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Journal e-Review

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Reviews of timely articles and books for current and emerging thought leaders and senior executives.

Built to Change: How to Achieve Sustained Organizational Effectiveness

By Edward E. Lawler III and Christopher G. Worley
Jossey-Bass, a Wiley Imprint, 2006
www.josseybass.com

The authors, both widely published in books and periodicals, provide some insight to the title of *Built to Change*. In the mid-1990s, the book *Built to Last* (Collins and Porras, 1994) was published and became perhaps the leading book on organizational excellence. Its authors basically identified the principles that allow firms to endure. Lawler and Worley see *Built to Change* as the sequel to *Built to Last*, representing what organizations need to do once they have developed the foundation for survival and want to increase their effectiveness over time.

It is pointed out early on that about half of the list of high-performing companies cited in *Built to Last* have not been able to sustain a high performance record over the last decade. Wisely, Lawler and Worley haven't included a list of high-performing companies in this book, but they have included some examples of how Proctor & Gamble, Johnson & Johnson, Limited Brands and Toyota have managed to respond to rapidly changing business environments. They also tell us about some major companies that have failed to successfully implement change management – and the consequences for doing so.

There was a time not so long ago (probably pre-Internet) when senior management of companies of all sizes could plan their business strategies for five years or more and meet annually just to tweak the plan. But, managing change was seldom an issue. Today, it may be the central issue in most organizational effectiveness initiatives. The authors recognize that some, maybe even most, organization change projects will fail – mainly because the type and amount of change being attempted is beyond the ability of most organizations to adopt successfully. Therefore, “the only way to ensure that organizations will be able to change is

to *design* them to change, to create organizations that love to change.”

From the opening chapters about identifying the determinants of organization effectiveness and providing a way to think about those determinants, to the conclusion where the authors discuss the challenges involved in creating a b2change organization, you'll see how important it has become for organizations to be built to change for long-term success.

Teach What You Know

By Steve Trautman
Prentice Hall, 2006.
www.amazon.com

Knowledge transfer is a hot topic in light of the potential retiring workforce. This book offers some practical tools that can be used in handling several current issues – the boomers retiring and taking their knowledge with them; workers rapidly changing jobs, resulting in more retraining; technology and system upgrades requiring new skills; M&As and outsourcing.

Trautman is not just theorizing, as he has been in the trenches onboarding thousands of new employees at Microsoft, Intel, Nike and Boeing. He describes how his peer mentoring approach can break the knowledge down in manageable chunks, teach it in a way that works for the apprentice, ensure understanding and then give feedback – and still allow the mentor and apprentice the time to carry their normal workload.

The book is written in a step-by-step approach and is modular enough that peer mentors can use the individual tools as needed in either formal relationships or in the informal interactions that pepper them each day. Each chapter is supported by simple tools, such as check lists, templates and worksheets, and the book closes with a thorough case study and sample training plans for mentors to use with apprentices. If you find one tool that helps you manage knowledge transfer, it will be worth way more than the price of this book.

Naked Conversations: How Blogs are Changing the Way Businesses Talk to Customers

By Robert Scoble and Shel Israel
www.amazon.com

Scoble and Israel argue that every business can benefit from smart “naked” blogging, whether the company is a small town plumbing operation or a multinational fashion house. By ignoring the “blogosphere,” you ignore what others are saying about you, they write. The authors have assembled an enormous amount of information about blogging: from history and theory to comparisons among countries and industries. They also lay out the “do’s and don’ts” of the medium and include extensive statistics, case studies and blogger interviews.

The authors contend that blogging is a tool of a very significant revolution, one that has become virtually unstoppable, something that shifts the balance of relationships between companies and the communities in which they operate. But they do admit that blogging also has its prickly issues – some real and some imaginary. Some companies and people should not blog, period. For others, determining whether the benefits outweigh the potential drawbacks can be a tough call.

