



Up the Organization: How to Stop the Corporation from Stifling People and Strangling Profits

Robert C. Townsend , Warren G. Bennis

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Although it was first published more than thirty-five years ago, *Up the Organization* continues to top the lists of bestbusiness books by groups as diverse as the American ManagementAssociation, *Strategy + Business* (Booz Allen Hamilton), andThe Wharton Center for Leadership and Change Management. 1-800-CEO-READ ranks Townsend's bestseller first among eightybooks that "every manager must read." This commemorative edition offers a new generation the benefitof Robert Townsend's timeless wisdom as well as reflectionson his work and life by those who knew and worked with him. Thisgroundbreaking book continues to remind us not to get mired in allthose sacred organizational routines that stifle people andstrangle both profits and profitability. He shows a way to humanizebusiness and a way to have fun while making it all work better thanit ever worked before.

Up the Organization: How to Stop the Corporation from Stifling People and Strangling Profits Details

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Omar Halabieh says

As the cover jacket best summarizes it: "No pomposities. In short takes and plain words here is a way to humanize business, to have fun while making it all work better than it ever worked before - and better than it ever worked before - and better than anyone else is making it work...The result is the best, strongest, funniest, sagest, most outrageous and constructive book ever written about running things." Robert shares with us his thoughts on a wide variety of management and leadership topics based on over 16 years of experience in the Corporate world, including Avis and American Express, to name a few.

What sets this book apart is the breadth of topics covered, as well as the presentation in the form of short, simple, and direct mini-essays.

Below are some key excerpts from the book that I found particularly insightful:

1- "By far the best two books I've read on the subject of getting things done through organizations are: *Managing for Results*, by Peter F. Drucker...and *The Human Side of Enterprise* by Douglas McGregor..."

2- "Compromise is usually a bad idea. It should be a last resort...When you give in, give in all the way. And when you win, try to win all the way so the responsibility to make it work rests squarely on you."

3- "Delegation of Authority - May give lip service, but few delegate authority in important matters. An that means all they delegate is dog-work. A real leader does as much dog-work for his people as he can: he can do it, or see a way to do without it, ten times as fast. And he delegates as many important matters as he can because that creates a climate in which people grow."

4- "A commander in chief [manager] cannot take as an excuse for his mistakes in warfare [business] an order given his minister [boss] or his sovereign [boss's boss], when the person giving the order is absent from the field of operations and is imperfectly aware or wholly unaware of the latest state of affairs. It follows that any commander in chief [manager] who undertakes to carry out a plan which he considers defective is at fault; he must put forward his reasons, insist on the plan being changed, and finally tender his resignation rather than be the instrument of his army's [organization's] downfall. - Napoleon"

5- "As for the best leaders, the people do not notice their existence. The next best, the people honor and praise. The next, the people fear; and the next the people hate...When the best leader's work is done the people say "We did it ourselves!" - Lao-tzu".

6- "Get to know your people. What they do well, what they enjoy doing, what their weaknesses and strengths are, and what they want and need to get from their job. And then try to create an organization around your people, not jam your people into those organization-chart rectangles. The only excuse for organization is to maximize the chance that each one, working with others, will get for growth in his job, You can't motivate people. That door is locked from the inside. You can create a climate in which most of your people will motivate themselves to help the company reach its objectives. Like it or not, the only practical act is to adopt Theory Y assumptions and get going."

7- "Most managements complain about the lack of able people and go outside to fill key positions. Nonsense."

Nobody inside an organization ever looked ready to move into a bigger job. I use the rule of 50 per cent. Try to find somebody inside the company with a record of success (in any area_ and with an appetite for the job. If he looks like 50 per cent of what you need, give him the job. In six months he'll have grown the other 50 per cent and everybody will be satisfied."

8- "Reorganizing - Should be undergone about as often as major surgery. And should be as well planned and as swiftly executed. "I was to learn later in life that we tend to meet any new situation by reorganizing; and a wonderful method it can be for creating the illusion of progress while producing confusion, inefficiency, and demoralization. - Petronius Arbiter.""

9- "Leadership Characteristic - available, inclusive, humorous, fair, decisive, humble, objective, tough, effective, patient."

Edmond Dantes says

Timeless è la definizione Migliore. Townsend avrebbe avuto molto da dire su Mai & Social in Azienda. Da leggere e meditare ancora oggi dopo più di 40 anni. A dispetto dei Soloni l'autore era un fervido sostenitore del M;ateriale umano e che si o e che si potessero raggiungere ottimi risultati con quello che aveva a disposizione - Vedi Storia AVIS

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Avis_Re...

