

## Relations industrielles Industrial Relations



Tom PETERS : *Thriving on Chaos. Handbook for a Managerial Revolution*. New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1987, 561 pp., ISBN 0-394-56784-6

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Malheureusement, les différentes parties du livre ne m'apparaissent pas former un tout très intéressant. L'absence d'un approfondissement analytique bien mûri se traduit par une série de morceaux détachés qui n'offrent pas un ensemble cohérent. Il y a ici beaucoup d'arbres de différentes qualités qui ne forment pas une forêt agencée.

En somme, ce livre d'économie de la santé ne réussit pas à se substituer au manuel de Robert G. Evans, *Strained Mercy: The Economics of Canadian Health Care* (Toronto, Butterworths, 1984, 390 pp.). C'est une contribution utile mais de deuxième rang pour celui qui désire maîtriser l'économie de ce secteur.

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**Thriving on Chaos. Handbook for a Managerial Revolution**, by Tom Peters, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987, pp. XII + 561, ISBN 0-394-56784-6

Assuming that the present day markets change rapidly, the author advocates the companies not only to respond quickly to shifting circumstances but proactively to take advantage of them. It is necessary to constantly create new market riches, inspire and seduce the customers with novelties. Responsiveness to the client is a must. By creating **uniqueness** it is possible to remain a leader. Listening to the customers and using manufacturing as a marketing weapon it is possible to arrange the capability building blocks: the pursuit of a fast-paced innovation, the activation of the sales and service forces, the reinforcement of the market intelligence, the elasticity and adaptability of the production apparatus.

The applications-oriented small starts are suggested as the guiding premise to create in the long run a corporate capacity for innovation. It is necessary to promote committed champions who would lead to innovative process. A climate of purposeful **impatience** would be very helpful in the mobilization of the personnel and management. The quantitative innovation goals need to be established. The evident failures should be accelerated instead of wasting efforts and resources on the useless rescue operations. The close **cooperation** between production and service people needs to be promoted. Pilots should be assigned to all projects in order to assure the appropriate progress. Make word-of-mouth marketing systematic; organize new product/service marketing efforts around explicit, systematic, extensive word-of-mouth campaigns. New products and services should be promoted on a basis of multi-functions teams consisting of people from all primary functions: design, engineering, marketing, manufacturing, finance, sales, service, purchasing. Learning from the others, copying and adapting the positive examples in one's own company should be much encouraged (the practice of "creative swiping").

Modern companies need internal **flexibility** and this may be achieved mainly through empowering people: involving everyone in everything, using self-managing teams, listening to people, celebrating their achievements, recognizing the contribution of everyone, spending time lavishly on recruiting, training and retraining people, providing incentive pay for everyone, providing an employment guarantee, simplifying the formal structure and curtailing it, reconceiving the role of the middle manager (he/she should be a facilitator and functional-boundary smasher), eliminating bureaucratic rules and humiliating conditions. The mobilization of the human initiative and commitment at the grass-root level has a basic importance for the ability of the enterprise to handle necessary changes.

A new view of **leadership** is badly needed at all levels. "The firm must become a hotbed of tests of the unconventional. It must become an experimenting (and learning), adaptive, change-seeking organization (...). "In control" by the old standards is "out of control" (fast slipping behind) by the new standards" (pp. 394-95). The inspiring vision needs to be promoted. It is up to the leaders at all levels to *manage by their own examples*. A visible management should be practiced instead of a secretive management. Delegation of power and trusting people are badly necessary. Not only vertical communication, but also horizontal communication, needs to be cultivated. The positive attitude of people towards the change and development needs to be evaluated, recognized and appreciated. A sense of **urgency** should be much promoted and reinforced in order to make clear to everybody that it is essential for the survival and success of the company.

The concentration on the **priorities** is a must. The chief control tools need to be revamped accordingly. Information, authority, and strategic planning have to become much decentralized. The goals of the company need to be realistic but ambitious enough to achieve a visible success. "Financial objectives should be small in number and conservative — only rarely should a manager fail to meet his or her objectives. Every growth plan must be backed up by the near-certainty of available supporting infrastructure" (p. 512). Total **integrity** is absolutely necessary. "Successful organization must shift from an age dominated by constructs and litigiousness to an age of handshakes and trust" (p. 518).

To take the chaos as given and to learn how to thrive on it is the basis of organizational proposals promoted by T. Peters. "Capitalizing on fleeting market anomalies will be the successful business's greatest accomplishment" (p. XII). It is a definite rejection of a traditional structuralist rigidity, dependence on the strict rules and procedures, appeal to the blind discipline. The "organic" organization definitely takes place occupied until recently by the mechanistic versions of order and obedience. In this respect the perspective offered by the author is much modern and innovative. It goes against the bureaucratic tradition, rejects the organizational status quo, puts full emphasis on dynamics and not on statics.

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**Saving Plants and Jobs: Union Management Negotiations in the Context of Threatened Plant Closing**, by Paul F. Gerhart, Kalamazoo, Michigan, W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, 1987, 109 pp., ISBN 0-88099-047-3 and ISBN 0-88099-046-5 (pbk)

**Saving Plants and Jobs** is a fascinating set of nine Ohio based case studies that focus on the prevention of plant closings. This short monograph is well worth reading. The author sets out to answer four questions: how can plant closings be prevented; which cases are preventable; why are preventive steps taken in some cases; and why aren't preventive steps taken in other cases.

The text is divided into five well written chapters: "The Economics of Plant Closures"; "Why Plants Close"; "Why Plants are Saved"; "Securing the Future"; and "Findings and Conclusion".

Gerhart's findings are threefold. First he argues that the most important set of factors driving plant closings are market forces. He finds that product diversity and new technology can enhance a plant's life expectancy. He states that while labour costs are not irrelevant they