

Do Bigger Things: A Practical Guide to Powerful Innovation in a Changing World

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Jennifer Wilde

Fast Company Press (Apr 16, 2024)

\$17.95 (264pp)

978-1-63908-069-4

Do Bigger Things is a lucid introduction to ecosystem-oriented business management practices.

Dan McClure and Jennifer Wilde's *Do Bigger Things* is an upbeat guide to harnessing the lightweight business management techniques of technologists and startup entrepreneurs.

Drawing on the model of a theatrical production, *Do Bigger Things* introduces the concept of ecosystem innovation, or relying on skilled individuals who perform separate tasks that coalesce around a director's goal. This method abandons detailed project planning, administrative oversight, and micromanagement—the hallmarks of traditional business management. In their place, it favors durable goals that grow and change in response to unpredictable circumstances.

While native to the technology and startup sectors, this book argues that ecosystem innovation can also improve other types of enterprises. Moving from examples of successful ecosystem innovators and market disruptors, including Solar Sisters and the Dollar Shave Club, to the novel roles and marketing practices that accompany ecosystem-oriented endeavors, the text explores the tools and mindsets that are necessary for on-the-ground application. And its modular chapters, illustrated graphs, and digressive text bubbles are accessible suggestions of the virtues of ecosystem thinking in miniature.

The book's central encouragements are to act, learn from the results, and then adapt the successive action to be more efficient, targeted, and productive. Methods specific to developing ecosystems are attended to well. In discussing the importance of an ambitious goal, for example, the book shows how prescriptive plans often undermine the natural talents of a group, while vague plans create space for inefficiency and disorder. While striking a balance between these two poles may seem mystical and axiomatic, a text bubble illustrates the gradual process of refining an idea with conviction, showing multiple ways of formulating the same basic business goal. And in arguing in favor of measuring progress through organic metrics, the book imagines a hypothetical tutoring business, pivots to a list of leading questions, and organizes each question into a graph to show how they relate to different aspects of business. Thanks to the book's encouraging tone, these didactic chapters are persuasive.

Although McClure's and Wilde's careers attest to the diverse application of ecosystem innovation—McClure is a global business consultant and startup founder, while Wilde developed efficient crisis response systems and created a humanitarian organization out of the experience of a catastrophic earthquake in Nepal—they are described in quite vague terms. Further, arguments about the benefits of ecosystem innovation stumble in developing a negative case against traditional working methods, where their examples run thin and highlight flaws rather than debating the merits of companies that thrive without ecosystem strategies.

A lucid introduction to ecosystem-oriented business management practices, *Do Bigger Things* is a leadership text that's designed to respond to the challenges of a fast-paced digital world.

WILLEM MARX (February 2, 2024)

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