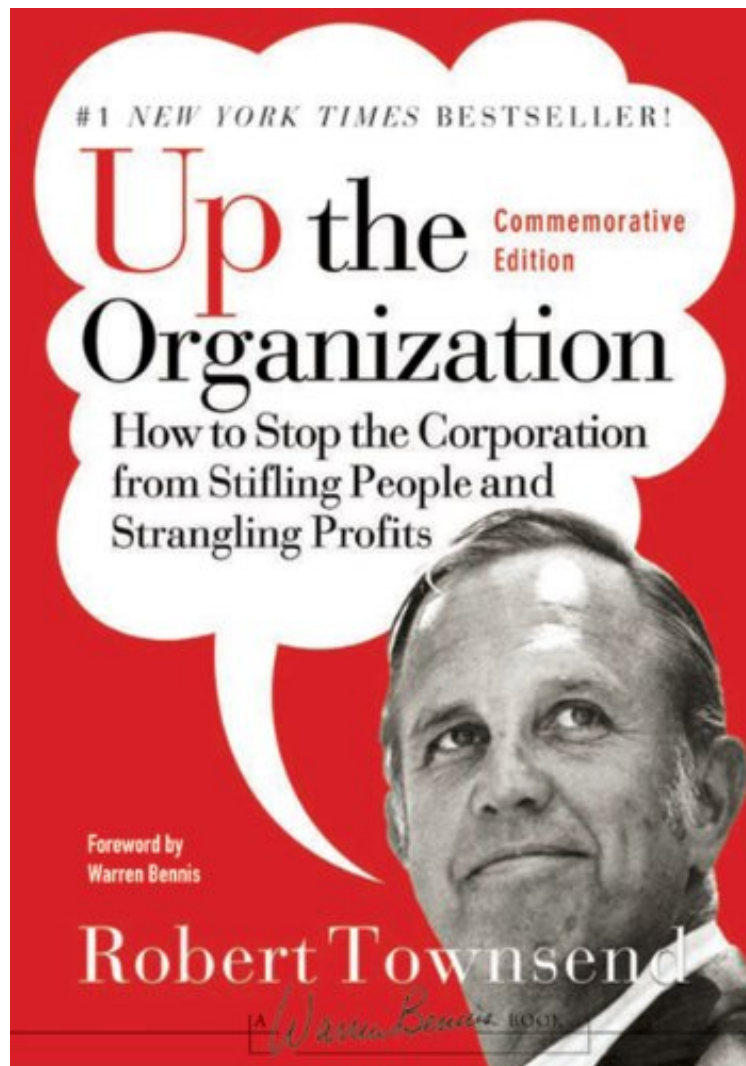


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Up the Organization: How to Stop the Corporation from Stifling People and Strangling Profits (J-B Warren Bennis Series)

Robert C. Townsend, Warren Bennis

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Robert C. Townsend, Warren Bennis : Up the Organization: How to Stop the Corporation from Stifling People and Strangling Profits (J-B Warren Bennis Series) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Up the Organization: How to Stop the Corporation from Stifling People and Strangling Profits (J-B Warren Bennis Series):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A classic that will make you think about why you do things the way you do and how to do them better By Wally Bock I call a business book a classic if it was first published more than twenty-five years ago and is still worth reading. Up the Organization: How to Stop the Corporation from Stifling

