



Open Boundaries: Creating Business Innovation Through Complexity

Howard Sherman, Ron Schultz

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Today's businesses are constantly under pressure to innovate—to develop new products, processes, and even organizational structures—in order to remain vibrant and healthy. But many businesses fall into the trap of doing more of the same, only faster. How can they break free of old patterns without overextending their resources or losing sight of their core goals and capabilities? In *Open Boundaries*, Howard Sherman and Ron Schultz bring fresh, new insights from the field of complexity thinking—the study of dynamic evolving systems—to unleash creativity and innovation throughout the organization. Drawing from their groundbreaking research at the Santa Fe Center for Emergent Strategies, the authors challenge readers to explore the underlying principles, cognitive models, and rules that govern their decisions and actions to reveal—and, more importantly, overcome—obstacles to innovation and growth. *Open Boundaries* introduces a practical vocabulary to help managers understand, analyze, and nurture the creative process by eschewing linear "cause-and-effect" approaches to decision making in favor of an approach that thrives on ambiguity and unpredictability. Showcasing the pioneering efforts of such organizations as Xerox-PARC, Applied Biosystems, Patagonia, and the United States Marine Corps, the authors vividly illustrate the power of complexity thinking in action—from creating new markets to establishing new ways of spreading emerging knowledge throughout the company. Ultimately, *Open Boundaries* is about ideas, the most powerful of which is realizing that organizations are not mechanical entities, but living systems that are constantly adjusting and adapting to both internal and external forces of change. By embracing this perspective, businesses can become far more creative, innovative, and profitable than they might have ever thought possible.

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