

Books

The New American Workplace: Transforming Work Systems in the United States

by Eileen Appelbaum and
Rosemary Batt.



In *The New American Workplace*, Eileen Appelbaum and Rosemary Batt explore the path U.S. companies are taking to transform their mass-production systems to high-performance work systems. Their

conclusions indicate that the road will continue to be bumpy unless we establish public policies to support such transformations.

One of the fundamental questions directing the authors' research is whether U.S. companies are modifying their current systems simply to preserve them, or whether the companies are making fundamental changes to radically restructure their systems. The answer is both—or neither—depending on how you interpret the study results.

The authors present case studies and research that indicate that most U.S. organizations are experimenting with two distinct models of high-performance work systems—American versions of lean production and team production. Both systems appear to be hybrids of systems being implemented successfully in such countries as Sweden, Japan, Germany, and Italy, and the authors admit that there is considerable overlap between the two. But there are significant differences in the extent to which each system mobilizes the workforce and the degree to which each emphasizes the strategic values of human resource and industrial-relations practices.

The authors examine these differences and their effects on successful

work restructuring. They also discuss other institutional barriers that can impede a successful transformation. Their conclusions form the basis for their recommendations on how to support high-performance work systems.

“The American business landscape is populated by many firms that continue to pursue the low-wage path, many others that are struggling to adopt piecemeal reforms without the institutional supports they need, and a small number of best-practices firms that have transformed their production systems.

“To move beyond the current landscape and diffuse high-performance work systems more broadly requires an interrelated set of public policies that address the issues that firms and workers cannot tackle. These include policies to improve training institutions, enhance employee participation, increase the commitment of firms to their stakeholders, support interfirm collaboration, and rule out the low-wage path.”

Eileen Appelbaum is the associate research director of the Economic Policy Institute in Washington, D.C. Rosemary Batt is a doctoral candidate in labor relations and human resource policy in the Sloan School at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

The New American Workplace: Transforming Work Systems in the United States, by Eileen Appelbaum and Rosemary Batt. 287 pp. Ithaca, NY: ILR Press, 800/666-2211; \$45 (hardcover), \$18.95 (paperback).

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HeroZ: Empower Yourself, Your Co-Workers, Your Company

by William C. Byham and Jeff Cox.

They're baaaack! William Byham and Jeff Cox are telling tales again. This time the authors show what employees can do to make their jobs more

This month's books address empowerment, partnerships that boost the competitiveness of rural areas, organizational transformation, and multimedia presentations.

B O O K B I T E S

Is Gender Hysteria Taking Hold?

Each month, "BookBites" features a popular business book, along with a question for readers to answer in 50 words or fewer. We will publish as many of the responses as possible in future "Books" columns. We may edit for space.

This month's book is *Disclosure*, by Michael Crichton, (Knopf, 400 pp. \$24/U.S., \$29.95/Canada). Crichton captivates readers with all the sordid details of a misdirected sexual-harassment case that pits a female boss against her male subordinate in an all-out, dirty fight to save his career and reputation.

Though the story is fictitious, the author implies that given the opportunity, women in positions of power are as likely to sexually harass an employee as are their male counterparts. Is this assumption

true? If so, how does it change the workplace?

Please fax your response to Theresa Minton-Eversole at 703/683-9203. Or mail it to "BookBites," *Training & Development*, ASTD, 1640 King Street, Box 1443, Alexandria, VA 22313-2043. Please include your name and address, so we can contact you if necessary before publishing your response.

From the Bestselling Author of ZAPP! THE LIGHTNING OF EMPOWERMENT



**EMPOWER YOURSELF,
YOUR COWORKERS,
YOUR COMPANY**

**William C. Byham, Ph.D.
and Jeff Cox**

fulfilling and make lasting improvements in the world in which they live.

Their newest book, *HeroZ*, features everyday employees who take control of their jobs and relentlessly improve the way they work so that in the end everybody wins.

Throughout the story these employees empower themselves and show what must be done to spread empowerment to their co-workers and their bosses.

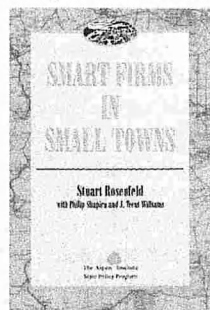
How do they do it? I won't go into the details; it would spoil the plot of this fable. But the authors say that the story "will inspire people at all levels of a business organization to envision themselves as heroic knights charged with the glorious duty of slaying the dragons that block the way to a prosperous future."

