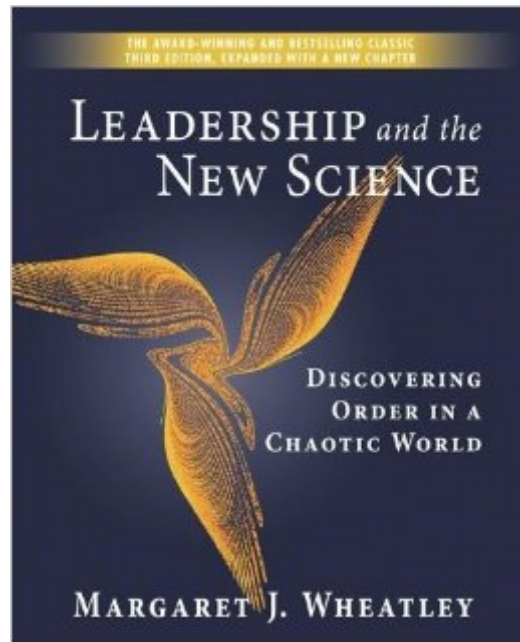


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Leadership And The New Science: Discovering Order In A Chaotic World



Synopsis

Leadership and the New Science launched a revolution by demonstrating that ideas drawn from quantum physics, chaos theory, and molecular biology could improve organizational performance. Margaret Wheatley called for free-flowing information, individual empowerment, relationship networks, and organizational change that evolves organically -- ideas that have become commonplace. Now Wheatley's updated classic, based on her experiences with these ideas in a diverse number of organizations on five continents, is available in paperback.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Leadership and the New Science: Discovering Order in a Chaotic World is Margaret J. Wheatley's effort to correlate principles of physics to the human dynamics that drive organizational effectiveness. Overall I thought the book was a worthwhile read and you may as well be depending upon what you're hoping to find. Many times when you hear an author or songwriter, it occurs to you that they're not saying anything that you're not already thinking or feeling; they simply find the words to express those thoughts where most of us come up short. Most of Wheatley's conclusions won't be viewed as revelations, but the thought process of getting there is rather novel in using principles of science to show how we can use them for benefit in dealing with people and organizations. Here is one example, and I thought it was the most effective part of the book. The Laws of Thermodynamics tell us about open and closed systems. A closed system consumes its own energy and eventually reaches a state of equilibrium where all things are

equal and in balanceâ |no change, no progress. Itâ™s nice and orderly, but nothing is happening. An open system on the other hand is chaotic because it is interacting with the environment around it. The chaos is what allows the system to grow and change in order to thrive in its environment.lâ™m sure you've seen these principles played out in organizations. The organization that closes itself to new ideas and new talent reduces chaos but in the long term also reduces the capability to create new opportunities or react quickly enough to environmental changes to survive.

I was required to purchase the hardcover edition of this book for a graduate school leadership class some years ago. At \$23 for 151 pages of widely spaced text, it clearly was going for the quality over quantity market, but did not deliver. To the contrary, I was left with the conviction that I had been scammed. As I read the positive reviews on this book, the image that comes to mind is that of the populace oohing and aahing over the vivid colors and delicate textures of the Emperor's new clothes.As other negative reviewers have commented, Wheatley's efforts to analogize from "new science" principles to management theory would be better served by a more accurate understanding of those principles. Though I'm no scientist, I've read enough to know that her descriptions of those principles were driven by the need to fit them into whatever flowery metaphor she had in mind.I have a theory that the more often a writer uses the words "we" and "our" to define the social or cultural conditions being discussed, the more incoherent, irrational or actively anti-rational his or her ideas will be. According to Wheatley:On equilibrium: "In a universe that is on a relentless road to death, we live in great fear. . . . In venerating equilibrium, we hide from the processes that foster life.. . . Can we dump these thermodynamics and get to the heart of things?"On Newtonian principles: "In our day-to-day search for order and prediction, we are driven crazy because of non-local causality. . . . The now-you-see-it, now-you-don't quality of these [elusive, fuzzy-world] boundaries will continue to drive us crazy a long as we try to delineate them. . .

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