The Leader's Guide to Radical Management: Reinventing the Workplace for the 21st Century

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A radical new management model for twenty-first century leaders Organizations today face a crisis. The crisis is of long standing and its signs are widespread. Most proposals for improving management address one element of the crisis at the expense of the others. The principles described by award-winning author Stephen Denning simultaneously inspire high productivity, continuous innovation, deep job satisfaction and client delight. Denning puts forward a fundamentally different approach to management, with seven inter-locking principles of continuous innovation: focusing the entire organization on delighting clients; working in self-organizing teams; operating in client-driven iterations; delivering value to clients with each iteration; fostering radical transparency; nurturing continuous self-improvement and communicating interactively. In sum, the principles comprise a new mental model of management.

Author outlines the basic seven principles of continuous innovation The book describes more than seventy supporting practices Denning offers a rethinking of management from first principles This book is written by the author of *The Secret Language of Leadership*--a *Financial Times* Selection in Best Books of 2007.

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Date : Published October 12th 2010 by Jossey-Bass (first published September 14th 2010)
ISBN : 9780470548684
Author : Stephen Denning
Format : Hardcover 336 pages
Genre : Business, Leadership, Management, Nonfiction

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Helen says

This is a book I happily keep losing. Radical management is a great collection of all the thoughts, methods, and techniques that fit the evolving context of the 21st century. You can trace some of the ideas shared here back to agile concepts, systems thinking, architectural concepts, but Stephen Denning repackages and combines these together into a mixture of evocative stories and information concentrate that leaves a lasting impression.

What I especially like is it binds it together into business management speak, so this is something I can hand to the non developer savvy to learn about the business implications of agile methods. Furthermore, we see how these methods, are applicable to more than just software development.

One of the more unique concepts, or perhaps this is simply the first place I read about it, is the concept of "customer delight" which I think is a very powerful way forward. In our services economy, business and work at the end of the day is about providing something to the consumer, and the way you maintain relevancy and profit is through continued customer delight. Advocates must outweigh detractors, plain and simple.

Lukasz Nalepa says

I had high hopes regarding this book, after good reviews and recommendation from my friends. Unfortunately, they were not met, as there was barely anything new to me here, and some facts and statements were a bit twisted, or slightly misunderstood by the author.

This book is a good and comprehensive introduction to a modern approach to management, taken mostly from Agile and Lean practices in the IT industry (and Toyota of course). It is written to address those, who are unfamilliar with the IT jargon.

Very good thing here is that author is very conrete, and puts a huge emhpasis on the mindset and points out why simply using practices without understanding them, and the reason behind them, does not work :)

All in all, a good book to read, but if you are already familiar with the Agile and Lean, there are tons of other more useful books for you out there :)

Deniss Ojastu says

The author took the Agile principles from software development and packaged them into what he calls a radical management. The ideas themselves are very righteous and I cannot agree more with them. I especially liked the chapters on Delighting Clients (you need to have your clients in mind above anything else) and on Radical Transparency (honesty, authenticity, accepting failures).

However, the book itself provides relatively little novelty compared to any other publication on Agile principles - and I felt that the narrative was being chewed and re-chewed again and again). The whole chapter about open narratives felt like promotion for author's previous books. Overall, it is quite a stereotypical American-style self-help book: "I did it once, I ve heard others having done it too, I call it "The New Big Thing" and now I preach it to everyone else".

It can be interesting for people from outside software development who have never heard of Agile principles of (project) management though.

Reggie says

At first this book didn't excite me. It includes an error about the Agile Manifesto being signed in Colorado, instead of Utah where it was actually signed. Plus it seemed like it was just going to repackage scrum, but use different words so it could be more broadly accepted. Ultimately though, the book proved insightful and motivating.

The author set out to discover the best management methods for our modern world and essentially discovered that scrum embodies a great approach. He pulled 7 principles from scrum and wrote this book around those 7 principles:

Focus work on delighting the client
Do work through self-organizing team
Do work in client-driven iterations
Deliver value to clients in each iteration
Be totally open about impediments to improvement
Create a context for continuous improvement
Create a context for continuous self-improvement by the team
Communicate interactively: stories, questions, conversations.

Ultimately this book puts people first. It's about unlocking potential and that resonates with me.

Whether developing software or running a restaurant, following these 7 principles will help things go more smoothly.

Ron Quartel says

Dated - but still some good concepts.

Particularly enjoyed the final chapter which outlined how he rolled out agile in his company - more as a revolution than your typically (and usually failed) agile adoption plan.

I found it a little too prescriptive and hence dated. Many modern agile practices have replaced ideas proposed in here that are now questioned e.g. velocity, planning poker. We have discovered new models of agility which work better than many of the (now dated) practices described in the book.

It is refreshing to find a book that talks about the management side of agile however. Perhaps would have been better if he stuck to this aspect instead of trying to outline what practices should be adopted also. Would have kept the book more current.

Patrick says

Stephen Denning presents us with a vision on a new way of working. The way to accomplish this fun and effective way of working is by applying radical management. Away with traditional top-down management, welcome self-organisation. I like Steve's vision, especially because it matches the vision of say, people like Seth Godin. Enlighting customers is positioned as a key principle, together with six other principles. A lot of them are bought directly from the Agile way of thinking, which we have known for quite some time now. What Steve does however, is architecting a nice set of principles and practices that may be used to lighten up the workfloor a bit. A major bit. Besides that, he saves them from the software development dogma.

Do not expect to excite your manager with a radical book like this one. This book is a powerful weapon that requires practicing to avoid stabbing yourself in the foot. So try out the practices in your own context and judge what they can do for you. Apply them big time when running your own business.

