



The Knowing-Doing Gap: How Smart Companies Turn Knowledge into Action

By Jeffrey Pfeffer, Robert I. Sutton

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Why 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? The Knowing-Doing Gap is the first book to confront the challenge of turning knowledge about how to improve performance into actions that produce measurable results. Jeffrey Pfeffer and Robert Sutton, well-known authors and teachers, identify the causes of the knowing-doing gap and explain how to close it. The message is clear--firms that turn knowledge into action avoid the "smart talk trap." Executives must use plans, analysis, meetings, and presentations to inspire deeds, not as substitutes for action. Companies that act on their knowledge also eliminate fear, abolish destructive internal competition, measure what matters, and promote leaders who understand the work people do in their firms. The authors use examples from dozens of firms that show how some overcome the knowing-doing gap, why others try but fail, and how still others avoid the gap in the first place. The Knowing-Doing Gap is sure to resonate with executives everywhere who struggle daily to make their firms both know and do what they know. It is a refreshingly candid, useful, and realistic guide for improving performance in today's business.

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Editorial Review

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Every year, companies spend billions of dollars on training programs and management consultants, searching for ways to improve. But it's mostly all talk and no action, according to Jeffrey Pfeffer and Robert I. Sutton, authors of *The Knowing-Doing Gap*. "Did you ever wonder why so much education and training, management consultation, organizational research and so many books and articles produce so few changes in actual management practice?" ask Stanford University professors Pfeffer and Sutton. "We wondered, too, and so we embarked on a quest to explore one of the great mysteries in organizational management: why knowledge of what needs to be done frequently fails to result in action or behavior consistent with that knowledge." The authors describe the most common obstacles to action---such as fear and inertia---and profile successful companies that overcome them.

Among the companies that Pfeffer and Sutton say do it right: General Electric, the Men's Wearhouse, SAS Institute, Southwest Airlines, Toyota, and British Petroleum. The book, based on four years of research, is broken into chapters with titles such as "When Talk Substitutes for Action," "When Fear Prevents Acting on Knowledge," "When Internal Competition Turns Friends into Enemies," and "Turning Knowledge into Action." Each chapter contains tips on what to do and what to avoid, and provides examples of how a lethargic company culture can be transformed. *The Knowing-Doing Gap* is a useful how-to guide for managers looking to make changes. Yet, as Pfeffer and Sutton point out, it takes more than reading their book or discussing their recommendations. It takes action. --*Dan Ring*

Review

"...brash, fiery in its opinions...Pfeffer and Sutton close the knowing-doing gap; open their book and you can too!" -- *Management General*, December 2000

"Every once in a while a great book starts to fall below the radar screen. This is one of those books:go out of your way to find a copy and read it!" -- *Management General*, Spring, 2000

"The authors never leave a topic without prescribing seven or eight steps that companies can take." -- *The New York Times*, June 25th, 2000

"This volume will quickly assume a place among the classic, frequently cited management books." -- *National Productivity Review*, Winter 1999

"Why can't we get anything done? Pfeffer and Sutton [answer this question]in their useful book." -- *Fast Company*, June 2000, *Story by Alan Webber*

From the Back Cover

"The Knowing-Doing Gap is must reading for us all. Why don't organizations do more of what they already know they should do? The answer isn't lack of smarts or strategy. Pfeffer and Sutton's analysis of the companies who get it right is fascinating and right on the money. Now...will we take action?"

--Bob Waterman, Co-author of *In Search of Excellence* and Author of *What America Does Right*

"The Internet economy is not simply an evolution in technology-it's a revolution. **The Knowing-Doing Gap** will help businesspeople apply their expertise in ways that are well suited for succeeding in this new

economy."

--John Chambers, President and CEO, Cisco Systems, Inc.

"Finally, a book that provides valuable insight into the question, Why do most companies know what to do but so few actually do it? It's not so much about strategy, explain the authors; it's all about execution. Thank you, Pfeffer and Sutton!"

--Richard M. Kovacevich, President and Chief Executive Officer, Wells Fargo & Company

"The Knowing-Doing Gap reveals the major obstacles to action that confront people in organizations—from CEOs to entry-level professionals. The authors guide practitioners through the labyrinth of organizational roadblocks and help them turn knowledge into action."

--Deborah Coleman, CEO, Merix Corporation

"Pfeffer and Sutton expose the real reasons businesses fail to compete successfully. The Knowing-Doing Gap is a refreshingly clear guide for turning the learning organization into a doing organization."

--Howard Behar, President, Starbucks Coffee International

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