

Business Books to Watch in March

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We've never had more than 20 books on any monthly books-to-watch list. It is often challenging to pare it down to 20, but never impossible—until now.

March is a monster month in business book publishing this year. It was a challenge to keep this list to 28 titles, and some very worthy books had to be left off.

In order of their release dates, here are the books we're hoping to become more acquainted with this month. (Remember this post for the leaner publishing months of summer.)

Clarity First: How Smart Leaders and Organizations Achieve Outstanding Performance by Karen Martin, McGraw-Hill

Award-winning business performance improvement and Lean management expert Karen Martin shows today's leaders how to eliminate ambiguity, and embrace transparency, truth, and tenacity to optimize performance at every level.

Throughout her global consulting work, popular book tours, keynote speeches, and work with thousands of leaders and improvement leaders, Karen has been hearing the same questions: How can we achieve our organization's performance goals more easily? How can we align the organization around a single strategy? How can we, as leaders, provide better context and establish a clear call to action? The answer is Clarity First, a practical and powerful approach to operating a business in a way that eliminates the ambiguity and confusion that makes work more difficult than it needs to be, creates a poorer customer experience, and hurts the bottom line.

With simple but sharp-focused clarity, Martin shines a much-needed light on the most common business management and leadership problems that can hamper performance, offering specific solutions and field-tested strategies that can dramatically improve your operations and overall performance. Leaders will learn how to gain the clarity they need to make better decisions and lead more effectively, and how to be more direct, decisive, and purposeful when communicating so that their teams will be more clearly inspired to follow their lead. When it comes to achieving organizational excellence, every great leader needs Clarity First.

The CEO Next Door: The 4 Behaviors That Transform Ordinary People into World-Class Leaders by Elena L. Botelho, Kim R. Powell, and Tahl Raz, Currency

Based on an in-depth analysis of over 2,600 leaders drawn from a database of more than 17,000 CEOs and C-suite executives, as well 13,000 hours of interviews, and two decades of experience advising CEOs and executive boards, Elena L. Botelho and Kim R. Powell overturn the myths about what it takes to get to the top and succeed.

Their groundbreaking research was the featured cover story in the May-June 2017 issue of Harvard Business Review. It reveals the common attributes and counterintuitive choices that set apart successful CEOs—lessons that we can apply to our own careers.

Much of what we hear about who gets to the top, and how, is wrong. Those who become chief executives set their sights on the C-suite at an early age. In fact, over 70 percent of the CEOs didn't have designs on the corner office until later in their careers. You must graduate from an elite college. In fact, only 7 percent of CEOs in the dataset are Ivy League graduates—and 8 percent didn't graduate from college at all. To become a CEO you need a flawless résumé. The reality: 45 percent of CEO candidates had at least one major career blowup.

What those who reach the top do share are four key behaviors that anyone can master: they are decisive; they are reliable, delivering what they promised when the promise it, without exception; they adapt boldly, and they engage with stakeholders without shying away from conflict.

Based on this breakthrough study of the most successful people in business, Botelho and Powell offer career advice for everyone who aspires to get ahead. Based on research insights illustrated by real life stories from CEOs and boardrooms, they tell us how to:

- Fast-track our career by deploying the career catapults used by those who get to the top quickly.
- Overcome the hidden handicaps to getting the job we want.
- Avoid the 5 hazards that most commonly derail those promoted into a new role.

For everyone who aspires to rise up through the organization and achieve their full potential, [The CEO Next Door](#) is an essential guide.

[Meet the Frugalwoods: Achieving Financial Independence Through Simple Living](#) by Elizabeth Willard Thames, Harper Business

The deeply personal story of how award-winning personal finance blogger Elizabeth Willard Thames abandoned a successful career in the city and embraced frugality to create a more meaningful, purpose-driven life, and retire to a homestead in the Vermont woods at age thirty-two with her husband and daughter.

In 2014, Elizabeth and Nate Thames were conventional 9-5 young urban professionals. But the couple had a dream to become modern-day homesteaders in rural Vermont. Determined to retire as early as possible in order to start living each day—as opposed to wishing time away working for the weekends—they enacted a plan to save an enormous amount of money: well over seventy percent of their joint take home pay. Dubbing themselves the Frugalwoods, Elizabeth began documenting their unconventional frugality and the resulting wholesale lifestyle transformation on their eponymous blog.

the globe like never before.

How We Work: Live Your Purpose, Reclaim Your Sanity, and Embrace the Daily Grind by Leah Weiss, PhD, HarperWave

A practical guide to bringing our whole selves to our professional work, based on the author's overwhelmingly popular course at the Stanford Graduate School of Business.

