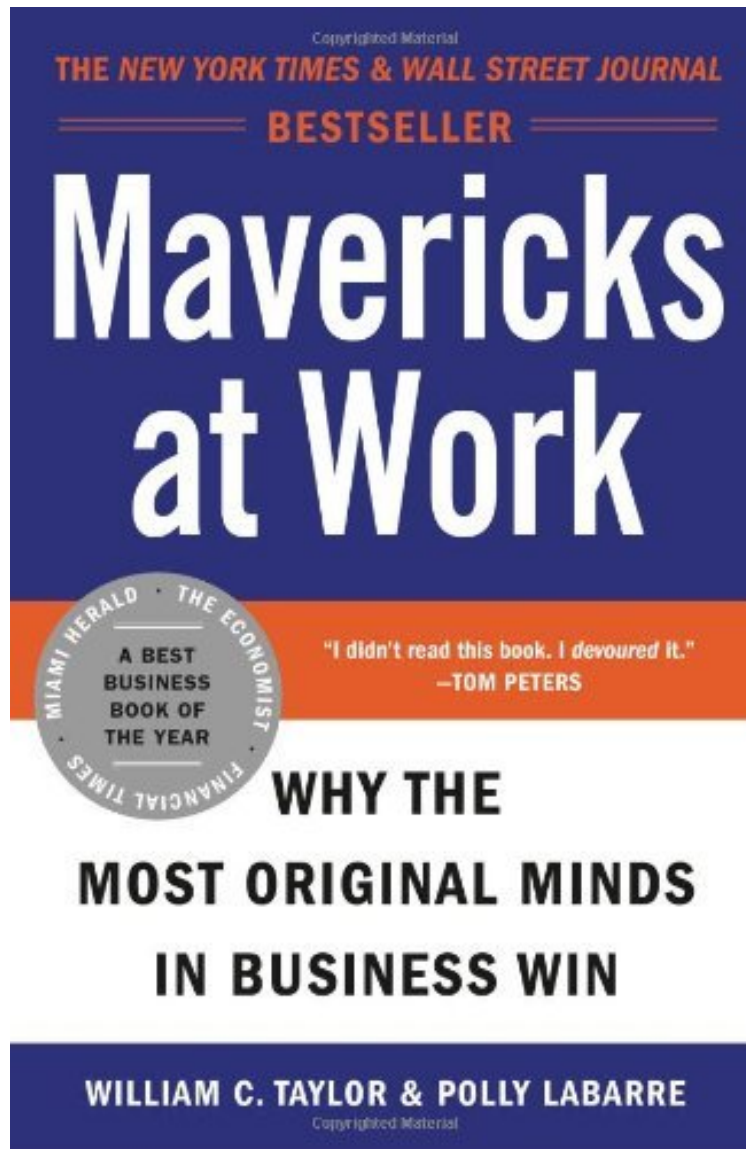


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Mavericks at Work: Why the Most Original Minds in Business Win

William C. Taylor, Polly G. LaBarre
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William C. Taylor, Polly G. LaBarre : Mavericks at Work: Why the Most Original Minds in Business Win
before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Mavericks at Work: Why the Most Original Minds in Business Win:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Looking for something to differentiate your business? By Jennifer H.I gave this 5 stars because for me, I like to do introspection and analysis on business processes, customer experience, and optimizing work for employees. I look for win-win. This book doesn't give you the answers: it discusses ideas on being different in business: being better, raising the bar, looking for wins for all involved, integrity

