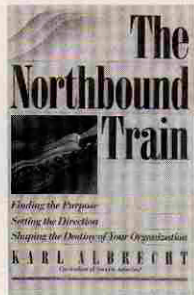


# Books

## **The Northbound Train: Finding the Purpose, Setting the Direction, Shaping the Destiny of Your Organization**

by Karl Albrecht.



“You must have a vision for your success and a direction for getting there. You have to know what train you’re going to ride.”

Karl Albrecht says too many organizations chug

along through the present with little sense of when or how they will arrive at the future. That’s fine if you’re a passenger on the Chattanooga Choo-Choo. But if companies plan to stay on top in today’s highly charged business environment and not get derailed by their competitors in the future, they need to board *The Northbound Train*.

Albrecht uses the metaphor of the northbound train to describe the kind of intense focus and commitment that companies need in order to develop true customer-focused, service leadership. The image of a moving train conveys a strong sense of momentum and an unstoppable, unwavering commitment to a chosen direction. Similarly, companies must focus on the direction that they need to take to succeed, and then define the route that they will travel toward that goal. The vision, the author says, must always be based on an understanding of what will create value for the customer.

Unfortunately, U.S. companies are notoriously bad at introspection, says Albrecht. So he has written this book to provide a step-by-step guide to soul-searching, strategy setting, and customer wooing.

In the first three chapters, Albrecht offers his view of why some of the “big guys” have nose-dived, why leadership is more important now than ever, and why the “service triangle” he introduced in his book *Service America* is still important.

Starting with chapter 4, readers can start defining their organization’s purpose and direction by following the strategic success model that the author describes. The model consists of five levels that move organizations from the most abstract level of meaning and direction to the level of defining a few critical, short-term goals. The levels include developing a vision, a mission, and core values, as well as creating a “planning hierarchy” and a unified concept for creating customer value.

Albrecht also presents a strategy-formulation process that organizations can use to define specific objectives that an organization must accomplish in order to carry out and communicate its vision, mission, and goals. The formula that the author explains addresses

- ◆ environmental scanning
- ◆ organizational scanning
- ◆ opportunity scanning
- ◆ model building
- ◆ gap analysis
- ◆ action planning
- ◆ strategy deployment.

Throughout the book, Albrecht provides insights into the effectiveness and ineffectiveness of real-world examples of the model and the strategy-formulation process.

“The existence (or lack) of a clear focus for success—the northbound train—sets the context for just about everything else that happens in and to an organization. Without it, leadership becomes a day-by-day struggle against seemingly isolated issues. People in such organizations merely

*This month’s books describe how to communicate a vision and goals effectively to employees and customers, in order to stay on track now and in the future.*

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work for a living, not for a higher purpose. Customer value becomes the hit-or-miss outcome of routine work activities, not a source of pride, creativity, and personal commitment."

Karl Albrecht is chair of the TQS Group, a management consulting firm based in Chicago, Illinois.

*The Northbound Train: Finding the Purpose, Setting the Direction, Shaping the Destiny of Your Organization*, by Karl Albrecht. 213 pp. New York, NY: AMACOM, 800/262-9699, \$22.95.

Circle 245 on reader service card.

**Customers as Partners: Building Relationships That Last**

by Chip R. Bell



In his latest book, *Customers as Partners*, Chip R. Bell shares his philosophy on the importance of creating and sustaining partnerships, both with customers and employees.

Bell begins by describing six attributes that are essential to successful partnerships: abundance, trust, dreams, truth, balance, and grace.

"I have elected to phrase the six qualities in somewhat antique words. For instance, instead of describing 'reliability' or 'assurance,' I chose 'trust.' 'Dreams' has implications that words like 'mission' or 'purpose' do not. The goal is not to be semantically pure in the choice of labels, but to

be instructive and insightful in the word pictures the labels evoke."

The author defines the essence of each of these attributes in subsequent chapters and describes how companies can develop these to form long-lasting customer relationships that are not just value-added, but value-based.

Bell writes in a traditional, down-home, common-sense style that's easy to read and useful to anyone in search of quotable quotes. But more importantly, it epitomizes the familiarity and "feel-good" atmosphere that he says strengthen the personal bonds that are established in true partnerships.

In fact, readers may gain as much insight into what the author is trying to convey from his poetry (featured throughout the book) as they do from the text. For example, here are a few stanzas from Bell's piece about honesty in customer relationships:

*I am truth; I'm here to serve  
relationships, for they deserve  
the special gifts that I convey;  
I change them to the partner way....*

*For friendships I'm the color blue  
I stand for steadfast, constant, true.  
Partnerships require the same,  
a faith that says, "We will remain...."*

*If partnership's your foremost aim,  
remember truth can help you gain.  
Your customers will loyal be,  
and thank you for including me.*

"This book is not about forming strategic alliances or crafting a partnership in the legal sense of the word. It is about developing a kinship that nurtures commitment and cultivates loyalty.

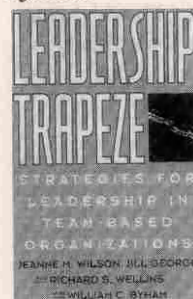
"It is always helpful to remember that long before contracts, price negotiation, and the sound of a cash register, there were people seeking people to respond to a need. Too often, customer disdain or indifference is born not from the logical aspect of the association but from the psychological dimension of the relationship. The human side of service is the substance of this book."

Chip Bell is a manager for Performance Research Associates in Dallas, Texas.

*Customers as Partners: Building Relationships That Last*, by Chip R. Bell. 237 pp. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler, 415/288-0260, \$24.95.  
Circle 246 on reader service card.