In today's workplace, the traditional boundaries between "work" and "personal" are neither realistic nor relevant. From millennials seeking employment in the sharing economy to Gen Xers telecommuting to Baby Boomers creating a meaningful second act, the line that separates who we are from the work we do is blurrier than ever.

The truth is, we don't show up for our jobs as a portion of ourselves—by necessity, we bring both our hearts and our minds to everything we do. In How We Work, mindfulness expert and creator of the perennially-waitlisted Stanford Business School course "Leading with Mindfulness and Compassion" Dr. Leah Weiss explains why this false dichotomy can be destructive to both our mental health and our professional success.

The bad news, says Weiss, is that nothing provides more opportunities for negative emotions—anxiety, anger, envy, fear, and paranoia, to name a few—than the dynamics of the workplace. But the good news is that these feelings matter. How we feel at and about work matters—to ourselves, to the quality of our work, and ultimately to the success of the organizations for which we work.

The path to productivity and success, says Weiss, is not to change jobs, to compartmentalize our feelings, or to create a false "professional" identity—but rather to listen to the wisdom our feelings offer. Using mindfulness techniques, we can learn how to attend to difficult feelings without becoming subsumed by them; we can develop an awareness of our bigger picture goals that orients us and allows us to see purpose in even the most menial tasks. In How We Work, Weiss offers a set of practical, evidence-based strategies for practicing mindfulness in the real world, showing readers not just how to survive another day, but how to use ancient wisdom traditions to sharpen their abilities, enhance their leadership and interpersonal skills, and improve their satisfaction.

Fusion: How Integrating Brand and Culture Powers the World's Greatest Companies by Denise Lee Yohn, Nicholas Brealey

Internal culture + External brand = FUSION.

For years, leaders at companies like Southwest, Starbucks, and Google have done something differently that's put their organizations at the top of "the most admired companies," "best brands," and "great workplaces" lists. They don't often talk about that "something" specifically in terms of brand-culture fusion, but, as author Denise Lee Yohn reveals, aligning and integrating their brands and cultures is precisely how they've achieved their successes.

Independently, brand and culture are powerful, unsung business drivers. But Denise shows that when you fuse the two together to create an interdependent and mutually-reinforcing relationship between them, you create organizational power that isn't possible by simply cultivating one or the other alone. Through detailed case studies from some of the world's greatest companies (including Amazon, Airbnb, Adobe, Nike, and Salesforce), exclusive interviews with company executives, and insights from Denise's 25+ years working with world class brands, Fusion provides readers with a roadmap for increasing competitiveness, creating measurable value for customers and employees, and future-proofing their business.

The Mind of the Leader: How to Lead Yourself, Your People, and Your Organization for Extraordinary Results by Rasmus Hougaard & Jacqueline Carter, Harvard Business Review Press

Join the global movement that's making corporations more people-centric to achieve great results.

The world is facing a global leadership crisis. Seventy-seven percent of leaders think they do a good job of engaging their people, yet 88 percent of employees say their leaders don't engage enough. There is also a high level of suffering in the workplace: 35 percent of employees would forgo a pay raise to see their leaders fired.

This is an enormous waste of human talent—despite the fact that \$46 billion is spent each year on leadership development.

Based on extensive research, including assessments of more than 35,000 leaders and interviews with 250 C-level executives, The Mind of the Leader concludes that organizations and leaders aren't meeting employees' basic human needs of finding meaning, purpose, connection, and genuine happiness in their work.

But more than a description of the problem, The Mind of the Leader offers a radical, yet practical, solution. To solve the leadership crisis, organizations need to put people at the center of their strategy. They need to develop managers and executives who lead with three core mental qualities: mindfulness, selflessness, and compassion.

Using real-world inspirational examples from Marriott, Accenture, McKinsey & Company, LinkedIn, and many more, The Mind of the Leader shows how this new kind of leadership turns conventional leadership thinking upside down. It represents a radical redefinition of what it takes to be an effective leader—and a practical, hard-nosed solution to every organization's engagement and execution problems.

Organize Your Team Today: The Mental Toughness Needed to Lead Highly Successful Teams by Jason Selk & Tom Bartow, with Matthew Rudy, Da Capo Lifelong Books

Following up the popular peak performance book Organize Tomorrow Today, a new plan to motivate, set priorities, and lead any team to optimal achievement

Watch a triumphant speech after a sports championship or business milestone and you'll almost always hear some variation of this catchphrase: "It couldn't have happened without the great team we have." It doesn't matter if you're the owner of a 10,000-employee Fortune 500 company or running a small business, you're a part of a team. With a combined 50 years of experience building, managing, advising, and troubleshooting teams in both the business and sports worlds, Jason Selk and Tom Bartow now reveal the common DNA that links the highest performing teams.