Culture is the prickliest thorn. Target executives explain that blogging is unlikely to start up inside America’s fourth largest retailer, because being personal in public is just not Target’s way. That’s a cultural thing. The influence of culture, both in business and countries, cannot be underestimated. Quite simply, some cultures are open and others are closed. Some leaders trust those under their watch, and others don’t. And that difference becomes increasingly important as more people realize that corporate blog policy tells outsiders a great deal about how a company sees its employees and its customers. Companies like Google, which discourage blogging, could start to lose talented people and already are revealing other cracks in their veneers. Discouraging employees from blogging neither builds internal morale nor attracts talented people.

Clearly, the authors think blogging is smart business; cheaper and more effective than most marketing programs in use today. It’s an interesting read regardless of which side of the fence you are on.

Strategic Performance Management: Leveraging and measuring your intangible value drivers

By Bernard Marr
Butterworth-Heinemann, an imprint of Elsevier, 2006

If you read only one management book this year, this could be the one to choose. This book sets new standards of how to measure and manage what really matters in organizations today. In a thought-provoking manner, Bernard Marr demonstrates why many traditional approaches to performance management are doomed to failure – and the book is well-written and is appropriate for both academic and executive audiences at the senior level.

According to Leif Edvinsson, professor of intellectual capital, Lund University, “The book shows practical and illustrative cases and step-by-step guidance on how to go from management by numbers to management by insights. In this book, Bernard Marr presents many well-designed templates for the identification of the value proposition and value drivers, for the design of meaningful performance indicators, and for the selection and adoption of software applications for a more efficient and effective strategic knowledge navigation and decision making.”

Marr provides clear guidelines of how to make strategic performance management work. Particularly insightful is his guidance on measuring intangibles, which represents one of the key challenges for all organizations. It’s an entertaining book to read, very comprehensible and is brought alive by numerous real-life case studies. It could be invaluable to you as you design an efficient strategic performance management system for your organization.

Risk Management for IT Projects

By Bennet P. Lientz and Lee Larssen
Butterworth-Heinemann, an imprint of Elsevier, 2006.
www.elsevier.com

As the title implies, this book is for the folks on the tech side of your shop. Lientz, professor of information systems at the Anderson Graduate School of Management, University of California, and Larssen, IT manager and consultant to more than 40 global firms over the last 25 years, show the reader how to identify and track the recurring issues leading to failure in IT projects and provide a proven, modern method for addressing them.

The authors state that the rate of failure of IT projects has remained little changed in survey after survey over the past 15-20 years – over 40-50 percent. And this

is in spite of new technology, innovative methods and tools, and different management methods. As you might expect, most IT projects are similar at a high, strategic level, but where they differ is in the people, exact events, and other variable details.

Lientz and Larssen demonstrate:

- How the issue arises and with what frequency;
- What the impacts of the issue are if it does occur;
- How to detect specific issues at an early stage;
- How to prevent individual issues from occurring; and,
- Detailed actions to take if an issue does arise.

The authors have used and taught others to employ the methods in the book. If you are on the IT side of things, the book is a useful tool. Even if you're not, it may help you to understand some of the specific issues in IT projects.

Business Process Management: Practical Guidelines to Successful Implementations

By John Jeston and Johan Nelis
Butterworth-Heinemann, an imprint of Elsevier

Oh no, not another book about business process management! Before you skip over this review, take a minute to read it.

At a time of exceptional change, both within organizations and society, there are a number of imperatives for executives and managers as they lead their enterprises beyond present boundaries into the 21st century.

The Foreword in this book is written by Tom Davenport, professor and director of research, Babson Executive Education, Babson College and this reviewer will quote and paraphrase Davenport, for he succinctly describes the content of this book.

