



The Idea-Driven Organization: Unlocking the Power in Bottom-Up Ideas

By Alan G. Robinson, Dean M. Schroeder

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Too many organizations are overlooking, or even suppressing, their single most powerful source of growth and innovation. And it's right under their noses. The frontline employees who interact directly with your customers, make your products, and provide your services have unparalleled insights into where problems exist and what improvements and new offerings would have the most impact.

In this follow-up to their bestseller Ideas Are Free, Alan G. Robinson and Dean M. Schroeder show how to align every part of an organization around generating and implementing employee ideas and offer dozens of examples of what a tremendous competitive advantage this can offer. Their advice will enable leaders to build organizations capable of implementing 20, 50, or even 100 ideas per employee per year.

Citing organizations from around the world, they explain what's needed to put together a management team that can lead the type of organization that embraces grassroots ideas and describe the strategies, policies, and practices that enable them. They detail exactly how high-performing idea processes work and how to design one for your organization.

There's constant pressure today to do more with less. But cutting wages and benefits and pushing people to work harder with fewer resources can go only so far. Ironically, the best solution resides with the very people who have been bearing the brunt of these measures. With Robinson and Schroeder's advice, you can unleash a constant stream of great ideas that will strengthen every facet of your organization.

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- Sales Rank: #34696 in Books
- Published on: 2014-03-31
- Released on: 2014-03-31
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.50" h x 6.25" w x .75" l, .0 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 216 pages



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Editorial Review

Review

“As leaders, we need to create an environment that effectively draws employee ideas out and empowers implementation. *The Idea-Driven Organization* provides a practical map on how to get there.”

—**Jeff Nagel, CEO, NBTY Inc.**

“We’re at the end of the age of being able to do more with less based on tired old management models and thinking. To thrive in the new era, organizations will need to be idea driven. Fortunately, Robinson and Schroeder have written a must-read guide for leaders looking to make this transformation.”

—**Chip R. Bell, coauthor of *Managing Knock Your Socks Off Service* and *Managers as Mentors***

“To succeed in business today, it is absolutely essential that you tap into the ideas, creativity, and innovation of every member of your team. Working with companies around the world, I have seen that one of the greatest roadblocks to their success is a failure to truly get the most possible value from their talent. I am extremely impressed with this book and have recommended it to many of my clients. The authors lay out a superb blueprint, with lots of tools and examples, for creating an idea-driven organization. This is one of those rare must-read books.”

—**John Spence, author of *Awesomely Simple***

“All outcomes measures are influenced by one critical factor: the number of employee ideas implemented by the frontline employees themselves. Alan Robinson and Dean Schroeder present research findings in many companies and industries that clearly confirm this but also explain how great leaders make it happen.”

—**John Toussaint, former CEO, ThedaCare, and author of *On the Mend* and *Potent Medicine***

“*The Idea-Driven Organization* is a challenge to the dominant paradigm of 'Manager Knows Best', replacing it with a more balanced program of top-directed but bottom-driven initiative to keep creativity and productivity flowing. It is no less than a call for a complete house cleaning – from physical and spatial relationships, to organization and information flows, and to changing the mindsets of employees and management alike! Required reading in an increasingly globalized and competitive world.”

—Dean Cycon, Founder and CEO, Dean's Beans Organic Coffee Company and winner of a 2013 Oslo Business for Peace award and the United Nations Women's Empowerment Principles Leadership Award for Community Engagement

“The idea-driven organization is one that steadfastly listens to its people to ensure the organization remains safe, responsible, productive, and continuously improving. Robinson and Schroeder provide an insightful guide for leaders who are vested in engaging the minds of their frontline employees.”

—Kevin S. Crutchfield, Chairman and CEO, Alpha Natural Resources

“Robinson and Schroeder have written a manifesto that might very well spark a revolution. They show us how the ideas generated by the knowledge and creativity of frontline employees can help any organization, large or small, public or private, become more efficient, more productive, more innovative. I say let the revolution begin!”

—Stan Rosenberg, Massachusetts Senate Majority Leader

“No one has captured the rationale and how-tos for achieving business results through frontline involvement as elegantly and convincingly as Schroeder and Robinson have. Learning how to unleash the significant power of ideas is quite possibly the most important leadership skill needed today.”

—Karen Martin, author of *The Outstanding Organization*

“*The Idea-Driven Organization* is an exciting book that makes a compelling case for a simple but very powerful concept—business leaders who learn how to leverage the know-how and ideas of their frontline people will have a major winning edge because most of their competitors either don’t get it or don’t know how to do it. The detailed and provocative case examples are a major strength of the book—they show how business leaders can put ideas into action by tapping the expertise in their own organization.”

—Lee Bolman, coauthor of *Reframing Organizations*

“*The Idea-Driven Organization* is so reasonable that the magnitude of its change message is easy to miss. The richness of the examples from all over the world make it fun to read, and the authors convincingly demonstrate the power of incorporating frontline thinking into your organization.”

—Marshall Goldsmith, author of the *New York Times* bestsellers *Mojo* and *What Got You Here Won’t Get You There*

“Robinson and Schroeder have learned from experience the power of people at the front line of the organization actively identifying and solving problems. Building on their previous book, *Ideas Are Free*, they tell us how to create an environment to encourage the free flow of ideas to become a high performing organization.”

—Jeffrey K. Liker, PhD, Professor, University of Michigan, and author of *The Toyota Way*

About the Author

Alan G. Robinson is a professor at the Isenberg School of Management of the University of Massachusetts Amherst. He has served on the board of examiners of the United States Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award. His research into the best and worst practices in continuous improvement has won a number of awards and has taken him into organizations in many countries around the world. He has advised more than sixty organizations in some ten countries on how to improve their creativity.

Dean M. Schroeder currently serves as the associate dean and director of graduate programs in management and is the Herbert and Agnes Schulz Professor of Management at Valparaiso University in Northwest Indiana. He has served on the board of examiners of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, is on the board of directors of the American Creativity Association, and has served on several corporate boards.

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