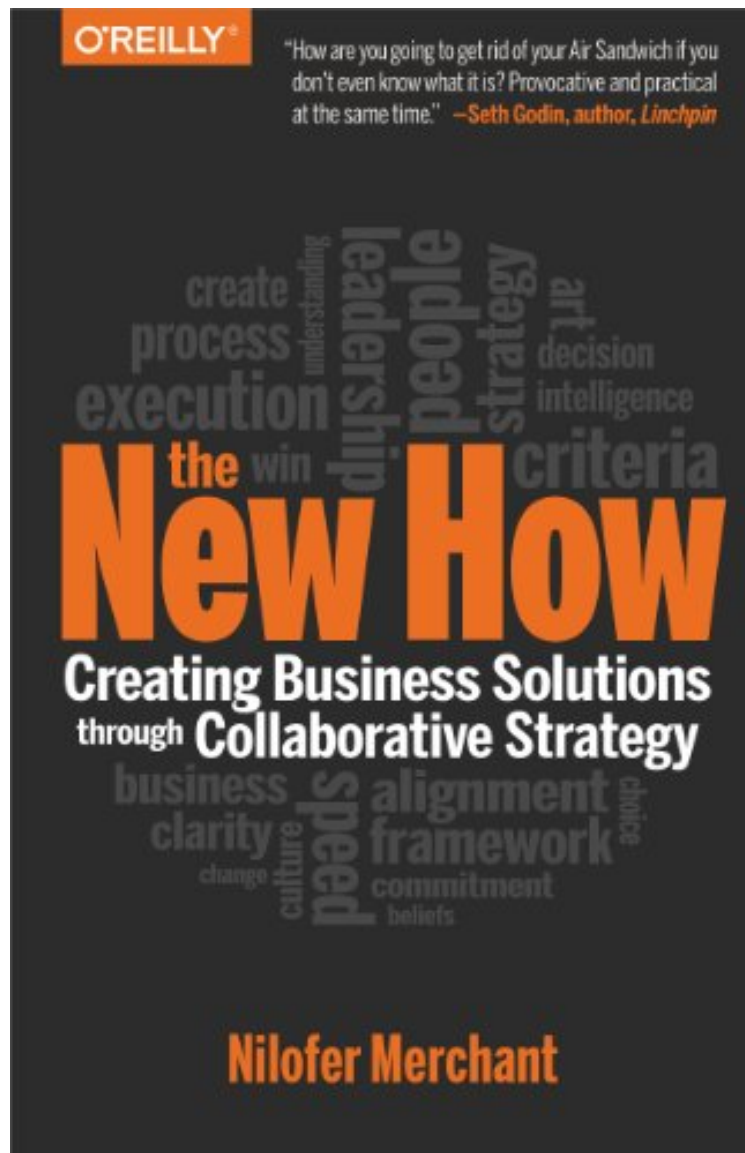


The New How [Paperback]: Creating Business Solutions Through Collaborative Strategy

Nilofer Merchant

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Nilofer Merchant : The New How [Paperback]: Creating Business Solutions Through Collaborative Strategy before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The New How [Paperback]: Creating Business Solutions Through Collaborative Strategy:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A toolkit for collaborative creation By Nikhil At a time when business executives are starting to embrace the power of positive psychology to boost workplace productivity,

