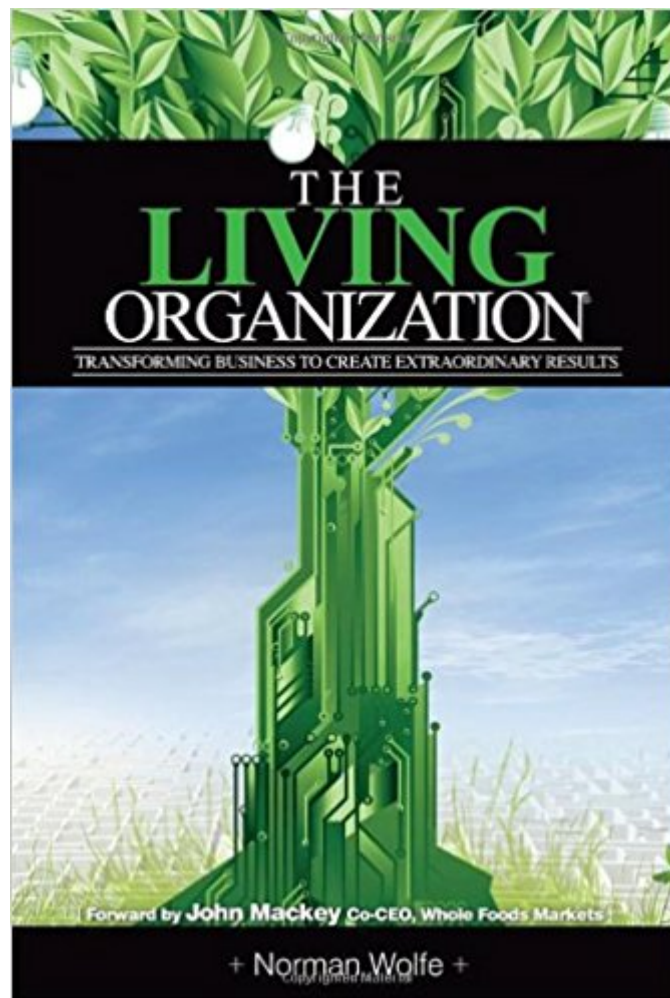




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The Living Organization: Transforming Business To Create Extraordinary Results



Synopsis

The pressure on CEOs and other organization leaders to create results, while balancing an increasing diversity of opposing demands, is reaching oppressive levels. The time-tested economic system is no longer adequate to meet the challenges of a world of evolving complexity. The Living Organization delivers a new model that transforms the best of what worked before and expands it to deliver new life and growth for organizations. First and foremost, The Living Organization deepens our understanding of how any living organization creates the results it desires. Norman Wolfe draws on decades of experience both leading and consulting with organizations, large and small, to unravel the mystery of creating results. Based on scientific, philosophical and spiritual truths, The Living Organization's® model explores how three distinct yet highly interdependent fields of energy influence and determine what results will and will not be created. Beyond just a new theory, Norman Wolfe provides practical tools for aligning and focusing the organization on strategy execution. Building on decades of learning about organization effectiveness and execution management, The Living Organization expands our frameworks for allocating resources and making decisions that will reap the desired results. The guiding principals and theories can direct the largest of corporations or the entrepreneurial startup in getting the results they want. Deeply personal, brimming with compelling stories from real-life challenges, and packed with powerful insights, tools, and practices, this book is a potent resource for aspiring, emerging, and seasoned business leaders alike. Or anyone interested in creating the results they desire.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

An inspiring reframing of how we understand business creates bottom-line result. I couldn't put it down Casey Sheehan, CEO, Patagonia... blazing a trail to a new world...reframing of how business opens us to the possibility of realizing the fullest of our human potential, individually and collectively. Chip Conley, Executive Chairman, Joie de Vivre and author of "Peak: How Great Companies Get Their Mojo from Maslow" The Living Organization is a very different management book. Norman Wolfe explains what no one else has - how spiritual principles are the bedrock of a growing, thriving business... This is a book to be read slowly and assimilated. Srikumar Rao, creator of "Creativity and Personal Mastery" and author of "Happiness at Work."

This is the first major book I have written. While I say I have written it, in truth I have often felt I was merely the instrument that would allow the message of the book to be come alive. Four the 4 plus years I was writing this book, it felt as if I was in the grasp of something bigger than myself. Much of what is in the book was given birth through the writing process itself. I hope you will feel that I have done this message justice. What is clear to me is that our society needs this message. The problems and challenges we are faced with cannot be solved through the lens of the old paradigm. But once we shift our framework, what was once difficult or even impossible will become easy and simple to address.

