

Book Picks: The Leadership

top 5 book picks

Images of Organization

Morgan, Gareth (ISBN: 0761917527)

Reviewed by Andre Mamprin

Since 1998, Morgan's *Images of Organization* has become an international best-seller. The overarching perspective of the book underscores how we "see" organizations in addition to the concept of "organizing" itself. Morgan is one of a handful of leading thinkers on the progression of the industrial model of organizations (organizations as machines), from organizations based on a command-and-control structure, to organizations as organic (an organization structure parallel to that found in the natural world) in today's knowledge era. Morgan explores deep, in a meaningful and highly interesting way, into contingency theory, organizations as open systems, organizational learning, and self-organization and adaptation. Furthermore, Morgan looks at "organizational ecology" as an entire eco-system. Through the exquisite metaphor of organizational ecology, Morgan launches an in-depth exploration of an array of interconnected organizational issues, including power, change, ways of thinking, exploitation, learning, and the collective unconsciousness, to name only a few. If I were to purchase only one book on current organizational thinking, this would be it. Morgan is a skilled writer and is adept at interpreting complex concepts in relevant, meaningful ways.

Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity

Wenger, Etienne (ISBN: 0521663636)

Reviewed by Andre Mamprin

Communities of Practice, written by Etienne Wenger, a research scientist, tends to be on the complex side of the equation. Nevertheless, this landmark work is a key link in

understanding the relationship between how organizations learn (what Wenger calls social learning) and the formation of what he calls "informal communities." The central premise of this work is that an organization is a constellation of communities of practice, which self-organize to create meaning through their collective conversations and participation. Wenger breaks down the concepts of practice, meaning, community, learning, boundaries, and locality, and reconfigures these into an eloquent model from which to view the dimensions of organizational design, learning, and practice. Interestingly, Wenger also looks at education, architecture, engagement, imagination, and alignment in relation to an organization's potential and ability to learn. Wenger masterfully leads the reader through a section he calls "Modes of Belonging," which I interpret as ways of seeing or perceiving. This thinking is advanced and somewhat theoretical in nature; however, I consider this requisite to anyone who is interested in the linkages among knowledge, learning, and how we "organize." This book is both highly interesting and highly relevant to the fields of knowledge management and organizational design, as it builds a solid foundation for understanding "networks": the essence of how work ("The New Work") is organized in the knowledge economy.

Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience

Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly (ISBN: 0060920432)

Reviewed by Andre Mamprin

For more than two decades, the author has been studying consciousness, creativity, and states of what he calls "optimal experience." Csikszentmihalyi looks in depth at the anatomy of consciousness, leaving no stone unturned. Including limits of consciousness, psychic energy, the self,

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psychic entropy, and complexity, he links consciousness to “enjoyment” and quality of life, a state he calls “flow.” He elaborates flow by exploring the conditions for flow, the body in flow, work as flow, as well as what he calls “chaos” – the state we are in when we deviate from flow. In essence, the making of meaning. The author looks at how we as humans make meaning, and how meaning enhances and contributes to “optimal experience.” This book is the gateway into Csikszentmihalyi’s work on consciousness, thinking, and creativity. He is considered by many a leading thinker on how we think.

Why Don't You Want What I Want?: How to Win Support for Your Ideas without Hard Sell, Manipulation, or Power Plays

Maurer, Rick (ISBN: 1885167563)

Reviewed by Julia Cipriani

This is a very readable collection of ideas, tips, tools and approaches to gaining support for your ideas. The underpinning of Rick Maurer’s *Why Don't You Want What I Want?* is his interpretation of levels of resistance to change. He describes level 1 resistance as a lack of understanding, calling for more information and explanation. Level 2 resistance is about a negative reaction to the idea itself, born of fear or concern for consequences. Level 3 resistance is about mistrust of the proponent of the idea, based on association or past experience.

Too often champions of change offer up more information, more power point presentations and glitzy publications to explain the wisdom of their approach. Maurer makes the case for understanding the differences among the levels of resistance and presents strategies based on active listening, engagement, exploration, and principled negotiation to work with different levels. He makes several suggestions for avoiding pitfalls. This book is about building and strengthening relationships. Practical, accessible, full of examples, and interesting!

Maurer is also very generous with his ideas, offering many on his Web site: www.beyondresistance.com.



The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable

Lencioni, Patrick M. (ISBN: 0787960756)

Reviewed by Laurie Hillis

Patrick Lencioni is a gifted author who combines the playfulness of a fable with the nuts and bolts of practical ideas that are immediately applicable. His newest and third book, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, provides a mythical story of Kathryn, a new CEO parachuted into a high tech organization with the ultimate leadership challenge ... to turn a dysfunctional team into a high performance team. Bringing tenacity and the best of her previous experiences, she turns the team around by teaching them, and the reader, what is needed for team success: trust, healthy conflict, commitment, accountability, and a focus on achieving collective results. It was hard to put the book down, wondering whether Kathryn was going to succeed with her challenge, and it was full of practical advice for improving workplace teams.