

(Mobile book) The New American Workplace: The Follow-up to the Bestselling Work in America

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James O'Toole, Edward E. Lawler

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James O'Toole, Edward E. Lawler : The New American Workplace: The Follow-up to the Bestselling Work in America before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The New American Workplace: The Follow-up to the Bestselling Work in America:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Remains a Useful and Essential Reference on the American Workplace By Fred Cheyunski This book by O'Toole and Lawler deals with how American organizations and people

have had to adapt to a new kind of workplace in the 21st century. The authors explain how three major competitive forces and dynamics---globalization, technology, and demanding ownership (read "shareholders" and their increasing influence)--- that have prompted executives to seek ways of equipping their firms for responding rapidly to change. They also describe what they call three emergent management models: Low Cost Providers, Global Competitor Corporations, and High Involvement Companies. Low Cost Providers are large labor intensive organizations like Wal-Mart where price is primary and to keep prices low, employees have minimal pay, benefits and job complexity. Global Competitor Corporations like IBM have enormous size and compete on the basis of resources that can bring to bear across geographies to serve customers. High Involvement Companies such as W.R. Gore seek comparative advantage through effective workplace management and the resulting significant "value add" to products and services provided. These three models seem similar in many ways to the operational excellence, customer intimacy and product leadership emphases described earlier by Treacy and Wiersema (and extended later by authors such as Moore, Kaplan and Norton, and Ross and Weill). While the correspondence is not clear cut, examining such parallels can be useful. O'Toole and Lawler go on to discuss ways the other two models can incorporate aspects of High Involvement approaches to improve their management practices. They also treat how High Involvement Companies as well as individuals in these and other circumstances can deal with major competitive force and dynamic challenges in the new workplace. The helpful context and definitions of management models are enlightening in themselves and provide critical background for Lawler's subsequent works such as "Talent: Making People Your Competitive Advantage" and "Achieving Excellence in Human Resource Management: An Assessment of Human Resource Functions." This book remains a useful and essential reference.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. An essential book!

By Sahra Badou This is the best business book I have read in a long time. The authors do an excellent job in providing a comprehensive picture of the state of the workplace in the US today. One conclusion the authors draw is that satisfying work is a basic human need that establishes individual identity and self-respect and lends order to life. Many important questions will be asked throughout the book. For example, if the United States wishes to continue to be the world's leading economic power, what workplace practices and public policies are required to ensure that it succeeds? The solution to this and other questions must serve both the well-being of employees and the effectiveness of their employing organizations in the belief that doing one without the other is not viable in the long run.

What follows are notes I took of this essential book:

Good work satisfies all three of the following fundamental needs (p. 8):

1. The need for the basic economic resources and security essential to lead good lives.
2. The need to do meaningful work and the opportunity to grow and develop as a person.
3. The need for supportive relationships.

Jobs satisfying the requirements of one, or even two, of the above needs may not satisfy them all. For example, a job may pay well but, at the same time, be dull and unfulfilling. A truly fascinating job may pay poorly, and a well-paying, interesting job may be overseen by an abusive supervisor. All three needs must be satisfied before most people will say they have a good job. Research shows that satisfying the needs of Americans for good jobs is important, if not essential, for the prosperity, health and social well-being of the nation. The costs of an insufficient supply of good work include a declining standard of living, a lower quality of life, increased social conflict, and the loss of America's unique standing in the world as the leading economic power. Researchers found the following key themes in US companies (p. 14-18):

1. The US is suffering from insufficient creation of new 'good jobs.'
2. Workers today face a wider array of choices than ever before, choices concerning what career to pursue, how much and what form of education to obtain, where to work, when to change jobs and careers, and when, or if, to retire.
3. Today, most companies put the needs of shareholders above the needs of workers.
4. There is now increased tension between work and family life. Among lower-paid workers, the cause of this tension is that two parents increasingly need to work long hours to make ends meet.
5. The primary and secondary educational system in the United States is failing to provide the skills millions of workers need to escape minimum-wage and dead-end employment.
6. In terms of real wages, executives and technically skilled workers have fared spectacularly in recent years, and college graduates, in general, have fared well relative to the rest of the labor force. At the same time, the relative wages of blue-collar workers have lagged significantly behind their better-educated and white-collar peers, and low-skilled workers have fared disastrously relative to other Americans.
7. Almost all young, educated people today expect to work for multiple employers, to move back and forth between work and education and between work and family responsibilities, and, perhaps, never to retire.
8. The high and growing costs of health insurance are driving countless business decisions, causing companies and industries to be unprofitable, putting American exporters at competitive disadvantages in world markets, discouraging the creation of jobs and leading to the export of others.
9. Current workplace practices, such as the use of contingent and part-time workers, preferences for younger over older workers, underfunding of training, growing gaps between the salaries and benefits of executives and average employees, and a 24/7 working environment, appear to be having negative effects on worker turnover, motivation, loyalty and job satisfaction.

Throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s, most U.S. manufacturing companies--and many service providers, as well--adopted or experimented with self-managing work teams to cut payroll costs and/or to enrich jobs. In most cases, such efforts led to increased employee motivation and to lower levels of turnover, absenteeism and stress-related illness. When managers give workers authority over their work and then reward them for doing the right

thing, they address basic human needs for recognition, control and belonging, needs that are more important determinants of employee morale and performance than are the physical conditions of work. Particularly when people work together--as opposed to being separate cogs in a machine--social bonds are formed that lead to cooperation and a desire to help each other succeed (p. 46-47). Recent studies show that the leading causes of absenteeism in the United States today are family-related, and that one out of six people who fail to show up for work offer stress as the reason. Studies show that social support can moderate elevated blood pressure, and that socially supportive workplaces tend to be the healthiest for most workers. Since the 1970s, there has been a major increase in employee stock ownership. Employee-owners are more inclined to exhibit positive behavior on the job, to stay with a company as a result of their equity interest, and to pay more attention to its financial performance, all of which are positive behaviors from a company's point of view (p. 119). The plus side of employee-ownership of stock is that it often increases the likelihood that workers can influence how their company operates. On the negative side, their jobs depend on the continuing success of their employing company (p. 120). The workplace always has been where people meet, converse, connect, and form friendships. Indeed, relationships at work are the most meaningful ones for most adult Americans outside their families (p. 133). All managers and business owners should read this book.

6 of 8 people found the following review helpful. Important yet incomplete study of work in America By Peter Lorenzi "The new American workplace" is a broad, comprehensive view of work and business in America. It is an update of a 1974 book with a similar focus, with commissioned papers and large databases contributing to the text. Topics and chapters include careers, health and safety, performance pressure, compensation, training and development and public policy. Such scope will almost automatically include some generalities that don't always apply and even some errors. As to the latter, on p. 165, the authors claim that Continental "was able to acquire U.S. Airways." I think not. As to the former, the authors claim that only low-cost suppliers "are predicated on a basic tenet of capitalist economics: the consumer is king." (p. 174). I do believe either point: "The customer is king" is not a basic tenet of capitalism and other firms, especially globally competitive firms believe in this concept and succeed globally by treating customers as kings. In fact, this phrase is relatively old and foreign; firms have been treating customers well for years. They tend to survive and to thrive in a competitive, global economy. O'Toole and Lawler generate eleven broad characterizations (listed in full in another review) of the American workplace over the last twenty-five years and categorize firms in one of three clusters: Low-cost (LC), global competitors (GC) or high involvement (HI). The eleven themes (pp. 15-18) include the widely popular yet controversial loss of good jobs complaint ("insufficient creation of new `good jobs'"), work and family life tensions (not really that new), social stratification based on education (unsurprising, given the booming knowledge economy), reduced employee commitment (a two-way street if there ever was one), shortcomings in the healthcare system (without acknowledging the incredible advances in healthcare and longevity), and underutilized human capital (the reader needs to refer back to the point of social stratification based on education). The authors clearly prefer the HIs and almost show disdain for the LCs. They cite Wal-mart employee complaints and contradictions, e.g., "I like Wal-mart...they need to fix it." (p. 174). And Wal-mart is showing signs of age and even weaknesses in their low-cost strategy, as stores such as Kohl's, Target, and Costco offer consumers more of what they really want from a store. They demonstrate that an LC like Southwest can focus on the customer yet also be committed to high-involvement policies and employees (p. 175). They recognize the need for personal responsibility for exercise and weight control (p. 178) yet they make this a corporate responsibility, e.g., "All companies can and should make an effort to educate workers about their responsibilities..." Their chapter on Public Policy (Chapter 16), which includes Education (pp. 186-194) ignores this exercise and weight admonition other than to endorse pre-natal care. They prescribe universal pre-school and small schools but ignore the power and potential of school choice. They lament the decline in state's shares of state college and university funding (p. 199), while ignoring that most of the increases in college costs have little to do with education, that financial aid continues to rise faster than tuition, and state schools sit on billions of dollars of untapped endowments while they increase tuition and enrollments at a rate that almost defies the laws of economics. In the end, too much credit is given to broad educational initiatives rather than a close examination of enduring drivers of a country's or company's sustainable comparative advantage. Education is important and powerful but it is not the entire solution. There are important cultural, social and political issues that underscore and undermine education, issues such as demographics, ("illegal") immigration, and the burgeoning gambling and pornography industries. This is an important yet incomplete book.

