

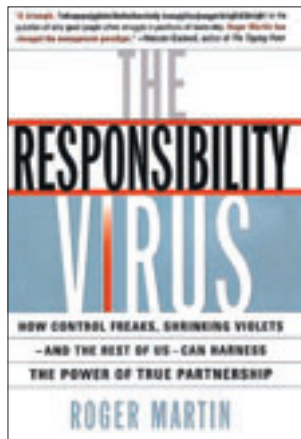
Bookshelf

■ Taking Responsibility

Some of us are Al Haigs. We shout “I’m in charge!” the minute something goes wrong. Some of us are anonymous worker drones, making sure someone *else* takes over when things get rocky. In either case, we’re all infected with the responsibility virus, either performing over or under our general level of capability, and growing increasingly frustrated with the people around us who either won’t do their share or who abrogate all the power.

In his book *The Responsibility Virus*, Roger Martin aims to change that inelegant, inefficient cycle. He gives several clear, detailed examples of situations in which one person’s imperfect behavior sparks someone else’s rash response, until both players are frustrated and angry and their projects fail. He then sets out equally clear and detailed behavioral models that lead to collaborative solutions and truly shared responsibility. For instance, groups working on a problem need to follow a procedure for analyzing their options and making the best choice; groups with fundamentally differing points of view need to learn to re-frame their perception of the problem from the other person’s perspective. Executives overseeing a mixed group of managers need to figure out what level of responsibility each of these managers is ready to assume and work with the individuals to improve their decision-making skills.

Martin’s prose is clear and thoughtful, and the examples he gives are drawn from real-life situations he faced in consulting jobs. It is no surprise to learn he is not a fan



either of the “cult of the CEO” or the “empowerment” school of thought. His solutions require more effort than adapting the two easiest modes of conduct—either over-achieving or under-achieving responsibility—but

his action plans sound doable and smart. (Basic Books, \$27.50)

■ Supply Chain and Demand

Today’s customer is ever more demanding, expecting quick service and made-to-order products, whether he’s buying a book, a car, or a component to be used in his own manufacturing business. To keep up with escalating changes in the marketplace, business owners need to figure out how to improve efficiencies, cut waste, and speed up their own processes. One of the best places to begin streamlining is the supply chain. This means examining the *whole* supply chain, from external suppliers to internal departments to end-use consumers.

In *Supply Chain Redesign*, authors Robert B. Handfield and Ernest L. Nichols Jr. do just that. Noting that “time-based competition is here to stay because of its direct linkage to profits,” they look at the various places along the supply chain where companies can improve performance. Taking advantage of today’s new technology is a vital part of the supply chain

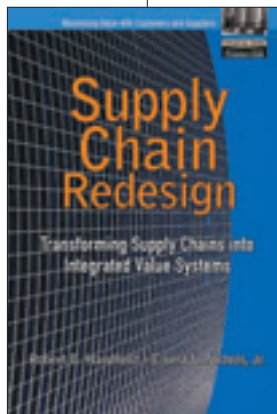
redesign, of course; so is the hard work of figuring out just how business is done. Who orders materials, how are orders filled, where do the delays occur? They point out that it’s essential to reorganize internal systems when necessary, but it’s equally important to work closely with business partners up and down the supply chain to achieve maximum efficiency. This sometimes means overcoming the fear of sharing data with outsiders and adopting a “co-destiny” approach with certain key suppliers.

The authors know that slimming down the supply chain isn’t going to be an easy task for most businesses. For instance, they discuss the benefits of enterprise resource planning (ERP), which requires companies to design integrated business transaction systems that handle all internal functions from customer contact through production planning

though delivery. Under this system, “one master record with multiple views is used for the enterprise. All processes use a common database.” That sounds terrific, they note, but “the actual process of implanting a new ERP system in an environment where people have grown accustomed to using their familiar lega-

cy systems has proven to be a monumental task in many organizations.”

For the companies that tame and exploit their supply chains, however, the rewards are great, including higher profits and satisfied customers. This book provides a manual on how to begin the arduous task. (Prentice Hall, \$34)



IS ECONOMIC GLOBALIZATION DESTROYING DIVERSITY IN CULTURAL PRODUCTS, SUCH AS MUSIC, LITERATURE, CINEMA, CUISINE, AND VISUAL ARTS?



Globalization and Diversity

Is economic globalization destroying diversity in cultural products, such as music, literature, cinema, cuisine, and visual arts? Tyler Cowen offers a structured, optimistic response to this difficult question under the clever title of *Creative Destruction*.

While admitting that global exchange may reduce cultural diversity *across* societies, Cowen reminds us that it increases diversity *within* societies by expanding the menu of choice. Trade, through a dynamic process that resembles Schumpeter's original creative destruction, increases diversity over time by accelerating innovation and change. It also increases operative diversity, which Cowen defines as how effectively we can enjoy the diversity of the world.

Cowen is most effective when he views globalization from an economic viewpoint, as when he carefully describes the gains from trade in cultural goods and isolates industry drivers to explain the evolution of geographic clustering in the film industry. He's also intriguing when he attaches a technical definition to a society's ethos; he argues that society relies on trade for innovation and growth and cannot survive without critical mass. He differentiates intensive consumers ("hobbyists") from extensive ones ("channel surfers") and questions who has an incentive to monitor quality when a culture is "dumbed down."

This slim volume may seem incomplete to some readers. Fundamental questions about property rights, which have become especially important in a digital environment, are left unexplored. Little attention

is given to the role of international institutions in preserving traditional art forms or intersection of social norms and cultural arts. Cowen also doesn't deal with the business of exporting cultural brands—which by most accounts still requires a strategic, financially sound, research-based approach and is more likely to be unsuccessful than successful. Overall, however, the book is an engrossing read. (Princeton University Press, \$27.95)

—reviewed by Dan LeClair
AACSB International

Quick Looks

In 1998, Nancy L. Zimpher came to the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee as its chancellor and immediately began the process of transforming the university. Her vision was of an engaged urban institution that was a resource for the community as well as the academic and student populations. *A Time for Boldness*, written by Zimpher, Stephen L. Percy, and Mary Jane Brukaradt, tells the story of UMW's slow, messy, glorious evolution. It is a detailed examination of the committees formed, the promises made, the people involved, the mistakes endured, and the triumphs achieved. It's a highly interesting chronicle for any public university seeking a greater connection to its city or its state. (Anker Publishing Company, \$39.95)

You may have come up with a number of creative comparisons between your workplace and some other institution, but you've probably never considered how your office resembles a monastery. Anna Fargo, writing in *The Patron Saint of Business Manage-*

ment, has done it for you. Breaking down the Rule of St. Benedict into small chapters, she first presents the saint's guidelines for living the monastic life and then interprets how they apply to today's corporate setting. St. Benedict decrees that "Whenever weighty matters are to be transacted in the monastery, let the Abbot call together the whole community, and make known the matter which is to be considered." Fargo explains, "Communication is the cornerstone of a healthy company." Excommunication at the monastery is likened to firing from a company. Here and there, a comparison is rather too much of a stretch, but the parallels between fifth-century monastic life and 21st-century corporate life are intriguing enough to consider on your own. (Insomniac Press, \$15.95)



Learning and applying the tools of self-discovery can change your life, enabling you to set priorities, commit yourself to the common good, and find your true calling so that you never simply "work" again. Travis L. Sample's inspirational book *Humanizing Change* lays out his eight principles for achieving what he calls "personal and professional alignment." He draws examples from thinkers as diverse as Jack Welch and Mahatma Gandhi while providing a road map for those who want to examine and truly change their careers—and their lives. (Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, \$37) 