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*Cultural Transformations*
Authors: John Mattone and Nick Vaidya
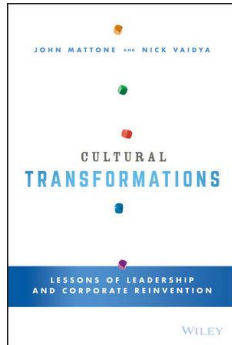Book Review                    Reviewer: John Poulos

# PM WORLD BOOK REVIEW

Book Title:     *Cultural Transformations – Lessons of Leadership and Corporate Reinvention*

Authors:        **John Mattone and Nick Vaidya**

Publisher:      Wiley

List Price:     $30.00          Format:  Hardcover, 272 pages

Publication Date:   Jan 2016          ISBN: 978-1-119-05592-1

Reviewer:       **John Poulos**          Review Date:  April 2016

## Introduction

The authors – John Mattone, a leading authority on leadership, talent and culture, and Nick Vaidya, Editor-in-Chief of The CIO Magazine and Managing Director of the CEO Leadership Institute – outline the challenges that form the premise of this book. They include:

- To stay ahead in a rapidly changing and globalized economy, transformation has become an imperative, yet by some estimates, 75% of transformation initiatives fall short of their goals
- Culture plays an essential role in creating and sustaining long-term growth and change
- Leadership is key to creating a strong business culture and driving transformation
- Companies worldwide are currently facing a massive leadership and corporate culture gap

On this foundation, they proceed to describe an overall framework and guide to developing strong and effective leadership that can shape culture and transformation. A series of interviews with a diverse mix of successful CEOs follows, serving to illustrate the challenges and accomplishment of these leaders, while reinforcing important themes of the case for transforming culture and closing the leadership gap.

## Overview of Book's Structure

The book is structured as follows:

Chapter 1 - Defines culture as comprising five culture building blocks (Capability, Commitment, Alignment, Individual Performance and Team Performance), notes the importance of culture and transformation, and establishes the vital role of leadership in driving this transformation. It also introduces proprietary frameworks, such as the

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Cultural Value Proposition and the Stealth Cultural Transformation Model, that help understand and apply the authors' concepts to new situations.

Chapter 2 – Lays out the six critical steps to transforming culture, and emphasizes the central role that the CEO plays in this endeavor. Uses the Wheel of Intelligent Leadership framework, including the "Inner Core" and "Outer Core" traits, to show the richness of attributes and competencies that an outstanding leader should exhibit. It concludes with a roadmap for transformation.

Chapters 3 through 16 – Interviews with 14 accomplished CEOs from different world locations, backgrounds and leadership journeys. Compelling background stories and insights on culture, change, leadership and advice for new leaders.

Chapter 17 – Final thoughts and a call to action. Also makes the case for a proper assessment of the current situation, challenges and opportunities ("prescription before diagnosis is malpractice").

Appendixes A and B – John Mattone's 20 Laws of Intelligent Leadership and a Cultural Transformation Readiness Assessment template.

**Highlights**

Most readers can relate to the challenges that this book is seeking to address. Corporate culture distinguishes many standout companies, but harnessing the potential of a transformative culture is not a simple undertaking. Complicating the task are the frequent mergers and acquisitions that bring different cultures and leadership models together under the same roof. Identifying and nurturing leaders from the top down is essential to reaping the benefits of such transactions and continuing to build value.

Numerous themes are emphasized throughout the book, including the following:

- Transformation and culture start with the CEO, who must think different and think big
- Attracting and developing talent is one of the most effective ingredients for a leader's and the organization's success
- The need for change and transformation is ever present, if you want to continue to be relevant
- Taking care of and respecting people is a common trait of outstanding leaders
- Transforming mind-sets leads to transforming behaviors, which leads to transforming culture
- Leadership is a marathon, not a sprint

These and other important attributes of leadership and prescriptions for successful culture transformation are introduced in the early chapters, and then sprinkled throughout the numerous CEO interview write-ups.

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**Highlights: What I liked!**

I appreciated the framework of ideas and relationships that paint a comprehensive and compelling picture of culture and leadership. Though not a cookie-cutter template for implementation, they can provide a basic structure around which to design a transformation initiative in your enterprise.

I also enjoyed the panorama of CEO perspectives from leaders with wide ranging experiences, industries, geographies and life journeys. While there are, not surprisingly, distinct differences in approaches and advice, I also could frequently discern common patterns and alignment with the concepts outlined in the book.

**Who might benefit from the Book?**

This book will be of interest to senior management in any organization that recognizes the need to transform itself to retain or attain leadership in its market, is struggling to strengthen and/or fully leverage its corporate culture, or is seeking to raise the level of leadership across the organization.

Managers and practitioners at all levels that are seeking to make a difference can apply the concepts and frameworks to drive change in their companies, while gaining practical insights from successful leaders.

Anyone who wants to gain additional perspective on leadership as a lever for organizational improvement and career advancement will discover provocative ideas and guidance in this book.

**Conclusion**

This book casts the culture and leadership gap as a challenge that we can't afford to ignore. While the magnitude of the gap and urgency for transformation may vary across companies, a mind-set that embraces change must exist at the C-level suite and pervade the organization to enable on-going culture and leadership excellence.

For more about this book, go to: http://www.wiley.com/WileyCDA/WileyTitle/productCd-111905592X.html

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## About the Reviewer



### John Poulos, PMP

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**John Poulos** has over thirty years of experience providing guidance on the effective use of information technology while delivering business-driven, technology-based solutions to a wide range of private and public sector organizations. In his current position as Senior Director of Cloud Services at NTT DATA, he manages strategic projects for NTT DATA/CS leadership, supporting growth and process maturity objectives of the practice. In addition, he delivers infrastructure and IT strategy consulting services to corporate and government clients. In prior positions, John provided IT consulting services across various industries and geographical regions. He managed complex projects for clients in private enterprise, higher education and government. John holds E.E. and Engineering Management degrees from Southern Methodist University, MIT, and The George Washington University.

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