in your interactions, and gives good examples of where these ideas have been successful. This book was great for me, but for someone looking for step-by-step, they might not enjoy it. This isn't a roadmap: this is a boost to those that already have a lot of investment in their business and strong desire to step out, improve, and stand out. I read this when it first came out and then again recently. It was well worth the re-read. I thought so much of this book that I bought copies for others, including a couple mentees that are just getting started in business. Hope the ideas in this book remind them that, even though they are being assimilated into the business world, don't lose your originality of thought and ideas.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. How an organization can prosper in a "hypercompetitive marketplace" By Robert Morris As William C. Taylor and Polly LaBarre explain in this book, Samuel Augustus Maverick (1803-70) was a wealthy land speculator in southwest Texas who cared little about cattle. "When someone repaid a debt with 400 head of cattle rather than cash, Maverick's caretakers allowed them to wander unbranded. Over time, locals who saw unbranded cattle would say, 'Those are Maverick's' - and a term was born that today refers to politicians, entrepreneurs, and innovators who refuse to run with the herd." Until reading this book, I did not know the origin of the term and tended to define it too narrowly as a descriptive of those who are by nature unconventional, eccentric, odd, etc. One of the basic arguments in this book is that, "when it comes to thriving in a hypercompetitive marketplace, 'playing it safe' is no longer playing it smart [and in business] mavericks do the work that matters most - the work of originality, creativity, and experimentation. They demonstrate that you can build companies around high ideals and fierce competitive ambitions, that the most powerful way to create economic value is to embrace a set of values that go beyond just amassing power, and that business, at its best, is too exciting, too important, and too much fun to be left to the dead hand of business as usual." That is certainly true of the decision-makers in the 32 organizations on which Taylor and LaBarre function in this book. The strategies, practices, and leadership styles may in some respects seem "unconventional, eccentric, odd, etc." However, they help to explain how organizations as diverse as Anthropologie, Commerce Bank, DPR Corporation, GSDM, IBM's Extreme Blue, ING Direct, the Pixar Animation Studio, and Southwest Airlines have achieved extraordinary success in the "hypercompetitive marketplace" to which the authors refer. However, and this is a key point, Taylor and LaBarre correctly note that there's a significant difference "between learning from someone else's ideas and applying them effectively somewhere else." Presumably Cirque du Soleil's founder, Guy Liberteacute;, and his associates rigorously examined dozens of other organizations while formulating and later refining their own strategies, practices, and leadership styles. In fact, that process never ends in "maverick" organizations such as Cirque du Soleil as their leaders continue to learn much of great value, especially what would not work and/or would not be appropriate for their organization. This really is a key point for those who read this book: by all means pay close attention to the various "Maverick Messages" that Taylor and LaBarre provide and explore the various "Maverick Material" they identify, then adapt -- rather than attempt to duplicate -- whatever will help make their own organizations more competitive. I was especially interested in the material provided in Chapter Ten, The Company You Keep: Business as If People Mattered. Specifically I was curious to know how various "maverick" organizations recruited, interviewed, hired, and then developed the people they need to achieve what Jim Collins would describe as their "BHAGs," their Big Hairy Audacious Goals. What kind of people do they look for? Here's one response, from Jane Harper, founder of IBM's Extreme Blue: "This is about finding people who could run the company someday. What we offer is cool projects, small teams, and dynamic places to work. We look for virtuoso skills, unique life experience, and genuine passion. Our people groove on this work. They love it. And you can't fake that." IBM describes Extreme Blue as an incubator for talent, technology, and business innovation. Its manifesto is "start something big." Taylor and LaBarre observe, "In the long term, the aim of Extreme Blue is to demonstrate new ways for IBM itself to work - to accelerate the turnaround strategy unleashed by the now legendary Lou Gerstner and advanced by his successor, Sam Palmisano." Later in this chapter, Taylor and LaBarre pose two questions that address the challenge of what they describe as "enhancing the character of competition": (1) Why would great people want to be part of this company? and (2) Where and how to find great people in the first place? Consider these brief comments about Cirque du Soleil: "Our mission is to invoke the imagination, provoke the senses, and evoke emotions." Lyn Heward "Talent is everywhere. That is why we look everywhere. If we want to reinvent ourselves - which is what everybody at Cirque is trying to do - then we have to constantly bring in new things. We never close off any avenue where we might discover new talent. Our responsibility is to have our eyes open." Line Giasson "There are no stars here. The show is the star. That's why our evaluation goes deeper than a talent evaluation. We need to learn about the person behind the artist. How many somersaults you can do is not as important as open-mindedness to our process, the tough-mindedness to get through the job, and what we call a 'fire to perform.' That's what we're looking for." Lyn Heward

In the Introduction, Taylor and LaBarre promise to provide a book "that aims to be true to the maverick spirit of the agenda that it champions and the leaders it chronicles." They fully deliver on that promise as they examine with rigor and eloquence 32 organizations that exude "an undeniable sense of purpose. But it's a sense of purpose that provokes: each company's strategy tends to be as edgy as it is enduring, as disruptive as it is distinctive, as timely as it is timeless." Congratulations to Taylor and LaBarre on what I consider to be a brilliant achievement. Bravo!

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Edgy and Disruptive By Andrew Schonbek This is a very good book. The authors, editors of Fast Company magazine, take us through the edgy and

disruptive strategies and practices that define a new management paradigm of the 21st century. The picture is painted with anecdotes and observations from such companies as Southwest Airlines, ING, HBO, Craigslist, Cranium, Whole Foods, Goldcorp, TopCoder, NineSigma, Vermont Teddy Bear Company and Cirque de Soleil. Fast Company indeed. Attention is given to strategy in the context of a new understanding of competitive advantage. There's an interesting overview of open source concepts and the reinvention of innovation. Cutting edge customer service and redesigning work to engage the talents of outstanding people are also examined at length. While many of the ideas of the book are lofty and in some cases counterintuitive, all are presented in an engaging, down to earth and straightforward manner. Here's an example from the Redesigning Work section: "There are good people and there are great people. Great people tend to hire other great people, because that's who they want to work with. But good people tend to hire people who aren't so good. They don't want to manage people who are smarter than they are. So over time, unless you're tough and disciplined, the talent level in the company declines to the lowest common denominator, and you wind up with lots of crappy people. It's a disaster". One important question however, is left unanswered. If the practices that are described eventually do prevail will they cease to be effective? What if everybody is an outlier? Hmmm...

