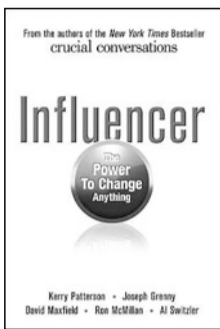


Business Books  
TOP FIVE USA

## 1 Influencer

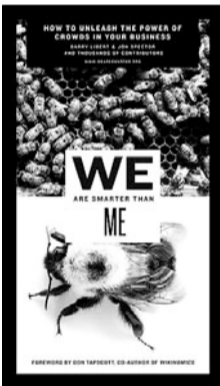
Why accept negative situations and behaviors as they are when you can change them? Yes, you can.

Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, David Maxfield, Ron McMillan and Al Switzler | McGraw-Hill Companies 2007 | 288 pg. | ISBN: 9780071484992

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Ian Ayres | Copyright ? 2007 by Ian Ayres  
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# Don't get pregnant if you want to get a job promotion

Wu Jiayin

FOR women, getting the equal right to work is a milestone in the emancipation of women.

Yet even now, discriminatory policies, both obvious and invisible, persist in the workplace, blocking women's career advancement, writes Sylvia Ann Hewlett in her book "Off-Ramps and On-Ramps."

A recent example:

A top female lawyer in Britain recently filed a lawsuit against her former employer for sexual discrimination and harassment, the Daily Mail reported early this week.

Gill Switalski, the lawyer in question, was former head of legal affairs at a city finance company. Twice-married and the mother of two disabled sons, Switalski put in for flexible working hours as well as regular work from home to devote time to her family.

But her line manager kept "fixated" on her working hours, even though she consistently met all her targets.

By contrast, a male employee at the firm, who also has special-needs children, was allowed to take time off and work from home, the report said.

In March 2006, when Switalski canceled a business trip because her mother died suddenly, the firm even demanded her mother's death certificate.

That year Switalski had to attend a work meeting

several days after she had undergone surgery. Following the surgery she contracted a life-threatening infection and required two more operations that year.

Because of illness and work stress she became depressed and could barely live a normal life, to say nothing of work.

This is a typical case showing how a talented woman is derailed by the typical, competitive male career paradigm plus discriminatory workplace policies.

Due to childbirth and other factors, women are unlikely to have linear careers as men, since they usually require leaves of absence for pregnancy and childcare.

It is clearly true that for men, a hyper-demanding position often yields rewards including high income, a desirable spouse and children, while a similarly demanding job may cost a woman her personal life.

So the "white male career model," which emphasizes uninterrupted long-term resumes and full-time office "face-time" at least 10 hours a day excludes women in many ways, writes Hewlett.

True. It is not uncommon to learn about companies' bias against women employees who are pregnant or take maternity leave.

In August last year, a woman surnamed Ju, a magazine designer and planner for a German publishing company in Shanghai, was

transferred to a job cleaning toilets when she reported she was pregnant.

Yet she was lucky in that the company promised to maintain her salary.

Many others face even worse treatment.

Bloomberg LP, for instance, was charged by the US federal government last September for demoting pregnant employees and cutting their pay.

And such "off-ramp" exits as maternity leave often lead to stalled careers, if not career loss.

According to Hewlett, 94 percent of women with interrupted careers want to return to work, but just 74 percent manage re-entry. Of these, only 40 percent find full-time jobs, 24 percent take part-time

posts and nine percent opt for self-employment.

"It's incredibly difficult to find an on-ramp once you've been at home for a while," writes Hewlett.

Not retaining talented women is costly for business, she argues.

A law firm, for instance, can spend US\$200,000 to US\$500,000 to replace a second-year associate.

Besides, the lack of diversity and a hostile workplace for women may also expose a company to heavy legal bills and unfavorable publicity.

And an increasing number of research studies from Harvard Business Review and other sources link higher financial returns with a diverse work force.

There is also truth in the old Chinese saying that "when men and women work together, they know no such thing as being tired."

To attract and retain women employees, flexible work programs are especially important. These include telecommuting, elastic working hours, allowing work at home and so on.

Ernst & Young (EY), for instance, launched a flexible program that allows women to cut their workload by 60 percent.

This turns out to be quite a success.

EY sources suggest that flexible work arrangements have saved the company at least US\$10 million in training and related costs.



Illustration by Zhou Tao/Shanghai Daily

## In praise of the second strike in business



Wang Yong

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YOU don't have to be the first to strike in business to win, although many people believe in the opposite — the first-mover theory.

In "Fast Second," authors Constantinos C. Markides and Paul A. Geroski buck the trendy first-mover theory with vivid examples showing that "when a radically new market arrives on the scene, it doesn't make sense to rush into it."

It's difficult, though, for the authors to challenge the first-mover theory, which has long been buttressed by many successful first movers.

But the authors have gathered enough counter-

examples — from Microsoft to Heinz — to show that "while everybody knows and celebrates what inventors and pioneers do, few people seem to appreciate that consolidation is equally important, if not more so."

Markides is a professor of strategic leadership at the London Business School. Geroski is a former economics professor at the same school and now chairs the UK Competition Commission.

Did Amazon.com innovate selling books online? No.

Did Ford pioneer the American car industry? No. Wrong again. In fact, "more than 1,000 firms" had tried their luck in the American auto market, the vast majority between 1885 and 1920, say the authors.

These early manufacturers offered extensive variety of cars, right down to cars with three wheels — and they disappeared.

In a radically new market, say the authors, companies start and fail quickly. People contribute massive investments to build a competitive infrastructure and then rush in, mostly having bought into the myth of the first mover.

These patterns, note the authors, all played out in the 1990s Internet boom and bust games.

The book has been positively reviewed since it was first published in 2004, but many reviews are biased — they misunderstand the authors to mean that a first mover is not a good idea.

For example, Kathleen Eisenhardt of Stanford University says: "Conquering radically new markets is about timing and a smart strategy for scaling them up, not creating them."

The authors merely suggest that a first mover has too many risks and often fails for a reason many may

have overlooked.

The reason is that radical innovations don't come from consumer demand. Consumer demand may stimulate general innovations, but ultimately, radical innovations come from producers who are much ahead of their time.

In other words, a first mover spends too much money for a market that is non-existent or too small.

In contrast, a fast second mover waits for the right time and consolidates dominant designs to create a mass market.

Although it focuses readers' attention mainly on how smart companies enter a new market, the book "Fast Second" has implications far beyond the corporate level.

The book could be a bible for a country as well as a company when it comes to growing in the face of powerful rivals.

When Japan entered the American car market, the US

scene was already dominated by the Big Three. But so what? Japanese cars have become one of the most welcome brands in America now.

But why it was Japanese cars, not Chinese or Vietnamese autos that entered the American market at the right time?

According to the authors, Chinese and Vietnamese car makers were not "fast second movers" at all — they were not fast enough. They were both distant second or third or 99th movers that followed along gathering crumbs.

So the lessons of the book come down to this: If you don't care about money or consumers, be a first mover. Otherwise, be a fast second mover.

"Fast-second strategies are not risk-free. The early history of most markets is littered with the corpses of firms that tried and failed to impose a particular dominant design on the market," caution the authors.

The key lies in timing.