

# Get Back in the Box: How Being Great at What You Do Is Great for Business

*Douglas Rushkoff*

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DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF



How Being Great at  
What You Do Is Great  
for Business

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**Douglas Rushkoff : Get Back in the Box: How Being Great at What You Do Is Great for Business** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Get Back in the Box: How Being Great at What You Do Is Great for Business:

42 of 42 people found the following review helpful. Manifesto for Future of Universal Wealth Ethical BusinessBy Robert David STEELE VivasThis is a thoughtful and easy to read book. The short editorial comments above do not do it justice.Drawing largely on his own experiences as a cyber-world observer, the author comes to conclusions that are

solidly supported by many other works that he does not cite (out of his primary area of interest) but that strongly support his independently derived conclusions. I refer to the various works on collective intelligence (Atlee, Bloom, Levy, Steele, Wells), additional works on the power of knowledge driven organizations (Buckman, Wheatley), and on the sources of innovation through intrapreneurship (Pinchot, Christensen, Raynor), and finally, the wealth of knowledge (Stewart) and infinite wealth (Carter). What I found most helpful in this book was its preamble, in which the author systematically pointed out that the war metaphors of business, the survival of the fittest, the assumption that we are all in competition with one another, and the centralization and manipulation of money, have all led to pathological behavior and distorted priorities that actually diminish what can be shared and created. In this the author is consistent with Tiger (The Manufacture of Evil) and various works today on immoral capitalism (Greider, Prestowitz, Perkins). He carries the argument further by suggesting that big is bad and that most giant enterprises have lost sight of their core competencies. They are so busy making money and outsourcing to cut costs that they literally "lose it." At the same time, they struggle desperately to "brand" to manipulate customers, to reinvent old products, etc. At the same time, the constant focus by merchants on short term profits reduces trust--as the author says, no long-term focus reduces trust. This is an important point. He writes at length about Wal-Mart as the poster child for abusing communities that lose three jobs for every two lower-paying jobs that Wal-Mart brings in, with fewer benefits, longer hours. The number of Wal-Mart employees that are below the poverty line is quite shocking. Wal-Mart is exporting good jobs to China and importing menial badly-paying jobs to the USA. In the middle of the book he addresses social currency, and suggests that most activities are not really about achieving specific goals or buying specific things, but rather about out-reach and networking--the primary human motivator is communion, and the fragmentation of the marketplace and the commoditization of the employee have blocked that. The book concludes with what could be said to be a very worthwhile mantra: businesses should answer real needs, everyone should collaborate rather than compete, and the over-all objective is to form communities by integrating the views and needs of employees, clients, stockholders, host communities, etc. He makes reference to addressing the needs of the bottom four billion people (per C. K. Prahalad's pioneering work), and has some very exciting references to a new business that allows cell phones to dial in to databases that offer Internet-like access for very narrow needs (e.g. crop prices or new cases of a specific disease). A central thesis of the book is that open source software reflects the needed attributes of the current and future networking environments. Larger groups of people collaborating openly are consistently more effective than smaller groups working in secrecy. As a side note, the author buries the current obsession of the U.S. Intelligence Community with anonymous access to the Internet (not directly but as a former intelligence officer I see this in what he says). He points out that social currency--being visible, being valued, sharing what you are interested in, seeing what others are interested in, is a \*fundamental\* aspect of the global networked brain. In other words, the U.S. Intelligence Community, by insisting on anonymous access to the Internet, is isolating itself and seeing the world through blurred lenses. The title of this book, while cute, might better have been "look under the hood." The author is compelling and interesting as he names specific consultants and specific companies all floundering to find new ways of getting money from customers, without ever actually looking under the hood of the car they are driving, and getting back to the fundamentals of their core competency. I am reminded of the U.S. Intelligence Community again--Ambassador Negroponte, a diplomat and a neo-conservative, is essentially in the same position as the ill-fated Dutch financier that took over Shell oil and had no idea how to run an energy company. His financial metrics were simply irrelevant, and over time Shell lost the ability to grow truly inspired geologists and engineers who had "the feeling in the fingertips" that the Germans stress so much. The author makes specific reference to large mergers being the death rattle of an industry--one can easily see this in the U.S. Defense industry, with L-3 buying Titan, General Dynamics buying Anteon, Lockheed lusting after this and that--the dinosaurs are in-breeding (and cashing out), and have completely lost the ability to meet real needs at a fair price with a decent amount of on the fly innovation. They will be beaten by small, fast, and often foreign providers. Over-all, I found this book inspirational, reasonable, and very very worthwhile. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. An inspirational view of the future of business By Raymond Jepson Throughout the 20th century business has been fine-tuned to deliver incredible amounts of productivity. This has been through corporate organization, division of labor, an increasing openness of management to listen to and involve labor and changing the package of incentives to workers. What Rushkoff outlines in "Get Back in the Box" flips this upside down. To me, he is really asking, 'where do we want to take business tomorrow?'. Rushkoff answers that by looking at companies that have managed to succeed, and continued their success. The keys come down to a few broad themes, first, realize what is motivating workers of today and learn to treat your consumers in a more human manor. The first breaks down to realizing that today's workers are less inspired by the corner office and more inspired by exciting work. Moreover, workers expect fair compensation for their work, and are uselessly distracted by fighting for raises or protecting retirement funds. The second part means two things: don't treat your customer like an idiot, but also, be careful how much you listen to them. Rushkoff exposes some companies that are so busy protecting themselves from lawsuits, and guarding their copyrights that they end up alienating their customers and losing business. It all boils down to companies thinking that what they own (IP) is more important than getting it out to customers. In Rushkoff's previous books, he's explored the world of consultants like

