



Army of Entrepreneurs

Create an Engaged and Empowered Workforce for Exceptional Business Growth

THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

Imagine the benefits to be gained from a pool of employees who act as if they own the business: greater motivation, increased productivity and a supercharged desire to succeed. As a young entrepreneur who turned a small PR business into a highly successful, international communications firm, Jennifer Prosek has experienced firsthand the power of instilling an “owner’s mindset” in every employee.

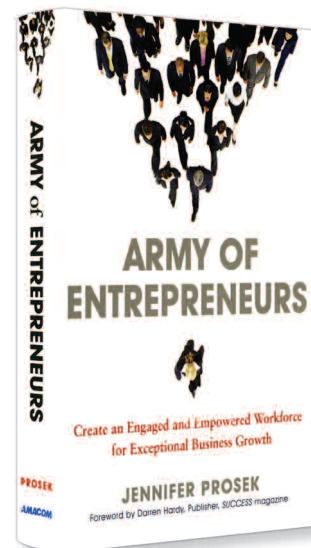
With innovation driving the new economy, your company’s people have never been more important. But old management models don’t truly encourage the entrepreneurial thinking needed for success. In *Army of Entrepreneurs*, Prosek presents an easy-to-follow action plan any company — large or small — can use to build a workforce dedicated to generating new business, creating breakthrough products and services and sustaining growth.

With your own Army of Entrepreneurs, every employee becomes a powerful force for growth within the organization.

Don’t go it alone. This clear, replicable roadmap is an invaluable guide for any business owner or manager.

IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- How to motivate, train and reward your employees.
- How to provide everyone — from interns to executives — with the skills and support they need.
- How to evaluate and refresh the program over time for continuous results.
- How to initiate a simple but effective incentive program that gets every member of the team actively involved in generating new business.
- How to develop internal training programs that foster an owner’s perspective with a focus on how the business works, where the profits come from and how to identify new opportunities.



by Jennifer Prosek

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THE COMPLETE SUMMARY: ARMY OF ENTREPRENEURS

by Jennifer Prosek

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Introduction

An Army of Entrepreneurs (AOE) is an internal force of committed employees. It is a structure and a mindset that enables a business to grow beyond the founder, owner or CEO. Each person develops an “owner’s mindset” and becomes a powerful force for growth within the organization.

PART I: TAKING A NEW APPROACH TO BUILDING YOUR BUSINESS

Suppose I told you that the smallest professional action on your part could result in a lifelong payday. Suppose I told you that your rank in the company, the terms of your pay package or the vitality of your social network didn’t matter. Do this one, basic action and you get the check. Would you try?

The answer is yes. I already know that. Because what I’ve just described to you is a system I call Commission for Life™, and it became the first building block of my new management model — the cornerstone of an AOE.

Not only would you try, but everyone in your company — from the interns to the executives — would try.

Introducing Commission for Life

My task was to figure out how to get my staff at CJP to make better choices, ones that would benefit them as well as the company. The answer I came up with was to create opportunities for them to make more money, either by taking on new responsibilities or earning a commission. I developed what I call the Commission for

Life program, where the employee who sets up a successful new business meeting — that’s it, just sets up the meeting — gets 5 percent of the revenue from the account for the life of the business as long as they remain with CJP.

Why does this very simple incentive work? Because it encourages employees to align their own financial and professional goals with the company’s growth and success. If they help the company grow, they see a direct and substantial benefit. And while Commission for Life was developed in a privately held small business, the construct can be applied to any company, big or small, private or public. Although awarding literal cash commission may not be possible in all situations, the idea is to create an incentive that keeps on giving across the employee’s career at the company and aligns the individual’s goals with the company’s goals. It’s the nudge you need to change the behavior. ●

Creating a Core Culture

I have found four key elements to be the critical steps in the creation of a strong corporate culture: authenticity, commitment to people, commitment to the business and continuous effort. Attention to these foundation elements allows the kind of culture in which the AOE can grow and thrive.

Step One Is Authenticity

Your first step, if you are to build a culture supportive of an AOE, is to demonstrate that no matter what has come before — in this job or in other jobs — you are for real. You are serious about your commitment to creating an Army-ready culture. You believe it, you are



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willing to live and breathe it and you want, expect and trust that everyone in the company will do the same. In other words, you must make the system into a star.

