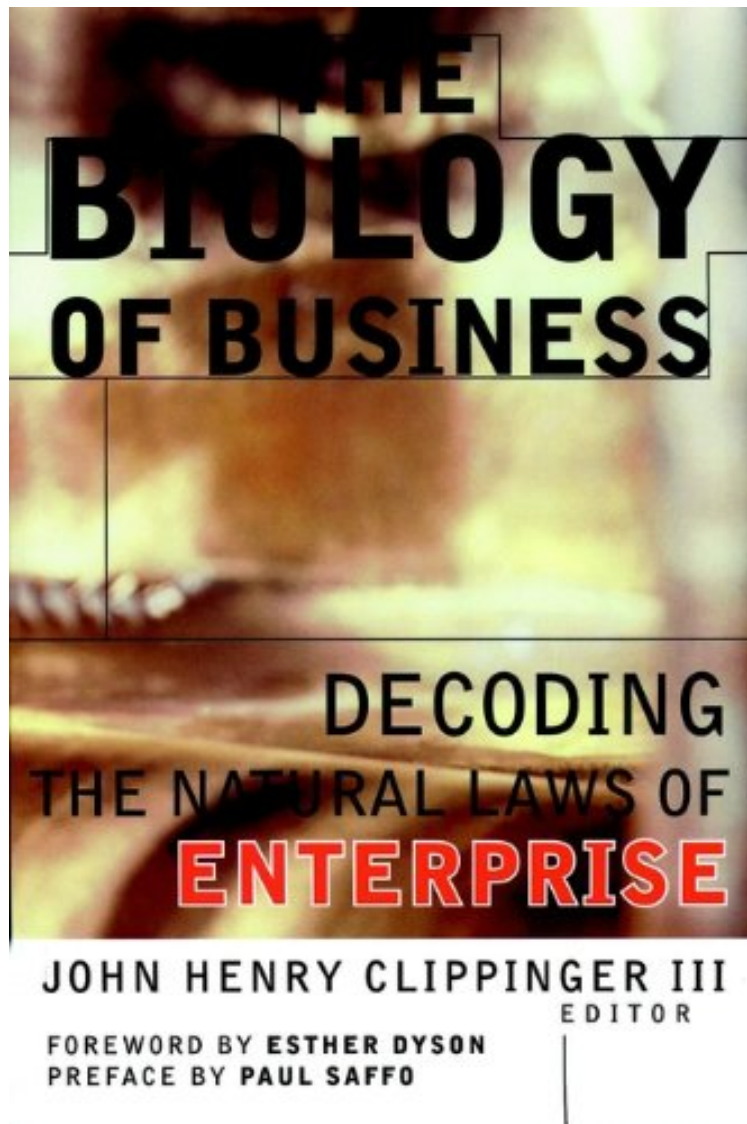


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The Biology of Business: Decoding the Natural Laws of Enterprise

John Henry Clippinger

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John Henry Clippinger : The Biology of Business: Decoding the Natural Laws of Enterprise before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Biology of Business: Decoding the Natural Laws of Enterprise:

4 of 5 people found the following review helpful. CAS: Perils and Opportunities By Robert Morris In the Foreword, Esther Dyson explains that this book explores "the details of complex adaptive systems (CAS) and how they apply to organizations and businesses. The underlying principles comprise the seven basic elements outlined by John Holland [in Hidden Order: How Adaptation Builds Complexity] for any self-organizing enterprise: aggregation, tagging, nonlinearity, flows, diversity, internal models, and building blocks. Master these basics and you will be better

equipped to build an organization that can respond rapidly to complex and diverse challenges, in a distributed and self-coordinating way." Clippinger serves as editor of ten separate but related essays, and, as the author of two of them. One of the most interesting concepts (discussed by Clippinger in the book's first chapter) is the "The Sweet Spot Between Excessive Disorder and Excessive Order." With Darwin's theory of Natural Selection in mind, Clippinger suggests that "The challenge to all forms of complex organization, from the simplest proteins to the most complex societies, is to survive in the particular 'fitness landscape' in which they find themselves. In the starkest terms, the challenge of survival is that of searching an enormous landscape, or space of options, in sufficient time to avoid extinction." In times such as these when change is the only constant, it follows that the "sweet spot" is mobile; how we define "excessive" disorder and disorder today, therefore, may well be inadequate (if not dead wrong) tomorrow. In the final chapter, "Emergent Law and Order: Lessons in Regulation, Dispute Resolution, and Lawmaking for Electronic Commerce and Community", David R. Johnson has some especially informative comments on the subjects indicated by the chapter's title. If change is the only constant, if measurements of "excessive" order and "disorder" are themselves volatile, what hope is there for organizations which must compete in such an environment? Johnson observes: "The lawmaker and dispute resolver of today must be more gardener than sovereign, building a trellis, grafting new plants, fertilizing open ground. The wise ones, who know they can only water and weed, not manufacture or command, will be rewarded with the knowledge that their actions will lead to a richer social and economic harvest." Don't be misled. This brief excerpt is not from the script for the film *Being There* in which the mentally-challenged character played by Peter Sellers unknowingly suggests correlations between agriculture and economics. Johnson's metaphors are apt and highly sophisticated, correctly suggesting all manner of complex and profound implications which can be derived from the aforementioned "underlying principles" which comprise "the seven basic elements" outlined by Holland. If your organization needs help with "decoding the natural laws of enterprise", I highly recommend the essays so carefully organized within this book.

