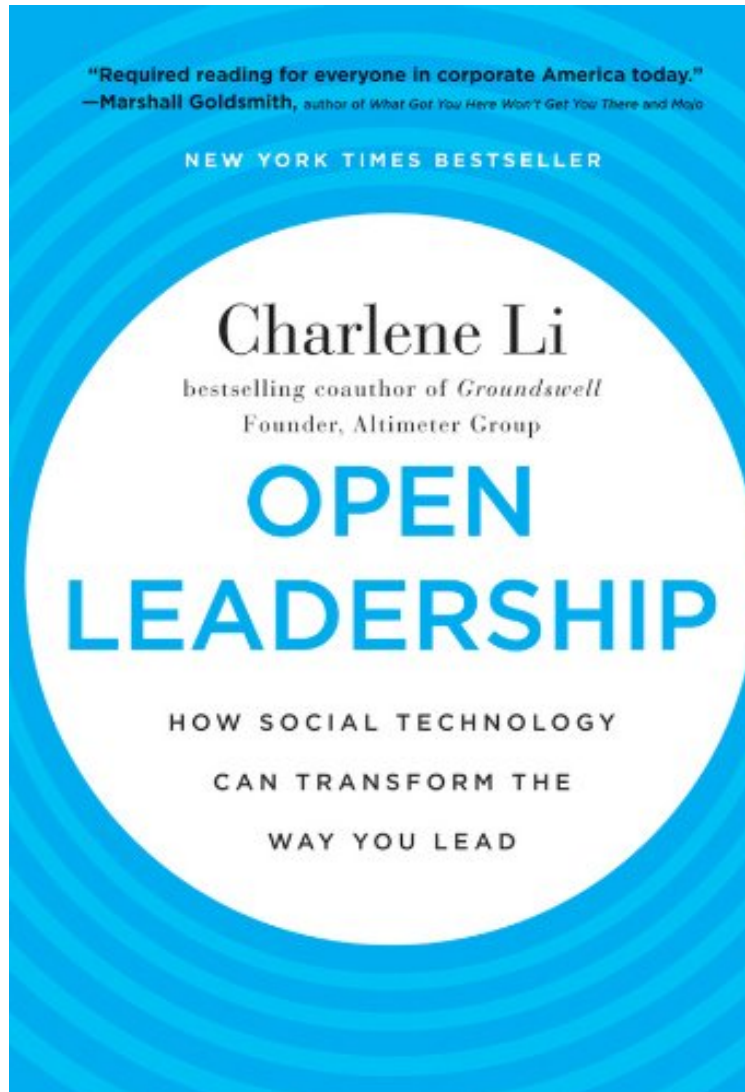


# Open Leadership: How Social Technology Can Transform the Way You Lead

Charlene Li

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**Charlene Li : Open Leadership: How Social Technology Can Transform the Way You Lead** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Open Leadership: How Social Technology Can Transform the Way You Lead:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Will it reach its intended target?By Akweli ParkerIn one section of Open Leadership, author Charlene Li alludes to experience with a fearful, therefore miserable boss. Just about everyone has had to deal with at least one territorial, vindictive boss who acted out in fear of "losing" control. Classy individual that she is, Li did not delve into details (though I would be intrigued to know them). But it lent some

credibility to acknowledge that her expertise in writing this book was borne of personal experience, not just third-party observation. This important and substantive work addresses a fundamental shift in how people -- individuals -- relate to organizations and vice versa. It's about a subtle, inevitable transfer of power that leaders can either adapt to (allowing their organization to engage an audience and thrive), or go down resisting. The book's subtitle is "How Social Technology Can Transform the Way You Lead." This vanilla tagline, unfortunately, does little to promote the importance and urgency of Li's message (see preceding paragraph). Public confidence in institutions is at an all-time low, and it owes in large part to the whole concept of "openness," or lack thereof. Customers, voters, volunteers, people of faith -- pick your sub-group -- are embracing organizations that share and listen. They are tuning out those that cling to the old model of withhold and dictate. I'd add "employees" to that mix of stakeholders, too, with the caveat that the \*best\* employees will increasingly choose to work for open organizations versus command-and-control ones ... because even in a lousy economy, they can. Meticulously researched, solidly written, and brimming with mostly useful sidebars and exercises, *Open Leadership* is a worthwhile read for new and experienced leaders at all levels. At the time of this review, there was also a web site that allowed you to fill out the exercises/assessments online. For me, this was much more convenient than stopping every chapter to complete the assessments on paper. I've both enjoyed the pleasure of working for (with, really) "open" leaders and endured the anguish of situations where "command-and-control" systems kept all the human cogs rigidly in place. In my experience, managers who could most use the lessons offered by Li tend to be the least likely to see the need: it takes a special (and at present exceedingly rare) kind of leader to engage in introspection, self-examination, and rethinking of the status quo. These behaviors require a certain amount of humility and comfort with relinquishing control, which may run counter to the programming of traditional career hard chargers. In defense of command-and-control, one reasonable argument for it, and against too "open" of an organization, is risk management. An inadvertent HIPAA violation by an employee using social media could result not only in huge fines but an incalculable erosion of public trust and goodwill. A culturally insensitive tweet from one impulsive worker can tar an otherwise thoughtful organization of thousands for weeks or more. More often than not, however, I think this "concern" about risk is a smokescreen to mask fear and lack of understanding of how the new, social media-interfaced business ecosystem works. I have no data to back this up, that's just what I intuit from observation and knowing how and why people react the way they do to change. Contrary to what's been posited in other reviews, Li brilliantly suggests addressing risk-related concerns the way you would any known business risk. Not by sticking your head in the sand, but by modeling, simulating, and dreaming up worst-case scenarios -- in this context, the scenarios being all manner of social media firestorms. Of course, to approve such time-and-money-intensive action, executives would have to be convinced of the potential benefits of participating in social media in the first place. For anyone worried about loose-cannon subordinates running amok on social media, Li notes that training and policies go a long way toward reducing the risk of screw-ups. In addition to serving managers and executives well, *Open Leadership* is a helpful resource to have on hand if you've been charged with getting your organization aboard the social media train. Li has used her vast network to include relevant interviews and anecdotes from a range of companies in multiple industries. There is likely a case study that addresses any resistance you're facing in implementing a more social media-friendly, open culture.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Li delivers again

