

Changing the Way America Works
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Introduction:

The title is an intentional play on words. It means just what it says, in all of its interpretations. Work in America has changed dramatically, and so have the institutions for which people work, and the public institutions that determine how our country works. That means that there are a nearly infinite number of sub-topics that might fit under this title. For the purposes of this book I have selected a limited number of the most obvious, more important and in some cases most controversial.

My premise is simple. We must change the way America works in all of its connotations or we will be bypassed and, indeed, overwhelmed by outside forces that do change. If those outside forces change faster and more effectively than America and Americans do, there are likely to be huge, and potentially devastating results for our country and its people. We can either act or react.

Many years ago, a wise man stated, “anytime our rate of change exceeds our rate of learning, chaos results.” While I don’t recall to whom I should attribute that piece of wisdom, I can certainly confirm its accuracy. Further, the late, wise Peter Drucker said, “the best way to predict the future is to create it.” He, too, was absolutely right.

Therefore, the challenge I am issuing to all readers, and to all Americans is: “Are you ready to create the future, or live with a future that is created and controlled by others?” I know my preference—take matters in my own hands—not leave the outcomes to others. Unfortunately, one of the elements of America that doesn’t “work” so well these days is its process of government. I didn’t say its political process. That part seems to be working fine. It is the governing process that those politicians choose to employ, in their interpretation of our Constitution and our laws that is failing us as a nation.

Until we collectively accept that we have a problem of epic proportions and that we must “change the way America works” in more ways than one, we cannot get on with identifying the nature of the problem and beginning to solve it. Solving problems, at its most elementary, is a two-step process. First, define the problem; second, solve the problem. If we short cut the first step, we fail to succeed on the second. We solve something, all right, but what we solve may be quite different from the problem we set out to fix.

But enough of these rationales; you either buy the premise of this book by now or you don’t—and won’t—no matter how much I argue that we much get on with Changing the Way America Works. Here are the _____ most important places where we must change. My goal here is to work on the first step—identifying the problems. It will take many people who are far wiser than I to develop and implement the solutions. I will just throw out a few solutions for use as a “straw man” as you read through the book..

Topics

(divide by kind of topic and put in some logical order)

1. Globalization's Impacts on America (Tom Friedman, C. K. Prahalad)
2. Health Care, including Medicare/Medicaid (Bill Frist)
3. Social Security & Pensions and the PBGC
4. Unions, Workers and Work
5. Productivity and Competitiveness (James Womack)
6. News Media and Freedom of Speech (George Will)
7. The Rule of Law and Its Abuse incl. Tort Reform
8. Congressional Dysfunction vs. Checks & Balances (Newt Gingrich)
9. The Mega-Customer's Influence on American Society (Lee Scott)
10. The Moral Decline, Personal Values & the Death of Ethics
11. Rights vs. Responsibilities
12. The Impact of Complexity
13. The Decline of the Family and Its Influence on Youth
14. The US Presidency—Why Does Anyone Want This Job? (George H. W. Bush)
15. Terrorism and Global Religious Conflicts (George Friedman, Robert Baer)
16. Secularism's Influence on Societies
17. Leadership in a New Era (Jim Collins, Warren Bennis)
18. The Impact of Technology on Lives and Work (Steve Jobs, Andy Grove, Bill Gates, Nick Negroponte)
19. Personal Privacy in an Info-tech Era
20. Innovation or Disintermediation (Gary Hamel)
21. The Entertainment Society & Decadent Lifestyles
22. Service Sector Growth—Hamburger Flippers or Knowledge Workers
23. The Outsourcing of American Work (Lou Dobbs)
24. Baby Boomers—Spending and Retiring (Robert Reich)
25. Immigration and American's Leaky Borders vs. Needed Workers & Skills (Victor Davis Hansen)
26. The Impact of Global Demography—the Aging of Developed Countries
27. What Will Be Made in America, and What Does "Make" Mean?