



Surfing the Edge of Chaos: The Laws of Nature and the New Laws of Business

By Richard Pascale, Mark Millemann, Linda Gioja

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Surfing the Edge of Chaos is a brilliant, powerful, and practical book about the parallels between business and nature—two fields that feature nonstop battles between the forces of tradition and the forces of transformation. It offers a bold new way of thinking about and responding to the personal and strategic challenges everyone in business faces these days.

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- Sales Rank: #662942 in Books
- Published on: 2001-12
- Released on: 2001-12-26
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.00" h x .71" w x 5.20" l, .56 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 320 pages

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Download and Read Free Online **Surfing the Edge of Chaos: The Laws of Nature and the New Laws of Business** By Richard Pascale, Mark Millemann, Linda Gioja

Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In this breakthrough business book, Pascale, Millemann and Gioja troll the emerging science of complexity for "ideas [that] can produce a concrete bottom-line impact." Extracting key "dynamics of survival" from the life sciences, these three management consultants successfully show business leaders how to turn their companies into agile and adaptable "living systems" that achieve long-term vitality and sustainability in a swiftly evolving environment. Their four "bedrock" principles are "Equilibrium is a precursor to death"; "Living things move toward the edge of chaos"; "Components of living systems self-organize" in response to turmoil; and "Living systems cannot be directed along a linear path." Writing with clarity and verve, the authors illustrate these larger points by comparing the functioning of organic systems (e.g., Yellowstone National Park), the behavior of organisms (dental plaque) and of insects (fire ants) with detailed case studies of five companies (British Petroleum, Hewlett-Packard, Monsanto, Royal Dutch/Shell and Sun Microsystems) and the U.S. Army. Practical-minded readers will appreciate their nitty-gritty insights into the relative advantages of "adaptive" and traditional "operational" leadership, as well as their consistent distillation of concrete business guidelines. While the authors aver that "there is no permanent victory in this eternal cycle of life and death," they make a persuasive case that "understanding living systems does not decisively win the game but, most assuredly, it improves the odds." (Nov. 1)

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Review

"Great storytelling, experience-based insight, and effortless prose."

—Christopher Meyer, Director, The Cap Gemini Ernst & Young Center for Business Innovation, and coauthor of **BLUR: The Speed of Change in the Connected Economy and Future Wealth**

"**Surfing the Edge of Chaos** is a breakthrough book . . . rendering subtle and complex ideas into readable prose by refracting the ideas through the prism of real-life organizations. This book will be must reading for any serious executive or student of organizational change."

—Warren Bennis, University Professor and Founding Chairman of the Leadership Institute, University of Southern California, and author of **Managing the Dream**

"**Surfing the Edge of Chaos** is an action plan for bringing organizations to life and life to organizations."

—Prof. Gary Hamel, author of *Leading the Revolution* and coauthor of *Competing for the Future*; Visiting Professor, London Business School; and Chairman of Strategos

"Grounded in both theory and practice, **Surfing the Edge of Chaos** helps any manager facing change to replace equilibrium and the status quo with innovation and self-renewal. The links drawn between the world of nature and the world of business form a particularly rich source of ideas for turning complexity and chaos into resolve and results."

—Dave Ulrich, Professor of Business, University of Michigan, and author of **Results-Based Leadership**

From the Inside Flap

Every few years a book changes the way people think about a field. In psychology there is Daniel Goleman's *Emotional Intelligence*. In science, James Gleick's *Chaos*. In economics and finance, Burton Malkiel's *A Random Walk Down Wall Street*. And in business there is now **Surfing the Edge of Chaos** by Richard T. Pascale, Mark Millemann, and Linda Gioja.

Surfing the Edge of Chaos is a brilliant, powerful, and practical book about the parallels between business and nature -- two fields that feature nonstop battles between the forces of tradition and the forces of transformation. It offers a bold new way of thinking about and responding to the personal and strategic challenges everyone in business faces these days.

