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Adaptability: The Art of Winning In An Age of Uncertainty

Max McKeown

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"In short, deliberate Darwinism!" [Stephen Elop, Nokia CEO](#)

Adaptability

The art of
winning in an age
of uncertainty

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Max McKeown : Adaptability: The Art of Winning In An Age of Uncertainty before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Adaptability: The Art of Winning In An Age of Uncertainty:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A Book Intended for Professional Strategists and Innovators By Richard Platt If the essence of "Good Strategy" vs. "Bad Strategy" is about a diagnosis, and a coherent guiding policy that is followed up by action, then this is the book for you. No one else took to heart and mind what Dr. Rumelt, the one who defined Good vs. Bad strategy, except this author. Max McKeown is in my un-humble opinion the newest (and best) star author in the field of strategy, and he comes w/ a track record of some excellent tome's that help to

establish that foundation. The principles that Max has outlined here have practical application, which might seem like quite a statement to make, unless this was coming from someone who has actually applied the principles in this book in the context that Max has outlined / suggested, and as he intended. You see I am a consultant, but not your typical one in the domain of innovation management, a part of my business is to assert into the marketplace to make things happen, for our clients and ourselves that is after we've made a diagnosis of where the weak points in what the opposition is doing or not doing. We actively act and operate as Innovation Activists / Market Insurgents Challengers when the status quo is choking the innovation in a given market, then we will on our own, or working on behalf of a client, assert into the marketplace and shake things up, and unhinge the players, w/ new business models and new technologies and products that are new to market. To do this effectively an innovation manager like myself, needs tools and guidelines to help direct traffic for me and my teams, I demand that my teams operate from principles, not random personality driven approaches or what any one person thinks is a good idea, I have responsibility and accountability to my teams and my clients to execute and do it right the 1st time. I am expected to hit, when and where I say I can hit, it is what we are paid to do, we don't have the luxury of hiding behind our decisions, we have to adapt to market conditions as they unfold, much like a fighter pilot locked in a dog fight has to. These principles give us additional insight and thoughtful points to stop, consider and ponder next steps /or consequences that could be fatal to a project. An equivalent meaning is to NOT do the stupid move. Max has done his homework, the principles are intended for all kinds of strategists, whether you are an Monday morning arm-chair quarterback, to the IP attorney, to the hungry MA focused executive, to the Innovation Manager trying to figure out how to enable his firm to be adaptive in the marketplace. I am reminded of Colonel John Boyd - OODA Loop fame, and his last remaining acolyte, Chet Richard's and his book "Certain To Win" , if the Colonel and Chet are the architects of the blueprint of the future adaptable organization, then Max's book on "Adaptability: The Art of Winning in an Age of Uncertainty" is the teeth that gives you the reader the principles to help drive your business, your processes and most importantly your people to help guide them on what you expect, and what the organization needs. We all have operated by values in our respective firms, but in my experience principles trump values and beliefs every time, I've seen a lot of people die for what they believe in, their values that they've staunchly defended beliefs, however I see a lot less dead bodies of those who operate from a principled standpoint, particularly the one's focused on winning in business and technology. Read this, read it again, put it on the shelf, and refer to it often.

Richard Platt Managing Partner - The Strategy + Innovation Group (former) Intel Global Innovation Program Manager for Innovation6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Beyond "adapt or die" By Robert Morris "It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent that survives. It is the one that is the most adaptable to change." Charles Darwin

Max McKeown presents his material within a three-part framework that focuses on these strategic objectives: How to recognize the need to adapt? (Chapters 1-6), How to understand necessary adaptation? (Chapters 12-17), and How to adapt as necessary? (Chapters 12-17). As Abraham Maslow suggests with his "Hierarchy of Needs" (usually portrayed in the form of a pyramid), man must first survive before giving thought to security; and only when secure can man consider "self-actualization" (i.e. personal fulfillment). McKeown's primary objective in this book is to help his reader to understand when, how, and why to adapt "faster and smarter than the [given] situation changes." He accepts Darwin's concept of natural selection but asserts, "Adapt or die is not the only choice. In the future, you can try to maintain what you already have, or you can attempt to transcend the constraints of your situation. We're part of a long chain of adaptive moves. Each move has changed the circumstances of our ancestors, until we arrived." How to learn how to adapt? In response to that question, McKeown provides an abundance of information, insights, and counsel. Here are a few of the dozens of passages in his narrative that caught my eye:

- o Why all failure is failure to adapt
- o How to embrace "unacceptable wisdom"
- o Why stability is a "dangerous illusion"
- o Why learning fast is better than failing fast
- o How to think better together
- o Why hierarchy is "fossil fuel"
- o How to "get your ambition on"

McKeown is well-aware of the importance of survival to countless individuals as well as to countless organizations and even countries throughout the world. However, his hope -- one that I share -- is that those who read this book will aspire to accomplishing more, much more than survival. The key, in my opinion, is first developing and then applying a mindset that recognizes the need for adaptation, understands what adaptation requires, and possesses imagination and (yes) courage sufficient to separate thinking repetition -- perpetuating what James O'Toole so aptly characterizes as "the ideology of comfort and the tyranny of custom" -- from adaptive iteration. Change may be inevitable but progress is not. The need to adapt is inevitable but being able to do that effectively is not. I introduced this brief commentary with a statement by Charles Darwin and now conclude it with another: "In the long history of humankind (and animal kind, too) those who learned to collaborate and improvise most effectively have prevailed."

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Strategic explanation of winning by adapting

By Rolf Dobelli Organizational success and failure can be reduced to one thing, or so argues management consultant Max McKeown in his scientific and cultural look at adaptability around the globe and through the ages. If groups can't change and adapt appropriately, they can't succeed. McKeown offers case studies from companies you know, such as Starbucks, providing insight into familiar story lines. Some of his other examples aren't as famous but are just as compelling: He looks at civil war in Liberia, computer game development and Italian bureaucracy to flesh out his 17 rules (which would be just as good without those few swear words) for

adapting and, thus, succeeding. McKeown's rules are eye-catching, but they don't always connect smoothly to the stories or to a plan of action. As such, some of the book works better as a history of adaptability than as a manual for acquiring that skill. Still, an eager reader can tease out techniques and ideas for becoming more adaptable, and McKeown offers warm, inspirational tales that provide general road maps for successful adaptation. getAbstract believes leaders of companies small or large looking to motivate their employees or themselves will find value here.

All success is successful adaptation. All failure is a failure to adapt. Adaptability is about the powerful difference between adapting to cope and adapting to win. Fascinating real-world examples from business, government, and sport, military and wider society bring the rules of adaptability to life. From the world's most innovation corporations to street-level creativity emerging from the slums. From McDonalds to Sony, from post-war Iraq to the revolutions of the Arab Spring, from the bustling markets of Hong Kong to the rubber marked circuit of the Monte Carlo Rally. With insightful rules, Max Mckeown shows you how to increase the adaptability of your organization to create winning positions. Human history is a story of competition to adapt between groups and individuals. It has never been more important to understand how to think better and adapt.