
Jim Shaffer's

Suggested Reading List



Introduction

People frequently ask me: In this busy world what should I be reading to ground myself in business issues and remain current on the latest thinking?

For the past 10 years or so I've distributed my suggested reading list to clients who are looking for professional growth and to people who attend our workshops.

What follows is my newly updated reading list. I've divided it into some broad categories.

- Foundational Works: Classics that lie at the core of leading a successful organization.
- Strategy: The what and why of business strategy formulation and execution.
- Leadership, People and Communication: The softer side of business. Soft is hard.
- Transformational change and Lean Six Sigma: Core thinking, processes, tools and techniques got managing change and large and small scale performance improvement.
- Specific concepts and disciplines such as marketing, organizational research and creativity.

I hope you find the following selections helpful.

Jim

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Category 1: Foundational Works

- *The Human Side of Enterprise*, McGregor; The first work about our fundamental beliefs about people-where Theory X and Y started.
- *The Practice of Management*, Drucker; A Drucker foundation book on the basics of business.

Category 2: Strategy

- *Competitive Advantage and Competitive Strategy*, Porter; (These are two books) Both represent a solid grounding on business strategy, the first focusing on the difference between low cost strategies and differentiation or value adding strategies. If you only want to read one, read *Competitive Advantage*.
- *Competing for the Future*, Hamel and Prahalad; Current thinking around strategy and the competitive landscape.
- *Good to Great*, Collins; As Jim Collins says, "Good is the enemy of great." And that's why so many institutions only get to good--because they don't strive to be great. Collins uses a lot of examples of companies that successfully became great companies and how they did it.
- *The Experience Economy*; Pine and Gilmore; Moving from commodity to differentiation to selling an experience. Think Starbucks.

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Category 3: Leadership, People and Communication

- *The Soft Edge, Karlgaard*; One of the best arguments since *In Search of Excellence* for balancing a great strategy, a hard edge (precise execution) and a soft edge (people values)
- *The Leadership Challenge, Kouzes and Posner*; Along with Warren Bennis' *On Becoming a Leader*, the best and most enduring discussion about leadership.
- *The Great Game of Business, Stack*; Jack Stack is the pioneer of open book management, the practice of creating businesses of business people.
- *Open Book Management, Case*; Examples of companies that practice the concept of open book management.
- *Why the Bottom Line Isn't, Ulrich and Smallwood*; This is one of Dave Ulrich's better books in that it lays out an approach to building capabilities that build value through people.

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Category 4: Transformational Change and Lean Six Sigma

- *Out of the Crisis*, Deming; The guru of quality management and its principles. The foundation of lean.
- *Lean Six Sigma*, George; Combining Lean and Six Sigma in one book—what they mean and how to apply them.
- *Leading Change*, Kotter: The simplest discussion of what impedes and drives change in organizations. The book I wished I'd written before John Kotter did.
- *The Progress Principle; Amabile and Kramer*; A focus on evidence-based management and an argument for “the big things are the little things. Superior research.
- **Category 5: Specific concepts and disciplines**
- *The Balanced Scorecard*, Kaplan and Norton; Translating business strategy into action by focusing on financial, customer and people goals and action
- *Marketing Management*, Kotler; A foundational textbook about marketing as practiced by P&G and the other marketing engines.
- *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us*, Pink; A compelling discussion about intrinsic rewards. It's not all about the money.

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- *Hard Facts, Dangerous Half-Truths & Total Nonsense, Profiting from Evidence-Based Management*, Pfeffer and Sutton; Why you should always question conventional wisdom. A model for thinking about problems and causal relationships.
- *Made to Stick*, Chip and Dan Heath; How to design ideas that people will remember to act on.
- *Orbiting the Giant Hairball*, MacKenzie; The best book on creativity ever written. Gordon MacKenzie's love and warmth are on every page.
- *Creativity, Inc.*, Catmull; Perhaps the second best book on creativity (after *Orbiting the Giant Hairball*) and an excellent book on leading people—both techies and creative who are on the same team.
- *Practice What You Preach*, Maister; Excellent book on organization research and causation between employee research scores and financial performance.

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