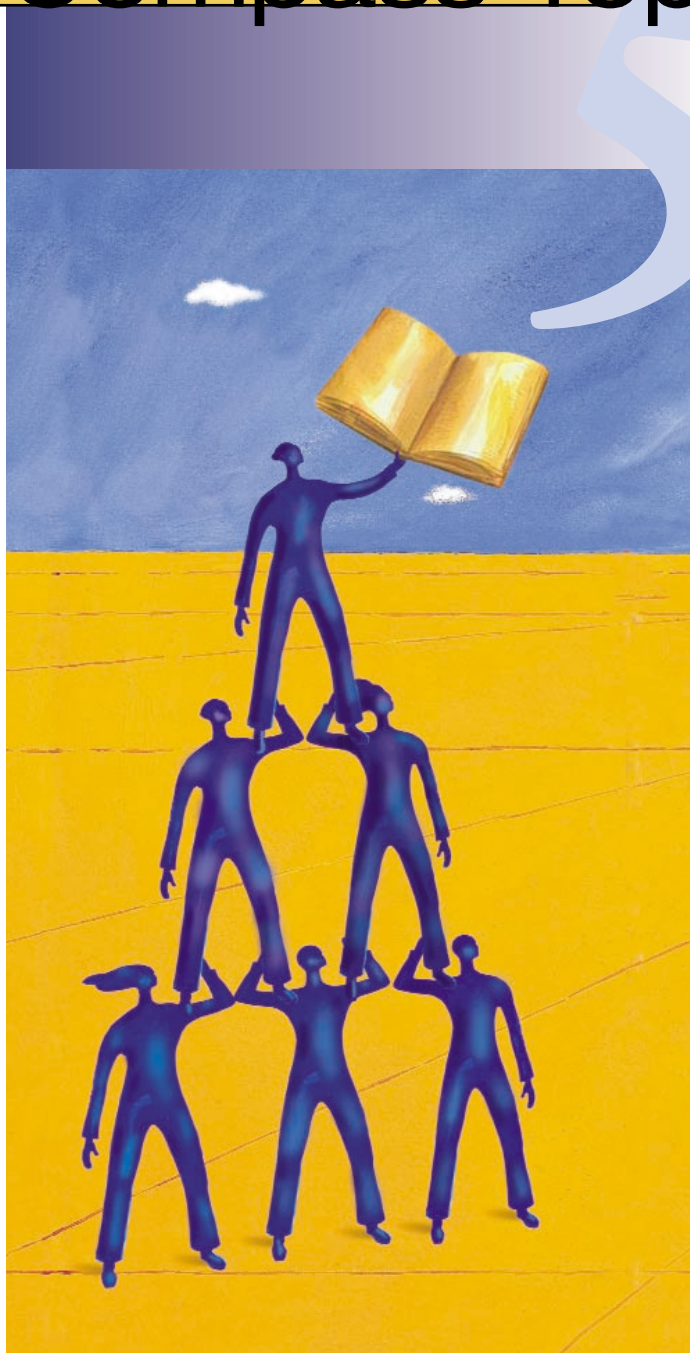


The Leadership Compass Top

top



Our top five book picks

Abolishing Performance Appraisals: Why They Backfire and What to Do Instead

Tom Coens and Mary Jenkins • ISBN: 1-57675-076-0

Reviewed by: Laurie Hillis

Performance management is both an art and a science. Many organizations struggle with finding the “one best way” to make this process a meaningful one. Just as many individuals in organizations find the process of traditional performance reviews to be less than a positive experience. Authors Coens and Jenkins expose and dispel many myths and false assumptions underpinning common performance management processes. The widespread use of teamwork, shared leadership and concerns over employee retention means traditional approaches no longer work. With real-life examples, resources, and tools, the authors help us envision a radically different view of performance strategies, based on collaboration, freedom, flexibility, and coaching. **Highly recommended.**

THE WAY OF TRANSITION Embracing Life's Most Difficult Moments

William Bridges • ISBN: 0-7382-0410-2

Reviewed by: Julia Cipriani

Transformation is the true destination of transition, whether it occurs in a myth or in an individual's everyday life.

This is William Bridges' third exploration of the landscape of change and transition. His earlier books, *TRANSITIONS Making Sense of Life's Changes*, 1980, and *MANAGING TRANSITIONS Making the Most of Life's Changes*, 1991, were among the first to provide a topographical map for making sense, at least at an intellectual level, of the peaks and valleys of transition.

