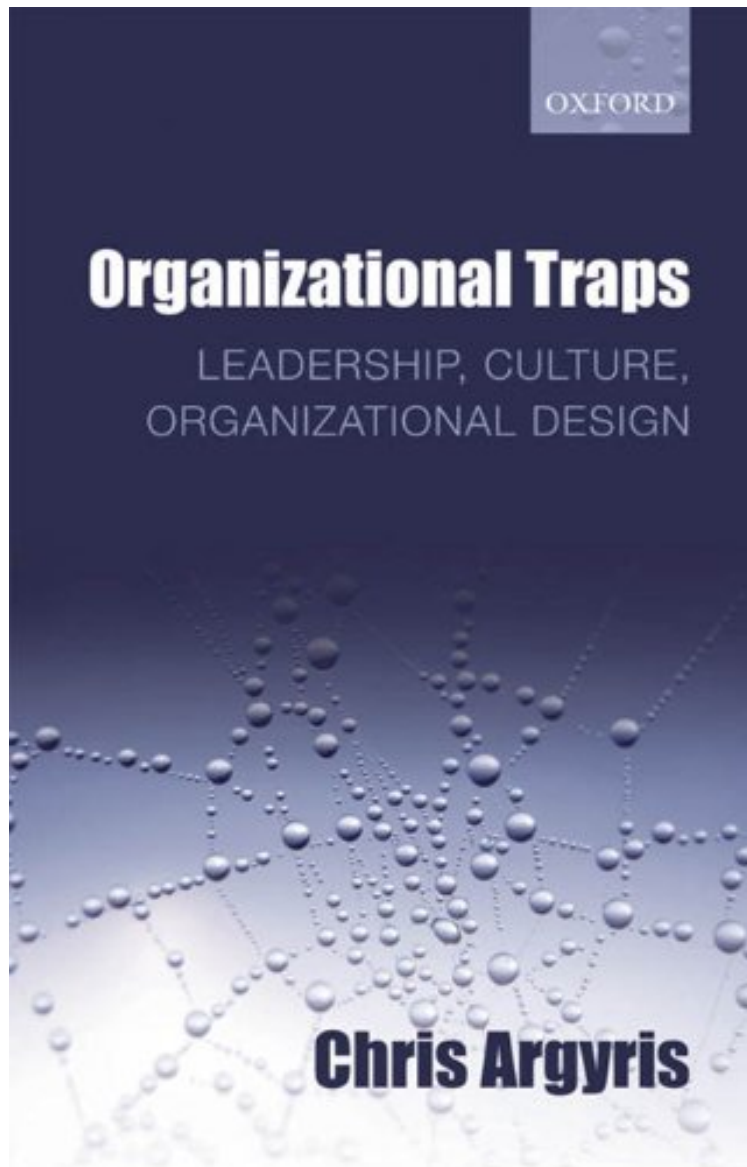


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Organizational Traps: Leadership, Culture, Organizational Design

Chris Argyris

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Chris Argyris : Organizational Traps: Leadership, Culture, Organizational Design before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Organizational Traps: Leadership, Culture, Organizational Design:

15 of 16 people found the following review helpful. Overcoming fear of confrontation By John Gibbs Although we say we value openness, honesty, integrity, respect and caring, we act in ways that undercut these values, and this leads to us getting trapped by our own behaviour, according to Chris Argyris in this book. Rather than being open and honest,

we say one thing in public and do another in private. Then we deny that we are doing this, and cover up our denial. The problem arises from a fear of confrontation. We would rather keep the peace than be honest, but there is a very high price to be paid. Organizational traps significantly impair the effectiveness of our organizations. The book contrasts defensive reasoning (Model I) with productive reasoning (Model II). Defensive reasoning, which is what people almost universally adopt in practice, has the following values: * Be in unilateral control * Win and do not lose * Suppress negative feelings * Behave rationally Productive reasoning, which many people espouse but almost no-one actually adopts in practice, has the following values: * Seek valid (testable) information * Create informed choice * Monitor vigilantly to detect and correct error I found the author's arguments convincing, but by the end of the book I was pessimistic about the prospect of ever successfully overcoming organizational traps. The vast majority of the book is devoted to examples of people who failed to overcome organizational traps and explanations of why the different types of advice offered by leadership experts will not help. The author concludes by saying that changing to reduce organizational traps will not be easy, but we have no other choice. 13 of 14 people found the following review helpful. At last a book that deals with some of the downsides of business By Clint Aust Centre If you are like me and are sick of the glossy and fluffy business books that tell a good but useless story, then take a read of Organizational traps because it has real substance. It addresses some of the difficult and more challenging business issues. Argyris is always a deep thinker and considers his comments well before writing. To play with a Dostevsky comment "All good businesses are similar, but each bad business is unique in their misery", Chris is one of a handful of authors who takes us in to the trouble waters of a struggling business and then identifies the problems and presents some solutions. While I appreciate Chris tackling the topic I also think that Chris is not trying to prove anything as an author. He is a confident author that knows his stuff and is not trying to be the newest best selling author so the book is not filled with the quotable grabs or the hyper-comment just plain good thinking and analytic reflection. On the downside, it is a small book and there is more to the topic than what Chris has written. But perhaps Chris will follow it up with a more technical book at a later date. Use this book as the introduction and follow it up with a more detailed book. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Exceptional By Andrew L Moore This book is simple to read, and the case studies make it an excellent example to use for understanding what happens in communication between people, and how that communication leads organisations to ineffective cultural norms. Great, I highly recommend it.