**Leadership Trapeze: Strategies for Leadership in Team-Based Organizations**

by Jeanne M. Wilson, Jill George, Richard S. Wellins, and William C. Byham.



According to the authors of *Leadership Trapeze*, many of today's managers feel a little like novice trapeze artists asked to leap from the comfort and safety of one platform (traditional culture) to reach

another (teams). The authors say this causes great anxiety for managers, because the managers don't know what to do and their companies don't know how to help them.

The key to making a successful transition to a team-based structure is knowing when to let go of old leadership practices and when to adopt new ones, they say. Their book explains how managers and executives responsible for facilitating the transition can learn when it's time to let go.

"This book is written for those individuals who have played by the rules faithfully for years, only to find that the rules have changed. [It] isn't about the vanishing leadership role in team-based organizations, because we believe that the demands on leaders increase—not decrease—with the introduction of teams. Rather our intention is to give leaders and their organizations all the tools they need to become less fearful and frustrated and more satisfied and successful in this very important transition."

In part 1, the authors explore the most common myths about leading teams and show how organizations use teams to drive necessary change. Through case studies, the authors describe five leaders' personal transformations. They present their model for the new leadership role, which includes behaviors required for success.

Part 2 is prescriptive. It outlines exactly what the authors say leaders

and their organizations need to do to work through three phases of team implementation—pre-team, new team, and mature team—and offers sound advice on how to support leaders through each phase. The authors also share such interactive tools as training plans, self-assessment checklists, and discussion guides that can help teams identify strengths, target problem areas, evaluate progress, and hone team and leadership skills.

The authors conclude the book by presenting their insights into the next generation of teams.

“The most effective players in the virtual organization of tomorrow will be those people with the broadest technical knowledge who have learned to make things happen by involving others. If you not only are good at these things but enjoy them as well, you’ll be a valued contributor, regardless of how the organization’s structure might change.”

Jeanne Wilson, Jill George, Richard Wellins, and William Byham all work for Development Dimensions International. Wilson and George are consultants, Wellins is senior vice-president of programs and marketing, and Byham is cofounder and president of the company.

*Leadership Trapeze: Strategies for Leadership in Team-Based Organizations*, by Jeanne M. Wilson, Jill George, Richard S. Wellins, and William C. Byham. 286 pp. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 415/433-1767, \$25.

**Circle 247 on reader service card.**

### **The Consultant’s Craft: Improving Organizational Communication**

by Sue DeWine



Sue DeWine has put together one of the most thoroughly researched textbooks available about organizational communication.

Packed full of information, *The Consultant’s Craft* provides a detailed, practical explanation of how communications managers or consultants can solve a variety of communications problems that severely inhibit overall organizational effectiveness.

The book is divided into six parts.

### **Additional Reading**

*Who We Could Be at Work*, by Margaret A. Lulic. 261 pp. Minneapolis, MN: Blue Edge Publishing, 612/944-9529, \$19.95.

**Circle 249 on reader service card.**

*Lessons From the Art of Juggling: How To Achieve Your Full Potential in Business, Learning, and Life*, by Michael J. Gelb and Tony Buzan. 224 pp. New York, NY: Harmony Books, 212/572-2537, \$19.

**Circle 250 on reader service card.**

*Training With NLP: Skills for Managers, Trainers, and Communicators*, by Joseph O Connor and John Seymour. 290 pp. San Francisco, CA: Thorsons, 415/477-4400; \$16 (U.S.), \$18.95 (Canada).

**Circle 251 on reader service card.**

*The Tao of Teams: A Guide to Team Success*, by Crecensio Torres. 179 pp. San Diego, CA: Pfeiffer & Company, 800/274-4434, \$24.95.

**Circle 252 on reader service card.**

Part 1 provides an overview of the roles and responsibilities of communications managers and specialists, as well as the skills that are necessary for applying the principles of organizational communication. Here she defines the differences between internal and external communications consultants and explains the differences between training, consulting, and other “helping” professions.

In the next two sections, the author discusses specific data-collection and analysis techniques for identifying organizational communications problems, as well as consulting techniques for helping people become more aware of communications problems and solutions.

In part 4, the author identifies ways that managers can correct communications problems. Some of the topics she addresses here include

- ▶ techniques for enhancing listening abilities
- ▶ strategies for improving meetings and presentations
- ▶ team-building strategies
- ▶ techniques for providing non-threatening feedback.

DeWine also discusses ways to deal with difficult people and ways to handle problems encountered during an organizational change process.

The author describes how to evaluate a communications program in part 5. And in part 6, she discusses ways consultants and communications managers can develop their skills throughout their careers. She concludes the book with a case study of an actual communications intervention.

The relevance of work such as DeWine’s is eloquently stated in the book’s foreword, which was written by Professor W. Charles Redding of Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana.

“To say that we live in an organizational world has become a truism. Thus, when any of the innumerable organizations touching our lives fails to function properly, we can expect to experience a variety of pains, both managerial and emotional, until the necessary improvements are made.

“Regardless of which particular organizational theory (if any) we happen to entertain, we must acknowledge one axiom: In every instance of organizational malaise that comes to mind, at some time in some way, human communication behavior has been significantly involved. Indeed, there are those scholars who have persuasively made the case that a communication failure is at least one of the basic sources underlying every organizational failure.”

Sue DeWine has added fuel to the debate.

*The Consultant’s Craft: Improving Organizational Communication*, by Sue DeWine. 396 pp. New York, NY: St. Martin’s Press. This book can be purchased through ASTD Press, 703/683-8100. Order code: DECC. Priority code: FHM. \$28 for ASTD members, \$30 nonmembers.

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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.**