Change will not happen by just wielding this book. Even though Steve's enthousiasm may inspire you through this book and through his blog, be both critical and practical. Most of the practices will look easy but are amazingly hard to implement. Trust me, I've been there.

Nevertheless I highly commend the book. Be inspired and help us make the world a better place by being a bit more daring. Dare to manage!

Sergey Shishkin says

Easily the best book on modern management that very much resonates with me. I especially liked how Denning separates principles from practices and gives examples of successes and failures. Unlike many other books describing organization change, this one does a great job highlighting cause-effect relationships and explaining why the principles make sense, how they support each other and what dynamics are at play when an organization doesn't live the principles. Readers coming from software development background will find some material familiar as the book borrows heavily from Scrum and Lean, elevating agile practices into domain of general organization management.

Tor says

The Lean methodology (Toyota Production System) - just with another flashy name. But the ideas are still gold.

Nic Brisbourne says

Denning makes a plea for companies everywhere to change management models from the hierarchical approach that evolved in the 20th Century to self organising teams where the role of management is to set objectives and remove impediments, leaving everything else up to the teams. This is a fundamental restructuring of work to give a full partnership between management and workers which speaks to the goals, behaviours, economics, and ethics that must govern the workplace for this century.

The reasons for shifting:
- the old model is no longer delivering good results for companies - hierarchical management works for predictable unskilled jobs but not for today's fast changing knowledge economy - evidenced by return on net assets falling consistently in recent decades and virtually all new job creation coming from startups
- the drivers of change - shift from semi-skilled work to knowledge work, the commitment of the workforce has become more important to productivity, customers are demanding more (and that can only be delivered by flexible self managing teams), all the productivity gains available have been wrung out of traditional management (BPR, downsizing, transformations etc aren't working)
- self managing teams are rewarding to work in, whereas only 20% of workers in traditional management structures find their work fulfilling (the idea is that we will all be working on something we love together with people who share our enjoyment all to the delight of others, in a trusting and open environment, and getting steadily better at doing it - i.e. the good life).

For me the need to deliver customer delight is the best hook to hang this on. Note the shift in focus from making products or services to customer delight.

All of this is consistent with Carlotta Perez's idea that a new social contract will be required in the deployment phase of the internet/IT technology revolution. Denning charts economic history as having three phases 1) managerial capitalism, 2) shareholder capitalism, and now 3) customer capitalism.

Focus on shareholder value is too short term. Too often the best thing for the share price is milking existing assets at the expense of customer satisfaction, this helps profits or return on assets in the short term, but builds up a brand debt that ends up getting repaid in the long term. (Note similarity with Clayton Christensen's argument that ignoring sunk cost and focusing on marginal returns similarly undermines investment.)

Delivering customer delight has many similarities with Lean Startup ideas - work in short iterations, looking to deliver value every time, aim for the simplest thing that customers will go for. But it adds a focus on customer delight - e.g. look for a customers unrecognised needs.

Key to success are having clear goals, a culture that supports open-ness, delegation of power, is tolerant of failure, and demands continuous improvement. Management must set the culture and live the values. Tools for success are daily standups, low tech visual displays (e.g. post-its on the walls), user stories to define goals, and use of narrative to motivate and enthuse.

Giuseppe Zangari says

Revolutionary. I think it's usfeul for everyone that work with people and create product or services for other

people.

Evryone?

Patrick Verheij says

This book gives really nice summary of principles and practices to create a workplace that is both fun and effective. I really like Stephen's accessible writing and clear tone of voice. He is a true evangelist for a more radical approach to management, and I agree with him that it would lighten up the world quite a bit even though he doesn't say it that way explicitly.

Alas, although what he writes is an excellent vision, practical implementation will be a major challenge for most organisations. Change like this is radical indeed and not an overnight thing for today's risk averse manager.

This book also borrows a lot from the Agile way of thinking, which exists since 2001 explicitly. What I like about that is that Stephen drags Agile out of the software development dogma and makes it applicable to the workplace outside that specific domain.

Nevertheless, do not be fooled by books like this. Unless you run your own business or have a lot of influence at where you work, you should not expect miracles to unfold immediately. Running to your manager with this book in hand will probably return some laughs and a kick in the butt. A book like this is a weapon land it requires some practice to wield succesfully.

So be inspired and work the recommended practices daily. Also be critical and select those things that work best for your own context. In the end I can highly recommend this book for it might change the way you think about your work and hopefully lighten things up a bit.

Brad Dunn says

I have kind of stopped reading 'work' books this year, in fact, my reading rate has gone way down. But this book kind of got me really pumped up about work again. I think its the best workbook I've read in a while.

It's essentially a book about Agile and Cross-functional teams. I am genuinely surprised that nobody has recommended this book to me before. But I wonder if its because everyone uses cross-functional teams by now :)

Maria says

There is another way to organize your business than along the traditional, outdated lines most companies use. With seven principles: delighting clients, self-organizing teams, client-driven iterations, delivering value to clients in each iteration, radical transparency, continuous self-improvement, and interactive communication you can create an organization that keeps innovating and delighting both employees and clients.

Khalid Sulami says

The essence of this book is about the followings:
1. All what you do is about client's delight
2. Creat diverse team from different disciplines with different mindset
3. Make the iteration of your product a client centric
4. Creat a unique value with every iteration.
5. Be transparent even with your client
6. Keep looking for self improvement opportunities
7. Interactive way of communication

Oliver Thylmann says

For somebody having done agile software development there is not much new and I am not sure it will really help old school managers. It is a good introduction though.