By Eric D. Brown I grabbed a copy by for my business trip last week. Gotta have something to read on the plane you know. I enjoyed this book. Not only is the subject matter interesting, but the way in which Li presents the material is fresh, interesting and engaging. The main premise of the book is that in order for organizations to use social tools and technology, they need to be able to operate in a more open manner. I do have to say that when I first saw the title "Open Leadership", I was perplexed. I thought that Li had somehow decided to move away from her area of experience and expertise in the social space and move into the realm of 'leadership' books. The subtitle helped assuage that fear though and after opening the book and starting to read, I realized that the title made perfect sense. In this book, Li declares open leadership to be a vital factor in whether an organization succeeds using social media. She argues that by becoming more open, organizations will be able to build real / honest relationships with their employees, clients and vendors. This is a good thing. Building long-lasting and valuable relationships with people (whether they are clients or employees) is the entire reason for moving into the social space. Having a culture of openness within an organization helps tremendously with building those relationships. Li argues that the old 'command and control' structure that most organizations have used (and still use) will not work in this more open environment. While this argument is made fairly successfully, there are many places in the book where Li tries to assuage those who still prefer the top-down command approach with her 'controlled' open-ness approach. When I first ran across the idea of a controlled 'open' environment as Li discusses, I was a little disturbed, but after thinking about it and reading more, I realized that Li wasn't really advocating for continuing the command and control approach; she's arguing for processes that help shape the open environment. As long-time readers of this blog know, I'm all for processes as long as they don't hinder the ability of the business to be 'human'. I highly recommend this book to anyone interested in social media, social technologies, customer service and marketing. There are a lot of really great stories case studies that highlight how organizations are using social media to get closer to their customers and the problems those customers are having. If you liked *Groundswell: Winning in a World Transformed by Social Technologies*, a great book in its

own right, you'll like this book too. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Leading with social technology By Josh Ellis Social technology has forced society to become more open: information is shared cheaply, quickly, and often times unvarnished. Li postulates that because of free flowing information, the nature of how relationships form has also changed. As society changes to become more open, the rules of conducting business in that society must also change. How to lead businesses in this era of openness requires a different model of leadership. Therefore, Li defines "open leadership" as "having the confidence and humility to give up the need to be in control while inspiring commitment from people to accomplish goals" (p. 14). *Open Leadership* (Li, 2010) is organized like a meeting of executives exploring whether or not their company should be more open, and if so, how to become so effectively. Li takes the reader from the realities of a new, more open society, to helping organizations understand that openness is not a binary state, but rather a sliding scale based on the company's objectives. Should a company desire to "learn, dialog, support [internal or external stakeholders], or innovate" (p. 52), Li provides an explanation of how open strategies accomplish these purposes. Part two of the book provides an organization with a step-by-step guide to organizational openness, beginning with understanding the social and fiscal benefits of being an open organization and establishing the structures that guide a company's openness policies--"sandbox covenants" (p. 107)--and finishing with an open strategy checklist. The final portion of the book, part three, holds the most innovative material about leading within an open environment. Chapter seven provides four "open leadership archetypes" (p. 175) based on where a leader's personality falls between two dimensions: (1) pessimistic or optimistic and (2) collaborative or independent. Open leaders tend to possess both optimism and a collaborative nature, though Li is careful to point out that open organizations must be able to work with a myriad of leadership personalities. Li devotes space in part three to two important concepts of leadership. First, open leaders tend to be both naturally curious and humble. Open leaders must be curious about their customers, products, and employees, but also humble enough to change their viewpoint--and their corresponding actions--based on what their curiosity unearths. Second, failure will happen, and it is in the best interests of leaders and their organizations to prepare for failure. A company's attitude toward failure and risk is often the difference between those with the courage to innovate and adapt, and those companies that ride their single accomplishment into irrelevancy. *Open Leadership* does have some weaknesses. The intended audience of the book seems either unclear or incredibly narrow. Top-level executives would benefit from the book if their intention was to overhaul their company's culture to be more open or alter their effectiveness through open strategies. A mid-level manager or other employee without considerable freedom and influence will likely long to work at an open company, rather than feel empowered to help change their company from within the rank and file. Transitioning the culture of a company is the hardest part of organizational change, and this book does little to assist the average employee to participate in that change. A comment on the back cover written by Seth Godin sums up a solution to this problem as well as anything Li provides, "Buy two copies of Charlene's new book, one for your boss and one for you." The book also suffers from its characterization as a leadership book. At its core, *Open Leadership* is a book about social technology, and how social technology is necessary to lead organizations to be more open. There are aspects of what a leader should possess in the form of traits, abilities, and strategies, but often the book portrays leadership as the act of putting procedures in place. In a world transformed by social technologies, leaders of organizations must adapt their business models to account for the changes within their customer base. *Open Leadership* is primarily a book about incorporating social technology within the strategies of a business, enabling it to be competitive and relevant within the structures of an open marketplace. To that end, the book is excellent. The book comes with helpful guides, references, and takeaways in the form of action plans at the end of each chapter, and it is augmented by online content. In fact, there are so many references to outside resources, it is almost impossible for those who are naturally curious to read through a sizeable portion of the book in a single sitting. If readers are looking to increase the effectiveness of their organizations through social technology, this book is an invaluable resource. If the reader is searching for a leadership book that prepares leaders to engage the realities of an evolving society caused by social technology, perhaps another choice is best.