William Byham is president and CEO of Development Dimensions International and is based in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Jeff Cox is a coauthor of such popular business books as *The Quadrant Solution* and *The Goal* and is based in Murrysville, Pennsylvania.

HeroZ: Empower Yourself, Your Co-Workers, Your Company, by William C. Byham and Jeff Cox. 203 pp. New York, NY: Harmony Books. This book can be purchased through ASTD Press, 703/683-8100. Order code: BYHE. \$16 for ASTD members, \$18 for nonmembers.

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Smart Firms in Small Towns
by Stuart Rosenfeld, Philip Shapiro,
and J. Trent Williams.



The influence of small and medium-sized enterprises on the United States' industrial competitiveness and on the economic competitiveness of the country's rural areas make up

the subject matter of the new book *Smart Firms in Small Towns*, by

R E A D E R S ' R E S P O N S E S

Rappin' About Reading

Readers respond to what IBM's next step should be, as well as to the question of ethics.

Q: *Given IBM's organizational climate, structure, and level of employee morale, what do you think IBM's chair and chief executive, Louis Gerstner, Jr., should do first to put the company back on track?*

A: "Gerstner has already taken the first steps he needed to do to gain financial stability. To change the culture, the people needs must be addressed. First, Gerstner will have to be very visible, touchable, and accessible to help eliminate the fear.

"Next, throw out the bureaucracy and solicit creativity. Once a level of trust and confidence has been established, then a real cultural assessment can be done. From that assessment, real decisions on cultural change can be

made, and a three- to five-year 'people plan' can be put into place."

— Ann Maddox

*Kaizen Performance Group
Memphis, Tennessee*

Q: *What kind of ethics code, if any, do you think companies should establish for their employees? And how could such standards be enforced?*

A: "Have you asked the right question? Ethics are represented by behaviors, not codes. I wonder if the question should be, 'How far should a company go in supporting the discovery of personal principles in its employees, and how might the company incorporate these principles into management of the company?'"

— W.G. Suter, Jr.

*Quality Management Resources
George Washington University
Washington, D.C.*

Ordering Information

For more information on any book listed in this column, circle the corresponding number on the reader service card and drop the card in the mail.

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Stuart Rosenfeld, Philip Shapiro, and Trent Williams.

According to authors Rosenfeld, Shapiro, and Williams, recent market trends and economic patterns are adding to the advantages that smaller, more flexible manufacturing firms have traditionally had over larger firms.

But many small organizations are notoriously slow to invest in new technologies and to adopt best practices. In part, that delay is due to a lack of funds and state policy that supports economic development.

Smart Firms in Small Towns examines some of the best practices and state-government modernization programs that support economic development and defines the elements that make these programs so effective.

According to the authors, the most successful modernization programs incorporate one or more of seven strategies that provide some mix of the following elements:

- ▶ collective action
- ▶ one-on-one assistance
- ▶ general support services
- ▶ information systems
- ▶ infrastructure to achieve the defined goals.

Among the states presented as having the "best" or "most promising" practices are Kentucky, Texas, Pennsylvania, Minnesota, Georgia, and Indiana. The authors also outline a process for setting up similar programs elsewhere.

"No program succeeds without strong, even evangelistic, leadership.

Building an inventory of the state's capabilities and making sure that existing resource providers are involved and coordinated are important parts of the process.

"The public sector may achieve its greatest value as catalyst for change and be most effective by providing incentives for preferred and innovative behavior. Its programs, however, must be at a scale that can make a difference. To achieve scale, modernization must be debated and discussed as an economic-development policy, not a technology policy."

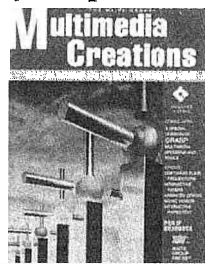
Stuart Rosenfeld is president of the nonprofit organization Regional Technology Strategies, in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Philip Shapiro is an assistant professor in the School of Public Policy at the Georgia Institute of Technology. Trent Williams is vice-president of the nonprofit corporation the Louisiana Partnership.

Smart Firms in Small Towns, by Stuart Rosenfeld, Philip Shapiro, and J. Trent Williams. 93 pp. Washington, DC: Aspen Institute, 410/820-5326; \$5 (single copy), \$3 (for each additional copy).

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Multimedia Creations: Hands-on Workshop for Exploring Animation and Sound

by Philip Shaddock.



