



How *Small* Moves, *Smartly* Made,
Can Set *Big* Things in Motion

John Hagel III, John Seely Brown, and Lang Davison

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In a radical break with the past, information now flows like water, and we must learn how to tap into its stream. Individuals and companies can no longer rely on the stocks of knowledge that they've carefully built up and stored away. Information now flows like water, and we must learn how to tap into the stream. But many of us remain stuck in old practices--practices that could undermine us as we search for success and meaning.

In this revolutionary book, three doyens of the Internet age, whose path-breaking work has made headlines around the world, reveal the adjustments we must make if we take these changes seriously. In a world of increasing risk and opportunity, we must understand the importance of *pull*. Understood and used properly, the power of pull can draw out the best in people and institutions by connecting them in ways that increase understanding and effectiveness. Pull can turn uncertainty into opportunity, and enable small moves to achieve outsized impact.

Drawing on pioneering research, *The Power of Pull* shows how to apply its principles to unlock the hidden potential of individuals and organizations, and how to use it as a force for social change and the development of creative talent.

The authors explore how to use the power of pull to:

Access new sources of information

Attract likeminded individuals from around the world

Shape serendipity to increase the likelihood of positive chance encounters

Form creation spaces to drive you and your colleagues to new heights

Transform your organization to adapt to the flow of knowledge

The Power of Pull is essential reading for entrepreneurs, managers, and anybody interested in understanding and harnessing the shifting forces of our networked world.

The Power of Pull: How Small Moves, Smartly Made, Can Set Big Things in Motion Details

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Doug says

While reading this book, I was already mentally categorizing this book as a two star, 'it would have been an interesting article in The Atlantic or the New Yorker but is a little long as a book' book, but then I stumbled on this passage:

Now, some might find this an elitist view of work. Of course, creative marketing people or talented software engineers or highly trained chemists can be passionate about their work. But what about janitors, truck drivers, or assembly-line workers? How will they ever feel passion for the work they do? As we will explore in a later chapter, these individuals, too, will have an increasing opportunity to feel passionate about their work. . . . As we begin to realize that scalable efficiency cannot see us through the shift to near-constant disruption, we will begin to see that performance improvement by everyone counts, not just performance for 'knowledge workers.'

Interesting. Then I kept reading. And then I got to the end of the book. This is the most in-point passage I could find on it:

So what can we do? We can find or develop our passion. . . . One of the great lessons that Toyota taught us is that assembly-line workers can be enormously passionate about their work if they are treated as problem-solvers who can innovate rather than automatons who are simply carrying out detailed instructions defined by someone else. . . . We would be well advised now to step back, reflect on those passions, and see if we can find some creative way to pursue them, either through a full-fledged career change by redefining the work we are doing, or by edging into it through a reduced workload arrangement. Another option is to find parts of our current work that are truly satisfying and engaging our interest.

So their advice to janitors and truck drivers is just to be passionate about your work and if not, tough luck? THAT'S IT!? It's like reading a 200+ page on how to operate a world-class restaurant and devoting 2 pages to the food. Useless, which is why I'd give this book negative 23,975 stars if I could. AT LEAST DEVOTE SOME OF THE BOOK TO PEOPLE OTHER THAN CREATIVE PEOPLE AND SOFTWARE ENGINEERS!! Tell me something. Tell me how this works in the physical world, not just the world of consultants and artists and computers. Tell me more than two sentences about the Toyota assembly line workers, because you're onto something there. Tell me how Sam Walton instilled passion in his workers, who ARE janitors and truck drivers, to create a dynamic organization out of cashiers and clerks (fun trivia fact: the Wal-Mart greeters are actually there to watch out for shoplifters, but instead of an intimidating guy who looks like a bouncer at a bar, Sam Walton came up with the idea of putting a friendly greeter at the door instead). Tell me about the Boeing 787 program and how they created a platform by which different subcontractors all over the world can come together and create something as impossible complex as an

airplane, which, unlike software, can't crash and has to work perfectly the first time, every time. Tell me how, even though there are integration problems, this is the way of the future. But don't keep telling me about the same crap about artists and consultants and computer programmers, because it makes me very sad and makes me want to write the authors to ask where I can get back the 5 hours of my time that they wasted.

Dennis Fischman says

If you're a manager--particularly a corporate manager--particularly a manager in a top-down, siloed, "do it the way we've always done it" corporation, then *The Power of Pull* may be for you. It will tell you:

1. People need to learn new information and make new contacts all the time, because the challenges they will face in the future are unpredictable. You never know what it is that you will need to know, or who will be your most valuable collaborator. Seek serendipity.
2. Organizations need to create environments in which people can do all the things in #1.

And that's it! The questions at the end of each chapter will help you see whether you (or your organization) are following the book's advice.

I am not a manager, nor am I a corporate type, so maybe I am missing something. I thought, however, that even in 2010 when this book came out, all this was old news. Not only has there been chatter about the need to adapt to the Information Age since the 1990's. Way back in the early 20th century, Dewey stressed that the ability to find things out is just as important as the ability to remember what we've already learned.

Still, I wish some people in government would read this book. Maybe they would think twice about demanding more planning, more measurement, and more standardization from community organizations that receive government funds. They could learn from this book not to stick with a model that the most nimble for-profit organizations are leaving behind, because it stifles both creativity and productivity. We, the public, would benefit if government spent more time and more money on enabling organizations to learn from one another and create new partnerships, instead.