How do you make this authenticity pitch read authentic? Here are three key tips:

- **Work hard at it yourself.** Nothing kills a culture faster than CEOs and managers who fail to live by their own rules.
- **Adopt transparency and honesty in all aspects of the business.** If what you really want is to empower your people to be entrepreneurial in their thinking and in their actions, you must give them what the entrepreneur naturally has: knowledge of what's going on in the company.
- **Strive for over-communication.** When you're trying to create a culture of entrepreneurialism, you can never communicate too much.

Step Two Is a Commitment to People

The treatment, care and training of the human beings are critical to the culture's success.

How do you show your commitment to people in your organization? Try the following:

- **Institutionalize celebration.** In an AOE environment, successes are noted, celebrated and set as standards for continued excellence.
- **Offer professional development.** It is unreasonable to demand excellence without providing the tools necessary to achieve it. One of those tools comes in the form of training.
- **Encourage autonomy.** Commit to trusting your employees to do their jobs, even when it seems they are wandering outside the lines of their job descriptions.
- **Provide challenge.** Complexity is not a barrier to success — it is an inspiration to action.

Step Three Is a Commitment to the Business

Ultimately, it is all about the success of the company. Attention to people, attention to authenticity, all must be in service to the ultimate goal: the growth and achievement of the firm. This is why we're all here. This is what will make all our efforts worthwhile.

What can you do to make this happen?

- **Present financial rewards that match contributions.** Individual success must be tied to company success.
- **Insist on deal-breakers and zero-tolerance.** If you're committed to creating a system that trains and nurtures star performers, ethics must be an ongoing commitment.

Step Four Is Continuous Effort

When you are building a corporate culture, your work is ongoing. You are always looking for ways to improve communication, improve training and provide more challenge. You are constantly evaluating the strength of the culture and what it may need next to continue to provide the right environment for your AOE. ●

Thinking Entrepreneurially — Even If You're a Big Company

There are several important reasons to foster entrepreneurial thinking in your ranks, reasons that explain why an AOE system is valuable to big firms and small ones. To stay successful, your company needs to:

- **Support innovation.** A company that does not constantly innovate is dying. A classic example is the General Motors Corporation (GM). GM was once synonymous with the American Dream. It embodied all the things America was proud of: manufacturing prowess, a popular and reliable product, a fair and loyal employer. But it also came to symbolize something else: a company that could not change. If there were good ideas popping around in the ranks of that company, the firm was too hamstrung by its old processes and policies to turn them loose and let them soar. Without a way to foster and nurture innovation from within, GM underwent a painful, public decline. The problem is that GM could not embrace innovation to keep its products in line with changing consumer tastes and the changing economy.
- **Keep in touch with your customers.** When did GM start to slide? Many business historians trace the decline to when the company began to lose touch with its customers. Throughout the country, tastes were changing. Brands like Toyota were moving into the consumer consciousness. Issues of affordability, reliability and energy efficiency began to loom large for buyers. But many analysts say GM didn't appear to notice. It just kept pumping out more big, gas-guzzling roadsters that had long been its mainstay. It was as if the company was blind to changes in the marketplace.
- **Retain top employees.** Successful employees are always thinking. Often they are the individuals who are coming up with new ideas and new ways to improve the business. Any manager should care deeply about keeping these top performers since they may be crucial and valuable rainmakers. One way to

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do that is to nurture and reward the innovative, entrepreneurial spirit many top performers share.

- **Be faster.** An AOE is a key way a company moves quickly. It puts more minds to work on the process of innovation. Because the cornerstone of the concept is empowering your staff to take action, it cuts down on the time it takes for an idea to become a reality.
- **Be global.** No business today can be hemmed in by physical location. We must all be able to do business around the world. If you want to do business globally, you must be willing to relinquish the old command-and-control style of business. A global business happens in a variety of cultures, across a variety of time zones. Calling upon your employees to take responsibility for making their jobs work is part of the AOE system. They need to look outward and adapt. That is what makes for success in the global marketplace. ●

PART II: DEVELOPING AN ACTION PLAN

Here's how I trained my people at CJP.

