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## Book Review

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**Organising Around Intelligence: The New Paradigm**

**by: Thow Yick Liang**

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**5 Toh Tuck Link, 596224, Singapore, 348pp**

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This is a book that is highly relevant to leaders and managers of business corporations, government bodies, institutions of learning, social communities, military organisations and nations in comprehending the theory of intelligent organisations. This theory stipulates that a human organisation must focus on optimising individual intelligence and elevating collective intelligence, if the system is to evolve successfully. The author, Liang, explains that with the current fast changing and complex environment, the processes associated with successful strategies are those that creatively explore and exploit edges of chaos to strengthen existing order. In particular, recognising and comprehending the complexity-intelligence linkage, and exploiting the complexity-intelligence strategy are vital for competitiveness and sustainability.

This book is divided into 11 chapters. In Chapter I, 'Entering the intelligence era', Liang describes some major world changes and why chaos and complexity theories are gaining importance in the non-scientific domains and the entire human world. He discusses the properties of complex adaptive systems and how such systems can be better managed. In particular, he also examines the concept of the edge of chaos, which he describes as a potential unexplored goldmine. He states that humanity is entering the intelligence era and a change in mindset is essential. The new mindset is the intelligence mindset (which also encompasses the complexity mindset).

In Chapter II, Liang discusses the emergence of a new paradigm, known as the intelligence paradigm, which stipulates that organising around intelligence is the strategy (complexity-intelligence strategy) to adopt in the current knowledge-intensive and fast changing environment. He introduces an intelligence-centric biotic structure for human organisations. He also emphasises the importance of having a new dimension of awareness and mindfulness, and a fresh mindset in intelligence management.

In Chapter III, Liang examines the fundamentals of the intelligent organisation theory. He explains the meaning and significance of intelligence, intelligent management and the structure (intelligent-centric biotic) and traits of an intelligent organisation. He then describes four levels of organisational intelligence before examining the roles of intelligence, information and language in a human organisation. Liang illustrates the necessity of nurturing an intelligence enhancer that encompasses three components (intelligence, theory and knowledge structure) in the human thinking system. At the end

of the chapter, he introduces the complexity-intelligence strategy (an integrated, deliberate and emergent strategy), which is beneficial in elevating the collective intelligence and competitive level of human organisations. This strategy gives an organisation the intelligence advantage.

In Chapter IV, Liang expounds the basic biotic structure (orgmind, intangible structure and physical structure) and dynamic of an intelligent human organisation. In particular, the characteristics of collective intelligence, orgmindfulness (mindful of the mental state of all interacting agents), connectivity and truthful engagement are examined. Liang argues that it is crucial for human organisations to exploit these characteristics associated with intelligence in order to compete more effectively in the new complex environment. In doing so, an organisation becomes an intelligent complex adaptive system (iCAS), which is a smart evolver and emergent strategist, driven by an intelligent complex adaptive dynamic (iCAD).

Chapter V focuses on the macroscopic perspective of the human thinking system and introduces the basic concepts of the general information theory. The human thinking system is perceived to possess two components, namely the energy-matter subsystem (natural) and the physical symbol subsystem (human created). From the perspective of information processing, Liang discusses the creation of the character set (confined only to humanity) and the procedure in which a human mind handles physical symbol subsystems. Next, from the cognitive perspective, he explains how a human mind interprets perception signals as concepts, creates more abstract concepts and makes decision. The latter activities are associated with the advanced intelligence of the human thinking system. The last part of the chapter includes a discussion on the structure and dynamic of the energy-matter subsystem (the functions of the neuronal networks). Liang suggests that a more comprehensive understanding of the human thinking system is vital to the nurturing of smarter interacting agents and highly intelligent human organisations.

