

Thriving in Disruption: Agile Organizations, Collective Leadership and New Work by Neha Chatwani, Indus Source Books (2025)

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Thriving in Disruption is a timely and thought-provoking exploration of how leadership, organizational culture, and work itself must evolve in an increasingly unpredictable world. Drawing from both academic insight and real-world practice, the book offers more than survival strategies—it envisions how individuals and institutions can flourish amid volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA). Disruption is reframed not as a threat but as an opportunity for transformation. At the core of the book is a fundamental redefinition of leadership. Rather than upholding traditional hierarchies based on authority, status, or control, it champions collective leadership—a model grounded in collaboration, shared purpose, and relational trust. Leadership is not a fixed title but an emergent, context-sensitive function distributed across people and teams. This people-centered approach challenges outdated paradigms where power is concentrated and decisions flow top-down. In dynamic environments, agility, responsiveness, and innovation are more likely to emerge from empowered individuals and psychologically safe teams than from rigid command structures.

A significant strength of the book lies in its treatment of knowledge—not as a static asset, but as a fluid, co-created, and renewable resource. It encourages open knowledge sharing, continuous feedback loops, and a learning culture, positioning psychological safety as foundational to such an environment. Without trust, people cannot share insights, admit failure, or challenge the status quo—all essential for navigating disruption. The theme echoes the growing relevance of learning organizations and trends seen in successful modern enterprises. Another recurring idea is that culture eats strategy for breakfast. Leaders are urged to examine their organizational values, rituals, and norms. Many workplace cultures still reinforce fear, conformity, and transactional relationships, which are incompatible with agility. The book advocates for inclusive, purpose-driven cultures that recognize the full humanity of employees. Emotional intelligence, empathy, and active listening are elevated from soft skills to strategic essentials. Inclusion is not just a diversity checkbox—it's a structural necessity for resilience.

While agility is often reduced to methodology (e.g., Scrum or Lean), the book treats it as a mindset and way of being—staying curious, adaptive, and open to feedback. Organizations must move away from rigid planning and instead cultivate iterative, evolving processes that allow them to respond in real-time to changes. Systems should be in place to measure meaningful progress, encourage experimentation, and embed flexibility into decision-making. This goes beyond surface-level transformation—it demands a rewiring of organizational DNA. One of the most impactful insights is the book's treatment of the evolving nature of work. It explores disruptions brought by digital transformation, remote collaboration, and generational shifts. While these changes pose challenges, they also unlock possibilities for more meaningful, human-centered workplaces. People are not “resources” but whole individuals with unique potential. Flexibility, autonomy, and well-being are core design elements of the future of work.

The tone throughout remains constructive and optimistic. While acknowledging the inertia of outdated systems, the book offers a hopeful vision for how organizations can become spaces of creativity, inclusion, and growth. Nature-based metaphors—like thriving ecosystems or rooted resilience—add freshness to the narrative. What makes the book especially valuable is its balance of philosophical depth and practical insight. It is not a step-by-step manual, but it equips leaders and change agents with mental models and reflective tools to initiate transformation.

One limitation of the book is its abstract style and reliance on conceptual frameworks, which may not fully satisfy readers seeking clear implementation steps or practical case studies. The absence of empirical data or detailed real-world examples might leave some readers wanting more concrete validation of its ideas. As a result, it may serve better as a source of inspiration and vision than a hands-on guide.

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