Jimt43 says

Another in a very long line of books in which the author has about 2 chapters worth of book and then is forced (or wants) to extend it to book length. The information in here would make a great blog or two, but not a book... give me a break! The little information contained here (I got bored and quit reading after not too long) DID give me pause and I am in the process of rethinking my approach to social media for IP2Biz.

Aaron says

Utter crap. Most of it is talking about nothing implying it will eventually talk about something. It even repeatedly reuses verbatim its own previous paragraphs.

Bill says

The Power of Pull succeeded in getting me to think about the hypothesis - that current business is trending away from top-down effectiveness toward bottom-up, using new networks of relationships and communication. But they didn't convince me that they have a unified theory that allows individuals and institutions to succeed in this new scheme.

The argument is built anecdote by anecdote. I don't disagree that there is a paradigm shift occurring. But a collection of anecdotes does not a paradigm make. That will be left for history to decide.

There is good stuff here. The authors remind individuals to make our passion our vocation. Good advice, for those that have any control over their fate. Many do not, due to economic and other circumstances. Institutions need to empower their individual contributors. Also good advice. Yet that's nothing new, either.

Documents the trend, but fails to capture the paradigm.

Bernadette Boas says

I will let you know

Camia Young says

Insightful into how social network work, and affirming that it is a new age we are moving into that privileges sharing knowledge and collaboration over competition and winning.

David Hood says

If you're interested in creating something or changing something you should read this book. One of the best books I've read in the last five years. Fantastic. Also follow @jhagel on twitter.

Kerry says

Lost me in the beginning when they started using terms that they hadn't yet defined. Then once I understood, the extent to persuade me that this "Big Shift" was inevitable involved stating that 'this big shift is inevitable.' I'm sure there was more here than I found. I definitely found islands of clarity but the shipwreck of a start made it hard for me to master the tumultuous seas. There were things I agreed with but as the whole book was about this one thesis, given they left me confused about what the thesis was and then failed to convince me of it, I think it didn't achieve its goal. Also a lot of the points they made was very long-winded. The parts I did understand seemed to be extremely verbose. I think it would have served better

and have been clearer if the authors restricted themselves to more of an essay length.

Phillip says

Why business is different now than it was 20 years ago and what it means to you.

May Ling says

I gave this 4 because it's fairly well written and for its time (2010) it was pretty innovative in way of thinking. I'm not sure I complete agree, but I think the more important thing for 2010 is what he identifies.

Hagel has a lot of very interesting things to say about how to grow in a way that is quite different from past methods he calls push. He recognizes that the existing system - of which we are very much still working through - is one that consolidates power in a particular way.

I know that likely he has influenced many and would find it interesting to see if he likes the stuff I'm working on for a book. I think it helps strengthen his argument.

David Reno says

Great book. It is a high-level business book that looks at some of the technological/business environments that have fostered success. The "Power of Pull" is about how businesses must operate in our new environment. In the past, the power of push based initiatives dominated corporate decision making. The authors suggest that push-based decisions require accurate foresight to be effective, as companies would forecast demand and set production in motion to meet it. In their new suggested model, pull-based platforms are created instead. These platforms are fluid by nature and can morph as participants add value. The idea is that businesses will create these arenas and then profit from them in non-traditional ways. Twitter and YouTube are two obvious examples. Their founders created ways to share videos and short messages. The people liked it and the rest is history.

My favorite section of the book is the following where the authors discuss how corporations will find revolutionary ideas from available knowledge flows.

"Knowledge flows naturally flourish on the edge. Why? Because, by definition, participants on these edges are wrestling with how to match unmet needs with unexploited capabilities and all the uncertainty that implies. Edge participants therefore focus on ways to innovate and create value by connecting unmet needs with unexploited capabilities and then scaling these opportunities as rapidly as possible."

Later in the book the authors lament about the corporate cultures that are present where a player from the inside, such as a VP, will mentor those actors that are most exposed to these knowledge flows. These companies are effectively damning the walls by bringing these edge players to the inside and encouraging the new blood to act exactly like the old.

My only qualm with this book is its tag line "How Small Moves, Smartly Made, Can Set Big Things in

Motion". Most of the pull based platforms and examples that are provided are fundamentally dramatic. There isn't anything small about changing a corporate culture or developing a platform that others will add value to. Their arguments are convincing, but the easy breasy title is a little misleading in my opinion.

Bob says

There is an overall theme to this book that is important, critical even, to large, established businesses that are struggling to increase their relevance and improve innovation. While the ideas in the book may be clear to those of us who, as described by John Hagel, live on or near the edge; it is not clear to mainstream businesses. This may sadden some of us given that the Web is now 25 years old, but it remains true. I choose to believe the negative reviews of this book overlook this fact and focus on the obvious nature of the message: a few influential, well-informed people can have a big impact; rather than the significance the message can have as a hiring strategy.

Yes. This could have been a long-ish article in a business magazine and has some amount of filler, but it is useful as a manual of sorts for unfamiliar with how ideas and people move freely across the Web.

I found the theme to be one of the most important that I've read since the Cluetrain Manifesto, which was also largely self-evident to those of use who were already living on the Web in 2000 but nonetheless groundbreaking.

If you've read Geoffery Moore's "Escape Velocity" and wondered how you can move a horizon 2 business to horizon 3; I think Hagel prthose ovides an idea that will help.

Denise deSilva says

So boring

Lloyd Fassett says

"For the first time in history we are dealing with a technology that shows no sign of stabilization in terms of price / performance ratio improvement. In fact, the exponential rate of improvement of the three building blocks of digital technology - processing, storage, and transport - is likely to continue for an indefinite period of time." pg 44.

And I say, ruminate on the idea of how this message found you.
