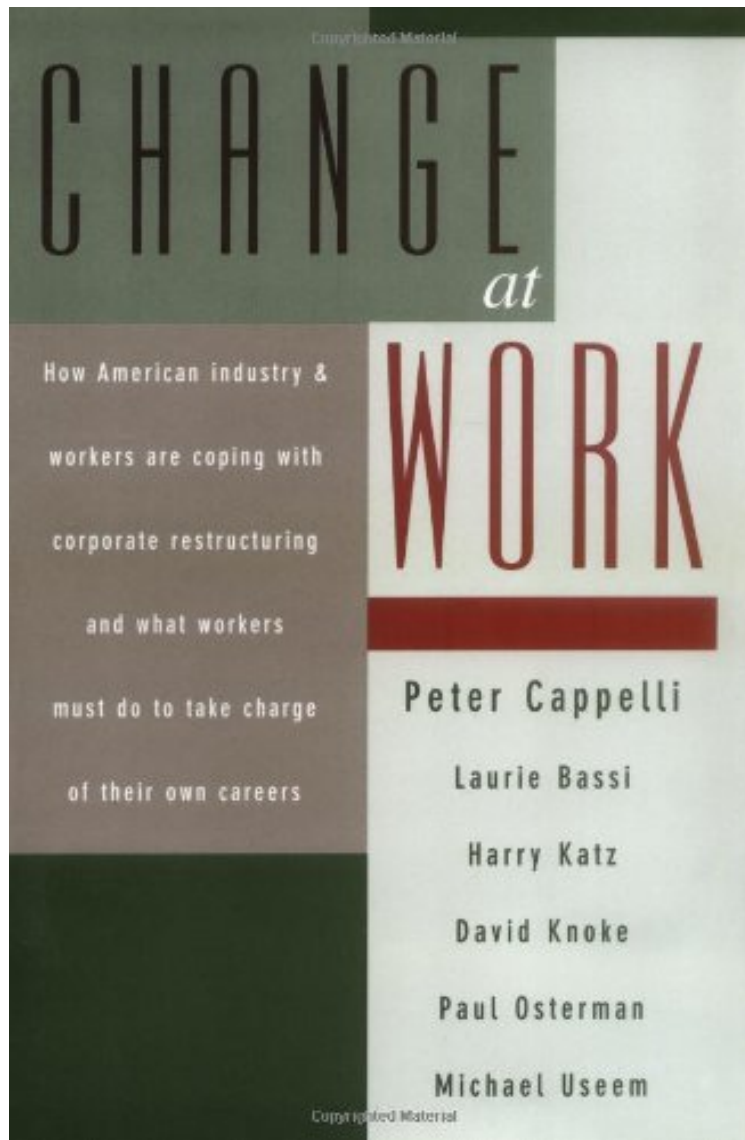


(Ebook pdf) Change at Work

Change at Work

Peter Cappelli, Laurie Bassi, Harry Katz, David Knoke, Paul Osterman, Michael Useem
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Peter Cappelli, Laurie Bassi, Harry Katz, David Knoke, Paul Osterman, Michael Useem : Change at Work before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Change at Work:

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Somewhat interesting but inconclusive
By ttaylor@mailhost.tcs.tulane.edu
Change at Work is based on a study, commissioned by the National Planning Association's Committee on New American Realities (NAR), to evaluate and comprehend changing employment/organizational practices. The study also looked at the impacts of such changes on the employees of the companies reviewed - particularly the skills and adaptation needed to weather this storm. Change at Work is divided

