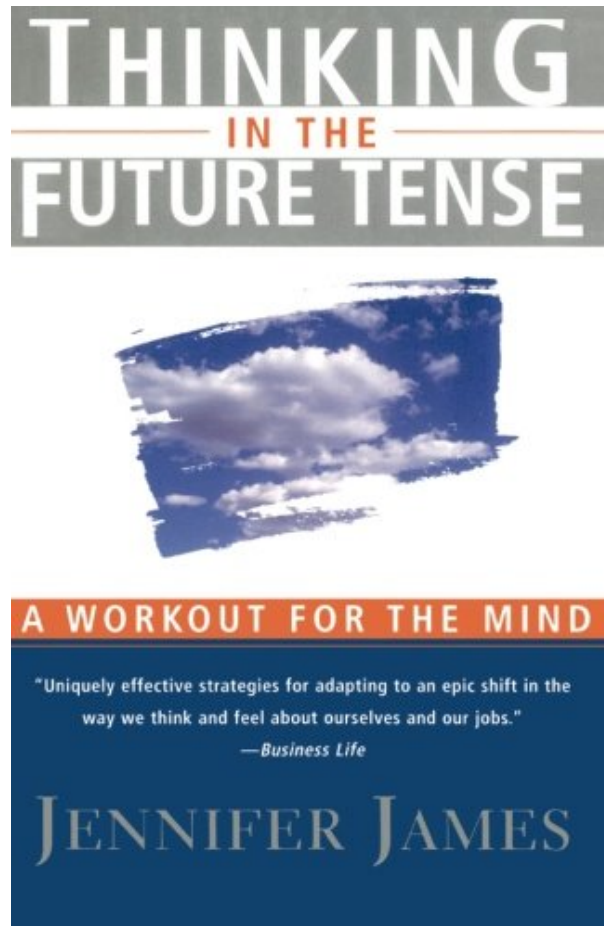


THINKING IN THE FUTURE TENSE BY JENNIFER JAMES



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THINKING IN THE FUTURE TENSE



A WORKOUT FOR THE MIND

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Amazon.com Review

Much is said these days about building bridges to the 21st century, and savvy businesspeople are constantly on the lookout for ways to make this colorful metaphor into reality. Thinking in the Future Tense: Leadership Skills for a New Age, by author and business lecturer Jennifer James, clearly establishes the framework for a real-world transition. James suggests what conduct might be necessary for long-term success and explains how it should be implemented.

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American business, economics, and society are changing at a phenomenal rate. The pressure is on, and managers need to learn faster, think smarter, and free themselves from confining assumptions and old mindsets. In this important book, James—“the Margaret Mead of modern business”—reveals the business survival skills managers need to know to operate in this new fashion.

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Most helpful customer reviews

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Skills Needed for the Future...

By Alicia Crumpton

James identifies 8 skills needed for the future: Perspective, Pattern Recognition, Cultural Knowledge, Flexibility, Vision, Energy, Intelligence, and Global Values. Strengths of this book are the chapter discussions of each skill described as "basic building blocks for understanding and adapting to change, essentials for anyone in a leadership role" (p. 24).

My challenge with the book is not the insightful skill list. Instead, I challenge the notion that "you can teach your mind to adapt to change" (p. 24). While I understand this statement, it belies the difficulty of a person's change process - changing habits, developing new skills is not something you just decide to do and voila you now do these things. Just ask any dieter - they have knowledge, they can adjust for short time periods but...how many dieters gain the weight back?! Human behavioral change is hard work, it doesn't happen just because a person learns and decides - this is the work of personal formation.

Even still - the skill list is spot on!

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

Thinking in the Future - Past?

By L. Allen

In "Thinking in the Future Tense: A Workout for the Mind", prodigiously published author and urban cultural anthropologist Jennifer James explains the changes that are taking place in the world of commerce and industry in terms of globalization, offering advice not only on refining "change management" or change survival, but the ability to thrive on change. Three areas explored are: perspective - the ability to identify the important changes; energy - doing more with less; and a "menagerie mind" - the ability to create new patterns.

James identifies what she believes are the forces behind change: Technological development, increased access to information, the evolution of needs. In her methodology for predicting change, James explains these in terms of processes taking place in six categories: extension, elaboration, recycling, pattern reversals, strange attractions, and chaos.

James acknowledges that to embrace the future, one must comprehend the past, and offers a staircase model for achieving such understanding. She also introduces the "barriers to thinking", which can obfuscate the readiness for change in an individual or an organization.

James summarizes her viewpoint thusly: "A global marketplace and workplace are creating stronger alliances...A global client will generate respect for diversity and interdependent prosperity. A worldwide information net will equalize access to education and wealth.... (Telecommunications) will create an environment of greater equality, stable economies, and a less fragmented world. ...When more people know more, when communication is instantaneous, tyranny and the creation of political illusions will become more difficult. When computers quickly collate data, documents, and policies, it is harder to create disinformation

or to manipulate images."

Ah, the naivete' of the Utopian vision as foreseen from the safety of 1996, when this book was first published- if only these statements were still true! The downfall of the instant gratification technology companies, subsequent downturn in the economy as a whole, and, alas, the events of Sept. 11 unfortunately make a hollow mockery of such global "love, peace, and unity through technology" embraces. Computers are used more often to disrupt, disinform and manipulate what any given audience sees and hears at an unprecedented, indeed, unimagined rate. The examples borne of the fruit of corporate, cultural and economic information "unification" today are Argentina, Enron, Al Quaeda...

Still, many of James' challenges to embrace change are valid today, and the book on this phase of our collective history has yet to be written, at least from the perspective benefited through time and distance.. May her vision eventually come true.

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful.

are you ready to think of the future?

By Y. Zhu

If you want to start to think of the future practically, clearly, and spiritually, James's book "Thinking in the future tense" is a right beginning. This book did not try to answer those questions, such as how to foresee the future, what the future will look like, etc, but can help you to answer a more basic question: are you ready to think in the future tense?

This is a handbook about helping you how to adapt yourself successfully to the future change. In this book, James presents eight skills which are essential for understanding what the future will look like, meeting the challenges of the future, especially for those in a leadership role.

These eight skills are deployed in eight chapters separately. In first three chapters, James identifies the necessities and importance of three skills, perspective, patterns and myths in detail. In fact, those three skills are very interactive. the perspective is shaped by experience, knowledge, memory, and also the myths. The myths are one kind of patterns which represent the culture's deepest beliefs and perception. The perspective also influences the pattern of recognizing the present and future.

In following four chapters, James presents more practical processes to enhance the abilities in future thinking: being flexible and visional, creating energy and security, identifying your intelligence, and measuring your diversity experience. To make those ways more persuasive, she interweaves with a lot of brief stories, which also make the book more readable.

In fact, those skills and processes are not only benefit for your future thinking, but also helping yourselves to involve new personalities and new characters. On the other hand, just as printed on the book cover that "the key to the future is in your mind", most skills and processes mentioned in this book are based on the past experience, the personal abilities, and the future efforts. There is no shortcut toward the future.

To my personal experience, this book does enlighten my mind in several ways, such as the power of myths and symbols, lodge cultures, observing energy, wild cards. On the other hand, although all skills and processes described in this book seem so reasonable and practicable to me, I more prefer several insightful sparkles sprinkling in the beginning of the book. Such as, the thrill in front of grave, first step in putting five-thousand-piece puzzle together, imagine yourself in front of the stairway of spaceship, the mind like a popcorn popper etc. The attraction of the future just relies on the dilemma between uncertainty of the future and human endless curiosity to imagine and foresee the future.

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