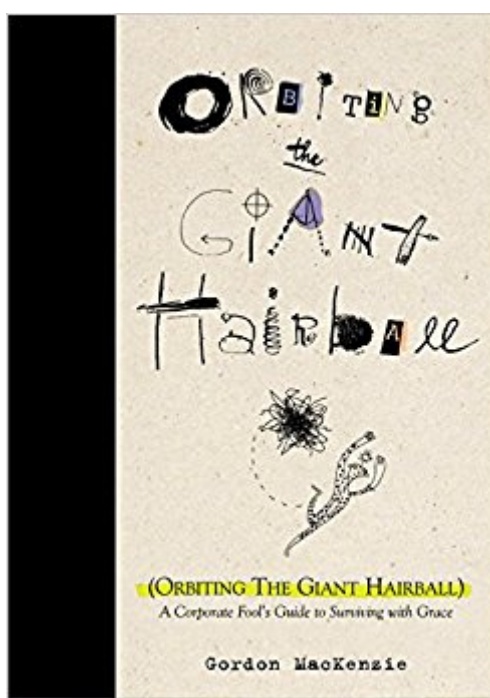


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Orbiting The Giant Hairball: A Corporate Fool's Guide To Surviving With Grace



Synopsis

Creativity is crucial to business success. But too often, even the most innovative organization quickly becomes a "giant hairball"--a tangled, impenetrable mass of rules, traditions, and systems, all based on what worked in the past--that exercises an inexorable pull into mediocrity. Gordon McKenzie worked at Hallmark Cards for thirty years, many of which he spent inspiring his colleagues to slip the bonds of Corporate Normalcy and rise to orbit--to a mode of dreaming, daring and doing above and beyond the rubber-stamp confines of the administrative mind-set. In his deeply funny book, exuberantly illustrated in full color, he shares the story of his own professional evolution, together with lessons on awakening and fostering creative genius. Originally self-published and already a business "cult classic", this personally empowering and entertaining look at the intersection between human creativity and the bottom line is now widely available to bookstores. It will be a must-read for any manager looking for new ways to invigorate employees, and any professional who wants to achieve his or her best, most self-expressive, most creative and fulfilling work.

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Customer Reviews

There is no denying the creativity of someone who can persuade one of the 50 largest private companies in the U.S. to create a position for him called "creative paradox," or someone who can convince the accounting department of that same company to write off to the company art collection the purchase of more than a dozen roll-top desks to be used in his "creative lab," or someone who could come up with such a goofy title for a book. MacKenzie worked for the Hallmark greeting card

company for 30 years, first as a sketch artist and eventually as an upper-level manager, until he escaped the "hairball" by creating his own niche. A corporate hairball is an entangled pattern of behavior or a mess of bureaucratic procedure that discourages originality and stifles imagination. A consultant for the last seven years, MacKenzie tells what he knows about creativity and what he learned about the creative process in a corporate setting. David Rouse

Gordon MacKenzie worked at Hallmark Cards for thirty years, where he inspired his colleagues to slip the bonds of Corporate Normalcy and rise to orbit - to a mode of dreaming, daring, and doing above and beyond the rubber-stamp confines of the administrative mind-set. In his deeply funny book, exuberantly illustrated in full color, he shares lessons on awakening and fostering creative genius. He teaches how to emerge from the "giant hairball" - that tangled, impenetrable mass of rules, and systems, based on what worked in the past and which can lead to mediocrity in the present.

"Orbiting" is one of my all-time favorite books for its important message hidden within a fun and interesting narrative. It is an autobiography of Gordon MacKenzie's organizational life as a creative force at Hallmark Cards. The Hairball is "policy, procedure, conformity, compliance, rigidity, and submission to the status quo, while Orbiting is originality, rule-breaking, non-conformity, experimentation, and innovation" (p. 39). It is difficult to write much about this book without spoiling the fun and discovery of reading it. Therefore, this review will be purposely brief and simply hint at some of the reasons I highly recommend this book: Favorite quote 1: "Companies we work for... have their perceptions of reality and they impose them on us. As a result, we are wrapped in a cocoon of realities perceived by others who came before us. It is a cocoon that gives us a sense of emotional security through connection to a shared belief. But it is also a shroud that binds and cripples us..." (p. 45). Many will recognize the forced team-building exercises that MacKenzie describes in this next quote. Favorite quote 2: "Mandatory fun is the force-feeding of some cockeyed activity to a captive audience with intent to generate joviality. Almost without exception, these ill-advised intrusions fail to create the mirth they are intended to. The result is a discomfort that everyone feels, but no one acknowledges (p. 118). Clearly the best part of the book are the stories that mark the author's journey through the company and speak clearly about how the exercise of power impacts the lives of individuals and the success of organizations. I especially enjoyed the power struggles over insignificant policies such as office trash bins. Overall, I can't really say what this book is about. Some will see it as a book on innovation, some will see it as surviving as an

individual deep inside a corporate bureaucracy, and some will see it as a triumph of the creativity of the human spirit. For me, it's a wonderful example of the complexity of organizational life and evidence that emergent outcomes are more than "the sum of the parts". From a complexity management perspective, these narratives bring richness and reality to how real organizations actually function and evolve (or stagnate).[...]

This is by far the greatest little book on creativity and should be a must for everyone, no matter what field, occupation, interest, etc. Gordon MacKenzie was a genius. His ideas about creative energy being crushed early on in peoples lives shows us why we need to learn how to orbit the giant hairballs that we find ourselves entangled in. This is required reading in our organization. We help young and old unleash and grow their creativity. Michael Moonbird - Bad Dog Arts

This was a quick read, with a ton of great sketches and illustrations that actual support the content of the book. It's got a great, positive message for working to your creative potential, without getting mired in the mix of corporate bureaucracy. I immediately recommended it to several of my coworkers. I appreciated that this one got to the message quickly in each chapter and didn't drone on or repeat itself just to fill up pages, like so many business books.

I'm a outside the box type or better a what box type of person. So after taking a job back in the corporate world after 10 years of working for myself a friend recommended (no actually he required) I read this book. It was very helpful both for my fear of the bureaucracy of corporate life and my way of desiring to lead. This book has a far reaching message that may be intended for creative types but could be useful for all managers to better understand how to manage the non-linear thinkers that work for them in order to capitalize on there ability to help the organization grow. If I can help my organization see that sometimes just doing it the way you always have isn't the best first choice then this book will be worth it's wait in gold. My only warning is that if you are a committed bureaucrat you are going to HATE this book. But open your mind and it will help you grow as a leader.

I think this book would be a good read for anyone entering college or even a graduate program, whether that be business, law, or architecture and design. There are way too many hairballs in this day and age, and more than ever one must learn how to orbit.

Head about book -- well written, humorous and on point. If only all employers thought employees

were worthwhile. Need to read it again even though I have retired -- it is one that I kept in my library.

One question: why is this not REQUIRED reading on every college campus in the country. Brilliantly conceived, brilliantly executed, and just plain fun. I've always felt like a comet. Now I know WHY. If you're looking for a gift for a college grad, this is it!

Great book that will help you retain your creativity and soul as you navigate the corporate world. Applies generally to more than the corporate world, but that is the intended audience. Whatever you do, this book will help you realize and stay true to your true, honest potential, whatever that may be. It's a quick read. Very well written. Gordon MacKenzie has a lively voice that will keep you engaged and inspired from start to finish.

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