Norman Wolfe's book, The Living Organization: Transforming Business to Create Extraordinary Results, offers insights, wisdom, and more importantly, a working framework from which leaders and followers can begin to collectively re-conceptualize how (and even why) businesses should function for excellence in a global, organic world. Wolfe argues, in the tradition of Meg Wheatley, that the continued use of machine metaphors, practices, and frameworks for talking about and managing businesses, will lead to a collapse of trust in, and commitment to, business organizations and capitalism itself. Wolfe's "living organization" framework is reminiscent too of the attempt by Philip Selznick, in his book, "Leadership in Administration: A Sociological Interpretation" (1957), to suggest the huge and important difference between an organization as an "instrument or tool", or as an [living] "institution", with a unique personality, and potential for distinctive competencies through time. In, The Living Organization, Wolfe shows how leadership can help build "living institutions" that have a Soulful Purpose, and who meet that

purpose by collectively tapping into the energy, passion, and love that people bring to the organization. Though some would discount the power of the "living organization" metaphor, the work of Patrick Lencioni also suggests that only through organizational health and well being rooted in trust, commitment to a higher purpose and accountability, can a business truly thrive over time. Wolfe's book is easy to read, includes stories and insights from Norman's interesting professional career and his experiences as a leadership consultant, and presents a very useful framework from which to think about true and sustainable improvements in the world of business. This combination of experience-based insight, with a powerful organic-based metaphor for living organizations is part of the reason I chose this book for required reading in a Strategy/Capstone course I've designed for a global MBA program. My experienced and professional students have responded well to the book, and I'd recommend it for both professional and academic settings. Note: the reviewer holds a Ph.D. in Strategic Management, and has 25 years of experience in professional training and MBA/Ph.D. management course development.

This book is about the crucial work of transforming corporations from blindly focusing on profit before people, purpose, health, happiness, the environment, or anything of real importance to focusing on making a contribution and reaping the rewards that naturally follow. This book focuses on how corporations can succeed better and more often by concentrating on higher goals, realities, and forces instead of overly simplistic ROI or profit measures. Profit should be a natural side-effect, not a purpose. The book provides more than happy talk and slogans. The author knows corporations and management systems and applies his extensive knowledge and experience in a convincing manner to show how corporations can become something to be proud of instead something to blame for all the world's problems. If a corporation wants to be regarded as more than a pig or a blight upon society, then here is a path to becoming admired and valued.

There is much discussion in the business world as to what has happened in the economy and how it affects our business models. Most business owners with whom I speak agree that things have permanently changed. What that means to the business is that we need a new model, a new way of thinking about our businesses so that we don't fall into the trap of trying to do the same things over and over, faster and faster and expect different results. Norman Wolfe has provided such a model and while the concept of "living organization" isn't particularly new (Wharton School used the

metaphor years ago) Wolfe has taken the concept much farther and added to it a more complete explanation of the interaction between the Living Organization, the energies created and the manifestation of results. In the spirit of full disclosure, it is important to note that Norman and I spoke frequently during his work on this book, and so I am familiar with his concepts. Wolfe's work starts out "simply" enough as he explains his analogy for viewing corporations and organizations as a "living" organism, such as the human body. He quickly makes it clear that he intends to carry the model further by adding in his in organizational development and strategy execution to the model. His engineering background shines through as he takes an obvious systems view to building the new model. Perhaps the piece with the biggest impact in our thinking will be to wrap our minds around the concept of "context" which Norman adds to the model. This is a critical piece as a pivotal point in this model is to understand how energy flows or is "pinched off" by our processes. The analogy brings many challenging issues in organization development and change management into clear focus. To give us a visual, the author had to build a three dimensional model for how the organization actually works. He marries the usual "Process, People, Customer, Finance" understanding of the business with the "Activity, Relationship, Context" (ARC) vertical dimension. The result of all this hard work is a very robust model for how any organization functions which in turn provides a clear view of how to address the inefficiencies we might be seeing. Another intriguing point is that this model doesn't negate most of the other representations and models to which I've been exposed over the years. Instead, it has filled in the holes and given me a new perspective of those models, why they work and how to effectively extend them. So if you are still trying to figure out what's going on in the business world, and if you still struggle to see how your business model is relevant or what needs to change, then Wolfe's book will definitely put you on the right path to evaluating your present business values and how you can re-think your model to gain extraordinary results for your people and your customers. Wolfe will take you through the process of building this complex model in a step by step fashion. When you get through that complexity (which you easily can with his expert guidance), you will realize the simplicity of the underlying structure. Find the true reason for your organization's existence, what Wolfe calls its "Soulful Purpose," and everything else will, with time and attention, fall into place. Every leader in any organization (profit, not for profit, public, private, large, small) would do well to read this book.

Beyond the basic premise, much of the book is very difficult to understand.

Bravo! This book focuses primarily on a new model for looking at businesses that I believe will make

them much more resilient and much more fulfilling to work for. According to Norman Wolfe of primary consideration, is the need for organizations to look first at the context with which they view their business, then the relationships they form and finally the activities they perform. It is rare that business leaders are willing to step out of the way they have "framed" their business and yet it is a key ingredient for innovation. Business leaders are well advised to read this short book and gain some new insights into how to lead their businesses in the future. A. Brink - Marketing Manager

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