Business as usual is a bust . . . In industry after industry, organizations that were once dismissed as upstarts, wildcards—mavericks—are making serious waves and growing fast. From high-profile innovators such as HBO and Google to funky sandwich shop chains, the truly imaginative and unconventional businesses are changing the way things are done—providing new approaches, strategies, and outlooks, as well as better ways to compete, lead, and succeed in the twenty-first century. The first book to document this change, *Mavericks at Work* is business "edutainment" for a smart, ambitious readership, profiling some of the most exciting—and often eccentric—CEOs in the United States, while detailing their remarkable strategies for success

.com In *Mavericks at Work*, Fast Company cofounder William C. Taylor and Polly LaBarre, a longtime editor at the magazine, give you an inside look at the "most original minds in business" wherever they find them: from Procter Gamble to Pixar, from gold mines to funky sandwich shops. Want to stop doing business as usual? Then take some lessons from the 32 maverick companies Taylor and LaBarre profile. Questions for William C. Taylor and Polly LaBarre .com: Whom do you think this book will appeal to? Taylor and LaBarre: This book should appeal to a wide "coalition" of business leaders and innovators—impatient, change-minded executives in big companies, senior leaders in smaller, entrepreneurial companies, young people with big dreams about their future and their careers. This book should inform and energize anyone and everyone who wants to do big things in business by shaking up the status quo and challenging the powers-that-be. One important point: We strongly believe that this book should appeal to women as well as men. It is not meant to be an uptight, starched-shirt type read—your typical all-male business book. The book doesn't target women executives per se, but we believe it will appeal to men and women alike. .com: What's the story behind the book? Taylor and LaBarre: In one sense, *Mavericks at Work* has been 18 months in the making. That's the amount of time that the two of us spent totally focused on the travel, research, interviewing, and writing to create *Mavericks at Work*. In another sense, this book reflects more than a decade's worth of learning, thinking, and writing about the best way to do business and the new cast of companies and individual leaders that represent the face of business at its best. First at that classic voice of the business establishment, Harvard Business , and then at the new-generation magazine that he cofounded, Fast Company, Bill Taylor has been traveling the world, visiting companies, and interviewing great business leaders. Much the same goes for Polly LaBarre—first at the venerable *IndustryWeek* magazine, and then as one of the original members of the Fast Company team, Polly has made it her speciality to discover, understand, and chronicle the most exciting and innovative leaders in business. With respect to *Mavericks*, the book reflects our in-depth access to the 32 companies featured in the book. This is anything but an "armchair" business book. We logged tens of thousands of miles and spent countless hours visiting, conducting interviews at, and participating in meetings, training sessions, and events inside a wide variety of organizations. We went deep inside these organizations, looking to understand the ideas they stand for and the ways they work. We participated in a filmmaking class at one of the world's most successful movie studios. We attended a closed-to-the-public awards ceremony at Radio City Music Hall, where employees of what has to be the world's most entertaining bank sang, danced, and strutted their stuff. We sat in on a crucial monthly meeting (the 384th such consecutive meeting over the last 32 years) in which top executives and front-line managers of a \$600-million employee-owned company share their most sensitive financial information and most valuable market secrets. We walked the corridors of a 120-year-old research facility where a team of change-minded RD executives is transforming how one of the world's biggest companies develops new ideas for consumer products. We walked the streets of Manhattan with teams of employees from a hard-charging hedge fund, who were sizing up ideas about stock-market picks. .com: What makes this book relevant today? Taylor and LaBarre: We believe that this is the right book at the right time, with a set of messages and a collection of practices that will inspire business executives and entrepreneurs to bring out the best in their companies, their colleagues, and themselves. Why this book now? Because business needs