As the firm grew and I was feeling overwhelmed, I wondered why all my clearly intelligent colleagues were not stepping up and doing the work I knew they were capable of. That's when I asked myself whether we had trained these employees and explained what we wanted them to do to be successful at our company.

The answer was no. We hired smart people and left it up to the informal training method — daily interactions between managers and employees — to clue them in as to what they had to do to succeed. That wasn't working for me and I was sure it wasn't working that well for the rest of the firm either. Nobody likes to have to guess. It is much less stressful to be told concretely: This is the path to success.

Four Elements of a Successful Employee

So I created a path. The catchy phrase I use is “Grinder, Minder, Binder, Finder.”

- **Grinder.** The key attribute of a Grinder is efficiency. The Grinder juggles many balls in the air and seeks to amaze others with his or her ability to get a job done efficiently, effectively and profitably. Grinders know no rank. You can find them at every level of the organization. Even top brass are expected to do a great deal of grinding. For all, the message is this: Take on a healthy workload and juggle those balls.

- **Minder.** A top-notch Minder is a skilled people person. This is the individual who is good at managing both people and projects. Minders are organized, communicate well and tap into their Grinder skill set to be efficient and organized. A Minder is a person everyone in the company wants to work for and with. While being a Grinder may be considered an inward-focused effort, a Minder looks out to others and focuses on what needs to be done to support, guide and inspire them to succeed.
- **Binder.** A Binder builds on the Minder's people skills and takes them one step further, looking for ways to strengthen the bond of individuals to the company. A Binder is a whiz at client relationships, building the trust and fluid communication that makes clients or people want to keep their business with companies. A Binder is always alert for ways this relationship can be enhanced and tended, never taking it for granted, never assuming the business is “already won.”
- **Finder.** Everyone in the company, from summer intern to CEO, must consider him- or herself a Finder of business. Finders are great listeners, constantly evaluating what they hear for potential business opportunities. Finders are also trend spotters, seeing the opportunity before it's publicly acknowledged. Finders create opportunity for the firm, either by bringing in new business, expanding existing business, or generating ideas for new products and services. ●

Training the Troops

The first step a company must take in creating its Army is to set up a system of basic training. In the “real” Army (the United States Army) that means taking the group of recruits to a remote training camp for 15 weeks and schooling them 24/7 in skills needed for combat. Since that's not possible in the business world, the alternative is to set up a system of mandatory, scheduled, high-profile training sessions. These are not the optional brown-bag lunches a traditional HR department might host for a discussion of business topics. These are professional workshops designed to train and inspire your staff to more proactive functioning.

The four boot camp workshops are:

1. **Teaching the Business.** This workshop will be the one that most resembles a traditional classroom experience. You will be walking your group through some business basics and establishing a common vocabulary. The goal of the workshop

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is to get your team onto the same page of business understanding.

- 2. Hunting for New Business.** In this workshop, you'll teach your employees the art of identifying and pursuing new business opportunities. In short, you will teach them to hunt for new business.
- 3. Advanced Hunting.** In "opportunistic" hunting, you focus on your potential opportunities: your friends, family, neighbors and acquaintances. After opportunistic hunting has been mastered, it's time to move on to the next level. I call this "strategic" hunting, or strategic lead generation, which is more targeted. Strategic lead generation comes from analyzing the business' current footprint and determining where the natural extensions are.
- 4. Intrapreneuring.** Lead generation is terrific, but there are more ways to contribute to the bottom line of a business than generating new opportunities. In addition, in any business, it is important to ensure that client retention and customer service are your first priority. That is the art of being a great intrapreneur — nurturing your existing business to its highest return. In this workshop, growing from the inside will be the focus. Content for this workshop should remain focused on the internal opportunities that can be spotted and exploited.

Short and Targeted Workshops

The workshops are designed to be short and targeted. Think two hours, although that's a recommendation, not a rule. Think short, intense training sessions rather than the occasional day-long marathon.

The goal is to get your staff thinking about these issues all the time. If there's too much time between training, it allows the impact of your teaching to wear off. ●

Recruiting and Retaining Talent

One way to hire smart is to never do it in a panic. This means creating and nurturing a constant pipeline of potential candidates. You may not need an individual right away, but you need to know that person now. Knowing who is out there and fostering an early relationship is the way you can make the right match at the right time.