Anyone who has spent time in an organization knows that dysfunctional behavior abounds. Conflict is frequently avoided or pushed underground rather than dealt with openly. At the same time, the same arguments often burst out again and again, almost verbatim. Turf battles continue for extended periods without resolution. People nod their heads in agreement in meetings, and then rush out of the room to voice complaints to sympathetic ears in private. Worst of all, when people are asked if things will ever change, they throw up their hands in despair. They feel like victims trapped in an asylum. And people often are trapped. But they are not trapped by some oppressive regime or organizational structure that has been imposed on them. They are not victims. In fact, people themselves are responsible for making the status quo so resistant to change. We are trapped by our own behavior. Researchers and practitioners have often reflected on these things, but there is a puzzle. On the one hand, there is substantial agreement that these traps are counterproductive to effective performance. On the other hand, there is almost no focus on how organizational traps can be prevented or reduced. This book argues that whatever theory is used to describe and understand such organizational traps should be used to design and implement interventions that reduce and prevent them. Argyris is one of the world's leading management scholars whose work has consistently shed light on organizational problems. This book is essential reading for MBAs, managers, and consultants.

"Argyris has once again challenged my thinking, theories and advice. Despite an explosion of books and articles about how to lead, improve organizational effectiveness, and change culture, we continue to see well intentioned and competent leaders embroiled in personal and organizational failures. Using decades of research, Argyris shows us the problem: our theories and advice ignore or bypass the hard truth; people avoid conversations that will help them learn about gaps between their intention to change and reality. Argyris argues that this well documented truth must be incorporated in our theories if they are to be robust and make a sustained difference. And leaders must insist we do if they are to avoid spending millions on flawed advice."--Michael Beer, Chairman, TruePoint, and Professor Emeritus, Harvard Business School "It is rare for a serious management book to be a real page-turner, but this one is. Drawing on fascinating cases from a lifetime of research on group and organizational dynamics, Chris Argyris shows how our own reasoning processes entrap us in patterns of behavior that we detest but cannot change. He explains how these traps become self-sealing and why even our best efforts to escape them merely tighten their bonds. The provocative strategy he offers for breaking out of our self-created traps merits close attention by anyone who seeks to improve life and work in organizations."--J. Richard Hackman, Edgar Pierce Professor of Social and Organizational Psychology, Harvard University "For over half a century, Chris Argyris has been helping those who are willing to reflect on their own behavior to become more effective. This latest work is his clearest elucidation yet of why we fall into the traps that stymie us and how we can author our own escapes. And while he is at it, he provides wise counsel on how to audit

the logic of those who purport to tell us the secrets of leadership."--Roger Martin, Dean, Rotman School of Management, University of Toronto"Chris Argyris is a master of revealing the universal dysfunctionalities of organizations and the challenges of dealing with them. Here he picks up the theme of Organizational Traps and successfully links them to issues of leadership, culture, and organizational design. Once again Argyris offers us insights in how to understand and tackle them."--Andrew M Pettigrew OBE, FBA, Professor of Strategy and Organization, Saïuml;d Business School, University of Oxford About the AuthorChris Argyris is the James Conant Professor of Education and Organizational Behavior Emeritus at Harvard University. He has consulted to numerous private and governmental organizations. He has received many awards including thirteen honorary degrees and Lifetime's Contributions Awards from the Academy of Management, American Psychological Association, and American Society of Training Directors. His most recent books are, Flawed Advice and the Management Trap (OUP, 1999), and Reasons and Rationalizations (OUP, 2004). A chair professorship was established in 1994 at Yale University. He is a Director Emeritus of Monitor Group.