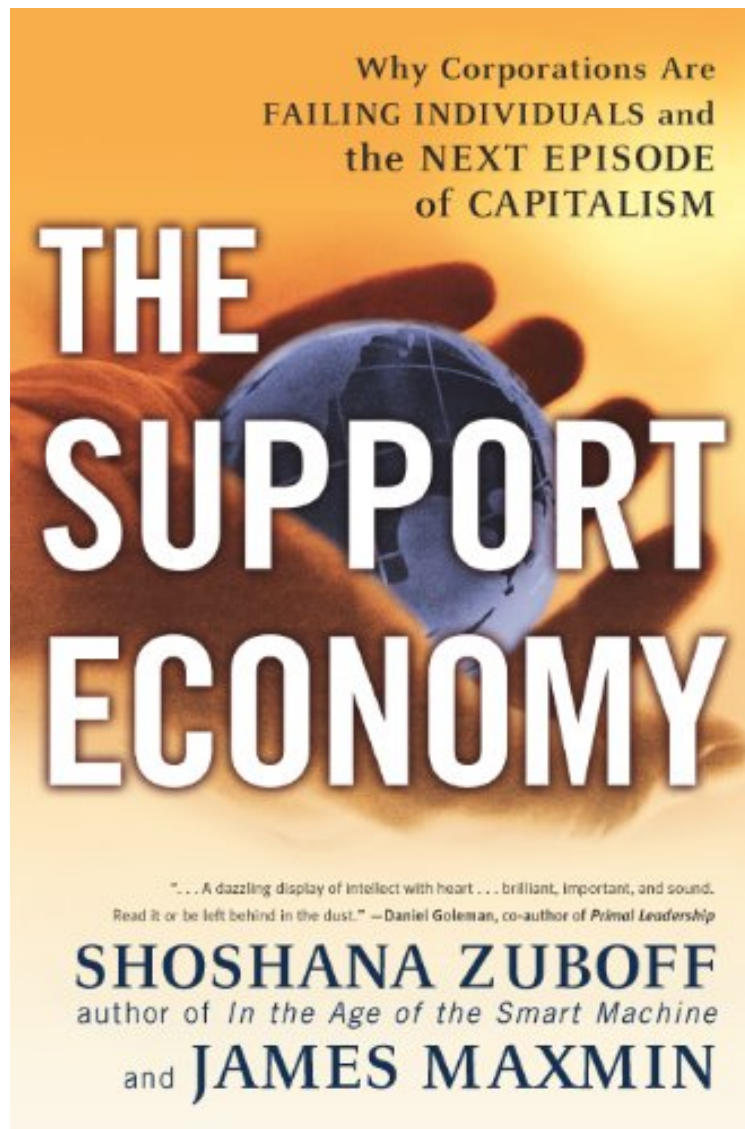


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The Support Economy: Why Corporations Are Failing Individuals and the Next Episode of Capitalism

Shoshana Zuboff, James Maxmin
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Shoshana Zuboff, James Maxmin : The Support Economy: Why Corporations Are Failing Individuals and the Next Episode of Capitalism before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Support Economy: Why Corporations Are Failing Individuals and the Next Episode of Capitalism:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. One of the most disappointing business books I have read latelyBy Individual InvestorThis is one of the most disappointing business books I have read lately. The author says she wants

to write for the general public and not for academe. She winds up writing for high school level at best. Surely there is a non academic audience with higher reading capacity than high school. Maybe I'm biased, but the David character that Lillian and Carlos Acero rely on and who the author seems to think is a revelation, is actually old hat, at least in concept. I wrote about a similar helper back in 1984 after playing a bit with Apple's Lisa computer in Cupertino. Why the story of Ford and Sloan needs to be retold is mystery to me. What Copernicus had to do with the Internet is even more far fetched. It seems like a tour de force of everything the author could think about that had the flimsiest relation to the story. I believe this book can be summarized in a one page memo to management, the central idea being that clients want and expect better customer service. If they don't get it, they will go shop elsewhere. I agree that customer service on the Internet is quite poor in some cases, specially with certain large Internet outfits that simply can't bother to staff their help desks adequately. Often mom and pop online vendors are more reliable than the big names. It could well be that the small businesses feel insecure enough to feel the need to provide good service. Some of the bigger ones are so smug and self satisfied that their service is just sub par. This is a field ripe for a good book about customer service and the remaking of capitalism. It is a real shame that Shoshana Zuboff and James Maxmin missed filling this void with a good book. 10 of 12 people found the following review helpful. An Outstanding Diagnosis By David Kay I strongly recommend The Support Economy. I'll start with the negatives -- it took me about 100 pages to really get into it; like most business books the authors repeat themselves; the future state they outline is sketchy; and they don't even really attempt to describe how we get from here to there. The reason I'm recommending it is that Zuboff and Maxmin absolutely nail the diagnosis of what's wrong with the interaction between producers and consumers today -- the way that individuals (at home and at work) are the shock absorbers between what enterprises know how to do and what people today need; the reason that managerial capitalism has to give way to, well, something new that they call "distributed capitalism;" the need to move beyond the relentless optimization of transactions and towards the maximization of value in the context of people's lives. And, thinking about my own situation and those of many of my peers, it just rings true. My personal trainer (who is also an event planner) is a kind of poster child for this new capitalism. While "support" is in the title, this isn't a book about technical support -- it's about a new value proposition of people helping people, not just better-products-cheaper. That being said, it is strongly influencing my thinking about technical support in general and my consulting company's value proposition in particular. 1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. It is Beginning to Happen By Bill Fenwick I purchased the hardback version when it was first available because I had found Ms Zuboff's other book and her presentations to be enlightening and perceptive regarding the impact of the computer and information technology. That was a few years ago but I have continued to look for markers indicating the concepts in The Support Economy were as perceptive as they seemed. Many of those markers are appearing. Individual pods of services that will be required are now appearing in startup companies and old line service vendors. It will be a while before the necessary institutional compromises will occur that ties the services together but it is happening. I repeatedly loaned out the hardcopy and recently bought a softback copy to insure I had a reference copy available. If an electronic copy is later made available I will purchase it as well (I find reference information in an electronic version is so much more efficient).

