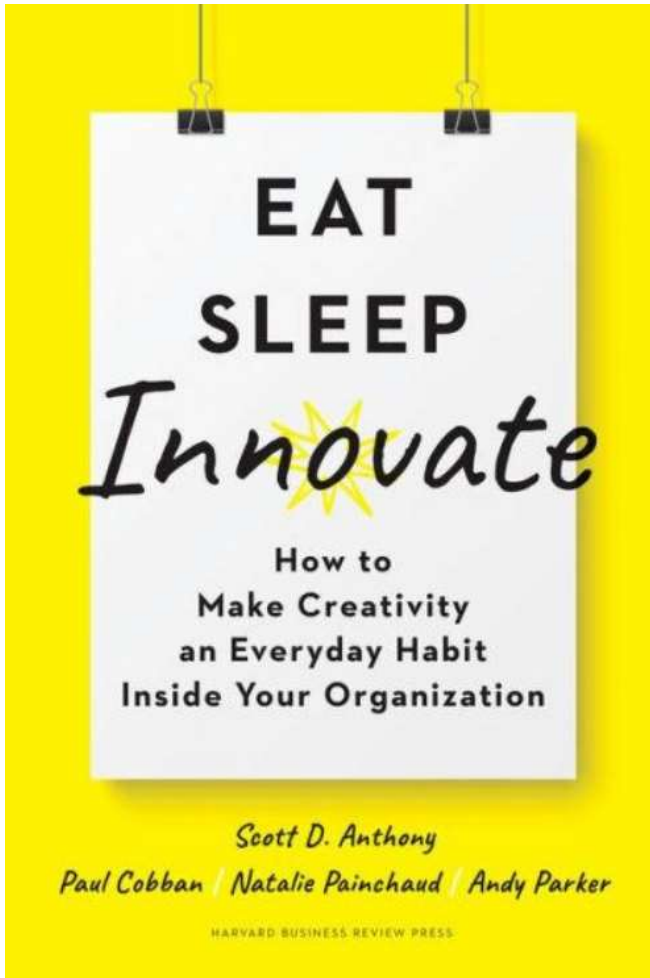


Harness your entire team's inventiveness

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"Eat Sleep Innovate: How to Make Creativity an Everyday Habit Inside Your Organization" by Scott D. Anthony, Paul Cobban, Natalie Painchaud and Andy Parker. Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 2020, 272 pages, \$28 (hardcover).



"We've been on the frontlines of innovation efforts and have seen the good, the bad, and the ugly," Scott D. Anthony, Paul Cobban, Natalie Painchaud and Andy Parker explain in "Eat Sleep Innovate: How to Make Creativity an Everyday Habit Inside Your Organization," their primer on how to harness the imagination and inventiveness of your entire team. "If you're skeptical, we understand. In our experience, companies are well-intentioned – they want to innovate and they want to build a stable of creative employees – but their attempts usually fail, or in some cases, completely backfire. Hence the skepticism."

"It's easy to assume that people can't change," they add a little later. "That lifetime workers have well-worn habits and lack the requisite knowledge to adopt cutting-edge technologies. This book lays out a system-level way to encourage and enable people to think and act beyond the status quo. Our approach sits at the intersection of four streams of research: organizational culture, habit change, innovation-enabling behaviors, and innovation-enhancing structures and systems."

Has your interest been piqued yet? Or asked another way, have you ever wished the people whom you work with could be more original in their approach to the challenges and problems they encounter on a daily basis? More importantly, have you ever wondered if you could motivate them to think outside the proverbial box on a more regular basis? Not only do these seasoned professionals provide detailed explanations that help shed some much-needed light on these ever-evolving queries, but they also take it to the next level by giving you the tools needed to accurately diagnose the issues at hand and make the necessary corrections that will help keep you viable – and competitive.

