

“De-bossing will accelerate as digital dashboards take on many of the traits and responsibilities of managers”

Reviews

Alive: Digital Humans and their Organisations

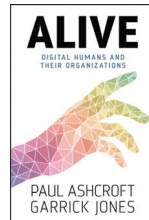
Paul Ashcroft & Garrick Jones, Novaro Publishing, £17.99/£9.99 e-book

The concept of digitisation is near ubiquitous in the business press, but it is also ill-defined. Is being digital just about automating processes? Does it apply to everyone or just a select few, technology-enabled multinationals? In *Alive*, two experienced consultants offer some answers – and end up posing plenty of fresh questions.

Ashcroft and Jones start with the premise that we must think of organisations as ‘alive’ – a “synthesis of human and digital” that blends intelligence from people and machines.

They trace this back to the advent of the smartphone, which has meant most of the world’s population is now online. Today, that means we want individuals to be flexible not just in where they work but in when they work: hence the rise of freelancing and consulting as alternatives to full-time employment.

Alive excels in connecting the dots between these trends. Soon, the authors predict,



“digital spines” will show businesses how to collaborate and manage projects. They liken transformational work in large organisations to the production of a Hollywood blockbuster, and show how design thinking can help us collaborate more effectively across borders.

Employee experience, they suggest, is becoming more personalised – ‘de-bossing’ will only accelerate as digital dashboards take on many of the traits and responsibilities of traditional managers. Gamification, meanwhile,

emerges as a tool for transforming learning.

By its nature, the book ends up hyperbolic in places – for example when it claims there is no such thing as a ‘local’ business in today’s connected world. It generalises about the motivation of millennials while warning against that exact issue, and it needs real life case studies. But despite its faults, it is tackling a profound challenge – and it’s doing it from a position of optimism rather than the apocalyptic scenario often painted by evangelists of automation.

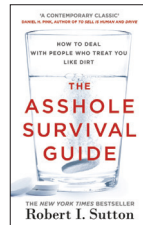


{Book}

Accelerated Leadership Development

Ines Wichert, Kogan Page, £29.99/£28.49 e-book

We’re not growing multifaceted leaders quickly enough, says Wichert, because the development we offer has failed to move with the times. Here she shows how organisational development, reflective learning practice and networks combine to propel high-flyers further – with a focus on women and millennials.



{Book}

The Asshole Survival Guide

Robert I. Sutton, Portfolio Penguin, £9.99/£5.99 e-book

The title isn’t the only provocative thing about Sutton’s guide to avoiding problematic individuals in the workplace. He advocates fighting back through calm, rational common sense and decency rather than confrontation, as well as ‘love bombing’ to handle difficult people. But there is science behind the bluster, making this book intelligent and often useful as well as good fun.



{Book}

Culture Your Culture

Karen Jaw-Madson, Emerald Books, £24.99/£17.99 e-book

Culture, argues Jaw-Madson, is both an inherent risk and a significant opportunity for organisations – and they’re not spending enough time understanding it in an evolving world. Her DOWE model for diagnosing and transforming culture is fairly complex, but it will get practitioners asking the right questions in a major change programme – and disarm ‘organisational snipers’ who like to shoot down well-meaning initiatives.



{Podcast}

Turning Purpose into Performance

Via hbr.org

The recent *Harvard Business Review* article on purpose-driven organisations has been much-discussed in HR circles. This Ideacast follows up its themes with the two management professors whose work inspired it, but more intriguingly it talks to Gerry Anderson, the CEO of a US energy company who realised his change initiatives weren’t working – he needed to respect his people and “ask for their heart” to turn his business around.

What’s new

If you don’t put thought into your meetings, you can’t be surprised when people are disengaged. In **The Art of Gathering**, Priya Parker suggests how to enliven even the most everyday workplace get-together. For David Plibeam and Glenn Wallis, understanding yourself as a leader is key to changing your performance for the better, a topic they explore in depth in **Leader ID**. In **Transforming the Clunky Organization**, meanwhile, Samuel B. Bacharach shows how visionary leadership, allied to pragmatism, can unlock any silo.