In Organize Your Team Today, Selk and Bartow show how it takes collective mental toughness to win, developed only through a clear understanding of the goals, limitations, roles and personalities on your team. Great leaders respect and embrace channel capacity, Selk and Bartow explain, which means they don't overload their teams with blizzards of tasks and responsibilities. They bust the "focus" and "relationship" fallacies, as those words are meaningless for teams unless they are byproducts of activities that really matter. And Selk and Bartow teach how to manage expectations, since doing so creates a level of respect between the leader and the team—and among the team members—that is a catalyst for peak achievement.

A Great Place to Work for All: Better for Business, Better for People, Better for the World by Michael C. Bush & The Great Place to Work Research Team, Berrett-Koehler

From Great Place to Work, which produces the popular *Fortune* 100 Best Companies to Work For ranking, comes a new definition of what it takes to make an organization great FOR ALL—for business, people and the world.

Today's business climate is defined by speed, social technologies, and people's expectations of "values" besides value. As a result, leaders have to create an outstanding culture for all, no matter who they are or what they do for the organization. This groundbreaking book, from the creators of the gold-standard *Fortune* 100 Best Companies to Work For list, shows how it's done. Through inspiring stories and compelling research, the authors demonstrate that great places to work for all benefit the individuals working there and contribute to a better global society—even as they outperform in the stock market and grow revenue three times faster than less-inclusive rivals. This is a call to lead so that organizations develop every ounce of human potential.

Work: The Last 1,000 Years by Andrea Komlosy, Verso

Tracing the complexity and contradictory nature of work throughout history.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the general Western conception of work had been reduced to simply gainful employment. But this limited perspective contrasted sharply with the personal experience of most people in the world—whether in colonies, developing countries, or in the industrializing world. Moreover, from a feminist perspective, reducing work and the production of value to remunerated employment has never been convincing.

Andrea Komlosy argues in this important intervention that, when we examine it closely, work changes its meanings according to different historical and regional contexts. Globalizing labour history from the thirteenth to the twenty-first centuries, she sheds light on the complex coexistence of multiple forms of labour (paid/unpaid, free/unfree, with various forms of legal regulation and social protection and so on) on the local and the world levels. Combining this global approach with a gender perspective opens our eyes to the varieties of work and labour and their combination in households and commodity chains across the planet—processes that enable capital accumulation not only by extracting surplus value from wage-labour, but also through other forms of value transfer, realized by tapping into households' subsistence production, informal occupation, and makeshift employment. As the debate about work and its supposed disappearance intensifies, Komlosy's book provides a crucial shift in the angle of vision.

Meltdown: Why Our Systems Fail and What We Can Do About It by Chris Clearfield & András Tilcsik, Penguin Press

A groundbreaking take on how complexity causes failure in all kinds of modern systems—from social media to air travel—this practical and entertaining book reveals how we can prevent meltdowns in business and life.

A crash on the Washington, D.C. metro system. An accidental overdose in a state-of-the-art hospital. An overcooked holiday meal. At first glance, these disasters seem to have little in common. But surprising new research shows that all these events—and the myriad failures that dominate headlines every day—share similar causes. By understanding what lies behind these failures, we can design better systems, make our teams more productive, and transform how we make decisions at work and at home.

Weaving together cutting-edge social science with riveting stories that take us from the frontlines of the Volkswagen scandal to backstage at the Oscars, and from deep beneath the Gulf of Mexico to the top of Mount Everest, Chris Clearfield and András Tilcsik explain how the increasing complexity of our systems creates conditions ripe for failure and why our brains and teams can't keep up. They highlight the paradox of progress: Though modern systems have given us new capabilities, they've become vulnerable to surprising meltdowns—and even to corruption and misconduct.

But Meltdown isn't just about failure; it's about solutions—whether you're managing a team or the chaos of your family's morning routine. It reveals why ugly designs make us safer, how a five-minute exercise can prevent billion-dollar catastrophes, why teams with fewer experts are better at managing risk, and why diversity is one of our best safeguards against failure. The result is an eye-opening, empowering, and entirely original book—one that will change the way you see our complex world and your own place in it.

Dying for a Paycheck: How Modern Management Harms Employee Health and Company Performance—and What We Can Do About It by Jeffrey Pfeffer, Harper Business