An essential guide for leaders who want to use social media to be "open" while maintaining control "Be Open, Be Transparent, Be Authentic" are the current leadership mantras-but companies often push back. Business is premised on the concept of control and yet the new world order demands openness-leaders do not know how to be open and be in control. This must-have resource will help the modern leader understand how to lead in the new open world-where blogging, twittering, facebooking, and digging are becoming the norm. the author lays out the steps that leaders must take to transform their organizations and themselves into being "open" -and exactly what that will mean. Shows how to use social media to become an open organization Offers basic advice for leaders who are adapting to the new era of openness in the marketplace The author Charlene Li is one of the foremost experts on social media and technologies In easy-to-understand language, this book will help leaders orient themselves to social networking and other technological advances.

.com An essential guide for leaders who want to use social media to be "open" while maintaining control "Be Open,

"Be Open, Be Transparent, Be Authentic" are the current leadership mantras—but companies often push back. Business is premised on the concept of control and yet the new world order demands openness—leaders do not know how to be open and be in control. This must-have resource will help the modern leader understand how to lead in the new open world—where blogging, twittering, facebooking, and digging are becoming the norm. The author lays out the steps that leaders must take to transform their organizations and themselves into being "open"—and exactly what that will mean. Shows how to use social media to become an open organization Offers basic advice for leaders who are adapting to the new era of openness in the marketplace The author Charlene Li is one of the foremost experts on social media and technologies In easy-to-understand language, this book will help leaders orient themselves to social networking and other technological advances. How Open Leadership Differs from Traditional Leadership Content from author Charlene Li Although the traits of good leaders are universal, there are new skills and behaviors that open leaders must learn and master to be effective. In particular, open leaders must act as a catalyst to creating greater openness in organization, in ways that differ significantly from traditional leadership: About Author Charlene Li: Charlene Li is founder of the Altimeter Group and the coauthor (with Josh Bernoff) of the critically acclaimed, bestselling book Groundswell. She is one of the foremost experts on social media and technologies, and is a consultant and independent thought leader on leadership, strategy, social technologies, interactive media, and marketing. Formerly, Li was vice president and principal analyst at Forrester Research and a consultant with Monitor Group. She was named one of The 12 Most Creative Minds of 2008 by Fast Company, and one of the Most Influential Women in Technology 2009. '...shows leaders how to tap into the power of the social technology revolution.' (Publicnet.co.uk, April 2011). From the Inside Flap "Be Open, Be Transparent, Be Authentic" are the current leadership mantras—but companies often push back. Traditionally, business is premised on the concept of control and yet the new world order demands openness. In Open Leadership Charlene Li (the coauthor of the blockbuster bestseller Groundswell) offers the next step resource that shows leaders how to tap into the power of the social technology revolution and use social media to be "open" while maintaining control. This important book explains how Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Yammer, Jive, and other popular social media sites can improve efficiency, communication, and decision making for leaders and their organizations. As Li explains, openness requires more—not less—rigor and effort than being in control. Open Leadership reveals step-by-step, with illustrative case studies and examples from a wide range of industries and countries, how to bring the precision of this new openness both inside and outside the organization. The author includes suggestions that will help an organization determine an open strategy, weigh the benefits against the risk, and have a clear understanding of the implications of being open. The book also contains guidelines, policies, and procedures that successful companies have implemented to manage openness and ensure that business objectives are at the center of their openness strategy. By embracing social media, leaders can transform their organizations to become more effective, decisive, and ultimately more profitable in this new era of openness in the marketplace.