The Future Arrived Yesterday: The Rise of the Protean Corporation and What It Means for You by Michael Malone

A bold vision about the ways companies will adapt and be reborn in a revolutionary world where business models implode and the search is on for what will work. . . .

The fate of newspapers and the music industry is a harbinger of what awaits every company: an aging business model in its death throes as people finally wake up to the grim fact that their products and the way they deliver them are completely out of sync not only with what customers want but how they want it. But Michael Malone—the author who, when the Internet was still the domain of technical experts, enabled his readers to see clearly the opportunities of the then-emerging digital age—is back and once again making sense of a future just around the corner.

Business considerations such as the wireless World Wide Web, billions of new consumers, and an entrepreneurial ethos are all converging. How a corporation is organized and how people will be managed and employed will change more quickly than anyone realizes. With technology poised to connect a billion new consumers from the most remote parts of the globe, corporations will enter a volatile economic era marked by unprecedented threats and opportunities. Survival will require companies to be “protean”—nimble shape-shifters able to change direction and identity in response to a rapidly evolving international marketplace. They must, in other words, act like perpetual entrepreneurial start-ups.
In our Web 2.0 world “the future arrived yesterday,” since the tools for success already exist and are the means for companies becoming protean. Malone provides remarkable insights into how this emerging corporate form will work and why it’s the key to competitiveness. Find out:

• Why the traditional CEO as master of the universe will be extinct. The CEO will be a chameleon, adapting management style and attitude to each company’s constituency.

• How to identify a core group of employees who will provide stability through their knowledge of the company’s history, values, and culture.

• How to effectively recruit, manage, and retain the best talent in an increasingly nontraditional, entrepreneurial, and peripatetic workforce.

• Who stakeholders are, why they matter, and how they will extend beyond any comparable business organization to this point.

• Why the rigid boundaries between for-profit and nonprofit ventures are likely to dissolve through alternate forms of value creation, resulting in hybrid enterprises.

By embracing impermanence and becoming true shape-shifters, protean businesses will not only endure, they’ll come to dominate large segments of the global economy. Provocative and pragmatic, The Future Arrived Yesterday is a dynamic blueprint for a tumultuous economic age.

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My Personal Review:
"In his new book entitled "The Future Arrived Yesterday", Michael S. Malone defines a new phenomenon in the corporate world which he calls the Protean Corporation. The Protean Corporation is a new form of organization that is structured to handle the stresses and strains we see emerging in our marketplace today. Stresses ranging from the retiring baby boomers being replaced by Gen Xer’s, Gen Y’s and millennials to the rising Asian workforce, continuous Internet connectivity, the pace of technological change, dramatic increases in new consumers the emerging nations and the rise in entrepreneurialism. These stresses and strains are unleashing an unprecedented rate of change into the marketplace, a rate of change that has never before been experienced and one that the organizations of today cannot possible handle successfully."
According to Malone the Protean Corporation "must find a way to continuously and rapidly change almost everyone of their attributes - products, services, finances, physical plant, markets, customers, and both tactical and strategic goals - yet at the same time retain a core of values, customs, legends, and philosophy that will be little affected by the continuous and explosive changes taking place just beyond its edges."

How does the Protean Corporation do this? By structuring itself into three distinct groups;

1. Core - the core staff are permanent staff responsible to retain the core values, customs, legends, and philosophies so that they will be little affected by the continuous and explosive changes. It is up to them to uphold the corporation's culture.

2. Inner Ring - permanent employees responsible for the operations of the business. These staff need to understand the workings of the business inside and out and must be extraordinary leaders as they will be leading day to day activities of the "Cloud" which makes up 90% of the Protean Corporation.

3. Cloud - in terms of numbers, the Cloud makes up 90% of the Protean Corporation. These are temporary staff whose employment may last anywhere from hours to days to years depending on their role and the requirements of the Protean Corporation at the time. They will be the staff that actually executes most of the day to day work under the guidance and direction of the Inner Ring. The Core employees will oversee the Inner Ring and the Cloud and ensure that the corporation's core culture is maintained.

What does this have to do with your Strength Zone?

It's pretty simple reallyâ€¦ unless you understand your strengths and are working in your Strength Zone, you are not going to understand where you fit into the Protean Corporation and you will end up getting steam rolled by it. You need to understand how you can best apply your strengths in this new organization and whether you are best fit to live in the Core, the Inner Ring or the Cloud.

No matter how the Protean Corporation structures itself to handle the increasing rate of change in today's world, unless its employees are working in their areas of strength (their Strength Zone), the Protean Corporation will not be successful.

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