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Business & Economics

Adaptability: The Art of Winning in an Age of Uncertainty
Max McKeown
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People are resistant to change and often fail to improve bad situations, a phenomenon that Max McKeown explores in *Adaptability*. This versatile book is officially classified as a business title, but the author's ingenious approach makes it useful in all endeavors, even in correcting a personal outlook that may be self-defeating.

The line drawn between private and professional is frequently blurred, since human conduct is at the controlling hub of business. McKeown has divided his text into three parts with seventeen rules, opening with catchy headings such as "All failure is failure to adapt" and "Stability is a dangerous illusion." His goal is to teach people how to win, rather than stagnate in a desultory competition. This author suggests changing the games and the rules themselves, making the world a better place for everyone.

Using diverse examples, including everything from ancient Greek history to international corporate fiascos and the fascinating activities of ants, McKeown illuminates why people act as they do—what works, what doesn't work, what holds us back. This enlightening motivational tool helps the individual determine where a problem exists and how to fix it, especially in an organization. Though a header titled, "Swerve and swarm," might make a conservative cringe, the lessons learned from this section could help prevent "an unhealthy gap between need and behavior," or, in other words, a failure to adapt. "Evolution, it has been argued, does not care what we think," says McKeown. "It cares about what we do. Evolution selects based on actions."

Backed by solid research and references, McKeown provides a common-sense guide to adapting beyond the point of mere survival. He believes that when people can't grow, societies can't grow. Embedded in this uplifting, inspirational message is a not-so-subtle political statement on countless issues. Though not offensive, the author's opinions emerge from the pages in bits and pieces, as he freely travels from one topic to another in illustrative examples

that can be applied to business. One might not have expected to find commentary on the military, war, and government, but these subjects make a prominent appearance.

Adapting can be challenging to the traditionalist who expects one set of circumstances and encounters another. McKeown wants us to be faster and smarter than the situation facing us, which, according to him, is the difference between coping and winning.

Max McKeown is the author of several books on innovation and competitive advantage. A consultant and public speaker, his clients include Microsoft and Virgin.

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