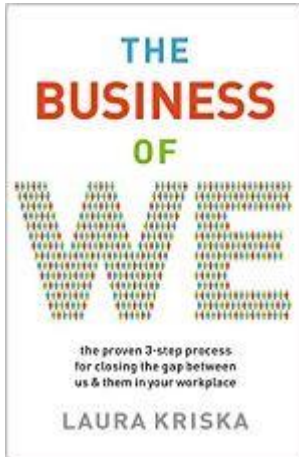


PM WORLD BOOK REVIEW



Book Title: ***The Business of WE: The proven 3-step process for closing the gap between us & them in your workplace***

Author: **Laura Kriska**

Publisher: HarperCollins Leadership

List Price: USD \$19.99 Format: soft cover, 290 pages

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Reviewer: **Vickie Carvajal, PMP**

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Introduction

In this book, the author's aims to create awareness of the existence of *Us vs Them* gaps and how to recognize the impact factors such as religion, gender, race, etc. can have in creating gaps and the impact those gaps may have in relationships. Her focus is to provide the tools to bridge and close the *Us versus Them* gaps.

The author provides a proven process to close the *Us versus Them* gaps and highlights the benefits of creating a WE culture. She has successfully used the three-step process in organizations by guiding them through the steps to identify cultural gaps and has provided companies and their leaders with tools to assess and recognize the leadership's role in the *Us versus Them* gaps. The ultimate goal at the end of the process is to develop plans to close the *Us versus Them* gaps and implement WE-building actions. The three step process reviewed in detail throughout the book includes:

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

Overview of Book's Structure

The book was structured in three sections:

- Section 1 – FRAMING THE ORGANIZATIONAL CHALLENGE
- Section 2 – THE PROCESS
- Section 3 – MOVING FORWARD

Throughout the three sections, the author provides details about the three step process to bridge and resolve *Us versus Them* gaps and uses real-world examples taken from today's headlines as well as personal and work experience to highlight the various points in each of the chapters within each section. There are 9 chapters in the book. Throughout the various chapters, the author provides highlights of the section topics via stand-out statements in order to emphasize message.

Highlights

Section 1: FRAMING THE ORGANIZATIONAL CHALLENGE

In the first section, the author focuses on diversity and how it can be a challenge for organizations to address. She also details how to recognize and address communication gaps and highlights the consequences of existing gaps. She encourages organizations to recognize what works and what doesn't work when addressing cross-cultural issues and provides necessary steps to take in order to gain cultural understanding. The author discusses the benefits of bringing people together, the cost of ignoring and/or not addressing the *Us versus Them* gaps, and the benefits of creating a WE culture – which include: 1) Increased profitability, 2) Increased Innovation, 4) Improved Communication and 4) Early warning System.

In this section she also shared ways to assess the efficacy of gap-bridging activities by reviewing the characteristics of effective and ineffective gap-bridging initiatives. She also reviews the most common approaches used to review/address cross-cultural issues and how the success of those approaches is due to the integration of WE-building concepts. The author also details the four stages of building trust and shares a trust building scales. She closes the section by describing in detail the Institutional WE-building Actions.

Section 2: THE PROCESS

In the second section, the author focuses on Fostering Gap Awareness, Conducting an *Us versus Them* Assessment and Creating a Gap-Closing Action Plan. The author describes the iceberg concept. She encourages the reader to always assume that differences exist and apply the iceberg concept, since only part of the information is visible/understood at any given time and an incomplete is seen/acknowledged. The author lists and covers in detail tools for fostering gap awareness which include 1) Encourage Cross-Cultural conversation, 2) Share iceberg stories, 3) Introduce the Identity cloud exercise, 4) Practice the iceberg self-introduction and 5) Create awareness-building scenarios.

As part of the Create awareness-building scenarios step, the author provides extensive exercises to practice the concepts. In addition, she provides the five levels of awareness in order to assess the reader's level of cultural awareness. She provides five rules for administering the assessment and provides an example of an

“US VS THEM” Assessment while giving guidance on how to score the assessment, interpret the results and use the self-assessment results. The author also explains how to build a gap-closing plan and what all should be considered when building a gap-closing plan. She provides a WE-BUILDING SOLUTION WORKSHEET as a tool to identify ideas in order to reach a solution to a culture gap and provides detailed explanations on each of the worksheet components along with an example of a completed worksheet. The author closes the section by asking the reader to take the *Us versus Them* challenge.

Section 3: MOVING FORWARD

In the third section, the author reviews how to overcome the obstacles to achieve cultural intelligence, why the traditional majority culture must take the lead and the need to build an internal infrastructure. She writes in detail about the classic barriers to WE-BUILDING, highlighting the classic divisions, the cost of divides, how to prevent marginalization of employees, and how to recognize contributions of individuals in the organization. The author details out the various WE-BUILDING components including leadership, policy strategies, communication strategies and behavioral strategies. She confirms that fostering a WE-culture is an on-going process that needs to be reviewed/assessed on continuous basis. She discusses in detail the benefits of the home-team advantages and how she encourages the home team to take action in order to avoid the common pitfalls of leaders in a dominant culture: 1) unaware and oblivious, 2) aware but scared, 3) aware and unaccountable, 4) aware and seeking organic approach and 5) aware, willing to act, but unsure.

In this section, the author also provides a Don't and a Do List of Actions to broaden inclusion and strategies for limiting gaps. She spends time discussing cultural fluidity and the benefits of having someone on the team that is culturally fluid and confirms the goal of WE-building is to move towards intentional positive results instead of negative consequences.

At the end of the book, the author provides several pages of recommended reading, which includes books and on-line resources. She also provides a detailed Notes section with references for each of the chapters.

Highlights: What I liked!

What I liked most about the book is the use of real-life examples based on personal experience or real-life headlines. The author details a proven how-to for WE-building using proven process that she has lead and managed with previous organizations and clients.

Who might benefit from the Book?

The book could benefit everyone that reads it as many of the readers may be part of organizations where they have the opportunity to interact with people from different backgrounds, cultures, or may be multi-lingual.

Conclusion

In this book, the author introduces the three-step process for closing the *Us versus Them* gaps, details how to complete a cultural self-assessment, provides a step-by-step worksheet on how to arrive at WE-Building solutions, and provides guidance on how to take action and foster an on-going awareness of a WE culture.

Editor's note: This book review was the result of cooperation between the publisher, PM World and the PMI Dallas Chapter. Authors and publishers provide books to PM World; books are delivered to the PMI Dallas Chapter, where they are offered free to PMI members to review; book reviews are published in the PM World Journal and PM World Library. PMI Dallas Chapter members can keep the books as well as claim PDUs for PMP recertification when their reviews are published. Chapter members are generally mid-career professionals, the audience for most project management books.

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About the Reviewer



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Vickie Carvajal, PMP has more than 20 years of experience working in application services and consulting. She has provided project management for a variety of clients in various industries and countries. Vickie has a Bachelor's degree in Accounting from Angelo State University and a Master's degree in Business Administration from Southwest Texas State University.
