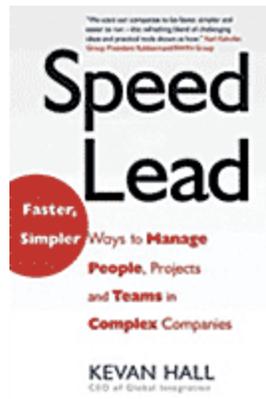


First, a confession: this book's subtitle, "Faster, simpler ways to manage people, projects, and teams in complex companies," initially left me more than skeptical. Given the wealth of literature and depth of research in current management theory, how could anyone find ways to improve their management practices for speed and simplicity at the same time?

Hall succeeds by using a clever trick: he reminds us of what we used to know, challenging readers to "unlearn" familiar practices – or rather, to start thinking about when, how, and why certain management concepts are applicable and when they are NOT. Hall argues that concepts such as teamwork, community, buy-in, and communication are way over-used and have become frustrating time wasters for leaders and individual contributors alike. He makes a crucial distinction between "spaghetti teams," characterized by intense interdependencies of team members with each other, and "star teams," which require only central coordination as independent efforts produce most of the results. Next, he argues compellingly that there are a lot more "star teams" than is commonly recognized, suggesting that these can be much more effective when throwing most common management wisdom overboard.



For instance, Hall identifies most meetings as time wasters and exposes "best practice reviews" as what they all too often are: activity reviews that rarely benefit a significant part, let alone a majority, of participants. The author uses catchy lines to emphasize his message: "A regular meeting is a bad meeting." "Multitasking [means] doing several things badly at a time."

Fortunately, he does not stop there. *Speed Lead* shows alternatives: effective ways to let employees learn from each other, avoid information overload, eliminate multitasking, lessen team interdependencies, and reduce leadership involvement, and so on. All along, the author keeps an eye on factors such as employee motivation and work-life balance in light of today's globalization pressures.

In the book's final chapter, "Leave my cultural values alone", Hall suggests focusing on sharing practices, not values, when working across cultural boundaries, unless the values involved turn out to be locally useful or cause trouble. While this approach and the book's underlying "time is money" premise reveal U.S. cultural bias and must be taken with a grain of salt when working around the globe, the chapter again manages to stimulate thought and offer simple-yet-effective practices.

Given the mega-trends of globalization, technology, and scale, organizations are getting ever more complex. Kevan Hall shows how to get off the organizational "hamster wheel," showing ways to lead successfully in a complex global environment.

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