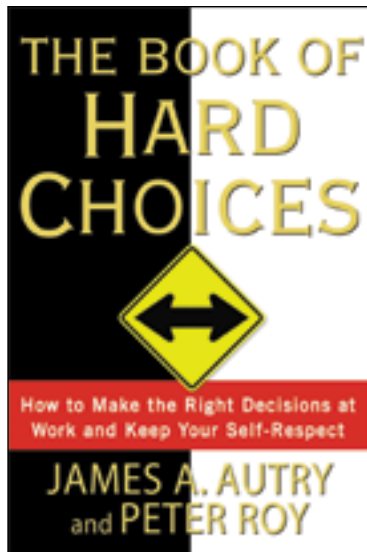


# GREAT SOURCE FOR HARD CHOICES



Workplace decision makers have been conditioned to believe that every problem has a solution. When faced with a challenge, it's their job to first analyze the situation, and then find the correct way to address it, right?

**W**rong, say James A. Autry and Peter Roy, authors of the insightful, conversational book, *The Book of Hard Choices*. Business problems usually yield several answers: some more right, some less right, none of them obvious. And finding the best answers for difficult dilemmas doesn't start with knowing the situation's details; it begins by knowing yourself. "Hard choices aren't about doing, they're about being," the authors write.

Instead of structuring the book the way most business advice guides are written—first-person tomes replete with personal reflection—Autry and Roy keen-

## The Book of Hard Choices: How to Make the Right Decisions at Work and Keep Your Self-Respect

By James A. Autry and Peter Roy  
Reviewed by Darin Painter



ly show, rather than tell, how business leaders make tough decisions. Experienced executives themselves (Autry was president of the magazine group of the Meredith Corporation, and Roy is a former president of Whole Foods Market), they interviewed 23 leaders (including former Starbucks president Howard Behar, Governor Tom Vilsack of Iowa, and small business entrepreneurs) about hard choices they've made on the job. Those choices are presented in the book's 23 chapters.

Anyone who glances at the titles of the chapters—such as "Say No to Your Customer or Give Up on Fairness?" and "Go for the Quick Fix or Teach Values First?"—might incorrectly assume Autry and Roy view decision making as black and white. But the book's golden nugget is the attention it gives to shades of gray, which invariably cloud circumstances. The lines between right and wrong become blurred when we must weigh our obligations to our employers against our own ideas about what is right and wrong. Those blurred lines provide intrigue in the book: Should altruism trump profit, even to the detriment of the organization? When should you step in to protect an employee and when should the employee be left to take the heat? If the CEO is up to some unethical accounting, should you always risk your job—and the company's reputation—to sound the alarm?

Such dilemmas put integrity to the test, requiring decision makers to look beyond organizational policy and industry precedents to find an answer that reflects their personal sense of justice. The authors dig into the thinking process, detailing in plain words what the leaders went through, including their emotional strain, self-doubt, and fear of

a wrong decision's effect on their organizations. Refreshingly, not everyone profiled in the book made the right choice, but all of them were forced to examine their values and make decisions in complicated circumstances. The result is hard-won wisdom.

Integrity, like love or morality, is a word that rolls easily off the tongue. But it doesn't mean a thing until it becomes behavior. As Autry and Roy note, "Deciding to do the right thing is not about making decision trees, diagramming the pros and cons in descending order of importance, or consulting case histories in a textbook, but instead is about looking inside your own best self to determine what to do."

Each chapter is infused with drama partly because each leader is completely on her own to make the best choice possible. You can't help but root for them—and feel for them—as they face authority figures, angry customers, threats to their careers, and in two cases even to their own lives. They balance conflicting interests by remaining centered on the things that matter most: their passion for good work and good results, their dedication to fair and equitable treatment for people who depend on them, and their abiding belief that acting with integrity is the surest way to succeed.

The stories themselves are more important than the bullet point "Lessons to Remember" at the end of each chapter. Soon after one leader went to work for a large planned community developer, he realized the firm was in cahoots with local politicians. Reading about his thought process before deciding to bring down the most powerful politician in the county is more powerful than read-

ing this bullet point: "Have the courage to condemn corruption for what it is."

Many of the best stories in *The Book of Hard Choices* deal with the value difference between short-term satisfactions and long-term gains. The book's most savvy sources avoid slippery slopes that lead to unintended consequences. One of them, a magazine publisher intent on maintaining credibility, refuses a livid advertiser's demands to write a favorable story about his company after the publication wrote one about a competitor. He could have avoided the crisis (and assured future employment of his staff) by appeasing the advertiser, but determined he never would be able to create a dominant publication that would make him or his staff proud. It's exciting and insightful to read how the publisher navigates the storm.

