

At first glance, Rosabeth Moss Kanter's *Supercorp* reeks of hyperbole. "Vanguard companies" that "rise out of the ashes of conventional business models" to create "innovation, profits, growth, and social good"? "The book that", as one reviewer is quoted, "the world has been waiting for"?

That may be a bit over the top. But don't be fooled. The solid case presented in this book is based on findings from hundreds of interviews conducted within fifteen companies, among them IBM and Procter & Gamble, Brazil's Banco Real, China's Shinhan Financial Group, France's Publicis Groupe, Japan's Omron, and Mexico's Cemex. And, yes, the value of the success strategies Harvard Business School professor Kanter derives from her studies indeed make *Supercorp* one of the most important works published in recent years.

A major theme is the importance of agility for companies as they compete in a globalized world. What makes this book compelling is its emphasis on business model innovation *and* social responsibility. Not the first to point this out but far ahead of others in suggesting strategies for a changing world, the author notes that "vanguard companies" have estab-



lished value-based guidance systems that go beyond taking care of the bottom line. If a company wants highly engaged and productive contributors, she argues, establishing values and principles that embrace longer-term social responsibilities for employees, customers, and the general public must have the same or greater weight as business goals, such as market dominance or shareholder value. Many case examples illustrate how companies build social networks and partnerships, leveraging their competitiveness and innovation potential to help local communities and global non-profits alike.

Far from merely promoting 'do-good' activities, Kanter looks at implications on business results and gains (what she calls the 'values dividend'). Keeping her advice practical, the author also avoids abstract ideals, conceding that Vanguard companies have flaws and discussing the substantial challenges presented by competitive pressures and job migration, the 'dark side of globalization'.

Kanter builds on the foundation laid by such important works as *Built to Last* and *Good to Great*. Her contribution may be even greater: sharing practical examples, analyzing potential downsides, discussing required leadership competencies, and listing the 'Ten Things Anyone Can Do to Be in the Vanguard', *Supercorp* points the way to sustainable business success in the Age of Globalization.

This review is dedicated to Raj Daniels, with great appreciation.

Leadership Crossroads™ 6122 Bryan Parkway, Dallas, TX 75206
469-233-3538

info@leadershipcrossroads.com www.leadershipcrossroads.com

This book review solely represents the opinions and conclusions of its author. It does not claim to be accurate, complete, or objective.

© Leadership Crossroads™, 2010



Lothar Katz is the founder of Leadership Crossroads. He has a wealth of experience in achieving productive cooperation across cultures and driving business success on a global scale.

A seasoned former executive of Fortune 500 company Texas Instruments, he regularly interacted with employees, customers, outsourcing partners, and third parties in more than 25 countries around the world, including many parts of Asia. Mr. Katz is the author of "Negotiating International Business – The Negotiator's Reference Guide to 50 Countries Around the World".