17 of 19 people found the following review helpful. An insightful awakening to the needs of management. By Catharine Arnston Clippinger and his stellar collection of contributors nail the key issues for management in the 21st century. The frenetic rate of change and complexity is forcing all leaders to re-evaluate how their businesses are run. This book crisply presents concepts that make sense not only for business leaders but for everyone. We are living in a time when standardization has been replaced by customization and Clippinger points out that our old paradigm of top-down management is similarly out of date. Get with the program and create a team. Open up channels of communication that allow bottom-up, creative decision making. Just as medicine has finally admitted that the mind-body-spirit-connection does indeed exist and even contributes to the health of the individual, so too does Clippinger remind us that there is a undeniable interconnectedness between the management, staff, customers and outside environment for every company and that the strength, fluidity and frequency of their communications and connections contributes to the health of a company. To embrace this new reality of multiple touch, bottom-up information flow, a new management paradigm is needed and Clippinger provides insights as well as techniques on how to deploy one. A great read and a must read for anyone who considers themselves an active participant in the 21st century.

Catharine Arnston January 2000 Boston, MA 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A Good Read! By Rolf Dobelli Like any compendium whose chapters were written by different experts, *The Biology of Business* has its ups and downs. As a collection of ten deeply informed essays on complexity theory management, its voices vary. But when you're in the perilous business of trying to predict just where the cutting-edge of technology will cut next, is that really a bad thing? The diversity and scope - what is now fashionably called "bandwidth" - of this volume surely could not be matched by any single author's work. As you read through topics as diverse as law, marketing, nurturing start-ups and the application of advanced biological concepts to management, you will indeed find yourself challenged to adapt. That's as it should be. Reading this book may change the way you perceive your business. As the biological paradigm continues to spread through consultants' minds like a complex adaptive mold spore, we from getAbstract strongly recommend this sophisticated book to help you stay au courant.

Increasingly interconnected, volatile, and complex, today's organizations cannot be controlled by any conventional approach to management. Indeed, an entirely new definition of what it means to manage is called for. In *The Biology of Business*, John Clippinger and nine outstanding contributors introduce managers to the Complex Adaptive System (CAS) of management, a system that takes into account all of the variables that impact modern enterprises and allows managers to take control from the bottom up. Here, the authors show how McKinsey Co., Capital One, and Optimark have employed CAS to achieve specific business goals and improve overall corporate fitness. And they bridge theory and practice to provide managers with proven tools and techniques they can use to transform their enterprises into self-renewing, self-organizing systems that are maximally responsive to changing market conditions and opportunities.

.com *The Biology of Business* is a blueprint for sparking self-organization, knowledge, and rapid change in any company. Edited by John Henry Clippinger III, the book is a collection of 10 essays about the complexity theory of managing. Authors include top business professors and leading consultants from McKinsey Company and Ernst

Young. A major theme: Traditional top-down management methods no longer work in an age of fast technological change and world competition. Instead, people must be free to manage themselves and come up with new solutions. The book's goal is to show how some companies are keeping "their enterprises balanced between order and chaos--in that 'sweet spot' where creativity and resilience are at their maximum," writes Clippinger, CEO of Lexeme, an Internet software company. For instance, Philip Anderson, a business teacher at Dartmouth College, recounts how Capital One became a leading credit card issuer and a major growth company by encouraging innovation among all employees. In another piece, called "Adaptive Operations," William G. Macready and Christopher Meyer highlight complexity techniques at General Motors, John Deere and Co., and Mohawk Industries. The book is for business leaders seeking new tools for managing in today's volatile business environment. --Dan Ring

From the Inside Flap

As organizations become more and more interconnected, volatile, and complex, how can managers possibly anticipate, much less control, the myriad factors that determine their company's success? Simply stated, they cannot. In an age of hyper-change and hyper-competition, the traditional management strategies and techniques no longer work. A new approach is called for and its principles lie in the science of complex adaptive systems or CAS. CAS is nothing new. Its ability to provide powerful insights into how complex systems can evolve to become well-ordered, self-organizing entities has informed evolutionary biology and other disciplines for some time. Its truths have long been demonstrated in economics, computer science, and in the common marketplace. But not until *The Biology of Business* have the principles of CAS been translated into practical methods, tools, and examples that managers can use to make their organizations fit for the future. Here, John Clippinger and nine extraordinary contributors present the seven basics of CAS theory and show how to apply them to real-world business challenges including knowledge management, brand creation, market development, product innovation, and organizational change. They present case studies of how CAS is already being employed by McKinsey Co., Capital One, and Optimark to improve organizational performance. And they explain how CAS can be used to keep an organization in that "sweet spot" between too much order and too much chaos so that it remains maximally responsive to market conditions and opportunities. In today's complex organizations, control cannot be imposed, but it can emerge if managers create the right conditions and incentives for it to do so. *The Biology of Business* teaches managers of such organizations how they can do exactly that--how they can transform their company into a self-organizing, self-renewing enterprise by creating order from the bottom up.

From the Back Cover

Increasingly interconnected, volatile, and complex, today's organizations cannot be controlled by any conventional approach to management. Indeed, an entirely new definition of what it means to manage is called for. In *The Biology of Business*, John Clippinger and nine outstanding contributors introduce managers to the Complex Adaptive System (CAS) of management, a system that takes into account all of the variables that impact modern enterprises and allows managers to take control from the bottom up. Here, the authors show how McKinsey Co., Capital One, and Optimark have employed CAS to achieve specific business goals and improve overall corporate fitness. And they bridge theory and practice to provide managers with proven tools and techniques they can use to transform their enterprises into self-renewing, self-organizing systems that are maximally responsive to changing market conditions and opportunities.

[subhead] Featuring Cutting-Edge Contributions by These Noted Scholars

W. Brian Arthur
Andy Clark
Philip Anderson
William G. Macready
Christopher Meyer
John Julius Sviokla
Brook Manville
David R. Johnson
David Stark