into six chapters, each individually authored by NAR committee members. Consequently, one of the main problems with the book is that it does not flow particularly well. The central theme of *Change at Work* is that the traditional methods of managing employees and developing skilled workers inside companies are eroding, leaving a new employment relationship in which the attachment between employees and employers has declined. Jobs demand more of their workers but offer them less, and these workers now bear more of the risks of doing business through reduced job security and contingent pay (pay based on performance). In addition, what Peter Cappelli calls the "traditional work arrangements," where companies developed skilled employees and worked to keep them, are quickly disappearing. Pressure on the companies for better performance is being applied from foreign competitors and investors and is causing these companies to explore restructuring to cut out "fat." This "fat" has often been interpreted to mean the companies' employees, who have found themselves to be the unfortunate victims of the now famous concept called "downsizing." The strengths of *Change at Work* are in the chapters contributed by Cappelli. In addition, the book contains an interesting and thorough variety of data, surveys, and other references, although some may not like their breadth or loose assembly. Unfortunately, *Change at Work* balances its strengths with several weaknesses. The book claims it is the result of a study, but it is actually more of a history lesson with limited background. It is also not particularly useful as a management tool, and may not even be considered interesting by most managers or employees. The book lacks a solid conclusion to the theme, with the exception that employee/employer relationships will become worse before they improve. *Change at Work* provides several other useless conclusions as well. Examples include the findings that employees need more skills in the new system (which begs the question-at what point throughout business evolution have employees never needed new skills?); managing these issues will be an enormous challenge; and change at work will continue. Big surprises. The variety of data sources and timeframes simply tossed together leaves the reader hoping that the authors will use them to point to some obvious conclusion or develop their own, but in the last paragraph they resign and state they are divided. The currently strong economy and low unemployment rate, albeit temporary, has given employees an opportunity to strike back in the form of being more selective, demanding better compensation packages, etc. We should not ignore the benefits of corporate restructuring as mentioned in *Change at Work*. Restructuring has given organizations much more flexibility in accomplishing their goals, has empowered employees, and has given them the autonomy that the traditional model could not. 3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Don't waste your time!

By A Customer "Change at Work" Cappelli, Peter (1997). *Change at Work*. Oxford University Press. NY

Change at Work is a commissioned study by the Committee on New American Realities that uses available information in an attempt to understand changing employment practices, changing organizations, and evolving employment relationships. The issues discussed in the book are nationwide workplace trends that have important ramifications for employees, employers, and the U. S. economy. *Change at Work* is definitely a scholarly work that must be read in manageable, small portions because of the poor linking of chapters and poor data presentation. Fortunately, the final and concluding chapter of this book makes some sense out of the previous six chapters. The editor tells us that the book was outlined by the group of authors, then individual authors took responsibility for each chapter. The editor also says "the authors made extensive comments on each others chapters along the way." (14). I have no doubt that the authors made comments on each chapter. I only wish they had taken the time to focus these comments on the transition between and the linking of the chapters and the data presentation. A consistent chapter format that used a conclusion or summary section at the end of each chapter would have facilitated the transition and linking of the chapters. This type of section at the end of each chapter could have solidified the authors' conclusions after the data purge that occurs in each chapter. Each data source pertains to a different time period and means of data collection. Some sources use percentage, while others use raw numbers. The authors do a poor job of linking the data; hence, the net effect is confusion to the reader. The authors would have made the book easier to read by using more graphical representation and detailing the significant data necessary to support their arguments. The one strength of this book is the editor's ability to bring most of the significant findings throughout the book into a logical concluding chapter that is easy to understand and flows quite well. Each of the previous chapters is referenced directly or implicitly as the editor makes sense out of the book. The authors are definitely working on a timely topic that most people in industry can relate to. Personally, I started working for my current employer, a global consumer products company, a year or two after they went through a large downsizing period. Since employment, I have seen this trend continue in the supervisory level. This is in alignment with the authors data that shows the percentage of supervisory jobs eliminated doubling in four years. My company is not currently going through a large organized downsizing, but rather a slow downsizing through attrition and hiring fewer people. The flattening of my company, coupled with the implementation of high performance work systems has undoubtedly placed the results of doing business on the employees. The book dedicates an entire chapter to these work organizations and the responsibilities that they bring to the employees. The book describes the changes and brings supporting data, but the authors do not give any significant conclusions or forecasts and does not present the data in a way that the reader can draw his or her own conclusions. The lack of conclusions or forecasts and the poor linking of the chapters leave the experienced reader, someone who has been through downsizing and is involved in high performance work groups, no better off than he or she was before. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful.

