

Book Review – Shyr Chui

Book review - Nine lies about work, A freethinking guide to the real world.

Marcus Buckingham, Ashley Goodall, HBR Press 2019

This one made it onto my reading list after becoming a hot tip summer read for various “business celebrities”. Like the best summer business book reads, you want them to be easy to read at the airport or poolside whilst still teaching you something new. This book ticks all those boxes plus coming as close to a “page turner” as business books get.

There’s something about business books that purport to be both evidenced-based and a “slayer of sacred cows” that I think is intrinsically attractive. I think it harks back to the provocative idea that there could be a special sauce or silver bullet that is lacking in conventional business wisdom, but which could answer all your organization’s problems. So, does this book deliver? Well, er... sort of. Does that matter? Well, no, because it’s still a really good, fun read.

By picking 9 commonly held business beliefs, revealing their weaknesses, and offering valid alternatives, the authors certainly put a strong case forward for doing things differently. Many of their alternative approaches are not original but their juxtaposition against the deeply wired, conventional and almost universal practices we see in our organizations is actually quite refreshing. Which begs the question, who is this book for? On one level, the executive suite probably holds the key to the major organizational changes suggested but the bulk of the writing is aimed at the local manager or team boss. I’m thinking both then, probably need to read this book.

Section headings:

Lie #1 People care which company they work for

Lie #2 The best plan wins

Lie #3 The best companies cascade goals

Lie #4 The best people are well-rounded

Lie #5 People need feedback

Lie #6 People can reliably rate other people

Lie #7 People have potential

Lie #8 Work-life balance matters most
Lie #9 Leadership is a thing

Favorite quote:

Regarding work-life balance...

“If you build technical craft on a loveless foundation, you net only burnout, because technical mastery absent love always equals burnout. Burnout isn’t the absence of balance but the absence of love.”

Recommended? As your next vacation or poolside read, definitely. 4*/5