"cool hunters" trying to track down the next big trend. In this book, he takes us into the world of companies making bold decisions because they know their product. Sure enough, the customer often follows. Overall, a great book for both business people looking forward and workers trying to inspire change. 6 of 9 people found the following review helpful. With one qualification, this is a very good book. By Joseacut; Angel Santana, PhD This is an excellent book about understanding what you do best, how that best makes the world a better place, and a bit about how to reach the public with what you do best. This is a point made on every page of the book. I highly recommend it to folks who want to take what they do very well, what they do better than anyone else, trust it, and devote oneself to doing it even better while bringing one's offering to market. There is, however, one important qualification to my praise. Which is, that while the author contrasts the limitations of the "first" Renaissance, with the virtues of this "second" Renaissance he also makes a great case for the value, insights gained from, and need for the competency of "pattern recognition," by upper corporate management. He makes the point that each company should have the ability to recognize the patterns associated to its core competencies and offerings, and I assume with how those patterns resonate with their customers. This was the essence and sine-qua-non of the "first" Renaissance; the re-birthing of the eternal patterns first made known in the classical Greek period. There is a great deal to learn about patterns and their recognition from the first Renaissance, much more than Mr. Rushkoff's excellent book has to offer, or gives credit to. Our current obsession with "Brand" and "Branding" and "Brand Management" is not anything more than a less adept striving to create what the Greeks understood about the worship of their gods. How each divinity was a constellation of psychological forces that formed patterns of thought, feeling, and behavior that were expressions "from" the culture and not imposed "on" the culture. During the first Renaissance this was recognized and was employed as a way to speak to and create for its own people. In this way, by understanding the first Renaissance a time of "pattern recognition," one can learn to create value for people from their lives and not impose it on their lives. I love this book and at the same time, this significant lapse has me thinking about how much the author has sacrificed of his own considerable and core competency for research in chasing the gods of "compare and contrast" so overly worshiped by those in-the-academic-box. But, let me also say that this is an amazingly useful book for those who want to embrace the patterns of collaboration, generosity, and approaching one's work as play, which are the shining patterns of this "second" Renaissance, that we live in today and which Hermes, Aphrodite and a sense of Philia can teach us all about as well. Once I began reading this book I could not put it down. Nothing is perfect, however, which is another point he makes in the book.

Douglas Rushkoff was one of the first social commentators to identify the new culture around the internet. He has spent nearly a decade advising companies on the ways they can re-orient their businesses to the transformations the internet has caused. Through his speaking and consulting, Rushkoff has discovered an important and unrecognized shift in American business. Too many companies are panicked and operating in survival mode when the worst of the crisis has already passed. Likening the internet transformation to the intellectual and technological ferment of the Enlightenment, Rushkoff suggests we have a remarkable opportunity to re-integrate our new perspective with the work we actually do. Instead of running around trying to "think out of the box," Rushkoff demonstrates, now is the time to "get back in the box" and improve the way we do our jobs, run our operations and drive innovation from the ground up. Combining stories gleaned from his consulting with a thrilling tour of history's dramatic moments and clever readings of cultural shift we've just experienced, Rushkoff offers a compelling vision of the simple and effective ways businesses can re-invigorate themselves.

From Publishers Weekly By touting the value of thinking "outside the box," business experts have inspired an obsession with growth, competition and offbeat concepts, says Rushkoff (Cyberia; Coercion; etc.). In fact, he insists, the secret of success lies inside the box; businesses that focus on their core competencies, their customers' needs and their work environment come up with better innovations in the long run than those that rely on flashy ad campaigns, focus groups or off-site consultants. Smart businesses, he argues, hire employees who are deeply familiar with the company's core products and encourage innovation by cultivating a fun, collaborative work environment. Rushkoff's premise is solid, and he supports it with several convincing examples (Craig's List, XM radio and Saturn among them). In his effort to shuck the traditional case study model of business writing, however, Rushkoff often digresses into long passages of glib historical analogy. He's more entertaining, and more convincing, in the sections where he focuses on particular businesses and business people. Fortunately, there are enough of those sections to please Rushkoff's many fans. (Dec.) Copyright copy; Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. Idquo;Get your highlighters out! Therersquo;s a worldchanging idea on each and every page.rdqquo;About the Author Douglas Rushkoff is the author of 10 bestselling books on media and culture, including Cyberia, Media Virus!, Playing the Future, Coercion: Why We Listen to What "They" Say, and the novels Ecstasy Club and Exit Strategy.