a breath of fresh air. We are, after five long years, coming out of a dark and trying period in our economy and society--an era of slow growth and dashed expectations, of criminal wrongdoing and ethical misconduct at some of the world's best-known companies. But NASDAQ nuttiness already feels like time-capsule fodder, the white-collar perp walk has become as routine as an annual meeting, and the triumphant return of me-first moguls like Donald Trump feels like a bad nostalgia trip, the corporate equivalent of a hair-band reunion. We've seen the face of business at its worst, and it hasn't been a pretty sight. This book is intended to persuade readers of the power of business at its best. Which speaks to one of our major goals for Mavericks at Work--to restore the promise of business as a force for innovation, satisfaction, and progress, rather than as a source of revulsion, remorse, and recrimination. Indeed, despite all the bleak headlines and blood-boiling scandals over the last five years, the economy has experienced a period of transformation and realignment, a power shift so profound that we're just beginning to appreciate what it means for the future of business--and for how all of us go about the business of building companies that work and doing work that matters. In industry after industry, organizations and executives that were once dismissed as upstarts, as outliers, as wildcards, have achieved positions of financial prosperity and market leadership. There's a reason the young billionaires behind the most celebrated entrepreneurial success in recent memory began their initial public offering (IPO) of shares with a declaration of independence from business as usual. "Google is not a conventional company," read their Letter from the Founders. "We do not intend to become one." Nor does the unconventional cast of characters readers will encounter in this book. From a culture-shaping television network with offices in sun-splashed Santa Monica, California, to a little-known office-furniture manufacturer rooted in the frozen tundra of Green Bay, Wisconsin, from glamorous fields such as advertising, fashion, and the Internet, to old-line industries such as construction, mining, and household products, they are winning big at business--attracting millions of customers, creating thousands of jobs, generating tens of billions of dollars of wealth--by rethinking the logic of how business gets done. Alan Kay, the celebrated computer scientist, put it memorably some 35 years ago: "The best way to predict the future is to invent it." We believe the companies, executives, and entrepreneurs you'll meet in the pages that follow are inventing a more exciting, more compelling, more rewarding future for business. They have devised provocative and instructive answers to four of the timeless challenges that face organizations of every size and leaders in every field: how you make strategy, how you unleash new ideas, how you connect with customers, how your best people achieve great results.

.com: Can you give us a brief summary of your book--in 250 words or less? Taylor and LaBarre: This book is a report from the front lines of the future of business. It is not a book of best practices. It is a book of next practices--a set of insights and a collection of case studies that amount to a business plan for the 21st century, a new way to lead, compete, and succeed. Our basic argument is as straightforward to explain as it is urgent to apply: When it comes to thriving in a hyper-competitive marketplace, "playing it safe" is no longer playing it smart. In an economy defined by overcapacity, oversupply, and utter sensory overload--an economy in which everyone already has more than enough of whatever it is you're selling--the only way to stand out from the crowd is to stand for a truly distinctive set of ideas about where your company and industry can and should be going. You can't do big things as a competitor if you're content with doing things a little better than the competition. This book is devoted to the proposition that the best way to out-perform the competition is to out-think the competition. Maverick companies aren't always the largest in their field; maverick entrepreneurs don't always make the cover of the business magazines. But mavericks do the work that matters most--the work of originality, creativity, and experimentation. They demonstrate that you can build companies around high ideals and fierce competitive ambitions, that the most powerful way to create economic value is to embrace a set of values that go beyond just amassing power, and that business, at its best, is too exciting, too important, and too much fun to be left to the dead hand of business as usual. Who are these mavericks? The core ideas in this book are rooted in the strategies, practices, and leadership styles of 32 organizations with vastly different histories, cultures, and business models. But all of them are business originals, based on the distinctiveness of their ideas and the power of their practices. They are rethinking competition, reinventing innovation, reconnecting with customers, and redesigning work. Together, they are creating a maverick agenda for business--an agenda from which every business can learn. From Publishers Weekly

A collection of case studies featuring the same formulaic ebullience endemic to business books since blurber Tom Peters' seminal work *In Search of Excellence*, this reader from *FastCompany* magazine cofounder Taylor and influential business writer LaBarre profiles some of the more interesting companies doing business today: Cirque de Soleil, Commerce Bank, Pixar, Anthropologie, Southwest Airlines, Jones Soda, Apple Computer and Craigslist among them. Such companies may have disparate cultures, but what unites them is originality, self-knowledge and passion. Whether by remaining small, recruiting zealously, or functioning like a kind of cult, such businesses succeed by imbuing the corporate rank and file with an entrepreneur's vision, avoiding the twin vices of mediocrity and complacency. Conversational but rigorous, Taylor and LaBarre's chipper exploration of imagination at work holds value for novice and journeyman business leaders. Copyright copy; Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

From Booklist Although the title sounds like a self-help guide to the dysfunctionally employed, the aim of this book is actually to challenge business leaders to think bigger and aim higher. Those are certainly not new challenges, so what makes this book different from all the others that encourage entrepreneurs to "break the mold"? The authors

have identified positive developments in a business environment that is struggling to emerge from slow growth, dashed expectations, and corporate scandal. Although they show how big-name innovators such as HBO, IBM, and Procter Gamble are finding new ways to stand out, a new breed is emerging that is proving that smarter can beat bigger. Companies such as Netflix, Google, and craigslist really are reinventing the wheel and have caused the business community to stand up and notice. The authors' vision is that these new innovators, once dismissed as upstarts, hold the key to reinstituting business as a source of inspiration and progress, creating a path for others to follow. David Siegfried Copyright copy; American Library Association. All rights reserved