One shortcoming is that too many of the book's chapters discuss matters weightier than most decision makers face. Sure, it's fun to read about how leaders confront financial manipulation (chapters 4 and 13) or face death threats (chapter 10), but the most gripping chapters are the least applicable to most readers. Huge storms are fine, but the book doesn't include enough ethical dilemmas resulting from watercooler conversations. *The Book of Hard Choices* also concentrates solely on managers instead of including tough choices faced by the rank and file.

Still, Autry and Roy present a powerful collection of real-life stories that can serve as a guidebook to help readers navigate future ethical dilemmas. The chapters are dramatic, personal, and surprising, and each one implicitly challenges readers to ask, "What would I have done?" The book is a jolt of perspective, deserving three and a half cups of caffeinated coffee.

**The Book of Hard Choices: How to Make the Right Decisions at Work and Keep Your Self-Respect** by James A. Autry and Peter Roy.

Morgan Road Books: 252 pp. \$23.95.

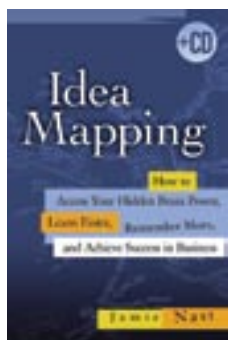
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# EBB AND FLOW

**T+D editors examine recent releases that put new spins on old ideas**



**Idea Mapping: How to Access Your Hidden Power, Learn Faster, Remember More, and Achieve Success in Business**

By Jamie Nast

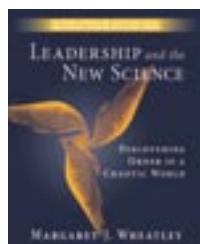
(Wiley, September 2006, \$24.95)

As a tangential argument for experiential learning, *Idea Mapping* is all about thinking outside the box, or in this case outside the document.

Nast claims that her process for logging thoughts helps users be more creative, learn faster, and remember more. That's because she says that the process mirrors how our brains naturally and freely associate information. And even more important to the busy professional, Nast says that readers can improve productivity and save time by creating these colorful, visual pictures.

The first five chapters define idea mapping, show the readers how to generate ideas, and walk them through the steps of creating idea maps, and the sixth and seventh chapters introduce application. The final chapters address team usage, individual examples, and mastering techniques.

The author also uses trademarked product names in her writing, (the book includes a free trial download of MindJet software on CD), which comes across as being a bit promotional.



**Leadership and the New Science: Discovering Order in a Chaotic World**

By Margaret J. Wheatley

(Berrett-Koehler, September 2006, \$19.95; third edition)

This classic bestseller has been adopted as required reading by businesses, not-for-profits, government agencies, and the United States military. It describes how recent discoveries in the new sciences—biology, quantum physics, and chaos theory—radically alter our understanding of the world.

The third edition of this book includes a new chapter, "The Real World," which illustrates how new science concepts are evident in the daily news. Wheatley compares terrorist networks to global networked organizations and illustrates how through disaster-relief efforts we can learn about bringing order to chaos. In simple terms, there is an urgent need to learn from the new sciences so we can successfully deal with the turbulence and upheaval that happens in organizations.

"Why do so many organizations feel lifeless? Why do projects take so long and develop ever-greater complexity, yet too often fail to achieve any truly significant results? Why does progress so often come from unexpected places, or as a result of surprises and synchronistic events that planning had not considered?" Wheatley asks in the first paragraph of her book.

She answers those questions and many more in this updated version.



**Taking Advice: How Leaders Get Good Counsel and Use It Wisely**

By Dan Ciampa

(Harvard Business School Press, September 2006, \$26.95)

Stubbornness is not a genetic trait inherited by all managers, yet many employees may wonder why their bosses can be so inflexible. In his book, Ciampa dissects many of the all-too-familiar flaws managers carry with them as they attempt to set an example for their teams.

The book draws the reader in with colorful tales of leaders who obstinately held fast to their own methods and made mistakes, either in leading a business or during their own careers. Although the subjects are anonymous, Ciampa spices up the stories with enough detail to make them lively. As the book illustrates, the most common flaws among managers are excessive self-assurance about the right course and their sense of infallibility regarding any decision.

He concludes the work by providing some essential steps leaders can use to build a network of advisers and develop personality traits that can be learned such as effective listening. He writes that when assembling a group of advisers, it is important for the leader to accept constructive advice and not just conclusions that were predetermined. Humility is also important, notably when soliciting advice from individuals who are outside the circle of personal loyalty.

The only question that remains about this book is whether the people who need to read it the most will do so.