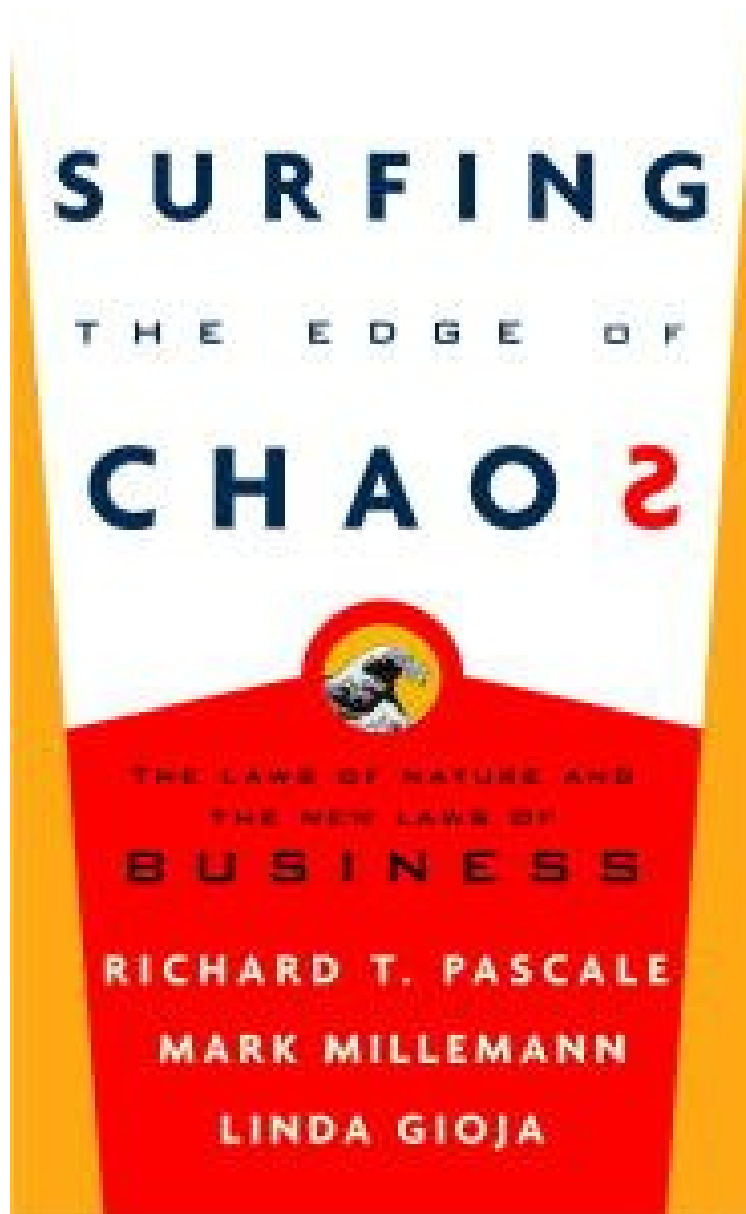


(Get free) Surfing the Edge of Chaos: The Laws of Nature and the New Laws of Business

Surfing the Edge of Chaos: The Laws of Nature and the New Laws of Business

Richard Pascale, Mark Milleman, Linda Gioja
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0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. One Star
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By R. Mullen
An important book that will give you ideas about how to interpret change around you, and how to interact within chaotic environments. Adaptation theory is still the rage in business, but usually from the troubling perspective of controlled chaos (as if). I much prefer the idea of "surfing" chaos,--in other words, assessing what's happening and grabbing a better board.
0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Interesting ideas, but the case studies are less convincing ...
By Customer
Interesting ideas, but the case studies are less convincing. As with Excellence, many of the case studies have failed. This is not a criticism, it is just a fact that case based books take a snap shop of a journey

Every few years a book changes the way people think about a field. In psychology there is Daniel Goleman's Emotional Intelligence. In science, James Gleick's Chaos. In economics and finance, Burton Malkiel's A Random Walk Down Wall Street. And in business there is now Surfing the Edge of Chaos by Richard T. Pascale, Mark Millemann, and Linda Gioja. Surfing the Edge of Chaos is a brilliant, powerful, and practical book about the parallels between business and nature -- two fields that feature nonstop battles between the forces of tradition and the forces of transformation. It offers a bold new way of thinking about and responding to the personal and strategic challenges everyone in business faces these days. Pascale, Millemann, and Gioja argue that because every business is a living system (not just as metaphor but in reality), the four cornerstone principles of the life sciences are just as true for organizations as they are for species. These principles are: Equilibrium is death. Innovation usually takes place on the edge of chaos. Self-organization and emergence occur naturally. Organizations can only be disturbed, not directed. Using intriguing, in-depth case studies (Sears Roebuck, Monsanto, Royal Dutch Shell, the U.S. Army, British Petroleum, Hewlett Packard, Sun Microsystems), Surfing the Edge of Chaos shows that in business, as in nature, there are no permanent winners. There are just companies and species that either react to change and evolve, or get left behind and become extinct. Some examples: Parallels between Yellowstone National Park and Sears show why equilibrium is a dangerous place in both nature and business. How Monsanto used a "strange attractor" to move to the edge of chaos to alter its identity and transform its culture. The unlikely story of how the U.S. Army embraced the ideas of self-organization and emergence. Why the misapplication of linear logic (reengineering a business or attempting to eradicate predators in nature) will inevitably fail. The stories in Surfing the Edge of Chaos are of pioneering efforts that show how the principles of living systems produce bottom-line impact and profound transformational change. What's really striking about them, though, is their reality. They are about success and failure, breakthroughs and dead-ends. In short, they are like the business you are in and the challenges you face. From the Hardcover edition.

