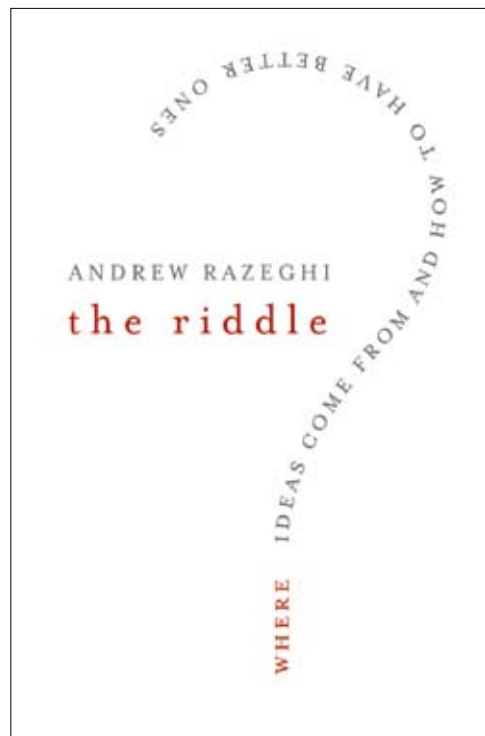


WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA?

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 The Riddle: Where Ideas Come From
 and How to Have Better Ones

By Andrew Razeghi
 (Jossey-Bass, 256 pp., \$27.95)

Reviewed by Paul Flynn



Once, long ago, I had a really good idea. I know it was a good idea because everyone said to me, “Paul, that’s a really good idea.” It was about to change everything in my life. Then, suddenly, I forgot my idea. Every other idea since then has seemed... well... you know.

Now, there’s hope that I might recapture the magic of that lost idea. It turns out that great ideas don’t come out of the blue—you can recreate the “Eureka” moment. So says Andrew Razeghi in *The Riddle*. Razeghi teaches innovation at the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University and is a principal at the firm StrategyLab Inc.

In *The Riddle*, Razeghi explores the nature of creativity and innovation. He examines how ideas come to us and gives helpful tips on how we can encourage innovative thought. Along the way, he explodes a few myths about what it means to be creative.

Perhaps you’ve suffered brainstorming sessions that focus on being creative, without producing a single helpful idea. We are constantly encouraged

to “think outside the box,” but do you ever long to crawl back into the box? What’s so bad about the box? At least it has definition—a framework upon which to hang a thought.

Razeghi shows us the importance of respect for conventions but urges us to live outside the box. He also draws an important distinction between artistic creativity and conceptual creativity. The first is focused on creating unique things, and the second, on problem solving. Too many brainstorming sessions focus on the artistic when most of us are problem solvers who need brilliant solutions grounded in conceptual creativity.

An appearance to the contrary notwithstanding, being brilliant is neither haphazard nor the result of

whimsy. In fact, the good news is that being brilliant might not be as hard as we thought.

To be brilliant, you have to start with a problem. That's easy; there are lots of problems in life. Razeghi argues that problems are essential for innovative thought. He defines innovation as a creative solution to a specific, articulated problem. Innovation looks at existing problems from different perspectives. The key is to be deliberate, to have a method, and to develop habits of thinking.

It's not all deliberation though. Razeghi shows us the value of rest. That's important. He tells us what to do before we have a little lie down that will make us more open to innovative solutions. Moments of rest and sleep are important for unleashing the mind. The author discusses the major discoveries of Archimedes and Einstein and the interplay between conscious and unconscious thinking.

Both men drew on previous knowledge for their biggest discoveries, but both solved their specific problems in a blinding flash when their minds seemed to be disengaged. It was important to relax the active mind to allow the unconscious mind to play with the problem. Razeghi stresses, however, that it was equally important not to cast off previous knowledge as a hindrance or obstruction to innovation. For Archimedes, it truly was the "Eureka" moment.

One of the myths that Razeghi explores is that "necessity is the mother of invention." He argues that necessity might be the adoptive mother and curiosity the birth mother. Let's leave aside for a moment the frightful image of invention's mother killing the cat and consider that the inventor of Braille was not a sightless person at all, but a curious one. Just as important to the development of Braille was collaboration by several innovative

minds, each building on the insights of his predecessors.

The Riddle is very reminiscent of Malcolm Gladwell's successful works *The Tipping Point* and *Blink*. Razeghi's work is perhaps not quite as engaging as Gladwell's work, but it is a pretty interesting read for anyone who has problems to solve. If you do nothing else, please give the book to that person in your professional life who thinks that formless brainstorming accomplishes anything of value.

