

Harvard professors Kegan and Laskow Lahey base their latest book on a bold thesis: “In most organizations nearly everyone is doing a second job no one is paying them for—namely, covering their weaknesses, trying to look their best, and managing other people’s impressions of them.”

Don’t know about you, but that premise sure matches my personal experience: whether you work for a company, an administration or a non-profit, how competent you **appear** tends to weigh a lot, often more than how competent you **are**. The vast energy people spend on hiding their limitations and shortcomings, the authors argue, is the single biggest loss of resources that organizations suffer.



An Everyone Culture presents an extensive analysis of the corporate cultures of three unique mid-size companies: e-commerce service provider Next Jump, investment firm Bridgewater Associates, and commercial property manager Decurion Corporation. Visit the website of any of these companies, and you will start getting an idea of just how different they really are.

Kegan and Laskow Lahey refer to these companies as DDOs or “deliberately developmental organizations,” saying that DDOs embrace the principle of developing everyone’s potential, from the recent hire to the CEO, on a

continual basis and to the benefit of business and employee alike. After a foundational explanation of adult learning principles and challenges, the book gives a “Conceptual tour of the DDOs,” discussing principles such as “weakness is a potential asset; error is an opportunity,” “the bottom line is all one thing” or “everyone does people development.”

Hearing that “personal and organizational development are as important as the bottom line” can be hard to swallow for traditional business leaders. Thankfully, *An Everyone Culture* gives plenty of room to a discussion of the impact on the bottom line, asking “But is this any way to run a business?” For starters – and as one would expect–, the three example DDOs sound a unanimous Yes, each being among the most successful and profitable players in their respective industries. Analyzing the reasons for these successes, Kegan and Laskow Lahey’s compellingly present their conclusion is that it is not merely **possible** to succeed as a DDO but that being a DDO creates distinct, sustainable business advantages. The continual innovation that comes out of regularly challenging each other, low employee turnover, high client retention, and high average employee performance all contribute substantially to the bottom line.

To quote Bridgewater’s CEO: “We do not think of our culture as a success factor, we are successful **because of** our culture.” That’s quite a statement—and in itself already plenty of reason to read this book.

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