



Facing up to Management Faddism: A New Look at an Old Force

Margaret C. Brindle, Peter N. Stearns

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Organizations pour billions of dollars into programs that in the end prove to be nothing but fads--short lived enthusiasms with little purpose other than to make those who initiate and promote them rich. Brindle and Stearns take a look at these vogues and fashions, and find that over a history of at least a century, there is continuity to, and similarities among them. Fads are both product and process, they find, tied to tensions in the workplace and to those who too quickly profess solutions to problems these tensions cause. The authors shed new light on such fads, examining how they develop in other cultures too, and give managers everywhere new ways to react to them, ways to uncover and resist patently nonproductive blandishments.

How to distinguish fads that may have at least some validity from those that don't is a main purpose of the book. The authors show that what works in one place may not work in another, exploring how firms often implement fad-based programs across borders without considering the cultural nuances in doing so. Brindle and Stearns use an interdisciplinary approach with an historical bent in their reviews, examinations and appraisals, but they remain pragmatic and utilitarian at all times. They are serious when they say that managing the fad itself is at least as important, often more so, than managing the fad's content. Their section on strategy alone will be of special value to managers in the trenches who need guidance day by day, as well as to financial and organizational analysts who want to avoid being hoodwinked by today's fads and tomorrow's as well.

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