From Publishers Weekly
In this breakthrough business book, Pascale, Millemann and Gioja troll the emerging science of complexity for "ideas [that] can produce a concrete bottom-line impact." Extracting key "dynamics of survival" from the life sciences, these three management consultants successfully show business leaders how to turn their companies into agile and adaptable "living systems" that achieve long-term vitality and sustainability in a swiftly evolving environment. Their four "bedrock" principles are "Equilibrium is a precursor to death"; "Living things move toward the edge of chaos"; "Components of living systems self-organize" in response to turmoil; and "Living systems cannot be directed along a linear path." Writing with clarity and verve, the authors illustrate these larger points by comparing the functioning of organic systems (e.g., Yellowstone National Park), the behavior of organisms (dental plaque) and of insects (fire ants) with detailed case studies of five companies (British Petroleum, Hewlett-Packard, Monsanto, Royal Dutch/Shell and Sun Microsystems) and the U.S. Army. Practical-minded readers will appreciate their nitty-gritty insights into the relative advantages of "adaptive" and traditional "operational" leadership, as well as their consistent distillation of concrete business guidelines. While the authors aver that "there is no permanent victory in this eternal cycle of life and death," they make a persuasive case that "understanding living systems does not decisively win the game but, most assuredly, it improves the odds." (Nov. 1) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. "Great storytelling, experience-based insight, and effortless prose convey a compelling message: Leading the talent-driven, distributed enterprise is the management challenge of the knowledge economy. The answers lie in complexity science, which provides relevant insights into the workings of living systems. Surfing the Edge of Chaos is the Rosetta stone, translating between real-world problems and exciting, illuminating theory. Pascale, Millemann and Gioja have at last made practical the idea of organization as organism."-- Christopher Meyer, Director, The Cap Gemini Ernst Young Center for Business Innovation, and author of BLUR: The Speed of Change in the Connected Economy and Future Wealth "Surfing the Edge of Chaos is a breakthrough book, achingly relevant for the New Millennium, by synthesizing new developments from the life sciences, social sciences, and physical sciences into an exciting framework that will help organizations and their leaders thrive and revitalize themselves in this post-modern, hypo-turbulent era. It has the added advantage of rendering subtle and complex ideas into readable prose by refracting the ideas through the prism of real-life organizations. This book will be must reading for any serious executive or student of organizational change."-- Warren Bennis, University Professor and Founding Chairman of the

Leadership Institute, University of Southern California, and author of *Managing the Dream*"*Surfing the Edge of Chaos* is an action plan for bringing organizations to life and life to organizations. An organization is a living system that must adapt to a changing environment -- the same as species in nature. Thinking of a company as a 'well-oiled machine' or of yourself as a cog in that machine is a recipe for extinction. Richard Pascale, Mark Millemann, and Linda Gioja provide exciting new ways to think about the professional and personal ch...From the Inside FlapEvery few years a book changes the way people think about a field. In psychology there is Daniel Goleman's *Emotional Intelligence*. In science, James Gleick's *Chaos*. In economics and finance, Burton Malkiel's *A Random Walk Down Wall Street*. And in business there is now *Surfing the Edge of Chaos* by Richard T. Pascale, Mark Millemann, and Linda Gioja.*Surfing the Edge of Chaos* is a brilliant, powerful, and practical book about the parallels between business and nature -- two fields that feature nonstop battles between the forces of tradition and the forces of transformation. It offers a bold new way of thinking about and responding to the personal and strategic challenges everyone in business faces these days.Pascale, Millemann, and Gioja argue that because every business is a living system (not just as metaphor but in reality), the four cornerstone principles of the life sciences are just as true for organizations as they are for species. These principles are:Equilibrium is death. Innovation usually takes place on the edge of chaos. Self-organization and emergence occur naturally. Organizations can only be disturbed, not directed. Using intriguing, in-depth case studies (Sears Roebuck, Monsanto, Royal Dutch Shell, the U.S. Army, British Petroleum, Hewlett Packard, Sun Microsystems), *Surfing the Edge of Chaos* shows that in business, as in nature, there are no permanent winners. There are just companies and species that either react to change and evolve, or get left behind and become extinct.Some examples:Parallels between Yellowstone National Park and Sears show why equilibrium is a dangerous place in both nature and business.How Monsanto used a "strange attractor" to move to the edge of chaos to alter its identity and transform its culture.The unlikely story of how the U.S. Army embraced the ideas of self-organization and emergence.Why the misapplication of linear logic (reengineering a business or attempting to eradicate predators in nature) will inevitably fail.The stories in *Surfing the Edge of Chaos* are of pioneering efforts that show how the principles of living systems produce bottom-line impact and profound transformational change. What's really striking about them, though, is their reality. They are about success and failure, breakthroughs and dead-ends. In short, they are like the business you are in and the challenges you face.