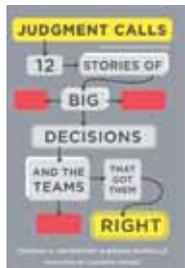


JUDGMENT CALLS 12 STORIES OF BIG DECISIONS AND THE TEAMS THAT GOT THEM RIGHT

By Thomas H. Davenport
and Brook Manville
Harvard Business Review Press, \$30.00



“Even the greatest of leaders can’t get out of the way of their own egos,” write Davenport and Manville in explaining their focus on Great Organizations rather than,

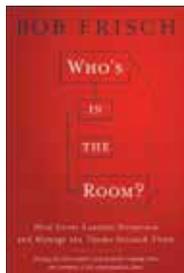
as similar books invariably do, on Great Men. “We offer this book as an antidote for, and even the counter to, the Great Man theory of decision making and organizational performance.” *Judgment Calls* begins strongly, with an introduction laying out a new paradigm of decision-making that uses deliberation, data, and the wisdom of crowds—not gut feelings. And the authors make a good case for using stories: “[D]oes the world really need another management framework?”

The twelve cases—“stories of good decisions because we think the world needs some good examples to emulate”—are unfamiliar, always a pleasant surprise. But they’re not all that effective in driving home the introduction’s arguments; the stories, stuffed with acronyms and names and nonlinear narratives, don’t address decisions so much as rethought organizational processes, and the “new approaches to judgment building” are surprisingly hard to extract. Perhaps the murkiness is inevitable: As the authors note, we look to Great Men partly because their stories, however oversimplified, make for more compelling narratives; in offering an antidote to that paradigm, Davenport and Manville leave readers looking for a few Great Men. —MATTHEW BUDMAN

WHO’S IN THE ROOM?

HOW GREAT LEADERS STRUCTURE AND MANAGE THE TEAMS AROUND THEM

By Bob Frisch
Jossey-Bass, \$29.95



“At the heart of every organization chart lies a myth,” begins Frisch in this tell-it-like-it-is book. But the author doesn’t go on to reveal anything you don’t already know. In fact, it’s not so much *what* he has to say but that he says it at all that is intriguing. There’s a perception, Frisch claims, that directly beneath the CEO is a team of anywhere from five to fifteen people “presumed by most managers to spend their time together discussing profound thoughts and making all the organization’s truly momentous decisions.”

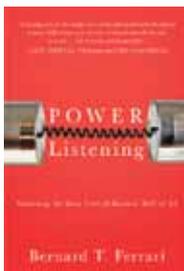
“The reality is that they don’t,” writes Frisch, a managing partner at the Strategic Offsites Group. But the CEO (and his direct reports) wants you to think they do. As you know, a seat at the table doesn’t guarantee a role in decision-making; despite forming executive committees, many CEOs rely on only a few individuals for advice. Meanwhile, consultants, coaches, trainers, and other advisers typically ignore this well-known but rarely acknowledged detail by suggesting ways to fix apparently dysfunctional C-suites. Frisch, on the other hand, argues that senior management teams are “not well suited for making most major decisions.”

As an alternative, he suggests creating (and then disbanding) numerous teams around specific projects or decisions. This is hardly a novel idea, but it’s still a good one around which Frisch offers various real-life examples. It’s frustrating, though, that his sympathies appear to rest exclusively with the chief executive, the only person to retain the same stature regardless of organizational structure. Furthermore, Frisch thinks it’s the C-suite, as well as others in the organization, who should adapt to the CEO’s leadership style of seeking input only from his unofficial “kitchen cabinet” of executives. In doing so, he turns what ought to be nothing more than an explanation into a prescription that a CEO not change his own behavior. Perhaps that’s understandable: At some companies, it’s probably harder for the one person at the top to alter how he works than for everyone else to do so. —VADIM LIBERMAN

POWER LISTENING

MASTERING THE MOST CRITICAL BUSINESS SKILL OF ALL

By Bernard T. Ferrari
Portfolio, \$25.95



Power Listening is refreshing for what it’s not: another self-help book that purports to unlock whatever supposed secrets remain to effective public speaking. Such manuals generally assume that your audience consists of thirsty vessels just waiting to be filled with your influential words, if only you could say the right thing in the right way. Hold on, Ferrari says. Actually, listen up! The former twenty-year McKinsey veteran claims that listening demands more effort and is more crucial than

talking. Unfortunately, we're so enamored with our own voices that we assume that "listening can be a time waster, rather than an effective means of advancing the ball."