Today's "managerial" capitalism has grown hopelessly out of touch with the people it should be serving. The Support Economy explores the chasm between people and corporations and reveals a new society of individuals who seek relationships of advocacy and trust that provide support for their complex lives. Unlocking the wealth of these new markets can unleash the next great wave of wealth creation, but it requires a radically new approach -- "distributed" capitalism. The Support Economy is a call to action for every citizen who cares about the future.

From Publishers Weekly This husband-and-wife team Zuboff's a Harvard professor and author of In the Age of the Smart Machine, and Maxmin's the former CEO of Volvo and Laura Ashley give socialist utopians of yesteryear stiff competition with their manifesto for a more personalized capitalism. They strive for the pop socioeconomics of a David Brooks or a Malcolm Gladwell, but their heavy academic style may disenchant some readers before their thesis's more radical parts kick in. Over the last two centuries, they argue, an increasingly efficient economy, coupled with a rise in democratic thinking and growing access to information, has opened up life's possibilities to increasing numbers of people. Because participation in the consumption-based economy is unavoidable, the general public looks to markets to provide "deep support" in their quest for individualization, but "are routinely punished for being complex psychological individuals in a world still fitted out for the old mass order." This macroeconomic structure treats people as either employees or consumers and inevitably hurts their feelings. Zuboff and Maxmin would eliminate the "little murders" of customer service interaction by replacing the current transaction-based model with a form of "distributed capitalism" based on a customer-supplier relationship, so semi-anonymous customer service reps will be replaced by "advocates" fully emotionally involved in their clients' needs. It's not clear how society will make its way to the authors' dream of a fully automated lifestyle, or what life will be like for blue-collar workers and manual laborers. Pundits who celebrated the Internet's potential to thoroughly revolutionize the economy, however, will no doubt rally

behind these impractical visions. Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal This husband-and-wife team-Zuboff is a professor at the Harvard Business School, while Maxmin is a former CEO of Volvo, Thorn EMI, and Laura Ashley-present a comprehensive, scholarly, but readable tome that provides a social, economic, and psychological history of the relationships between people and corporations. The authors aver that while people have certainly changed over time, the corporations and other organizations they depend on for employment, goods, and services have not. "Managerial capitalism" fails to meet human needs because managerial structures have remained the same over time. As explanation, the authors cite the increase in the number of educated, middle-class people after World War II; the rise of the individual; working women; alienation from organized religion; frustrations with inadequate medical care; consumer issues; and, most recently, corporate chicanery such as at Enron. The authors maintain that employees' frustration and their demands for more control over their time need to be addressed. Zuboff and Maxmin describe a future where employees will take matters into their own hands and willingly incur the cost (including paying advocates) to find relief from frustration, improve communication, and create a win-win situation for all parties. This timely and thought-provoking book will appeal to users of business collections in academic and large public libraries. Steven J. Mayover, formerly with the Free Lib. of Philadelphia Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Booklist Harvard Business School professor Zuboff (with the help of coauthor Maxmin) waxes profoundly and deeply about dramatic changes in life and work in her latest book, which is a marketer's guide, a consumer call to action, and a trend-watch for businesses. Her premise is that corporations are light-years behind changes in people, because the question of value now resides in individuals. More specifically, we're becoming a world in which service and knowledge and advocacy are paramount, a world where a support network and quality of life matter so much more than traditional wealth and work. The desire to control one's own life means a shift from managerial to distributed capitalism, a transition that's heavily documented by social, political, and historical statistics. Far-fetched? Perhaps, but the authors make an intelligent argument. Barbara Jacobs Copyright copy; American Library Association. All rights reserved