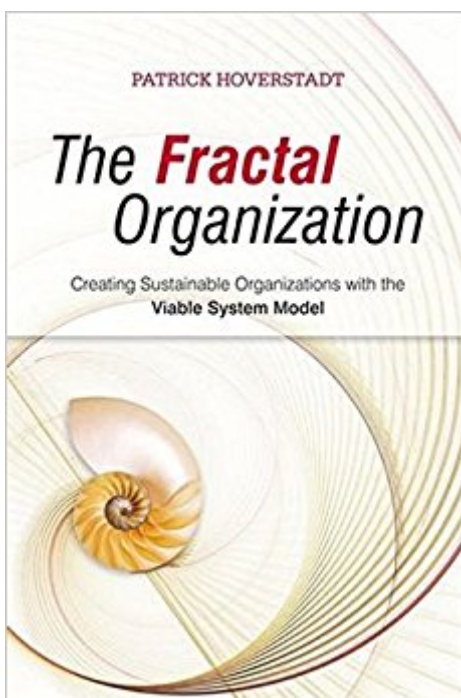


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The Fractal Organization: Creating Sustainable Organizations With The Viable System Model



Synopsis

The world of management is in crisis - the old remedies no longer work and organizations are failing at an increasing rate. Although many talk of 'joined up thinking', few offer practical guidance on how to achieve this in organizations. The Fractal Organization sets down the practical implications of a well tested systemic approach to building organizations that are capable of surviving and flourishing in these turbulent times. "An excellent read. Many organizations fail at the mercy of their own ignorance. The author has done an excellent job in making the science of effective organization accessible to management, providing them with a new knowledge to deal with the uncertainties that the markets place upon them." Stephen J. Brewis, Business Architect, British Telecom "...one of the most interesting, thorough and rigorous guides to management that I have ever read, introduces new insights in every chapter carries a credibility which acts as a counterbalance to the sometimes difficult message which he conveys which is that a lot of mainstream management practice is at best ineffective and at worst downright destructive. I would recommend this book to anyone interested in management or systems thinking." Penny Marrington, Course Chair, Systems Group, Open University "In my opinion this book manages to present sound academic theory that is relevant and helpful to the practitioner in the business. I experienced several A-HA moments." Pauline Marsh, Strategy Director, CS&S International, BAE SYSTEMS "The insights of the Viable System Model have been open only to a select few for much too long. Hoverstadt has gone furthest in bringing these ideas to a wider audience. Management books have too often been serious but not practical, or practical but not serious. This book is both brilliantly serious and practical, and often entertaining too." Professor Peter Kawalak, Manchester Business School "Integrates mainstream management ideas with the systems ideas underpinning the VSM, and flows and reads well. As a starting point for developing understanding of the VSM in today's world this book improves greatly on all books that have gone before, I would certainly recommend it to colleagues, clients, and students." Dr. Robin Asby, Course Chair, Communication and Systems, Open University

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Customer Reviews

'This is a well-written book on a complex subject that uses helpful examples taken for actual organizations.' (Quality World, January 2010).

The world of management is in crisis - the old remedies no longer work and organizations are failing at an increasing rate. Although many talk of joined up thinking, few offer practical guidance on how to achieve this in organizations. The Fractal Organization sets down the practical implications of a well tested systemic approach to building organizations that are capable of surviving and flourishing in these turbulent times. "An excellent read" Many organizations fail at the mercy of their own ignorance. The author has done an excellent job in making the science of effective organization accessible to management, providing them with a new knowledge to deal with the uncertainties that the markets place upon them. • Stephen J. Brewis, Business Architect, British Telecom. "One of the most interesting, thorough and rigorous guides to management that I have ever read, introduces new insights in every chapter carries a credibility which acts as a counterbalance to the sometimes difficult message which he conveys which is that a lot of mainstream management practice is at best ineffective and at worst downright destructive. I would recommend this book to anyone interested in management or systems thinking. • Penny Marrington, Senior Lecturer in Thinking and Practice, Open University. "In my opinion this book manages to present sound academic theory that is relevant and helpful to the practitioner in the business. I experienced several A-HA moments. • Pauline Marsh, Strategy Director, CS&S International, BAE SYSTEMS. "The insights of the Viable System Model have been open only to a select few for much too long. Hoverstadt has gone furthest in bringing these ideas to a wider audience Management books have too often been serious but not practical, or practical but not serious. This book is both brilliantly serious and practical, and often entertaining

