

PM WORLD BOOK REVIEW



Book Title: ***Good Power: Leading Positive Change in Our Lives, Work, and World***¹

Author: **Ginni Rometty**

Publisher: Harvard Business Review Press

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Reviewer: **Christa Ward**

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Introduction

In "Good Power," Rometty makes an optimistic call to action to anyone seeking to affect positive change in their families, communities, and societies. Reflecting on her 40-year career at IBM, Rometty's values-based mindset sets the tone of the book as she focuses on the 'how' of change as much as 'what.' The collective parts of good power – its heart, soul, muscle, and brain – go beyond adding value to the individual. They are the essential elements for positive global change.

Overview of Book's Structure

The book is divided into three parts: The Power of Me, The Power of We, and The Power of Us.

The Power of We covers Rometty's career at IBM and explores the five themes of her professional and leadership journey: Being in Service Of; Building Belief; Knowing What Must Change, What Must Endure; Stewarding Good Tech; and Being Resilient.

Highlights

Rometty's writing is crisp and she efficiently gets into the details of what good power is and does.

- The heart of good power builds belief. Rometty embraced good power at a young age and was intentional with her influence: providing stability to younger siblings in the wake of their father's abandonment; discreetly

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coaching a male classmate to challenge their professor privately after an exam; and making values-based decisions in her first management role at IBM. She recalls being mentored to run an entire vertical business, and her hesitation when offered the job. "My biggest obstacle was not a lack of ability, but self-imposed self-doubt. I could have been celebrating! That episode began to crystallize an idea that would prove true time and again: growth and comfort never coexist."

- The soul of good power lives to be in service of, to consider and fulfil someone or something's needs to the best of our abilities. Mid-career brings an inflection point in Rometty's journey when a trusted mentor demonstrates that "passion can be acquired when it doesn't come naturally, and summoned, conserved, and applied selectively." This revelation pays dividends when she is chosen to head an insurance business and then, the biggest role of her career to date -- leading the merger with Price Waterhouse's Consulting business. Visibility grew and larger roles followed, culminating in her appointment as IBM's ninth (and first female) CEO.
- The brain of good power is about bridging old and new to create something better. The company was facing a sea change of technology and had grown stale. In her first all-hands meeting as CEO, Rometty recalls her priority was about "building belief in our purpose, the Three Strategic Beliefs, and in me." Over the next several years, she repositioned the company for the digital age with new core businesses and divested beloved but unprofitable products. Of that period, she writes, "I realized that knowing what must change and what must endure is key to making the tough choices that lasting change demands, and in parallel makes us pay equal attention to how work gets done, not just what work gets done."
- The muscle of good power is about stewarding good tech. Rometty describes it as "(taking) accountability for the creation, application, and disruption of technology by making values-based decisions within a long-term context, addressing technology's upsides and downsides, and considering all stakeholders." Throughout the 2010s public trust in tech companies eroded as privacy concerns became top of mind. Although IBM was not at the center of tensions, Rometty and her team debated over what to do. She describes the options, and their choice: "... we could lay low and hope to stay out of the heat. Or we can go on the offensive and speak more publicly to try to differentiate ourselves. We pick the latter." Addressing the concerns with "A Letter to Our Clients About Government Access to Data" resonated with customers and remains on IBM's website. Lingering questions from employees and governments around the world were addressed with a framework that provided values-based outcomes.

Highlights: What I liked!

Rometty's humility, clear writing style, and respect for the reader underpin the book, making it refreshing to read. She has the warm approach of a trusted mentor and imparts actionable advice with confidence.

Who might benefit from the Book?

Any individual who dares to think beyond the status quo and believes in their ability to positively influence and transform the world around them.

Conclusion

Rometty begins "Good Power" by describing it as a memoir with purpose. Her story is more than just an account of one person's journey to the top of a storied company. It's a challenge to build belief in oneself and others; deliver positive value to the societies in which businesses operate; do the difficult work to lead responsibly; and remain relevant in an authentic way. These principles will help individuals, organizations, and societies see beyond distractions to create and implement positive solutions in an increasingly complex world.

For more about this book, go to: <https://store.hbr.org/product/good-power-leading-positive-change-in-our-lives-work-and-world/10550>

About the Reviewer



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Christa Ward is a Senior Program Manager and accomplished leader in the technology industry. With a strong background in project management and communications, she has successfully launched startups and led transformation programs. Known for her innovative approach to increasing operational efficiency, Christa recently spearheaded a broad change initiative that resulted in significant cost savings for her organization. She holds an MBA from Texas A&M University-

Commerce and is certified as a PMP and 6σ Green Belt. Christa has received awards for driving change through values-based practices.

She enjoys reading memoir and journaling.

Connect with Christa at [linkedin.com/in/christaw](https://www.linkedin.com/in/christaw).

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