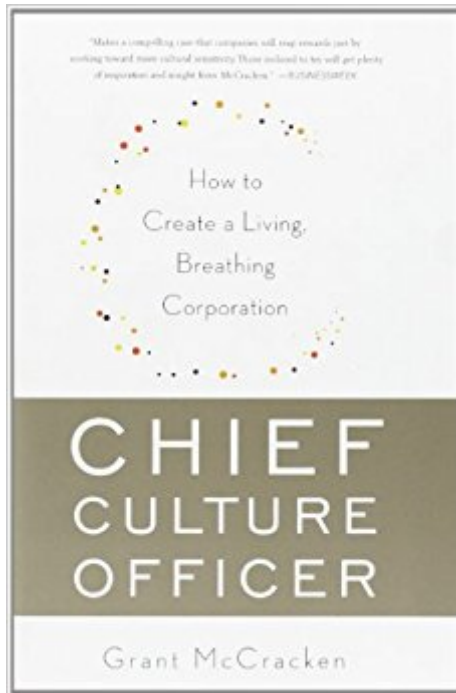


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Chief Culture Officer: How To Create A Living, Breathing Corporation



Synopsis

The American corporation--deaf and blind to the world around it--needs a new professional. It needs a Chief Culture Officer. Grant McCracken, an anthropologist who now trains some of the world's biggest companies and consulting firms, argues that the CCO would keep a finger on the pulse of contemporary cultural trends while developing a systematic understanding of the deep waves of culture in America and the world. The CCO would be the corporation's eyes and ears, allowing it to detect coming changes, even when they exist only as the weakest of signals. Trenchantly on point and bursting with insight and character, Chief Culture Officer is sure to expand your horizons--and your business.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I am a big fan of Grant McCracken. I've not just enjoyed his books, but gotten some powerful ideas for my professional life from them over the years. I've read McCracken when he's being insightful. I know what that looks like. Chief Culture Officer does not have the kind of material Grant McCracken writes when he's been insightful. Instead, it's filled with embarrassing ideas that appear to have been made off-the-cuff. Actually, that's just the kind of flippant approach to business that McCracken suggests in this book that a Chief Culture Officer ought to be following. He suggests that watching reality TV shows like Real Housewives is a good form of ethnographic research. He advocates for the blind groupthink of brainstorming that Christian Madsbjerg and Mikkel B. Rasmussen deftly exposed in their more recent book The Moment of Clarity. In the closing pages of Chief Culture

Officer, McCracken disparages academic anthropologists who have, as a culture, adopted the practice of writing more like irrelevant philosophers than observers of culture. His criticism is right on target, but in this book he has largely over-reacted to anthropology's academic rhetoric of nonsense by embracing the careless style of the worst business writers. As an alternative to academic anthropological writing, McCracken suggests that people investigating the culture of consumption try to express ideas that are just barely good enough for the moment, but can be easily thrown away. He uses the metaphor of Thor Heyerdahl barely keeping Kon Tiki afloat, and then throwing it away as soon as he makes landfall. That's not the kind of material that an enduring brand will be made from.

I read this book when it was first published in 2009 and then read and reviewed Grant McCracken's more recent book, *Culturematic: How Reality TV, John Cheever, a Pie Lab, Julia Child, Fantasy Football . . . Will Help You Create and Execute Breakthrough Ideas*. Of all the current observers of the contemporary business world and, especially, of the evolution of workplace culture, I know of no one else who sees more and sees more deeply than he does. Here's a case in point. Just as Dave Ulrich has been an advocate for several years of adding a chief human resources officer (CHRO) to an organization's management team, McCracken is determined to add another. As he explains, "That's what I want to do with this book [Chief Culture Officer]: invent an office and an officer - the Chief Culture Officer, the person who knows the culture, both its fads and fashions, and its deep, enduring structure. I hope this book will be read by two groups: people inside the corporation who want to make the corporation more intelligent, strategic, and responsive, and people outside the corporation who want to turn their knowledge of culture into a profession and a career." Years ago, Southwest Airlines' then chairman and CEO, Herb Kelleher, explained the importance of culture to its success: "Maintaining excellent customer services involves a process of getting people to understand the importance of it to them in their daily lives as well as in others'. We were a little concerned as we got bigger that maybe some of our early culture might be lost so we set up a culture committee whose only purpose is to keep the Southwest Airlines culture alive. Before people knew how to make fire, there was a fire watcher. Cave dwellers may have found a tree hit by lightning and brought fire back to the cave.

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