Here's how to create a great pipeline:

- **Talent-spot constantly.** Recruiting requires an ongoing commitment from senior leadership and a programmatic approach.
- **Engage the staff in talent spotting.** It's important to open the talent-spotting process to the rest of

More Than Just Bright Ideas

An Army of Entrepreneurs (AOE) does more than just generate good ideas. It becomes the eyes and ears of the company out in the marketplace. In a firm that is old-fashioned and top down, employees may not speak up when they see their employer veering off track. In an AOE environment, they are encouraged to speak up. What do you see out there in the marketplace? In what areas are we, as a company, succeeding? In what areas are we losing to competitors or to changing client/consumers tastes?

Your Army is your connection to what's going on outside your office. Years ago, focus groups and market research would have been paid to provide feedback. Today, you need information faster and from a wider variety of sources. Empowering your employees to do this work is not just smart, it's crucial.

the company. Encourage them by setting up a paid referral system for bringing in top talent. Your best talent spotter may be out there just waiting for you to acknowledge his or her talents.

- **Be creative in job creation.** One way to build a pipeline for full-time employees is to create ways for promising young staffers to get a taste of your company on a part-time basis.
- **Don't hire only in flush times.** Staff numbers should not be an economic indicator for your firm — up when times are good, down when they're not. The right staff is what drives your company forward, and that's doubly important when the economy is struggling.
- **Measure your results.** Like any other effort, recruiting needs to be measured to determine what's effective and what's not.

After the Hire

The tough job of recruiting isn't over when the offer is accepted. It just moves to the next stage: ensuring the new hire sticks. Here are three ideas:

- **Allow for an adjustment period.** Your entry-level hires will embrace the Army model faster than those who are seasoned and experienced. Your more senior hires will require time to adjust to the Army model, which can sometimes be dramatically different from their former environment. You need to understand the process of adaptation to your model and manage your own expectations.

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- **Be transparent with existing staff.** One of the ways a new hire succeeds is when he or she is embraced by the existing staff. When I make a hire, I announce it. When I make a hire that might be controversial (such as during a tough economic period), I address that directly. I encourage people to talk to me about their concerns.
- **Get feedback from the employee.** Not only do we ask our new hires how they're doing, we also encourage them to share their experiences.
- **Consider retention a business priority.** It is not enough to have talented people flowing into your firm; you have to make them want to stay, integrate into your Army and serve. That means part of your recruiting strategy must extend to what happens next. ●
- **The importance of social networks.** For entrepreneurial companies today, social networks play a huge role in success.
- **Project spotting.** This is the exercise of taking existing clients and developing a project they didn't know they needed.
- **The value of technological sophistication.** Finally, technological expertise is something an AOE can use as a marketing tool. CJP managers are frequently panelists on discussions of technology in the business world. ●

Using Technology

Communications technology enhances entrepreneurial behavior and when used well, it also becomes a critical point of differentiation. If I were to look at two companies, both with an AOE strategy, I could tell you which one was going to be more successful based on the implementation of communications technology. Technology, from my perspective, is all about the movement of information.

For our business, the most critical use of technology revolves around our ability to communicate with one another. Certainly, we all use the standard-issue technology around e-mail and cell phones. But to make the Army hum, we take our use of technology up a notch and tap into new media options.

One of our primary tools is the blog.

Blogging Is a Critical Technology Option

Former Sun Microsystems president Jonathan Schwartz wrote an article for *Harvard Business Review* about his experiences titled "If You Want to Lead, Blog." Among his observations:

"Blogging lets you participate in communities you want to cultivate — whether it's your employees, potential employees, customers or anyone else — and leverage your corporate culture competitively."

Technology as a Business Tool

Communicating is critical, but, ultimately, we need the AOE to move from conversation into action. Technology plays a critical role in the execution of the company's day-to-day efforts. Consider:

Measuring Success

The key to smart measurement is knowing what to measure. Your initial benchmark process needs to gather and assess your current metric systems. What do you currently measure? Most companies measure revenue and profits on an ongoing basis. What else are you collecting data on? Are you regularly surveying for client satisfaction? For employee engagement? Are there other, less obvious measurement processes going on throughout the company? For example, are there awards given by different departments or managers? These are, in and of themselves, measurement processes; you should know about them and their history. These are the tools that will tell you where you are at the start of your process.