Must read for students and new managers. *Change at Work* is a must read for high-school students, college students, and those seeking careers in management. Cappelli has a no-nonsense approach with detailing those issues impacting our careers, the work environment, and the future. For those wondering if a technical or college education is worthwhile, Cappelli gives you good reasons for furthering your education. Cappelli and his co-authors do an outstanding job detailing those issues and circumstances faced by today's workers and managers of all business, i.e., corporate America, government agencies and other nonprofit entities, and the smallest of ma-and-pa companies. Cappelli does not offer good solutions for any of the issues he raises in this work. Unfortunately for professionals and management already in the work force, *Change at Work* offers no new knowledge.

A far-reaching transformation is taking place in the US in the relationship between employers and employees. The lessons learned from Japan and from "best practice" companies like IBM about how job security, training, and internal development can improve employee commitment and performance have given way to a new set of lessons about how companies can reduce fixed costs, increase flexibility, and improve performance by eliminating the elaborate employment systems that prepared employees for long careers in the company. Where the old arrangement protected employees from outside market forces, the new ones drag the market right back in through downsizing, contingent workforces, hiring on the outside for new skills, and compensation contingent on overall organizational performance. New work systems that reengineer processes and empower employees "flatten" the organizational chart, cutting management jobs in particular and reducing opportunities for career development. The new arrangements shift many of the risks of business from the firm to the employees and make employees, rather than employers, responsible for developing their own skills and careers. They also increase the demands placed on workers while reducing what they receive back for their efforts. While morale is down and stress is up, employee performance seems to be rising largely because of fear driven by the shortage of good jobs. *Change at Work* explores the theme that employees have paid the price for the widespread restructuring of American firms as illustrated by reduced security, greater effort and hours, and reduced morale. In this important study--commissioned by the National Planning Association's Committee on New American Realities--the authors consider how individuals and employers need to adapt to the new arrangements as well as the implications for important policy issues such as how skills will be developed where the attachment to the firms is sharply reduced. The future is uncertain, but the authors argue that the traditional relationship between employer and employee will continue to erode, making this work essential reading for managers concerned with the profound impact corporate restructuring has had on the lives of workers.

"In this very complete study sponsored by the National Planning Association's Committee on New American Realities....these authors first document the pressures on employers that cause them to restructure: increased foreign competition, changes in product markets and consumer demand, the need for flexibility, new models for organizing, and a focus on core competencies."--Sloan Management "Cappelli's volume should be of great interest to everyone involved in the organization of employment. The book is particularly lucid in analyzing what it sees as the fundamental contradictions at the heart of modern employment systems....Should be required reading on both sides of the Atlantic."--Financial Times "This is an excellent primer on the magnitude and impacts of the changes that have transformed American employer-employee relations during the past two decades, and as such it will be very informative for students and scholars across the entire range of workplace-related disciplines."--Choice "The book highlights a set of issues that are likely to be of growing importance in the near future if the recent strong employment market continues in the United States."--Comparative Labor Law and Policy Journal "...this book deserves to be widely read for its breadth of coverage of the downsizing and restructuring issues."--Work and Occupations From the Back Cover *Change at Work* explores the theme that employees have paid the price for the widespread restructuring of American firms as illustrated by reduced security, greater effort and hours, and reduced morale. In this important study - commissioned by the National Planning Association's Committee on New American Realities - the authors consider how individuals and employers need to adapt to the new arrangements as well as the implications for important policy issues such as how skills will be developed where the attachment to firms is sharply reduced. The future is uncertain, but the authors argue that the traditional relationship between employer and employee will continue to erode, making this work essential reading for managers concerned with the profound impact corporate restructuring has had on the lives of workers. About the Author Peter Cappelli is at The Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania.