



A community of leading knowledge-based organizations dedicated to networking, benchmarking and sharing best knowledge practices.

Pfeffer, Jeffrey and Sutton, Robert I., *The Knowing-Doing Gap: How Smart Companies Turn Knowledge into Action*, Harvard Business School Press, Cambridge, 1999, 256 pages (ISBN: 1578511240).

The market for business knowledge is booming, as companies looking to improve their performance pour billions of dollars into training programs, consultants and executive education.

Why, then, are there so many gaps between what firms know they should do and what they actually do? Why do so many companies fail to implement the experience and insight they've worked so hard to acquire?

Jeffrey Pfeffer is the Thomas D. Dee Professor of Organizational Behavior at Stanford Graduate School of Business and the author of *The Human Equation*. Robert I. Sutton is a professor of organizational behavior at Stanford's School of Engineering, where he is co-director of the Center on Work, Technology, and Organization.

In their book *The Knowing-Doing Gap: How Smart Companies Turn Knowledge into Action*, the authors confront the challenge that companies now face in their battle to turn knowledge into productive action. They identify the causes of 'The Knowing-Doing Gap' and explain how to close it.

Firms that turn knowledge into action avoid the 'smart talk trap.' Companies that act on their knowledge eliminate fear, abolish destructive internal competition, measure what matters and promote leaders who understand the work people do in their firms.

Plenty of examples of companies that have overcome this knowledge-action gap are highlighted in the book. Other case studies include those companies that tried, but failed, and yet other organizations that managed to avoid the gap from the beginning.

Companies which Pfeffer and Sutton say do it right include: General Electric, the Men's Wearhouse, SAS Institute, Southwest Airlines, Toyota and British Petroleum.

Why is there so much knowing in companies and so little doing?

The widespread failure to make knowledge management worked prompted two Stanford University professors specializing in organizational behavior to investigate unseen barriers preventing knowledge from reaching the front line.

One key problem is to tolerate mistakes: a blame culture inhibits the spread of knowledge. The book has many examples of smart companies that steal competitive advantage by knowing how to get things done.

Verdict: Packed with valuable insights and written with verve.

(Extract of review by Carol Kennedy,)

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