

Bookshelf

■ **As a new president completes his first 100**

days in office during exceedingly challenging times, leaders everywhere contemplate what it takes to *Hit the Ground Running*. Jason Jennings has conducted in-depth interviews with nine high-performing CEOs to discover what common patterns and beliefs govern the behavior of top executives. The answers tend to be basic and straightforward, and there are hardly any surprises: *Tell the truth. Gain trust. Be accountable. Find the right people.* Yet the

stories behind the platitudes are intriguing glimpses into the lives of nine CEOs who outperform average CEOs on virtually every measure. For instance, Tim and Richard Smucker, great-grandsons of the man who founded the J.M. Smucker Company, are Christian Scientists who do business by the Golden Rule and don't hire—or keep—employees who don't fit in. That's critical, writes Jennings: "A company either has the right culture that their leadership

has worked relentlessly to move throughout the organization or the wrong one because the leadership couldn't be bothered with *soft* things like culture." Jennings uses the successes of the other eight CEOs to make additional points, allowing their personal stories to illustrate universal themes of business. (Portfolio, \$25.95)

■ **A company that fails to grow will fail to** survive, but managing strategic growth is a difficult proposition. The key is to grow in incremental stages after carefully defining specific goals—and giving managers some latitude for failure. This approach, called *Discovery-Driven Growth*, is presented by Columbia University's Rita Gunther McGrath and Wharton's Ian C. McMillan. They write, "What needs to replace conventional planning when you are trying some bold new growth program is a process that allows you to set a direction, probe inexpensively, redirect where necessary, and, hopefully, grasp emergent growth, but shut down early and inexpensively if things don't work out." The authors

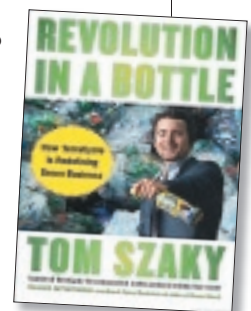
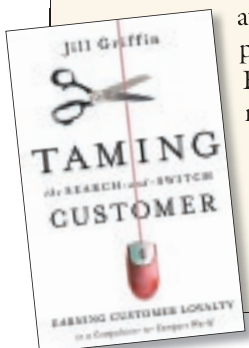
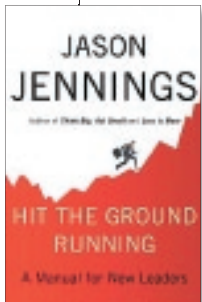
outline the essential steps of creating a framework for growth, bringing the management team on

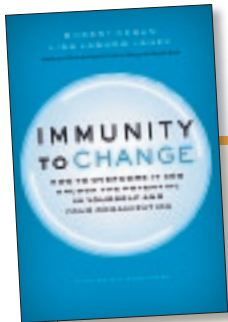
board, managing projects, and deciding when to abandon them. "It's crucial that your team doesn't attach a stigma to stopping a project," they warn. "Doing something that yielded valuable insight, learning, or new capabilities can be as valuable as growing a new business can." It's a well-reasoned approach to a critical process. (Harvard Business Press, \$27.95)

■ **Anyone who's fascinated by the day-by-day, despairing-and-euphoric cycle** of building a new enterprise from scratch should enjoy Tom Szaky's *Revolution in a Bottle*. Bonus points if the reader is invested in the notion of eco-capitalism. In his honest, funny, and uncensored book, Szaky shows how he turns trash into cash—more specifically, turns worm excrement into fertilizer—thereby simultaneously making a profit and helping to save the world. The tales of funding woes and near-disasters contrast nicely with the ultimate successes, such as selling the first pallet of fertilizer to a big box store and coming up with new Earth-friendly products. Szaky cares passionately about doing the right thing, but he's a pragmatist, too. "It seems fairly clear to me that everyone wants to buy organic, eco-friendly products, but equally clear they don't want to pay more for them," he writes. "That's where eco-capitalism comes in." It's a fun, frightening, and fabulous ride. (Portfolio, \$15)