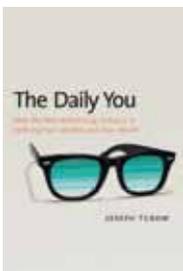
Ferrari successfully spins old platitudes into new insights, and you'll smirk in agreement as he describes different types of listeners, including the Opinionator (oftentimes a CEO), who listens to others mainly to assure himself that his ideas are right; the Grouch, who *knows* others' ideas are wrong; and the Answer Man, who "starts spouting solutions before there is even a consensus about what the challenge might be." The author illustrates these characters, as he does many other points in the book, with lively examples and anecdotes.

While many of the recommendations are commonsense—"respect your conversation partner," "challenge all assumptions"—their value lies in the notion that few of us seem to heed such advice. Moreover, the further you get into the book, the more you realize that it's not really about listening after all. Rather, *Power Listening's* main strengths are its suggestions for how to engage in meaningful conversations—that is, by becoming a better listener, you become a better speaker too. Without any neuroscience mumbo-jumbo or treating readers like kindergarteners, Ferrari makes valuable, valid points. Listen to him. —V.L.

THE DAILY YOU

HOW THE NEW ADVERTISING INDUSTRY IS DEFINING YOUR IDENTITY AND YOUR WORTH

By Joseph Turow
Yale, \$28.00



Every move you make, marketers are watching you, collecting data, and deciding whether you're a "target" or "waste" to them. Such are the terms that companies use to describe whether someone is a potential consumer for their products or services. Each click online sends a message to advertisers about who you are and how much you matter, explains Turow, a communications professor at the University of Pennsylvania. "Big deal!" some may say, shrugging their shoulders. Others, like Turow, recognize just how big it is. By taking us on a journey that begins

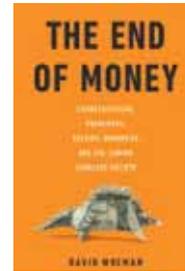
with a click and ends with ads allegedly perfectly targeted at us, the author illuminates the many ways in which companies gain, analyze, and use information about us.

The Daily You isn't your typical diatribe against incursions on privacy. Rather, it's a detailed description of the Internet's effect on advertising. So detailed, in fact, that there are moments in the book when you forget the point Turow is trying to make—that today's media environment reflects diminished consumer power. He doesn't quite make it. Rather, he threatens the reader with the "ominous implications" of online marketing, but in his drily written account, hazards often turn out to be sheep disguised as wolves. For example, in explaining how companies such as Facebook and Google share their data, Turow never clarifies how the process *negatively* impacts users in your daily life. And so, ironically, the book comforts more than scares. After all, if the unknown is what distresses us most, the author's behind-the-scenes account reassures that the sky is not falling. —V.L.

THE END OF MONEY

COUNTERFEITERS, PREACHERS, TECHIES, DREAMERS—AND THE COMING CASHLESS SOCIETY

By David Wolman
Da Capo, \$25.00



From page 5—introducing a Georgia pastor who insists that a cashless society is part of Satan's plan—journalist Wolman signals that his book won't be a dry

examination of the meaning of money. And he embarks on a brightly written exploration of all things monetary, from a brief history of currency to a report on counterfeiting today to a bulletin from post-crash Iceland. He discusses the lure of gold and "the eco-costs of cash."

The End of Money is partly a chronicle of the author's year avoiding cash, during which he is surprised to see his pledge to shun bills and coins "mutate into a genuine aversion." Money, he learns, is dirty—really, *dirty*, with all kinds of germs—and the knowledge exacerbates his annoyance with useless nickels and pennies. He speaks with anti-cash activists and envisions a near-term future in which cash is genuinely optional.

Wolman is at his best when reporting—from, for instance, the Digital Money Forum, which "proved to be just too conferencey, with its drip, drip, drip of PowerPoint presentations, impenetrable corporate jargon, and technical speak." He doesn't aim to be comprehensive or definitive, so the breeziness and anecdotal format is pleasurable rather than scattershot. But the book is both entertaining and provocative, and no reader will get to the end without—perhaps for the first time—thinking about what's in her wallet. —M.B.