What follows is a list of elements that must be measured in an AOE environment. Alongside the traditional elements, such as revenues and profits, be sure you are measuring:

- **Pipeline growth.** One of the key benefits of building an Army is your team's ability to generate new business. Every business owner knows that a strong pipeline is the key to overall success; it helps guard against the feast/famine business cycle.
- **Product innovation.** If you've been effective in your communication during training, your staff should be coming up with new ideas — and new products on a regular basis, with energy and enthusiasm. You should be able to see a swift up-tick in the overall volume of new business ideas.
- **Assignment size.** At our firm, we benchmark the size of the client contract when it comes in, and then again one and two years later.
- **Employee satisfaction.** The Army model should improve employee satisfaction across the board. When you measure for employee satisfaction, you get a preview of your firm's financial future.

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- **Participation in Army activities.** The AOE system opens up a new set of opportunities for staffers and you need to keep tabs on how many of them take advantage of that change. It's not enough to keep track of the volume of new ideas. You need to be aware of how many of your staffers are offering them up.
- **Customer satisfaction.** It should stay the same or increase under the AOE model. If it drops, you know you've got a problem. Staffers are too focused on entrepreneurial pursuits and they're neglecting their "day" jobs. ●

Officer Training

Every army needs officers. One of the key elements of success in an AOE organization is the selection and training of managers. These are the people who will be your voice as your company grows. They will be the ones to communicate the need for entrepreneurial thinking and action to staff every day. They are the ones who will take your thinking and make it happen.

What to Ask of Managers

There are key factors that managers must embrace to be successful in an Army of Entrepreneurs. You need to:

- **Be a good boss.** Bob Sutton, professor of management science and engineering at Stanford University, found that there are evidence-based ways to be a good boss, even in tough times when managers may be called upon to do tough things, such as cut budgets and staff. The key, he says, is to act in ways that both protect the company performance and preserve human dignity by being predictable, promoting understanding, being willing to give up some control and being compassionate.
- **Understand the role of money.** Money motivates many people. Money also makes people happy.
- **Avoid being a robot.** There's good research to indicate that a little emotion on the job is a good thing. Some emotions have a positive place in the successful firm. These emotions are appreciation and autonomy.

Innovation — It's a Management Discipline

Many people consider innovation to be the result of the free flow of ideas. But Esther Baldwin, of Intel Corp., is on a mission to reposition the idea of innovation as a management discipline. Baldwin launched the Innovation Center in Shanghai, China, and pushed to reposition innovation not as a happy accident, but as a

task of everyday managers. Innovation, she says in an interview with *MIT Sloan Management Review*, is not about brainstorming. It is the result of measurable, manageable activities. Her advice on how to manage for innovation:

- **Use technology tools, such as databases, to capture employee ideas.** Managers need to supply technology tools to support ideas and find them larger platforms throughout the company.
- **Encourage employees to communicate with each other.** A great idea isn't just something you bring to your direct supervisor and hope for the best. Use chat rooms, video conferencing and social media to encourage greater sharing.
- **Be prepared for initial resistance from traditional innovators.** It's important to enlist these existing innovators in the expanded innovation process. ●

Maintaining Momentum

Momentum is not just a way to keep a program on track; it's a critical strategy to keep your most talented individuals in your ranks and working hard.

There is a web of activities and processes that combine to keep the energy level high. Three critical areas are compensation, morale and communication. These are the linchpins to maintaining forward momentum. The key is to keep the idea alive on a daily basis and not let the program fizzle out before it's had a chance to succeed. You need your people to stick with you and stick with the program.