Pascale, Millemann, and Gioja argue that because every business is a living system (not just as metaphor but in reality), the four cornerstone principles of the life sciences are just as true for organizations as they are for species. These principles are:

Equilibrium is death.

Innovation usually takes place on the edge of chaos.

Self-organization and emergence occur naturally.

Organizations can only be disturbed, not directed.

Using intriguing, in-depth case studies (Sears Roebuck, Monsanto, Royal Dutch Shell, the U.S. Army, British Petroleum, Hewlett Packard, Sun Microsystems), **Surfing the Edge of Chaos** shows that in business, as in nature, there are no permanent winners. There are just companies and species that either react to change and evolve, or get left behind and become extinct.

Some examples:

Parallels between Yellowstone National Park and Sears show why equilibrium is a dangerous place in both nature and business.

How Monsanto used a "strange attractor" to move to the edge of chaos to alter its identity and transform its culture.

The unlikely story of how the U.S. Army embraced the ideas of self-organization and emergence.

Why the misapplication of linear logic (reengineering a business or attempting to eradicate predators in nature) will inevitably fail.

The stories in **Surfing the Edge of Chaos** are of pioneering efforts that show how the principles of living systems produce bottom-line impact and profound transformational change. What's really striking about them, though, is their reality. They are about success and failure, breakthroughs and dead-ends. In short, they are like the business you are in and the challenges you face.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Jennifer McMorris:

Do you have favorite book? In case you have, what is your favorite's book? Reserve is very important thing for us to be aware of everything in the world. Each guide has different aim as well as goal; it means that publication has different type. Some people experience enjoy to spend their time and energy to read a book. They can be reading whatever they have because their hobby is reading a book. What about the person who don't like examining a book? Sometime, man feel need book once they found difficult problem or even exercise. Well, probably you'll have this Surfing the Edge of Chaos: The Laws of Nature and the New Laws of Business.

Sheldon Downs:

This Surfing the Edge of Chaos: The Laws of Nature and the New Laws of Business book is not ordinary book, you have it then the world is in your hands. The benefit you receive by reading this book is actually information inside this reserve incredible fresh, you will get details which is getting deeper an individual read a lot of information you will get. This particular Surfing the Edge of Chaos: The Laws of Nature and the New Laws of Business without we recognize teach the one who examining it become critical in pondering and analyzing. Don't end up being worry Surfing the Edge of Chaos: The Laws of Nature and the New Laws of Business can bring if you are and not make your handbag space or bookshelves' turn into full because you can have it inside your lovely laptop even cellphone. This Surfing the Edge of Chaos: The Laws of Nature and the New Laws of Business having good arrangement in word and layout, so you will not feel uninterested in reading.

Donald White:

Surfing the Edge of Chaos: The Laws of Nature and the New Laws of Business can be one of your basic books that are good idea. Most of us recommend that straight away because this publication has good vocabulary that can increase your knowledge in terminology, easy to understand, bit entertaining but delivering the information. The article author giving his/her effort to set every word into pleasure arrangement in writing Surfing the Edge of Chaos: The Laws of Nature and the New Laws of Business yet doesn't forget the main level, giving the reader the hottest in addition to based confirm resource information that maybe you can be certainly one of it. This great information can certainly drawn you into completely new stage of crucial contemplating.

Mario Curtin:

Some individuals said that they feel fed up when they reading a book. They are directly felt the idea when they get a half portions of the book. You can choose the actual book Surfing the Edge of Chaos: The Laws of Nature and the New Laws of Business to make your current reading is interesting. Your personal skill of reading proficiency is developing when you like reading. Try to choose simple book to make you enjoy to study it and mingle the idea about book and examining especially. It is to be initially opinion for you to like to start a book and study it. Beside that the e-book Surfing the Edge of Chaos: The Laws of Nature and the New Laws of Business can to be your friend when you're truly feel alone and confuse in doing what must you're doing of this time.

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