Viewing work as a process is hardly new. It dates at least to the early 1900s, and there have been nearly as much iteration as there have been years to date. It has come and gone in various forms and was mostly perceived as "faddish." But the authors take a unique approach to BPM in this book, creating an "amalgam" of previous approaches. The book "considers all of the major vehicles by which organizations understand, measure and change how they work." "The authors refer to the 'demystification' of process management, and they are correct that the field has been clouded by faddishness and mystification for far too long."

"As Jeston and Nelis point out, people are the key to implementing new process designs. If they don't want to work in new ways, it is often difficult to force them to do so. Hence, any successful process management effort requires a strong emphasis on culture, leadership and change management."

"Process management doesn't replace everything else in organizations, and it's not a panacea." This book doesn't suggest "that all an organization needs to do to be successful is process management – it simply argues that process management must become one of the abiding approaches to managing organizations." The perspectives "within the book may appear to be only common sense; they are indeed sensible, but they are not sufficiently common."

SOME ARTICLES YOU SHOULD READ:

"Stop Demotivating Your Employees"

By David Sirota, Louis A. Mischkind and Michael Irwin Meltzer
Harvard Management Update, Vol. 11, No.1, January 2006

Sirota, et. Al., tell us that most companies have it all wrong. They don't have to motivate their employees. They have to stop demotivating them. The great majority of employees are quite enthusiastic when they start a new job. But in about 85 percent of companies, their research finds, employees' morale sharply declines after their first six months – and continues to deteriorate for years afterward. That finding is based on surveys of about 1.2 million employees at 52 primarily Fortune 1000 companies from 2001 through 2004, conducted by Sirota Survey Intelligence (Purchase, New York).

The authors contend that the fault lies squarely at the feet of management – both the policies and procedures companies employ in managing their workforces and in the relationships that individual managers establish with their direct reports. The research shows how individual managers' behaviors and styles are contributing to the problem, and what they can do to turn it around.

"Retain Your Brains"

By Anne Fisher
Fortune, July 24, 2006, p. 49.

You may not have thought to look at a U.S. federal agency for tips on knowledge transfer, but this article about the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) might make you focus on their strategies. The TVA actually began years ago to tackle the problem of employee experts

retiring in alarming numbers. Impressively, in the past five years, 32 percent of the TVA's workforce has retired and been replaced with nary a glitch in operations.

In the 10 minutes it takes you to read this article, 90 more boomers turned 60 – might be time to get your knowledge transfer plan in place.

“You Look Marvelous – But is there more to next-generation ERP than lip gloss and eye shadow?”

By Rick Whiting
InformationWeek, July 24, 2006, p.33.

The opening paragraphs are enough to get you interested: “The words ‘enterprise resource planning’ conjure up ugly images – tortuously complex business processes, missed deployment deadlines and massive cost overruns. For more than a decade, ERP has

been synonymous with beastly software projects. Now, the three most influential vendors – SAP, Oracle and Microsoft – are re-architecting their applications with the promise that things will get better.”

“At the heart of all three vendors’ ERP redevelopment efforts is the adoption of service-oriented architecture (SOA), Web services standards and business process management (BPM). Service-oriented architecture and BPM, the vendors say, are critical to making their applications more modular and easier to adapt as needed – say, when two companies merge – something that’s been sorely lacking.”

As you continue to read the article, you may wonder if the big three are focusing on SOA and Web services, because they’ve felt some pressure from small and mid-size vendors or because it’s what their customers really want. The author rightly states that organizations should be wary of buying into the idea that SOA is a panacea.

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IHRIM Webinar

Extreme Makeover – HRMS Edition, Case Study by QUALCOMM, Inc.

Wednesday, September 13, 2006

11:00 – 12:30 a.m. Pacific • 1:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. • Central 2:00 – 3:30 p.m. Eastern

Managing HRMS: Post-Implementation Issues

Rockville, MD – September 20-21, 2006

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Tools for Building a Solid HR Systems Foundation

Dallas, TX – October 12, 2006

Topics include:

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- Self-Help Through the HR Portal

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