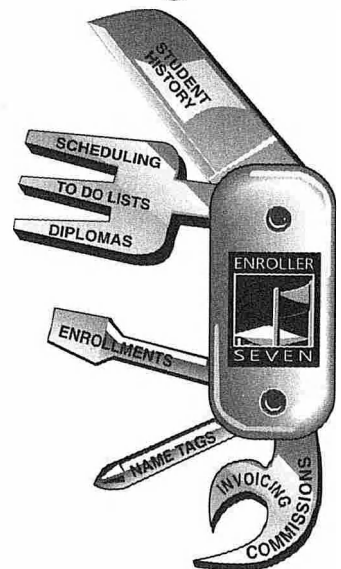
Philip Shaddock's book *Multimedia Creations* is a multimedia creation in itself, featuring a fully integrated text-and-software tutorial for creating interactive animation and sound presentations.

Shaddock presents an overview of what multimedia is, as well as the steps involved in developing a multimedia production. He then explains the capabilities of the accompanying software package, Grasp, and describes the hardware that is needed to use the package.

At this point, Shaddock challenges his readers to begin working through the series of programming exercises, which teach, among other things:

- ▶ how to build a software "slide

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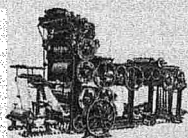
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Books

projector" that arranges images in sequence and plays back digital or synthesized sound

- ▶ how to create a software magazine and an animated demo
- ▶ how to synchronize sight and sound
- ▶ how to create a music video.

At the end of the book, Shaddock includes the plans for a product-knowledge computer game and for a complete menuing system that readers can shape into an interactive information system.

"What multimedia describes is the marriage of television, digital sound, and the desktop computer. Multimedia software lets us rein in all this horsepower and make it pull in one direction.

"By the end of *Multimedia Creations*, you'll have learned multimedia programming the way a moonshiner learns driving—very fast, with a total disregard for the speed

limits and obstacles imposed by the PC's architecture."

Philip Shaddock's consulting firm, Philip Shaddock Associates, helps clients design and produce multimedia communications. Reach him on CompuServe at 70274,2146.

Multimedia Creations: Hands-on Workshop for Exploring Animation and Sound, by Philip Shaddock. 430 pp. Corte Madera, CA: Waite Group Press, 800/944-0191; \$44.95 (U.S.), \$56.95 (Canada).

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"Books" is compiled and written by Theresa Minton-Eversole. Send books for consideration to Books Editor, Training & Development, 1640 King Street, Box 1443, Alexandria, VA 22313-2043.

Additional Reading

Technotrends: How To Use Technology To Go Beyond Your Competition, by Daniel Burrus and Roger Gittines. 376 pp. New York, NY: HarperBusiness, 212/207-7581, \$25.

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The Soul of the Enterprise: Creating a Dynamic Vision for American Manufacturing, by Robert Hall. 382 pp. New York, NY: HarperBusiness, 212/207-7581, \$27.50 (U.S.), \$37.95 (Canada).

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Paradigms: The Business of Discovering the Future, by Joel Arthur Barker. 240 pp. New York, NY: HarperBusiness, 212/207-7581; \$12 (U.S.), \$16 (Canada).

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The ISO 9000 Book: A Global Competitor's Guide to Compliance and Certification, by John T. Rabbitt and Peter A. Bergh. 166 pp. New York, NY: AMACOM, 212/586-8100, \$26.95.

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A Company of One: The Power of Independence in the Workplace, by Tom Payne. 118 pp. Albuquerque, NM: Lodestar, 800/447-9254, \$12.95.

Circle 253 on reader service card.

Gay Issues in the Workplace, by Brian McNaught. 151 pp. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 212/777-6359, \$17.95.

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Staying in Demand: How To Make Job Offers Come to You, by C.D. Peterson. 183 pp. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 212/337-6013, \$12.95.

Circle 255 on reader service card.

Fair, Square, and Legal: Safe Hiring, Managing, and Firing Practices To Keep You and Your Company Out of Court, by Donald H. Weiss. 316 pp. New York, NY: AMACOM, 212/586-8100, \$16.95.

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Speaker's Sourcebook 2: Quotes, Stories, and Anecdotes for Every Occasion, by Glenn Van Ekeren. 419 pp. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 800/288-4745, \$14.95.

Circle 257 on reader service card.

The Adult Learner's Guide to Alternative and External Degree Programs, by Eugene Sullivan. 227 pp. Phoenix, AZ: Oryx Press, 800/279-6799, \$39.95.

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