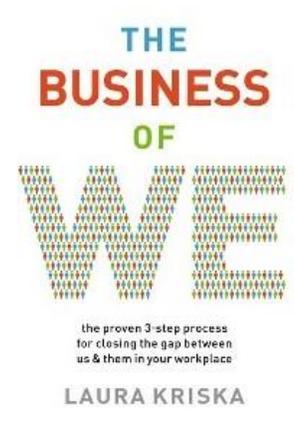


The Business of WE

There has never been a more important time for Laura Kriska’s WE-building tools.”
—Yasuyuki Suguira, Former President, **Mitsubishi Corporation America**

Us versus Them gaps have always impacted in the American workplace – Sales versus Marketing, Manufacturing versus Engineering, Human Resources versus Legal – but the demand on stakeholders to address a wide range of culture gaps is more urgent than ever before due to the impact of the pandemic, Black Lives Matter protests, and the most divisive election in modern times. No matter what your politics, one thing is clear—the old tools just don’t work; a new approach to diversity, cultural difference, and inclusion is urgently needed. What can business leaders do to create true synergy among the diverse and often fiercely divided members of their workforce?

In *The Business of WE* (HarperCollins Leadership; January 12, 2021), **Laura Kriska** presents a practical roadmap for building cohesive, high-performing teams, regardless of members’ differences. Drawing on her decades of international experience as a cross-cultural consultant, Kriska shares her unique mindset and proven method: *WE-building*. As the author impresses on every business leader, successful WE-building begins by seeing and naming differences in your organization and then acknowledging your own role in *Us versus Them* dynamics.



“Us” refers to members of what Kriska calls *the home team*: the homogenous group in power whose norms become the standard by which all people in the organization are measured. Leadership in many organizations is made up of people who belong to the home team and who themselves are the product of a generation taught to be color-blind and culture-silent. The legal landscape is riddled with costly penalties for the smallest mistakes, which leaves many leaders confused about how to navigate this critical issue. Instead of engaging in honest self-assessment, many view diversity as a risk to be avoided with the help of lawyers. In contrast, WE-builders see differences as real, predictable, and an opportunity to learn and expand—and work to close any gap between people who are separated by ethnicity, language, race, religion, or any factor that divides.

“When people work together across differences and take action to close gaps, amazing things can result,” Kriska attests. “But skills among those on the home team to see and

to recognize differences elude many people, including leaders. Knowing how to close gaps remains a mystery to many of us.”

Offering more than a fresh perspective, *The Business of WE* provides a practical three-step process for closing any gap that gets in the way of people’s ability to communicate, collaborate with, and trust one

another: #1: **Foster Awareness** #2: **Self-Assess** #3. **Take Action**

While the process is simple, applying it to achieve real and lasting change requires time and effort, commitment and accountability. To light the way, Kriska shares stories of wide-ranging companies that significantly improved innovation and productivity, reduced supplier costs, and increased profits all because leaders and employees from different backgrounds closed *Us versus Them* gaps. Among many eye-opening insights and effective strategies, readers will learn:

- A quick and effective way for anyone to measure their own level of engagement with any ‘them’ culture.
- How to effectively repair division without spending a dime
- How to recognize warning signs of *Us versus Them* gaps, from derogatory comments about a specific group to unspoken divisions reflected by where people sit or hang out.
- How to proactively create opportunities for individuals to *discover existing common factors* and sponsor experiences that *become shared factors* among diverse employees and create unity within organizations.

In the wake of the Black Lives Matter movement, the Covid-19 pandemic, and a contentious Presidential election, people across a diversity of geographies, ethnicities, races, genders, generations, faiths, and political views have to work exceptionally well together for the sake of not only economic recovery but America’s future. Inspiring, pragmatic, and packed with helpful examples and tools, *The Business of WE* is an indispensable guide to start us moving forward.

About the Author

LAURA KRISKA is an internationally recognized expert and leading consultant on cross-cultural relations with more than 30 years of experience bridging gaps in diverse workplaces. She has worked with Fortune 500 companies on four continents, helping thousands of business leaders and professionals build trust across *Us versus Them* differences based on nationality, ethnicity, race, religion, age, or any factor of identity.

Born in Tokyo to missionary parents, Laura was raised in a white suburban community in Ohio, surrounded by people who looked, sounded, and prayed like she did. Thanks to her parents' adventurous spirit, she grew up with a fascination for different cultures and a strong attachment to Japan. During college, she spent a year studying in Tokyo and learning to speak the language. After receiving her BA in Japanese Studies from Denison University, she began her career in Japan. She was the first American woman to work in Honda Motor Company's Tokyo headquarters, as an assistant to a senior executive. This experience is the basis of her first book, *The Accidental Office Lady*.

A sought-out lecturer and a TEDx speaker, Kriska is widely considered an authority on inclusion and cultural integration. She regularly speaks to professional and educational groups, including New York's Japan Society and NYU Stern School of Business, and conducts bilingual and cross-cultural training sessions for clients ranging from Mitsubishi to David Letterman.

Laura Kriska completed the International Studies program at Waseda University in Tokyo and earned an MFA in Writing from Columbia University. She also earned a brown belt in judo from the Kodokan Institute in Tokyo. She currently lives in New York City.

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