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Kill the Company: End the Status Quo, Start an Innovation Revolution [review] / Bodell, Lisa

Miroslav Danihel

B O O K   R E V I E W   **M I R O S L A V   D A N I H E L**

self-ascendant tendencies? The Christian model suggests that we can, making statements like "Consider others before yourself" and "love one another." But these counsels are given in the context of the Christian teaching that the Holy Spirit will transform my human nature after the similitude of Jesus. Can this happen in a pluralistic community?

Baker provides several organizational examples where P_2P structure has worked. These are some of the same organizations (not all) cited by other authors for their effectiveness in modeling servant leadership. With an appropriate vision and clear organizational values consistently maintained by the organizational community, P_2P has a chance to survive in this imperfect world. A more specific application is the Christian community and nonprofit organizations that are primarily staffed by volunteers. Most of these organizations have modeled their leadership and organizational structures after business and government models. The relational and emotional values that support these institutions and organizations seem to be a perfect context for implementing the P_2P model.

I extend my recommendation to you regarding this book by Mila Baker. Her model is well-defined and she explains it well. While it requires some general understanding of leadership history as well as information technology structures, this is not to a degree that would discourage the average reader. Organizational examples are given that support her theme and purpose in writing the book; though these became a bit tedious to read toward the end, they do not diminish the essential value of this book in presenting an actionable model of organization and leadership that challenges the increasingly

ineffective command and control model of the industrial age.

STANLEY E. PATTERSON is Professor and Chair of the Christian Ministry Department at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary and is Director of the Christian Leadership Center at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan.

KILL THE COMPANY: END THE STATUS QUO, START AN INNOVATION REVOLUTION

By Lisa Bodell
New York, NY: Bibliomotion (2012)
Hardcover, 264 pages

Reviewed by MIROSLAV DANIHEL

The book under review, *Kill the Company,* is written by Lisa Bodell. A sharp thinker, innovator, management professor and advisor, Bodell is the founder and CEO of future-think, one of the most influential and internationally recognized innovation research and training firms. In her book, Bodell speaks to what she believes is the biggest downfall of the contemporary corporate culture (complacency, conformity, and lack of leadership) and indentifies killing the company as the solution. After this shocking claim, Bodell dedicates the first half of the book to detailed descriptions of fast and successful ways to kill your own company. As a great teacher, Bodell destroys with the purpose to build. She claims that "only after you've killed your company you will be able to tap into the innovation that will transform it into a killer company" (p. xx). The second half of the book is dedicated to describing innovative ways to lead a company into a new era, building on new foundations, and focusing on developing soft skills. Bodell offers not only innovative ideas, but concrete

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tools and real-life examples as well. Furthermore, she aims to provoke managers and ordinary employees to start thinking in innovative ways, acting upon their ideas and turning their companies from "Zombie, Inc." into "Think, Inc.," and in the process, moving from a place of complacency into a vibrant life.

Bodell brings a wave of fresh air into the corporate world by replacing old strategic planning models with new inclusive models that focus on empowering not only the top managers but all employees to think innovatively and "kill" the status quo. Companies usually try very hard to make status quo more efficient; however, they are often afraid to change it entirely. In contrast, the author asserts that "to create a company of tomorrow, you must break the bad habits, and inhibitors that exist today. That's why you have to kill the company first. It's probably the most innovative thing a leader can do." (p. xxii).

While Bodell supports her expert opinions by listing the results of many research studies, her stronger support comes from describing her own experiences with changing corporate culture in different companies. These examples not only prove the point and make the book more readable, they also serve as practical instructions for those readers who would like to try to revitalize their companies by "killing" them. Bodell further acknowledges that there is no single approach that fits all, appealing to the readers to use their creativity and innovative abilities when trying to implement her ideas.

The last two chapters of the book are dedicated to a detailed description of a two-week seminar on bringing change to a big financial company. The author describes the individual steps of her workshop, the use of the innovative tool kit included at the end of the book, and alternative ways to implement the kit in different situations. The tool kit encourages leaders to look at their companies from the outside in, using several simple yet powerful exercises (e.g., "Kill the Stupid Rule" and "How to Put Myself Out of Business"). This practical approach enables leaders to apply Bodell's ideas in their own institutions. In addition, it encourages employees to voice their opinions and see them implemented.

The appeal to "kill to company" is one that Christian churches should hear as well. Bodell claims that the problem with large organizations, which include a number of churches, is that "they create roles and constraints and sometimes people forget why they are there" (p. 94). The focus on hard skills (the numbers) as opposed to soft skills (building the people), along with fear of change, paralyzes many Christian communities. Boddel's ideas about leadership, her diagnostic tools, and her tools for implementing innovative change are well suited for not only businesses but for churches and other types of organizations, as well.

The book *Kill the Company* is rooted in behavioral philosophy; therefore, it is very practical, promoting innovative thinking and its implementation. Bodell's approach to corporate leadership does not focus on changing and rebuilding the existing corporate culture, but on destroying the status quo and building a whole new culture with new pieces and a fresh vision. The book is easy to read, touches a current problem in corporate leadership, and—most importantly—offers practical and applicable solutions that promise great results. I would recommend this book to all leaders who desire great things for their companies and

are not afraid to change themselves and empower their employees to "kill" the company.

MIROSLAV DANIHEL, a pastor in Slovakia, is currently a Doctor of Ministry student concentrating in the area of Christian leadership studies at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary in Berrien Springs, Michigan.

BOUNDARIES FOR LEADERS: RESULTS, RELATIONSHIPS, AND BEING RIDICULOUSLY IN CHARGE

By Henry Cloud
New York, NY: Harper Collins (2013)
Hardcover, 237 pages

Reviewed by RON AGUILERA

Boundaries for Leaders is the latest book by well-known author and leadership consultant Dr. Henry Cloud. In it, he shares various tools and techniques beneficial to leaders who want to grow healthy organizations. Cloud stresses the importance of creating boundaries by developing structures that determine what will exist and what won't. He states that "you get what you create and what you accept." What this means to me is that a leader is either creating or allowing the culture he inhabits. This is especially true if the leader has been leading the organization for some time. Maybe you have heard the old adage: "Up to three years the problems in your organization belong to the previous leader; after three years the problems are of your own making."

Cloud says that the leader is "ridiculously in charge" of the vision, the people that get invited onto the team, what the goals and purposes are going to be, and what behavior is going to be allowed and what isn't.

In other words, establishing the boundaries. He spends the bulk of the book explaining seven boundaries that will fulfill the vision of the organization and help its people thrive:

- Helping people focus on the things that matter most,
- Recognizing the emotional climate that drives brain functioning,
- Facilitating connections that boost energy and momentum,
- Creating organizational thought patterns that limit negativity and helplessness,
- Identifying paths for people to take control of the activities that drive results,
- Creating high-performance teams organized around the behaviors that drive results,
- Leading yourself in a manner that protects the vision.

One of the most fascinating sections of the book has to do with building a healthy emotional climate. Cloud uses the latest neuroscience research to make an argument for conditions leaders can set that will motivate, empower and unify the team. He also describes other conditions that will result in the opposite. One great example is the tone of voice we use when communicating with an individual or with our team. Neuroscience reveals that when we use "put-down," angry tones, or harsh words, we trigger a switch in brain function—"it's like a switch going on from the upper brain to the lower brain." The upper brain is where the higher cognitive capacities happen, things such as logic, judgment, creativity, problem solving, planning, and big picture thinking. In the lower brain, not a lot of what we call thinking goes on. The lower brain controls the "fight or flight" response. Cloud describes a third option in which people simply freeze: They do nothing. The brain