Thirty years ago, the bestselling "letter to the government" *Work in America* published to national acclaim, including front-page coverage in *The New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *Washington Post*. It sounded an alarm about worker dissatisfaction and the effects on the nation as a whole. Now, based on thirty years of research, this new book sheds light on what has changed - and what hasn't. This groundbreaking work will illuminate the new critical issues - from worker demands to the new ethical rules to the revolution in culture at work.

From Publishers Weekly
Several decades after USC professor O'Toole contributed to a Department of Health, Education and Welfare task force report called "*Work in America*," he and coauthor Lawler, another USC professor,

commissioned 16 papers reviewing its conclusions, which are summarized here in workmanlike style. The 1973 study described workers trapped in dehumanizing jobs, which damaged economic productivity and workers' health and happiness; it prescribed job enrichment, improved education (especially technical and mid-career training) and government-funded research. However, the original study missed the three major forces that were transforming the workplace: "globalization, technology and the nature of equity ownership." Tracing the effect of these changes through the early 1990s, the new study concludes that they have eased but not eliminated the older problems, while introducing new ones. Another gap in the first study was to focus solely on solutions from governments and employers, while it was changes by workers that drove much of the progress. Arguing that the old recommendations still apply, the authors also propose new ones, including support for entrepreneurs, eased immigration, reduced employment-based taxes and resurrection of a Nixon-era plan for government-subsidized private health insurance. The number of contributors and the long time period under consideration give weight to the conclusions, but the layers of summary, from the original data, academic papers and commissioned papers, in addition to time lags from publishing delays, dull the message and reduce topicality. (July) Copyright copy; Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

From Booklist Following their groundbreaking 1972 study *Work in America*, O'Toole and Lawler take a fresh look at how life at the office has changed in the last 35 years. Their not-so-startling conclusion is that the U.S. is attempting to implement tomorrow's competitive strategies with yesterday's managerial ideas and public policy infrastructure. Many U.S. companies trying to find a middle ground to serve the new global economy are shackled with an antiquated corporate mentality that does not keep skilled workers engaged in their careers or meet their aspirations. Companies have taken steps over the years to enrich workers' jobs along with trying to meet their personal needs for recognition and control. Studies in the early 1970s clearly demonstrated that satisfied workers were productive workers. But it's no surprise that health care, work-life balance initiatives, pay incentives, training and development opportunities, and other perks that many American workers consider their birthright are being challenged and eroded by offshore outsourcing, productivity pressures, decreased job security, and a host of other economic realities that bring the idea of a global economy into every cubicle in America. Gail Whitcomb Copyright copy; American Library Association. All rights reserved "Offers a persuasive argument for high-wage, self-managed employment. . . . Employees confronting the changed world of work will be better off for reading it."--BusinessWeek; "This comprehensive and authoritative volume presents the latest information on trends and conditions in the U.S. workplace with clarity and tangible detail."--Library Journal; ". . . an optimistic updating . . . also reckons with technological forces and a global economy that are radically and rapidly disrupting business organizations."--Fast Company; "James O'Toole and Edward E. Lawler definitely tackle 'must-address' topics in their examination of the American workplace, including outsourcing, immigration, compensation, public policy, and work/life issues."--IndustryWeek; "This book makes a compelling argument about where the workplace has been, where it is now, and where it is going . . . it raises questions and provides insight about what the US and organizational managers need to do to remain competitive."--Human Resource Planning; "It would be impossible to understand the 21st-century workplace without this book. Certainly the management book of the year; probably of this decade."--Warren Bennis, author of *On Becoming a Leader* "A thoroughly researched inquiry into the dramatic transformation of work in America, *The New American Workplace* challenges everyone--employers, workers and elected officials--to act now to keep our country competitive in the 21st century."--U.S. Representative Tom Allen "The *New American Workplace* provides a compelling account of the pressures for change in the workplace and how they are playing out for employers and employees."--Peter Cappelli, Editor of *The Academy of Management Executive* and Director of the Center for Human Resources, The Wharton School "In this revealing work, O'Toole and Lawler highlight the growing sophistication required of all interested parties and the increasing interdependencies that each must exhibit if the United States is to survive and thrive in the years ahead. The insights they offer are both intimidating and exhilarating and lay out the challenges that all of us will have to take on in the years to come."--Dave Pace, Executive Vice-President, Partner Resources, Starbucks Coffee Company "Filled with both information and insight, the book provides a fantastic overview of the contemporary world of work and what that picture says about public policy imperatives."--Jeffrey Pfeffer, author of *The Human Equation: Building Profits by Putting People First*, Professor, Stanford Business School