managers who have their boots on the ground are searching for a practical guide to actually get people to produce more innovative work more efficiently. This book is exactly that: A step-by-step instruction manual for engaging your team and realizing the full power of collaboration. The New How introduces a new way of thinking about designing and implementing strategy, allowing one to build an environment where responsibilities are clear, the team is engaged in the challenge, constructive conflict is welcomed, and new ideas are synthesized and then iteratively culled to produce the best solution for a given situation. Nilofar Merchant lays out in simple, direct language, occasionally peppered with creative, businessy neologisms, the range of tools available to managers and collaborators alike to produce solutions that draw on the full experience of the team and keep everyone on board until the project is complete. Going further in the Appendix, she describes in detail how to use these tools to maximum effect. The text itself is well laid out, with an easy to follow outline structure and frequent paragraph breaks to prevent information overload. Larger chunks of text are broken up by whimsical illustrations by Hugh MacLeod which, if not supplementing a concept from the text, at least provide a lightweight breather from some of the denser chapters. If there is anything negative about this book, it's that it sometimes appears to be too heavy on glass-full idealism, with an "every problem is an opportunity" mentality. It offers little help on what to do when things go seriously awry and how to execute a graceful recovery. But there are plenty of other business books full of that kind of information. When you need to get beyond office politics, overcome apathy/lethargy, avoid misdirecting your resources, pick out the best solution from a field of contenders, and execute on a strategy cleanly, The New How will help you at every turn.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Legitimizing Ideas and Actions By Customer Nilofar Merchant's book The New How describes ways to meld strategy and execution and make firms "act flatter" (i.e., act less top-down). The book provides an integrated set of approaches to thinking, doing, and being that lets people create better solutions and collaborate more effectively. In short, it outlines effective approaches for firms to move from ideas to their practical application. The New How discusses how we can develop companies where people are engaged and where they can thrive because, basically, they are not told what to do--and nobody likes being told what to do! In short, the book is about leadership, and it offers a guide for those leaders looking to rethink how they lead their companies. In essence what Merchant is implicitly addressing is the relationship between power and legitimacy in a firm. As such, the book has value that extends beyond the business world, as the proper relationship between power and legitimacy is also a critical component of effective governance, or in fact in any institution where leadership is at issue. Firm's with a power-legitimacy disconnect, which can be fostered by what Merchant calls "the air sandwich," will have disempowered employees who, because they do not perceive themselves as stakeholders (those with effective power), do not wholeheartedly engage with the mission of the firm. They are mere passengers on the company ship, with little control over the direction or speed they are headed. Being and feeling disempowered reduces the desire to think, to take in new ideas, to develop new insights, and to create new outcomes. It reduces productivity. If employees are empowered--seen as strategic stakeholders that are vital to the organization and the threats and opportunities the organization faces--then you've got something. But their stake in the company has to be valid, and they have to feel like they are legitimately a part of the enterprise and have power (the ability or capacity) to produce an effect that matters. Empowered people have a reason to be more interested, and they will ask better questions, co-create more strategic options, and ultimately effect better execution of those options. Employees are empowered by having a belief in the purpose or mission of the company, and they get this by getting the tools and working with others to co-create the strategy and execute it. As with citizens in the public sector, employees in a company work alongside others who have their own beliefs, tools and ways of dealing with an issue. Rather than create a right-wrong situation, which can be fostered by top-down strategy-making and us-them thinking, what is really offered by Merchant's ideas is an opportunity for the company team to co-create an outcome that neither "side" (top-down, side-to-side) might yet imagine--it is in effect a communal and stronger outcome. Even just the opportunity to be a part of the strategy (the empowerment), not the actual participation in its development, can be enough to enhance its perceived legitimacy, and thus to foster greater commitment and earnest effort. Legitimation is the heart and soul of leadership, both in the sense of the legitimacy of the power of the leader herself (and her ideas), but also in the legitimacy of the power granted to those who get to play a meaningful role in strategy development. The New How offers approaches to companies to directly address the quality of their relationships and the perceptions and realities of power and legitimacy at all levels. In this approach, management becomes more the hub of a series of relationships throughout the firm, relationships that are organized in ways that proffer power, create trust and legitimacy, and lead to greater value. And value is what it's all about.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Actionable Ideas for Doing Strategy Differently By James Notter I resonate with what Merchant writes in this book, including her frustration with traditional strategy processes and results, and particularly her idea of the "air sandwich" of strategy--where the high level is clearly set by the executives, and the implementation is managed by the people on the ground, but there is not clarity about how those two connect, which leaves everyone frustrated. My version of this idea is the "middle level thinking" that is too often missing in organizations, particularly around strategy. Merchant goes on to offer a framework--Question, Envision, Select, and Take--that can help you be more collaborative in strategy making. I particularly like the "Select" phase, because she talks about actually making choices and becoming clear not only on what you want to do, but what you

are NOT going to do. She has a process called "murderboarding" that is about prioritizing and sorting all the ideas that are generated in a strategy process. This is hard work that a lot of organizations skip. It's a great book, and I highly recommend it. There aren't a lot of books I have found that offer truly actionable ideas for doing strategy differently, and this is one of them.

What people are saying about *The New How* "How are you going to get rid of your Air Sandwich if you don't even know what it is? Provocative and practical at the same time."--Seth Godin, author of *Linchpin* "The New How is informative and provides exciting insights because the suggestions are practical and doable. Merchant gets the new reality--leadership fails not so much from flawed strategy as it does from failed processes of engagement from those responsible for implementing the strategy. In high-performing organizations, everyone acts like a leader, and they own the strategy and take actions to ensure its success. If you care about making a difference, read this book."--Barry Posner, author of *The Leadership Challenge* "Collaboration is a powerful, competitive weapon: this book shows you how to use it to win markets."--Mark Interrante, VP Content Products, Yahoo, Inc. "In a world in which the pace of change is ever quickening, collaboration, not control, is the route to a successful organization. This book tells you how to make your organization collaborative. And Nilofer Merchant's writing is a model of clarity."--Barry Schwartz, author of *The Paradox of Choice: Why More Is Less* "Want to transform your organization into a collaborative enterprise? Nilofer Merchant provides insightful and practical strategies in *The New How*."--Padmasree Warrior, CTO, Cisco Systems, Inc. "Merchant's book is a practical guide for the journey from strategy to implementation. The collaborative tools described here can help companies reach strategic success--and avoid pitfalls along the way."--Tom Kelley, General Manager, IDEO, and author of *Ten Faces of Innovation* "Once in a generation, a book comes along that transforms the business landscape. For today's business leaders, *The New How* redefines the way companies create strategies and win new markets. Management gurus have always said "people matter." But those same gurus still relegate strategy to an elite set of executives who focus on frameworks, long presentations, and hierarchical approaches. Business strategy typically has been planned by corporate chiefs in annual meetings, and then dictated to managers to carry out. *The New How* turns that notion on its head. After many years of working with Apple, Adobe, HP, and many other companies, Nilofer Merchant discovered the secret sauce: the best way to create a winning strategy is to include employees at all levels, helping to create strategy they not only believe in, but are also equipped to implement. In *The New How*, Nilofer shows today's corporate directors, executives, and managers how they can transform their traditional, top-down approach to strategy planning and execution into collaborative "stratecution" that has proven to be significantly more effective. Enhance performance and outcomes by deflating the "air sandwich" between executives in the boardroom and employees. Recognize that strategy and execution are thoroughly intertwined. Understand how successful strategy is founded in effective idea selection--a pile of good ideas doesn't necessarily build good strategy. Create company strategy and link it to targeted execution, using the practical models and techniques provided.

How are you going to get rid of your air sandwich if you don't even know what it is? Provocative and practical at the same time.--Seth Godin, Author of *Linchpin*