People and Strangling Profits by Robert Townsend was published for the first time in 1970. When there were only very few business books, most were by CEOs and they were pretty straightforward. The CEO told you how they achieved their success. That's how most business books by CEOs are today, too. Since business books became popular in the early 1980s, only a few authors have taken the "visitor from Mars" approach. That's to look at the organization they work for or run and say, "If I had just landed here from another planet and was starting a big company, would I do it the way we're doing it?" If the answer is no, they want to eliminate stuff. The best "visitor from Mars" books are about common sense in business, written by people who made it work. The best ones are also about eliminating bureaucracy and putting people first. Ken Iverson's book about Nucor, Plain Talk, is one of those books. So is Ricardo Semler's book The Seven-Day Weekend. Up the Organization was the first of the genre. Townsend was the CEO of Avis from 1962 to 1965. At the time Avis was second to the industry giant, Hertz. Avis gained market share and became famous in part because of a wonderful ad campaign based on the theme "We're number two, so we try harder." When Up the Organization was published in 1970 it spent 28 weeks on the New York Times nonfiction best-seller list. The Book Robert Townsend claimed that he never read business books, and the book he wrote doesn't look like another business book you've ever read. The book is an alphabetical listing of topics that he comments on. There are 97 chapters but don't panic, they're very, very short, very, very witty, and very, very insightful. Some of the topics, like "Secretary" and "The Steno Pool," are like little blasts from the 1970s. You can read past them and not miss much. Big chunks of the business vocabulary are out of date, but you can figure things out easily. Some language would be considered "sexist" today, but that's not important enough to pass up the wisdom that's here. The main reason to read this book is that many of the things that Townsend says are, perhaps surprisingly, still relevant. He advocates getting rid of what was then called the Personnel department, which is now called Human Resources. He suggests getting rid of the whole department and replacing it with a one-person "people department." He thinks people should set their own working hours. As a "visitor from Mars," he suggests logical changes that run counter to common business practice then and now. That's the value of the book. Even though it was written more than 40 years ago, many of the bureaucratic ideas that Townsend calls out are still common practice. Another advantage of reading the book is that the style is what we would call today, "edgy." Bottom Line The reason you should read Up the Organization: How to Stop the Corporation from Stifling People and Strangling Profits today is that it will jog your thinking, just like it did those of us who read it 40 years ago. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Business Humanized! By O. Halabieh As the cover jacket best summarizes it: "No pomposities. In short takes and plain words here is a way to humanize business, to have fun while making it all work better than it ever worked before - and better than anyone else is making it work... The result is the best, strongest, funniest, sagest, most outrageous and constructive book ever written about running things." Robert shares with us his thoughts on a wide variety of management and leadership topics based on over 16 years of experience in the Corporate world, including Avis and American Express, to name a few. What sets this book apart is the breadth of topics covered, as well as the presentation in the form of short, simple, and direct mini-essays. Below are some key excerpts from the book that I found particularly insightful: 1- "By far the best two books I've read on the subject of getting things done through organizations are: Managing for Results, by Peter F. Drucker... and The Human Side of Enterprise by Douglas McGregor..." 2- "Compromise is usually a bad idea. It should be a last resort... When you give in, give in all the way. And when you win, try to win all the way so the responsibility to make it work rests squarely on you." 3- "Delegation of Authority - May give lip service, but few delegate authority in important matters. An that means all they delegate is dog-work. A real leader does as much dog-work for his people as he can: he can do it, or see a way to do without it, ten times as fast. And he delegates as many important matters as he can because that creates a climate in which people grow." 4- "A commander in chief [manager] cannot take as an excuse for his mistakes in warfare [business] an order given his minister [boss] or his sovereign [boss's boss], when the person giving the order is absent from the field of operations and is imperfectly aware or wholly unaware of the latest state of affairs. It follows that any commander in chief [manager] who undertakes to carry out a plan which he considers defective is at fault; he must put forward his reasons, insist on the plan being changed, and finally tender his resignation rather than be the instrument of his army's [organization's] downfall. - Napoleon" 5- "As for the best leaders, the people do not notice their existence. The next best, the people honor and praise. The next, the people fear; and the next the people hate... When the best leader's work is done the people say "We did it ourselves!" - Lao-tzu". 6- "Get to know your people. What they do well, what they enjoy doing, what their weaknesses and strengths are, and what they want and need to get from their job. And then try to create an organization around your people, not jam your people into those organization-chart rectangles. The only excuse for organization is to maximize the chance that each one, working with others, will get for growth in his job, You can't motivate people. That door is locked from the inside. You can create a climate in which most of your people will motivate themselves to help the company reach its objectives. Like it or not, the only practical act is to adopt Theory Y assumptions and get going." 7- "Most managements complain about the lack of able people and go outside to fill key positions. Nonsense. Nobody inside an organization ever looked ready to move into a bigger job. I use the rule of 50 per cent. Try to find somebody inside the

company with a record of success (in any area_ and with an appetite for the job. If he looks like 50 per cent of what you need, give him the job. In six months he'll have grown the other 50 per cent and everybody will be satisfied."8- "Reorganizing - Should be undergone about as often as major surgery. And should be as well planned and as swiftly executed. "I was to learn later in life that we tend to meet any new situation by reorganizing; and a wonderful method it can be for creating the illusion of progress while producing confusion, inefficiency, and demoralization. - Petronius Arbiter."9- "Leadership Characteristic - available, inclusive, humorous, fair, decisive, humble, objective, tough, effective, patient."1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Blasphemy to the political and bureaucratic minded!!!By ClearpointA no nonsense approach like Robert Townsend's is blasphemy to the political and bureaucratic minded that control today's large corporations and institutions. Now, more than ever, blasphemy is what is needed to combat the god-like worship of the narcissistic creatures that roam the executive suites of the world's largest corporations and institutions, and through who's unchallenged incompetence, trillions of dollars of wealth and millions of innocent lives are destroyed each year, so that they may maintain their positions of power.

Although it was first published more than thirty-five years ago, Up the Organization continues to top the lists of best business books by groups as diverse as the American Management Association, Strategy + Business (Booz Allen Hamilton), and The Wharton Center for Leadership and Change Management. 1-800-CEO-READ ranks Townsend's bestseller first among eighty books that "every manager must read." This commemorative edition offers a new generation the benefit of Robert Townsend's timeless wisdom as well as reflections on his work and life by those who knew and worked with him. This groundbreaking book continues to remind us not to get mired in all those sacred organizational routines that stifle people and strangle both profits and profitability. He shows a way to humanize business and a way to have fun while making it all work better than it ever worked before.