THE WAY OF TRANSITION is not about methods and tools, it is a book about being. Transition is a path that is unknowable until it has been taken. No attempts to plan, prescribe, or control one's way through it will work. Bridges describes transition – the ending, the neutral zone, and the new

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beginning – drawing on the rites of passage in myth, literature, and Native American ritual. The neutral zone brings disengagement from whatever has been lost, disenchantment for the way one is torn out of the old reality, disorientation caused by the resulting bewilderment, and feelings of disloyalty for being critical of aspects of the old way. The disconcerting nothingness of the neutral zone gives it power. Satisfactory outcome for change comes from the transition process – re-orientation, personal growth, authentication, creativity, and discovery.

Bridges wrote *THE WAY OF TRANSITION* after he had lived the death of his wife and shared with her the hope and pain of her cancer. While the author echoes many of the observations he made about transition in his other books, he plumbs the depths of emotional turmoil, confusion, self-doubt, and angst of the neutral zone in a deeper way. People promoting change often have a hard time understanding the feelings of those who feel they have lost or are losing something. Bridges' own quest provides a backdrop for understanding the importance and pain of transition.

The Leadership Mystique – A User's Manual for the Human Enterprise

Manfred Kets de Vries • ISBN: 0-273-65620-1

Reviewed by: Andre Mamprin

Leadership now requires very different behaviour from the leadership tradition we have become accustomed to. Author Manfred Kets de Vries suggests leaders are "merchants of hope", requiring them to speak to the collective imagination of their people, urging them to join the "business journey." De Vries prompts the reader to ask compelling questions, such as how do you execute your own leadership style? Whether you work on the shop floor or have a corner office of the top floor of a shimmering skyscraper, what have you done today to be more effective as a leader? Can you present complex issues to others in a simplified way? Do you enjoy mentoring younger people? Do you believe people make an extra effort when working with you? Are you convincing when making presentations? He cites there are no quick answers to such leadership questions and there are no easy solutions, but uncovers the layers of complexity pertaining to such questions.

This 300 page work outlines a series of strategies, tools, and models that are relevant, fresh, and insightful, and serves as a "best-of" collection on leadership thinking. From styles to emotional intelligence, from organizational processes to exploring emerging competencies, from organizational culture to dimensions of leadership styles, **this is a must for every practitioner's library.**

The Web of Life

Fritjof Capra, Ph.D. • ISBN: 0-385-47676-0

Reviewed by: Kelly Wyer

Fritjof Capra, Ph.D., is a physicist and systems theorist and founding director of the Berkeley-based Centre for Ecoliteracy. He is also the author of three international bestsellers, *The Tao of Physics*, *The Turning Point*, and *Uncommon Wisdom*. In *The Web of Life*, Dr. Capra assists the reader in jumping the gap between Science and Social theory. He opens his discussion with the following comment. "This book is about a new scientific understanding of life at all levels of living systems – organisms, social systems and ecosystems. It is based on the new perception of reality that has profound implications not only for science and philosophy but also for business, politics, health care, education and everyday life."

The book provides an excellent basis for understanding the concepts of systems thinking and how business organizations can be linked to an ecosystem model. Dr. Capra also identifies the potential for a larger discussion in regard to the meaning of these ideas as they relate to the future of the environment, the planet, and humanity.

Training to Imagine: Practical Improvisational Theatre Techniques to Enhance Creativity, Teamwork, Leadership and Learning

Kat Koppett • ISBN: 1-57922-033-9

Reviewed by: Colin Funk

Training to Imagine is one of the first books to successfully explore and make meaning out of the now very popular practice of improv theatre and business training. The author goes well beyond just providing simple lists of theatre training games, and effectively translates the theories, methodologies, and exercises of improv into straightforward and practical guidelines for business leaders.

The first part of the book lays out the key competencies that one needs for either acting on stage or engaging individuals in the boardroom. In the "Principles" section the author provides clear explanations of the major improvisational theatre concepts and techniques, along with convincing links to training and leadership development.

In the "Activities" section, a list of over 50 powerful improv activities are neatly broken down into 10 components: Overview; Topic; Purpose; Supplies; Numbers of Players; Game flow; Variations; Tips; Debrief Questions; and Source. Particularly valuable is the Debrief Questions section – a list of compelling questions carefully formulated to help participants link the improv experiences to their work environment.

In today's fast paced and competitive environments organizations, increasingly need staff and teams that can make sense out of complexity. Training individuals to be creative and innovative may be one of our greatest challenges in the future. *Training to Imagine* provides a practical guide that will quite likely make that job all the more easier.