

First, Break All the Rules: What the World's Greatest Managers Do Differently

Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffman
Simon & Schuster, 1999, \$25, 271 pages
ISBN 0-684-85286-1

Retention and productivity of employees are among the issues that increasingly concern information management professionals. The bottom line of good management, of course, is measuring the effectiveness of an organization. Suppose the good management could be distilled into its essential components. That is what authors Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffman claim the Gallup organization did by interviewing more than a million employees and tens of thousands of managers and studying their responses to a large set of questions, including:

1. Do I know what is expected of me at work?
2. Do I have the materials and equipment I need to do my work right?
3. At work, do I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day?
4. In the last seven days, have I received recognition or praise for doing good work?
5. Does my supervisor, or someone at work, seem to care about me as a person?
6. Is there someone at work who encourages my development?
7. At work, do my opinions seem to count?
8. Does the mission/purpose of my company make me feel my job is important?
9. Are my co-workers committed to doing quality work?
10. Do I have a best friend at work?
11. In the last six months, has someone at work talked to me about my progress?
12. This last year, have I had opportunities to learn and grow?

Answers to these questions discriminated between excellent worker productivity and average. Moreover, for many different companies in many different businesses, the answers to these questions—those that reflect the employee's relationship with his or her immediate supervisor—trumped more accepted measures of corporate excellence such as pay, benefits, or charismatic leadership.

These interviews resulted in great insight. The authors contend that talents may not be taught. While some managers believe what is missing can be supplied with more training or experience, great managers capitalize on an employee's natural strengths and work around the weaknesses. To the extent that the book explains superior performance by employees and managers, it is extremely worthwhile.

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The Data Webhouse Toolkit: Building the Web-Enabled Data Warehouse

Ralph Kimball and Richard Merz
John Wiley & Sons, 2000, \$49.99, 416 pages
ISBN 0-471-37680-9

The Web has become a primary conveyor of information to anyone, anywhere, anytime. Ralph Kimball and Richard Merz take the reader behind the scenes and describe a new world where companies can gather information about Web use unforeseen even a few years ago.

The Data Webhouse Toolkit is divided into two sections. The first is a lesson in

how to use data gathered from the "clickstream," which is information about how a user navigates, or "clicks through" a Web site during a session. The second is a description of how to place a data warehouse into a Web environment. The authors perform an outstanding service to IT and business leaders by using plain language to describe the value of collecting information about how visitors actually use a site. The material is readable, but not oversimplified. The real-life examples are excellent. For example, a company may gather data from the clickstream and learn that customers often leave the site when confused by certain selections, or when frustrated by slow response time caused by a large graphic.

This book is for all levels of IT and business professionals who want to understand how to harness the power of a Web site for profitability and better decision making. The introduction implies that knowledge of dimensional modeling and Web architectures is required. Some readers may think the book is too technical but it can be useful to both beginners and specialists. Some key issues that every manager should be thinking about are all covered in some depth: privacy, security, capacity, and quick response time. This book accomplishes the rare feat of guiding a developer/architect through an architecture and implementation.

The Data Webhouse Toolkit is really two books in one. Depending on interest level, readers could find value in one section or the other. However, I highly recommend both.

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