The Age of Discontinuity: Guidelines to Our Changing Society
Peter F. Drucker (1969)

Why Read It?

- One of the key books in the development of modern management thinking, it gives a valuable insight into the changing nature of management, innovation, and entrepreneurship in the knowledge economy.
- Explains and analyzes the new challenges, opportunities, roles, and responsibilities in the workplace of an evolving entrepreneurial economy.
- Informs that knowledge, rather than labor, is the new measure of economic society—and predicts the rise of the knowledge worker long before the term came into common usage.

Getting Started

*The Age of Discontinuity* shows how the manager as knowledge worker is a new breed of thoughtful, intelligent executive, who is paid for applying knowledge, exercising judgment, and taking responsible leadership within the organization.

The knowledge worker thinks of themself as another professional. While dependent on the organization for access to income and opportunity, the organization equally depends on him or her.

Author

Peter F. Drucker (1909–2005) was a popular business and management thinker, and prolific writer on business management, entrepreneurship and economics. He was a Professor at the Graduate School of Management, Claremont Graduate University, and was a consultant. He was also awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Context

- Argued that the knowledge worker sees him or herself as just another professional, no different from the lawyer, the teacher, the preacher, the doctor, or the government servant of yesterday. They have the same education, but more income—and probably greater opportunities as well.
- Discusses the knowledge worker as a new breed of executive—a highly trained, intelligent managerial professional who realized their own worth and contribution to the organization.
- Sees the manager as a responsible individual rather than a paper shuffler.
- Examines how the knowledge workers now own the means of production through such financial factors as pension funds and investment trusts.

Impact

- Suggests that our advanced economies must shift to depend on knowledge work rather than industrial strength.
- Presents the rise of the knowledge worker as part of the evolution of business management into a respectable and influential discipline.
- Mapped out the demise of the age of mass, labor-based production, and the advent of the knowledge-based, information age.
- If knowledge, rather than labor, was the new measure of economic society then the fabric of capitalist society had to change.
- Considers that the knowledge worker and the organization are interdependent.
- Knowledge was not only power, but it was also ownership.
• Contains startlingly correct predictions about what would happen in the new economy and marketplace.

Quotation

“If knowledge, rather than labor, is the new measure of economic society then the fabric of capitalist society must change.”

More Info

Books:

• Drucker, Peter. The Practice of Management. New York: Harper, 1954. A classic of management thinking, it was way ahead of its time in examining how the role of the manager was developing during the 20th century, and laid the foundations for the idea of the knowledge worker.

To see this article on-line, please visit