too. Prof. Peter Kawalek, Manchester Business School. "Integrates mainstream management ideas with the systems ideas underpinning the VSM, and flows and reads well. As a starting point for developing understanding of the VSM in today's world this book improves greatly on all books that have gone before, I would certainly recommend it to colleagues, clients, and students." Dr. Robin Asby, Consultant and Director of Sigma Two Limited. Patrick Hoverstadt is a full time consultant and a part time academic, applying systems methods to analysing organizational problems and designing solutions for clients.

I was referred to this book from the Wikipedia link on Management Cybernetics; but the book is pretty light on the Management Cybernetics and Viable Model theory, and spends more time on general management anecdotes. It's not a horrible management book, and it's emphasis on cellular manufacturing and hierarchical ("fractal") organizational structuring is good. If you absolutely must have a Kindle book on Management Cybernetics, you could get this, but I would recommend ordering Beer's or someone else's books instead.

THE FRACTAL ORGANIZATION, by Patrick Hoverstadt is the future state of management science in a growing complex world. By this I mean a clear benefit to the business and government organizational structure which are both modeled by the VSM's fractal structure, explained by Patrick Hoverstadt, the author, with outstanding and rare clarity for a subject so few people are familiarized with because of its highly systemic nature. Most noteworthy is the fact that the theoretical explanations are accompanied by many examples of concrete applications in real life situations with both public and private clients who have had the good fortune of contacting the author. The Fractal Organization is based on professor Stafford Beer's magnificent work of management science THE VIABLE SYSTEM MODEL. For those who have kept asking for a taste of the pudding, here is plenty of it with a lot to spare. This book is not only recommendable, but it would be a great gift for this Christmas season for many managers who are being trapped by ALPHABET SOUP CONSULTING METHODS which simply do not work and make matters worse. Doing what I preach, I bought and gave away three copies to friends. Sincerely, Javier Livas, disciple and friend of the late Stafford Beer. YOUTUBE contributor with dozens of videos on the VSM and Management Cybernetics related topics.

Make no mistake I really like Mr. Hoverstadt's writing in style and content. The VSM is fascinating, challenging and seems a very important addition to the organizational or managerial set of theories.

But as is the fate of things in science it also contradicts many "pet theories" out there (if the term theory is fitting at all that is). Start with "fractal organization" being defined as a recursively defined map of the organization. I might very well show that any recursively defined VSM is at the same time hierarchical (it can be plotted as a tree) and any hierarchical organization chart can be defined recursively by mapping the template head-staff-division say onto itself. But of course it is rather the depiction of functional aspects that sets the VSM apart. Mr. Hoverstadt gives interesting cases of application. Yet, where is the evidence? I am not sure about cybernetics having reformed science in such a way as to not having to provide evidence for any statements. But that exactly is how Mr. Hoverstadt proceeds: while he provides an impressive list of reference material at the end of his book the reader now has to read it all or simply take Patrick Hoverstadt's word for it. You will not find a single footnote or citation in the whole book. On page 185 he states that a study found that 90% of strategic plans never get implemented and that another even puts that figure up at 98%. I find this mighty interesting and essentially that is the task for science but where can I find that study? If something like the VSM really does offer superior utility to management than one should be able to corroborate hard evidence. Otherwise one is competing with lots of "snakeoil salesmen" out there giving us elaborate anecdotal evidence. Remember the great motto of the Royal Society: "nullius in verba"

An excellent synthesis of several theories and hypotheses related to model based governance. The book is a delight, easy to read, with a personal touch, cohesion and clarity of explanation in ideas, text and figures, of the complex patterns of leadership and management in nowadays organizations.

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