The Game-Changer
– How Every Leader Can Drive Everyday Innovation


Reviewed by DIANNE KRIEG

A. G. Lafley is recognised as a leader in management and innovation. As Chairman and CEO, he transformed Proctor & Gamble from a $39-billion into a $79-billion company using leadership and innovation to drive sustainable growth.

Ram Charan, the author of Execution, has been a consultant for many well-known companies including GE, DuPont and KLM. In The Game-Changer, Lafley and Charan share their experience and wisdom using inspiring and practical examples of how companies such as Apple, Proctor & Gamble, GE, Sony, Toyota and DuPont have used innovation to turn around growth, productivity and bottom-line results.

The Game-Changer is an authoritative management guide, from idea creation and selection through to prototyping and going to market. It includes how to:

● Define the right strategy for effective innovation.
● Structure an organisation to promote innovation.
● Implement management systems to assess ongoing innovation.
● Provide incentives for teams to deliver.
● Manage multiple and competing innovations.
● Manage failure.

In entertaining anecdotes, Lafley and Charan relate some of their fascinating successes (and joyful failures) in illustrating what works and what doesn’t and how they use management tools to dramatically increase the payoff from innovation investments.

Chapter by chapter, The Game-Changer builds an adaptive and practical model for owners, CEOs and managers wanting to develop permanent and flexible processes for continual innovation and self-renewal as a critical driver of sustainable growth.

The early chapters focus on the foundations to innovation: defining strategic goals, creating and supporting an innovation work culture, and how a “customer as boss” focus can drive both incremental and disruptive innovation strategies.

In later chapters, Lafley and Charan provide on-target tips for refining how managers and teams should approach projects that are aiming for something new or something better. They offer lists of questions useful for examining your organisation and specifically analyse areas of company practice where innovation has been proven to work – making the customer boss, managing science, allocating capital, managing intangible assets, capturing employee wisdom and building a global consortium.

The Game-Changer clearly illustrates the unglamorous truth about innovation: that it is hard work, that elbow grease has been and will always be the real back-story of innovation, and that a work culture supportive of innovation is achievable for companies large and small.

Across three parts and 10 clear chapters, this book is written to be relevant for a wide audience. It has a crisp conversational style and is an easy read. I found The Game-Changer to be an engaging and valuable book that left me with a much richer appreciation of the concept of innovation and the sort of eye-opening understanding to help me persevere.

Dianne Krieg is a consultant for the Brisbane transport division of Brisbane City Council.