James says

The section on computers and their priests is still relevant today and I'm sorry that Townsend was unable to become the curator of the Harvard MBA school museum of horrors after a richly deserved closure.

Also time for a reread.

Chris says

This book is an insightful and hilarious account of how to run a business. It's an old classic, published in 1970 by the then recently retired CEO of Avis Rent-a-car. He's nontraditional, iconoclastic, and thoughtful about organizational principles and business in general.

Buyer beware; given that's its written in 1970 it is palpably and utterly sexist in language; some jobs are for "men" and others are for "girls" and I'm sure you can guess which are which. It's more the artifact of the times than him; his approach is remarkably egalitarian; he has an entire chapter about how stupid racism is, for example.

He takes special aim at excessive executive pay and unfairness; sadly since this book was published the real value of an average Fortune 500 CEO's pay has increased tenfold, while that of the average worker has not increased much at all.

But it's a very quick and engaging read; I wish I worked for this guy.

Renee says

Did I miss something... after reading this book feels like I am ready to learn how to start a board of directors! I truly think this book is for struggling corporations not small businesses trying to become a corporation. The flow of the text was a little disorganized but maybe because I have the original copy.

Vivek says

Get to the point and get it over with kind of book. Something that you keep stashed at your office draw to refer to when needed. Makes it equally rewarding to read whether you are an entrepreneur, manager/lead in a small/medium/large business or an employee learning his/her way through the corporate ladder. The book is organized into topics that are organized alphabetically. so your contents is the index. Or just open to a random page and you shall find a nugget of gold.

Anthony says

This book is clearly dated but most of the big topics are still applicable. It's brief, to the point, and brutally honest.

TarasProkopyuk says

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Romans Karpelcevs says

Short, old, and somewhat good.

The book itself is a collection of thoughts on particular topics, listed alphabetically. There is no structure, and some ideas are obvious in 2017, some are food for thought and some are extremely limited in application. Book is mostly targeted at executives working at large companies. So many suggestions are about what kind of departments you should fire, or what kind of secretaries hire.

My main problem is that Townsend doesn't offer the reader a set of important management principles, but instead gives "hands-on" and very concrete advices, half of which would only make sense for him, or for a particular industry, or time, or company size, or even operation country.

It wasn't particular valuable to me, and there are much better and thorough or fundamental management books out there now. What was groundbreaking 30 years ago is just one of the many great ways now.

David says

First came across this paperback shortly after it was published in 1970, so my edition is not the same as the one shown here.

What's interesting is how much of Townsend's advice still resonates after 40+ years. You'd think that a section like COMPUTERS AND THEIR PRIESTS would be out of the ark by now. I worked in IT for a long time, and find there's still a lot to like in Townsend's brief, brutal analysis.

This book had a huge impact on my working life. One of the best ever!

FiveBooks says

Author Steve Lance has chosen to discuss Robert Townsend's *Up The Organization* , on FiveBooks (<http://five-books.com>) on his list of five books that explain the future of Advertising, saying that:

“At the beginning of my career *Up the Organization* was hugely influential to me because it told me that you could be part of an organization and still be a maverick within the organization. What Robert Townsend preached was how to break the rules and still fit in.”.

The full interview is available here: <http://thebrowser.com/books/interviews/steve-lance>

Sigerson says

Townsend was an effective leader. He made Avis into a profitable and effective organization, when it had previously been losing money and was inferior to #1 rival Hertz.

His take on the role and responsibilities of the CEO is sorely needed today. The current crop of CEO's is largely lacking in both his humility, savvy, and effectiveness, while being grossly overpaid.

Given a choice between Townsend and his management philosophy and style, and that of many of today's "celebrity CEOs", I'd go with Townsend.

He got the job done.

As for the book, it is a breath of fresh air, largely applicable today. It should be required reading for all MBA students, and undergraduate business majors [as if they would be receptive to his message].

Michel says

Excellent book. Was given this in 1974 and have just found it in my library and reread it. It is just as pertinent today as it was 42 years ago.

The page that really sticks out is Page 135 entitled "Policy Manuals".

This really brings into perspective all the BS now required by companies who want to see your Quality Manuals, Quality Policies and the rest of the irrelevant rubbish that makes zero difference to the final product.

This book is well worth a reread by the modern managers and students to understand what NOT to do be successful.

Page 66 about Harvard Business School is also worth a read. This alone could save your company millions.

Michael Brown says

The only book about business that you'll ever need to read. Over 40 years old now, but it still cuts though all the BS of the modern corporate world.

Holly says

Hilarious, short, relevant and dated at the same time.