Today's customers are curious, restless "infovores" who generally know a great deal

about any product before they buy it—and a great deal about your competitors before they decide to buy that product from *you*. The advent of the Internet—with search engines like Google and social networking sites like Facebook—means potential customers not only know what products are available, they know who carries those products and what other people think about the buying experience at each retail outlet. Even your long-term customers will find it easy to switch to new providers if they don't like your service or selection. But Jill Griffin, a specialist in creating customer loyalty, knows all the keys to *Taming the Search-and-Switch Customer*. "The 'Do I switch?' question is always lurking," Griffin writes. She gives today's leaders ways to make that answer "No." (Jossey Bass, \$24.95)





Many people want to change something about themselves—they want to lose weight or become more effective leaders—but no matter how often they try, they never successfully diet or delegate. Robert Kegan and Lisa Laskow Lahey would say that’s because humans have developed a powerful *Immunity to Change*. The easy-going executive who wants to become a forceful communicator secretly believes he will lose the CEO’s favor if he speaks more bluntly; hence, to protect himself, he has grown immune to the very idea of dissent. But Kegan and Lahey, both of Harvard, don’t believe people have to be stuck in their current mindsets. They’ve developed a system that not only helps individuals identify changes they would like to make, but also helps them identify the hidden rewards preventing them from altering their behavior. “We are calling upon workers to understand themselves and their world at a qualitatively higher level of mental complexity,” they write. This mental complexity will absolutely be necessary, they believe, as humans try to navigate an increasingly complicated world. (Harvard Business Press, \$29.95)

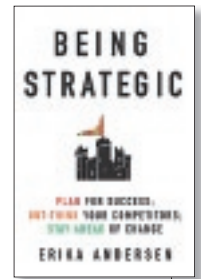
The business landscape is littered with companies that once were giants in their fields and now struggle to maintain profitability. In *When Growth Stalls*, advertising strategist Steve McKee deconstructs the seven factors that can have a devastating effect on companies. Three are the widely understood external forces of economic upheavals, aggressive competition, and changing industry dynamics, and McKee fills a few chapters describing how even top performers fall victim to these “tectonic market shifts.” But he spends more time on the “four subtle and highly destructive internal factors that conspire to keep companies down: lack of consensus among the management team, loss of nerve, loss of focus, and marketing inconsistency.” To make his points, McKee draws on research conducted by his firm, and he peppers his prose with briskly told tales about the times that McDonald’s, HP,



Sears, Home Depot, and a host of others stumbled. Well-written, fast-paced, and insightful, the book is an excellent how-to manual for any executive facing tough times. (Wiley, \$27.95)

Everyone always talks about strategy, but no one ever does anything about it. Or, more precisely, people believe they need a strategy—to improve their businesses or their personal lives—but they’re not sure how to choose or implement one. In *Being Strategic*, Erika Andersen clearly sets forth the steps that have to be taken before any strategy can be formulated. “Being strategic means consistently making those core directional choices that will best move you toward your hoped-for future,” she writes. Most of the tips come down to clarifying: figure out what your core challenge actually is, view it in the larger context, set your goals, realistically assess the obstacles, select your strategies, screen out the unimportant data, and keep making improve-

ments on your plan. Andersen constantly nudges readers to take a hard look at their situations—to act as “Fair Witnesses” who impartially observe and record reality—even though that’s frequently a difficult task. She also provides worksheets and exercises to get readers to think more clearly about how to strategically revamp their businesses and their lives. (St. Martin’s Press, \$24.95)



During the 2001 recession, Apple was working on iTunes and the iPod, and these products were ready to launch when the economy rebounded. That was a smart move, note Philip Kotler and John A. Caslione in *Chaotics*. They write, “It’s natural for companies to be more conservative when there are budgetary concerns, but companies that don’t take risks, don’t invest in product development, and misjudge the need for collaboration will find it difficult to compete when the market is on the upswing.” Kotler and Caslione believe that the world economy has moved from the familiar two-phase model—up or down—into a time of incessant turbulence that will require constant recalibration. Many factors will contribute to this ongoing turbulence, including globalization, technology, the growth of emerging economies, and customer empowerment. The authors also explore how executives can devise their own “Chaotics Management Systems” to get them through these troubled—but exciting—times. (AMACOM, \$30.95)

