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A Bigger Prize: How We Can Do Better Than The Competition



Synopsis

Co-winner of the 2015 Salon London Transmission Prize
Get into the best schools. Land your next big promotion. Dress for success. Run faster. Play tougher. Work harder. Keep score. And whatever you do—make sure you win. Competition runs through every aspect of our lives today. From the cubicle to the race track, in business and love, religion and science, what matters now is to be the biggest, fastest, meanest, toughest, richest. The upshot of all these contests? As Margaret Heffernan shows in this eye-opening book, competition regularly backfires, producing an explosion of cheating, corruption, inequality, and risk. The demolition derby of modern life has damaged our ability to work together. But it doesn't have to be this way. CEOs, scientists, engineers, investors, and inventors around the world are pioneering better ways to create great products, build enduring businesses, and grow relationships. Their secret? Generosity. Trust. Time. Theater. From the cranberry bogs of Massachusetts to the classrooms of Singapore and Finland, from tiny start-ups to global engineering firms and beloved American organizations—like Ocean Spray, Eileen Fisher, Gore, and Boston Scientific—Heffernan discovers ways of living and working that foster creativity, spark innovation, reinforce our social fabric, and feel so much better than winning.

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Customer Reviews

There are two approaches by which you can read this book. You can either read it as a business exposition on competition with a more top-down view. This would have relevance to fields such as policy-making, economics, an MBA class, etc. The other way to read it would be as a self-help book

to help you understand how competition in daily life causes you suffering. In the first manner, the book passes but barely. In the second manner, the book fails drastically. Let's start with the good. The book certainly covers a lot of domains upon which competition is used. Family relationships, marriage, education, the pharmaceuticals industry, corporate businesses, employee-owned firms, etc. And along the way you learn some cool facts. You might have suspected that the only thing that good exam-taking skills show is well good exam-taking skills. But do know why? Apparently, there's a gene called COMT that regulated dopamine absorption after increases in stress levels. The faster it absorbs it, the better the test-taker you will be. Furthermore, the book does well to give a variety of opinions and not attribute this malady of competition to any one factor. While neurological factors might certainly play a factor, they are tempered by environmental and social attributes. But I'm afraid that's all for the good. While the book covers a lot of fields in each different chapter, you do not need to read each chapter to find out what it says. The basic format of each chapter in simple terms is: 1). Start with example of competition in a domain (say education). 2). State how bad it is (give multiple examples for this and various anecdotes). Steps 1 and 2 may be exchanged from chapter to chapter. 3).

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