Compensation, Morale and Communication

- **Compensation.** There are two basic types of compensation: traditional (cold, hard cash) and psychic (the elements of your new job that may not be entirely tangible but have a huge impact on how you feel about your work life). Both are vital to maintaining momentum. Both play critical roles in motivating and sustaining an AOE. Both must be present to ensure a stable, motivated workforce.
- **Morale.** An AOE that works well together and respects and enjoys one another is one that produces better results. Creating opportunities for team members to get to know and like one another should be part of your business strategy. The company that regularly facilitates ways to get to know people personally and professionally will function better.
- **Communication.** To keep the momentum going, you must communicate in ways that inspire your

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Army. Without communication, your hard work can fall apart in a matter of months. Communication provides clarity and allows everyone to understand the forces at work inside and outside the firm. ●

Managing Disaster

A study by A.T. Kearney looked at businesses that wound up in bankruptcy and found that, in most cases, the economy was not to blame. “The root of insolvency is often strategy. Managers often react too late and again lack strategic foresight. Enterprises are paralyzed; although the crisis is omnipresent, it is often underestimated and counteractive measures are taken too late,” says Robert Ziegler, vice president, A.T. Kearney Middle East.

When businesses fail to embrace a smart long-term strategy, the worst eventually catches up with them. They float along during strong economic times and when the tide goes out they are stranded. They may think the economy is to blame, but the Kearney study shows that’s not the case.

Top Reasons for Insolvency

Top reasons for insolvency include incorrect strategy/investment decisions, a cost structure that is too high, insufficient liquidity, and belated or inconsistent response of management. Other reasons include value chain dependency, management conflicts, and conflicts between workforce and management. Sometimes, but less often, insolvency is caused by outside forces, such as an economic or industry crisis.

And yet, even armed with that information, we do not see companies stepping forward with an AOE response. How do companies respond to financial woes? Kearney found the top responses are freeing liquid capital, seeking cooperation from customers or suppliers, cost reduction, and taking debt and equity capital measures. Other strategies include seeking better strategic alignment, staff reduction and communication enhancement. Some companies go outside for help, seeking outside consultants or support from public subsidies.

The most useful AOE tactics — communication and process improvement — are buried on that list. While businesses are learning that innovation is a critical strategy, many are missing the opportunity to use Army strategies to combat economic woes. ●

PART III: PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

To call IBM a giant is an understatement. It looms large both in physical size and in impact on the global

business world. So what is it doing as an example of AOE thinking? It is a classic example of how good can come to a company when a leader brushes off the naysayers and taps the Army to do its best work.

In 1990, IBM was the second most profitable company in the world. But it was in trouble. As the market for its mainframes was drying up, the engine that had fueled the company’s growth was stalling out. Starting in 1991, the company began losing money, bleeding nearly \$16 billion over three years.

Lou Gerstner, who joined IBM as CEO in 1993, turned the company around. And he did it, in part, by embracing a radical idea: empowering his Army to make decisions.

Gerstner did not take the most ambitious decentralization route, the breakup of IBM into a collection of independent units. But he did look for ways to decentralize the decision-making process that was impeding the company’s growth process. While critics said this would result in chaos within the company, Gerstner opted to tap the talents of his workforce.

Restoring the Line Manager’s Accountability and Ownership

Among his efforts: He restored the line manager’s accountability and ownership. He charged his senior managers with redesigns and gave them the power to make sizable changes. The charge to the senior managers signaled the change throughout the company. It would no longer be the case that decisions would be held up in committees at the company’s Armonk, N.Y., headquarters. Line managers were to make decisions, and they would be held accountable for them.

This was just one of the many changes Gerstner instituted at IBM, but it was also one of the most lasting and impactful. By 1994, IBM was back in the black. While the job was not finished, the turnaround was clearly in progress. The naysayers were wrong. Empowering individuals to make decisions — even in a company as large as IBM — can have dramatic positive results. ●

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

If you liked *Army of Entrepreneurs*, you’ll also like:

1. ***Multipliers*** by Liz Wiseman and Greg McKeown. Learn how to become a multiplier of people and how to get the most from their talents.
2. ***It’s Your Ship*** by Capt. D. Michael Abrashoff. Abrashoff shares his experiences commanding a guided missile destroyer.
3. ***Open Leadership*** by Charlene Li. The coauthor of the bestseller *Groundswell* offers the next step resource that shows leaders how to tap into the power of social technology and use social media to be “open” in their leadership methods.