My rating: four cups of coffee.

Paul Flynn is senior manager of performance improvement for BBDO Detroit; paul.flynn@bbdodetroit.com.

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BOOKS //

Good News

T+D EDITORS PRESENT THREE NEW TITLES
TO GET YOUR WHEELS TURNING.

Rules to Break, Laws to Follow:
How Your Business Can Beat the
Crisis of Short-Termism

By Don Peppers and Martha Rogers
(John Wiley & Sons, 320 pp., \$29.95)

From stop signs to taxes, following the rules helps us all stay out of trouble. But in an era of business technology that sees tiny newcomers making billions, while well-known giants are upended, some rules are clearly made to be broken.

Peppers and Rogers show us how making three particularly flawed assumptions about sales and profit, marketing, and creating company value can lead to disaster. The authors also discuss how best to shatter these beliefs in order for companies to innovate, lead, and create durable value for clients.



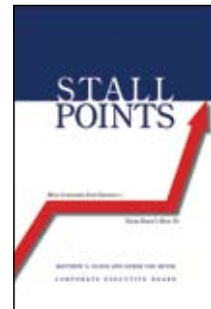
In addition to the rules to break, the authors offer more than a dozen “laws” to heed, directly necessitated by the swiftly changing business environment. These laws are grounded in shifting focus from short- to long-term success, with retention and empowerment of customers and employees as a centerpiece.

The authors’ laws to follow underscore concepts such as the link between success and innovation, the increasing importance of earning customer trust, and using diversity and dissent to drive creativity. Each law helps to steer the book’s 14 annotated chapters, and the conversational writing style supports a flow of information that is honest and practical. *Rules to Break* is part of the Microsoft Executive Leadership Series.

Stall Points

By Matthew S. Olson and Derek Van Bever
(Yale University Press, 228 pp., \$27.50)

Stall Points is a timely book for executives, learning professionals, and strategists concerned with their organizations’ health in the current economy. Authors Olson and Van Bever of the Corporate Executive Board describe a ‘stall point’ as “the moment in time that best represents a turning point, or significant downturn, in corporate revenue growth.”



Olson and Van Bever base their book’s claims on comprehensive research of 500 companies that have enjoyed Fortune 100 profitability within the last 50 years. The authors examine the growth experiences of these firms and conclude that it is common to stall, that it is difficult to see a stall coming, and that it is extremely difficult to recover from a stall. In fact, 76 percent of the companies studied never restarted after a stall point.

Olson and Van Bever devote the majority of *Stall Points* to explaining growth stalls’ root causes, the majority of which are strategic or organizational in nature, and therefore controllable. Through self-tests, readers can assess the extent to which root causes exist in their firms. Finally, the book concludes with a set of actions to guide readers toward identifying the internal strategic assumptions and external change factors that most often trigger stalls.

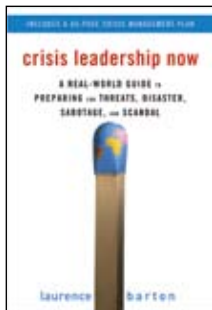
Ann Pace

Juana Llorens

**Crisis Leadership Now:
A Real-World Guide to Preparing
for Threats, Disaster, Sabotage,
and Scandal**

By **Laurence Barton**
(McGraw-Hill, 352 pp., \$39.95)

No CEO anticipates that her company will be the one to experience a major crisis such as workplace violence, product recalls, industrial accidents, or senior management malfeasance. However, this book is about action planning for and managing critical incidents if and when they do occur. Throughout the book, Barton details and analyzes hundreds of critical incidents that have happened to companies throughout the last two decades.



During Barton's time as vice president of crisis management with Motorola, eight murders took place. He has designed crisis plans, simulations, vulnerability audits, and executive presentations for clients including The Walt Disney Company, Nike, The Gap, Honda, Exxon-Mobile, ESPN, and British Petroleum. He has also been a three-time college president, and was the first Fulbright fellow to enter crisis management.

The book details the characteristics that define a crisis, strategies to respond to early warning signals, methods to mitigate threatening situations, and ways to promptly communicate decisions to employees, shareholders, and customers. It also includes a 40-page sample crisis plan, as well as templates for addressing a variety of threats that might cause harm to an organization, on any and all levels of function.

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