Structurally, the book consists of an Introduction, "The World's Greatest Untapped Source of Energy," eight chapters arranged in two major sections: "Part One: Laying the Foundation" (consisting of the first four chapters), and "Part Two: Tips, Tricks, and Tools" (which is made up of the last four chapters), and a Conclusion, "Starting a Movement." The concepts and applications are grounded in evidence-based research, with seven pages of source notes. Oddly, I found the fairly extensive appendices included at the end of the primary narrative to be particularly enlightening; they are arranged in five sections: "Culture of Innovation Bookshelf," "Culture Change Literature Review," "Culture of Innovation Diagnostic," "What's the Status of Your innovation Relationship?" and "Bag of 101 BEANs," which is an acronym for Behavior Enablers, Artifacts, and Nudges.

The insights – and the recommendations that spring from them – chronicled in “Eat Sleep Innovate” are fairly comprehensive and cover both the human side of the equation as well as the technical considerations inherently embedded in every successful enterprise. Culture shapes the tools we use; the tools inevitable shape the culture in an ongoing feedback loop that defines almost every aspect of the modern world – especially the provision of goods and services that keep us moving forward at an ever-accelerating pace. A representative excerpt accentuating the relevance of the human component of the environment can be found in “Conducting a Culture Spring,” the fourth chapter and one I found especially intriguing:

“People must live new behaviors before they design ways to encourage and enable them. Just because almost everyone intuitively understands the importance of culture does not mean that everyone is willing to dedicate time to progressing culture. Providing firsthand experience about the power of particular behaviors is the best way to convince people of the importance of BEANstorming in order to enable those behaviors.”

Similarly, a good illustration of the interplay between people and technology – at least from an historical perspective – can be found in “Phase 4: Move Ideas Forward,” the eighth chapter:

“Probably the single biggest advantage that ‘born digital’ companies have is that they recognize technology is the business. In contrast, many legacy companies see IT as a necessary but largely unwelcome cost. A 1979 Harvard Business Review article, for example, suggested forming a ‘banking back office’ to drive IT efficiencies and allow the ‘real business’ to focus on what mattered: engaging with customers and making money. This shift created unhealthy tensions between revenue-hungry frontline leaders and IT departments charged with injecting huge amounts of software change into ever-increasingly critical systems while still keeping them stable. A master-and-servant relationship evolved, in which the front office held the purse strings and prioritized new revenue-generating functionalities over necessary improvements to stability.”

Anthony is a senior partner at Innosight, a growth-strategy consulting firm; in 2019, he was recognized as the No. 9 most influential management thinker by Thinkers50, a biannual ranking of global business thinkers. His previous books include “The Silver Lining: Your Guide to Innovating in a Downturn,” “The Little Black Book of Innovation: How It Works, How to Do It,” “The First Mile: A Launch Manual for Getting Great Ideas into the Market” and “Dual Transformation: How to Reposition Today’s Business While Creating the Future” with Clark G. Gilbert and Mark W. Johnson. Cobban is chief data and transformation officer at DBS Bank, which is based in Singapore; he also chairs the Institute of Banking and Finance Future-Enabled Skills Work Group and is an IBF Fellow. Painchaud, who holds a BA with distinction in industrial relations from McGill University in Montreal and an advanced certification in executive coaching from the Columbia University Coaching Program, is director of learning at Innosight. Parker spent five years with Accenture’s Global Strategy Group, based out of London where he worked on numerous transformational and strategic projects for consumer goods and services clients; he is also a partner at Innosight.

“The good news is, innovators inside large companies can access the same tools as entrepreneurs,” the authors note near the end of the book. “They can combine those tools with hard-earned assets of scale. And that combination can be absolutely magical.”

After making my way through this enthusiastic yet captivating treatise on the confusing yet ultimately inspiring world of contemporary commerce, I could not agree more. Highly recommended.

Reviewed by Aaron W. Hughey, University Distinguished Professor, Department of Counseling and Student Affairs, Western Kentucky University.