

## Relations industrielles Industrial Relations



Tom PETERS, Nancy AUSTIN : *A Passion for Excellence. The Leadership Difference*. New York, Random House, 1985, 437 pp., ISBN 0-394-54484

John NAISBITT, Patricia ABURDENE : *Reinventing the Corporation. Transforming your Job and your Company for the New Information Society*. New York, Warner Books, 1985, 308 pp., ISBN 0-446-51284-2

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**A Passion for Excellence. The Leadership Difference**, by Tom Peters and Nancy Austin, New York, Random House, 1985, pp. xxv + 437, ISBN 0-394-54484

**Reinventing the Corporation. Transforming your Job and your Company for the New Information Society**, by John Naisbitt & Patricia Aburdene, New York, Warner Books, 1985, pp. xi + 308, ISBN 0-446-51284-2

There is a growing concern about the quality of the U.S. business leadership and several books on this subject have inspired a new way of thinking in this respect. The failures of Great Society were attacked by D. Halberstam (**The Best and the Brightest**) and D.P. Moynihan (**Maximum Feasible Misunderstanding**) as well by several others. Corporate cultures were critically evaluated by T. Peters and R. Waterman (**In Search of Excellence**), B. Ouchi (**Theory Z**), R. Pascale & T. Athos (**The Art of Japanese Management**). T. Deal and A. Kennedy (**Corporate Cultures**) R.M. Kanter (**The Change Masters**) and K. Auletta (**The Art of Corporate Success**). There is a growing awareness that in order to open new frontiers it is necessary to revitalize the economy. This point has been made clear by R. Reich (**The Next American Frontier**) and G. Gilder (**Wealth and Poverty**). It is not enough to criticize or even to offer alternative models. In order to change it is quite crucial to inspire the passion among the management personnel: an invigorating purpose, full attention to it, courage, self-respect. The best bosses are tough on the values but tender in support of people who would dare to take a risk and try to implement these values. The whole point is «trust, integrity, care; given those, the details will take care of themselves (...). We must cultivate passion and trust, and at virtually the same moment we must delve unmercifully into the details» (Peters & Austin 1985: xx).

There are several trends which have to be considered in running modern corporations: emphasis on information; competition between innovators; elimination of a considerable part of middle management; decline of teenagers on the labour market; work force younger, better educated, and increasingly female (a vanegated labour force); mismatch between the education system and the actual needs of the economy; the problem of health fitness and the growing cost of keeping it; the exaggerated expectations of the newcomers to workplaces. As the answer to these trends J. Naisbitt and P. Aburdene propose the following guidelines:

1. The best and brightest people will gravitate to those corporations that foster personal growth.
2. The manager's role is that of coach, teacher, and mentor.
3. The best people want ownership — psychic and literal — in a company; the best companies are providing it.
4. Companies will increasingly turn to third-party contractors, shifting from hired labor to contract labor.
5. Authoritarian management is yielding to a networking, people style of management.
6. Entrepreneurship within the corporations — intrapreneurship — is creating new products and new markets and revitalizing companies inside out.
7. Quality will be paramount.
8. Intuition and creativity are challenging the «it's all in the numbers» business-school philosophy.
9. Large corporations are emulating the positive and productive qualities of small business.
10. The dawn of information economy has fostered a massive shift from infrastructure to quality of live. (ss. 45-46)

There is a need for managers to be able and willing to nourish environment for personal growth, reward performance and innovation, contract out tasks that do not necessarily have to be implemented inside the company, encourage the horizontal cooperation, encourage people being inventive. «To attract the brightest people, companies will have to consciously create an environment for learning and growth. Central to this will be the manager's new role: to coach; to teach, to nurture. To keep people motivated and productive, the best companies are exploring a range of new financial incentives from performance bonuses to employee stock-option plans. The people in the re-invented corporation, however, will not all be employed there, but many will increasingly be leased from contract staffing firms. We are re-inventing the corporation from a top-down bureaucracy into a network where everyone learns from everyone else. The new economy is once again an entrepreneurially driven economy» (Ibid., pp. 77-78).

The care of customers and constant innovation, care of the personnel and a sensitive leadership. «The passionate, courageous, self-respecting people we know, when challenges or risks loom before them, regard them as something to be faced» — claim T. Peters and N. Austin (p. 415). «Courage and self-respect are the lion's share of passion: It's hanging in long after others have gotten bored or given up; it's refusing to leave well enough alone; it means that anything less than the best you can imagine really bothers you, may be keeps you awake at night» (Ibid.).

Both books here considered represent a reaction against mediocrity going together with bureaucratization, complacency, and low aspirations. In the present day competition with the Asian challenge, Americans have good reasons to re-evaluate their own resources and revive the traditional assets. It is difficult even to imagine a real push ahead without stimulating some enthusiasm and the belief in one's own strength. Both books testify a considerable optimism: Japanese entrepreneurship may be better in many respects but American entrepreneurship is still alive, may inspire new approaches, and open some attractive chances. The far reaching conformism of Japanese is not an answer to the North American problems. There is a major asset in the democratic spirit, trust in people and their good will, self-governmental solutions, teamwork appealing to the sense of personal freedom, and cooperation of genuine individuals.

The popularity of books that encourage to think positively about the impact of modern technology on corporations, and at the same time appreciate good leadership able and willing to have a passion for excellence, is an important factor of change. The interpretation of business leaders as cynical 'exploiters' and cheap manipulators is not very helpful in opening a chance for the better, except if somebody believes in a revolution and a new order worth to be introduced. The experience of state socialism is not very encouraging; most people escape for freedom to industrial democracies and not to the communist countries. Bureaucratization of the economy is not an answer. The fact that many entrepreneurially oriented business leaders achieve good results by the use of democratic methods stimulates a hope that this is the way better than others. Examples presented in both books need analysis and permit general conclusions. There is definitely not enough of it and the readers may be lost in the large number of facts taken from the great variety of companies.

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