



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

By Richard Pascale, Mark Milleman, Linda Gioja

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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.

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Download and Read Free Online **Surfing the Edge of Chaos: The Laws of Nature and the New Laws of Business** By Richard Pascale, Mark Millemann, Linda Gioja

Editorial Review

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)

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Review

"Great storytelling, experience-based insight, and effortless prose."

—Christopher Meyer, Director, The Cap Gemini Ernst & Young Center for Business Innovation, and coauthor of **BLUR: The Speed of Change in the Connected Economy and Future Wealth**

"**Surfing the Edge of Chaos** is a breakthrough book . . . 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."

—Prof. Gary Hamel, author of *Leading the Revolution* and coauthor of *Competing for the Future*; Visiting Professor, London Business School; and Chairman of Strategos

"Grounded in both theory and practice, **Surfing the Edge of Chaos** helps any manager facing change to replace equilibrium and the status quo with innovation and self-renewal. The links drawn between the world of nature and the world of business form a particularly rich source of ideas for turning complexity and chaos into resolve and results."

—Dave Ulrich, Professor of Business, University of Michigan, and author of **Results-Based Leadership**

From the Inside Flap

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.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Kim Armstrong:

The actual book Surfing the Edge of Chaos: The Laws of Nature and the New Laws of Business will bring that you the new experience of reading some sort of book. The author style to describe the idea is very unique. Should you try to find new book to see, this book very suitable to you. The book Surfing the Edge of Chaos: The Laws of Nature and the New Laws of Business is much recommended to you to see. You can also get the e-book through the official web site, so you can quickly to read the book.

Teresa Hennessey:

This Surfing the Edge of Chaos: The Laws of Nature and the New Laws of Business is great guide for you

because the content which can be full of information for you who all always deal with world and also have to make decision every minute. This specific book reveal it info accurately using great manage word or we can state no rambling sentences included. So if you are read it hurriedly you can have whole info in it. Doesn't mean it only gives you straight forward sentences but challenging core information with attractive delivering sentences. Having Surfing the Edge of Chaos: The Laws of Nature and the New Laws of Business in your hand like getting the world in your arm, data in it is not ridiculous 1. We can say that no book that offer you world inside ten or fifteen minute right but this e-book already do that. So , this really is good reading book. Hello Mr. and Mrs. busy do you still doubt that?

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