In Chapter VI, Liang introduces some complex adaptive dynamics (CAD) that are beneficial to human organisations. He indicates that the human mind is the intelligence decoder, which is essential for the encoded information in energy and matter forms to be understood, released and utilised. Thus, in order for human organisations to perform more effectively, a new management and leadership mindset that is structured around intelligence is necessary. Liang also elaborates how an integration of local self-enrichment processes and constructive global forces gives rise to the essential dynamics of an intelligent organisation – balancing between autopoiesis and self-organisation. Using the intelligent person model, he explains how the intelligent person (versus the economic man and administrative man), as a smarter evolver and emergent strategist, helps to elevate the collective intelligence and activate the self-organising dynamics of the organisation through higher levels of mindfulness and orgmindfulness.

In Chapter VII, Liang introduces the roles and needs of artificial information systems and networks that can enhance the ‘central nervous system’ and ‘sensory subsystem’ in intelligent human organisations. He explains that these networks support the efficiency of the organisation by increasing the speed of information processing and transmission. He describes the various types of intelligent information systems (IIS) and advocates the usage of complexity-based IIS as such systems can help organisations reduce costs and add value to their operations. Next, he discusses four classes of artificial intelligence systems, which can elevate the connectivity, communication and information processing ability of an organisation. This is followed by a description of an external IIS, which is

used to collect competitive intelligence from its environment to support the environment scanning and responding subsystem of an intelligent human organisation.

In Chapter VIII, Liang explains and illustrates the integration and interdependency of five significant properties that help to elevate the iCAD of human organisations. The properties involved are collective intelligence, connectivity, culture, organisational learning and knowledge management. These properties are unique to humanity and such properties, when integrated, become the 3C-OK framework (a sub-strategy) of the complexity-intelligence strategy. Liang discusses the dynamics of the integrated 3C-OK framework and argues that organisational learning and knowledge management cannot take place effectively without the presence of high collective intelligence, quality connectivity and a supportive mindful culture.

In Chapter IX, Liang expounds the effectiveness of paper dialogue as one of the tools for nurturing collective intelligence. He indicates that a primary requirement for nurturing collective intelligence is that the interacting agents must be willing to share their thoughts and knowledge with the organisation without fear. He further illustrates that if the organisational culture is not mindful, the interacting agents will feel uncomfortable, insecure, threatened and non-participative, leading to an Abilene Paradox. He indicates that to overcome the phobia of truthful communication, paper dialogue and eventually dialogue itself is a useful method to adopt to facilitate and improve the collective thought sharing processes.

In Chapter X, Liang introduces the intelligence leadership and management strategy. He indicates that as every generation of human beings become more educated and informed, their awareness and expectation are greatly modified. He feels that the leader-follower relationship is now more complex and non-linear and therefore an immense shift in the mindset, strategic thinking, ability and style in leadership is inevitable. He observes that there is a general shift in leadership from vertical to lateral stance. He further indicates that leadership has to be more flexible and situation dependent (encompassing collective/consultative leadership, intrinsic leadership, learning leadership, transitional leadership and latent leadership) in the new landscape. He emphasises that a critical factor to account for this shift is the intelligence-to-intelligence linkage.

In the concluding, Chapter XI, Liang provides a summary of the intelligent organisation theory. According to him, organising around intelligence is the strategy to be adopted in the current environment. Complexity is in the mind of the beholder. Therefore, such a strategy requires an inevitable shift in mindset – from Newtonian to intelligence. Throughout his book, Liang introduces fresh concepts and ideas, such as the intelligence mindset, the complexity-intelligence linkage, the biotic structure, the intelligence enhancer, the general information theory, the integrated deliberate and emergent strategy, the 3C-OK framework, the intelligent person model, and the intelligence leadership strategy. With the primary objective of nurturing highly intelligent human organisations that can self-organise constructively during crisis, he concludes that a holistic and in-depth understanding and application of the intelligent organisational theory is necessary for the current leadership and management of all human organisations.

This book is an excellent resource for leaders and managers of organisations buffeted with complex and fast changing challenges that defy simple, linear and orderly mechanistic solutions. Readers who are new to the idea of intelligent organisations will gain many new perspectives. The book is well-organised and clearly presented to make reading easy. The abstract concepts are built-up gradually over the chapters. However, as the author has indicated, new ideas are still emerging in this challenging domain. Therefore, the reader has to approach this work with a flexible and open mind.