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## **THE CORPORATE LATTICE:**

### **Achieving High Performance in the Changing World of Work**

by Cathleen Benko and Molly Anderson

“Cathy Benko and Molly Anderson have produced a landmark book that should be read and re-read by anyone who cares about improving corporate performance. It argues persuasively that the old corporate ladder metaphor is dead. What has emerged in its place is the corporate lattice which is flatter and more collaborative and in tune with the changing workplace and workforce. You will find yourself nodding in agreement with the analysis of this new world and taking notes on what to do about it. This is a book that will have a profound and positive impact. I recommend it highly.”

**Anne Mulcahy**, *Chairman, Xerox Corporation*

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Work in the corporate America of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is radically different than any time in the past. The 9-to-5, hierarchical model that took hold in the industrial age has given way to a new landscape. Work is increasingly virtual, dispersed—often global and 24/7. Jobs are less structured and more collaborative. The pace of change is faster. Organizational structures are flatter. Companies are much easier to see into. Careers zig and zag. Work is done whenever and wherever. Information flows in every which way. And performance and productivity are more dependent upon a highly educated workforce—much more diverse in every respect than ever before.

Together, these changes are forever altering the traditional assumptions on which the prevailing corporate ladder and the command and control, top-down management style that defines it were built. In a new book, top executives Cathy Benko and Molly Anderson make a compelling case that it's time to dismantle the metaphorical ladder.

***The Corporate Lattice*** (Harvard Business Review Press; August 3, 2010; hardcover) defines an emerging model **more suitable** for the converging workforce and workplace changes at hand. At the heart of the lattice organization is a customized workplace that provides agility and options for both employees and employers. Individuals have more than one way to get ahead—and even more than one way to define what get ahead means. For employers, these options create strategic flexibility and drive greater employee engagement, resulting in superior performance.

The three key components or “lattice ways” involve:

- *How careers are built.* Depicting career paths as multidirectional with moves up and down, as well as diagonally and across. Success is defined and achieved in a multiplicity of ways.
- *How work gets done.* Shifting from 9-to-5, in-the-office to results-driven work through a hybrid of remote and physical locations and communication methods.
- *How participation is fostered.* Moving from top down to ‘all in,’ as technology enables relationships, teamwork and collaboration that can no longer be constrained (or controlled) by the traditional rules of hierarchy.

Building on Benko's 2007 bestselling book, *Mass Career Customization* (co-authored with Anne Weisberg), this new book takes a broader approach, laying out a specific plan for creating lattice corporations. The authors show that organizations are indeed making lattice investments—web 2.0 technologies, career pathways, remote and virtual work sites, social networking, workplace flexibility, inclusion programs, etc—but through the lens of corporate ladder thinking. These companies are responding with ad hoc, siloed and reactive efforts that fall short of the desired results by failing to also address the underlying ‘ladder’ mindset and structures. By providing a framework to integrate these efforts, companies and individuals alike can visualize the shift and have greater clarity about the changes underway, thereby making both existing and future investments more productive. The authors draw on three case studies of companies—Cisco, Thomson Reuters and Orrick Herrington & Sutcliffe LLP—that exemplify the lattice model in action.

Lattice organizations also widen their views of whose voices can make a difference and where good ideas can come from. Organizations are more transparent, and their leaders are more inclusive, more candid and increasingly interactive in their communication. They provide and value more options for what successful careers look like. And by leveraging new technologies, employees are becoming connectors of all the moving parts of the business as they never could before.

The corporate lattice model allows companies to create a scalable, cost effective approach to work with many benefits—from lowering real estate costs, to attracting and engaging top talent, to maximizing technology investments and mitigating risk. Along with solid advice and guidance, the book provides many examples of the lattice model in action.

The book also provides a guide for individuals. Lattice organizations offer more options—and with more choice comes more personal responsibility no matter where you sit in the organization.

“Companies are struggling to meet the challenges of the changing world of work,” write Benko and Anderson. “Traditional assumptions about what it takes to achieve and sustain a high-performance workplace simply don’t hold any longer. The ladder belief that high performance and sustainable career-life fit are opposing forces must now give way to a new reality: that they are mutually reinforcing and inextricably linked.” The corporate lattice solves this paradox.

***The Corporate Lattice* is both primer and guidebook for new ways of working in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond.**

**THE CORPORATE LATTICE:  
Achieving High Performance in the Changing World of Work  
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## About the Authors

### Cathleen Benko

Cathy Benko is Vice Chairman and Chief Talent Officer at Deloitte LLP, the largest professional services firm in the United States. In this role, Cathy sets the strategy and leads the delivery of Deloitte's signature talent experience to a highly skilled and diverse workforce. She is a leading authority on talent strategies and transformational change to achieve exceptional results. Previously, she served as Deloitte Consulting LLP's global e-business leader and subsequently led the high-technology industry sector as well as the organization's award-winning Women's Initiative.

Cathy has been named a "Frontline Leader" by *Consulting* magazine and is the recipient of its inaugural Leadership Achievement Award for Women Leaders. She has also been cited by a number of prestigious organizations, including Women in Technology International (WITI) and the *San Francisco Business Times*, which named her one of the "Most Influential Women in the Bay Area" for eight consecutive years.

Cathy is co-author of the bestseller *Mass Career Customization: Aligning the Workplace with Today's Nontraditional Workforce* (Harvard Business Press, 2007) and *Connecting the Dots: Aligning Projects with Objectives in Unpredictable Times* (Harvard Business Press, 2003). Her byline and other contributed insights have appeared in such publications as *The New York Times*, *Ivey Business Journal*, *Strategy + Leadership*, *BusinessWeek*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Time*, *Workforce Management* and other national media outlets, including major television business and news channels.

Cathy serves on Deloitte LLP's executive committee and global talent council. She is a member of *Consulting* magazine's advisory board and the Western Advisory Council for Catalyst and was recently a judge for *Harvard Business Review's* McKinsey Awards. Cathy earned her MBA from Harvard Business School and lives in Northern California with her husband and two children.

## **Molly Anderson**

Molly Anderson is Director of Talent for Deloitte Services LP, specializing in innovative strategies to engage today's increasingly diverse, knowledge-based workforce. She designed and led the implementation of Mass Career Customization across Deloitte's 45,000-person organization, significantly increasing career-life satisfaction, retention, and engagement.

Molly is an authority on organizational effectiveness, talent strategy and learning and development. She has extensive experience implementing transformational change in large organizations through the integration of processes, people and technology. Her expertise spans a range of industries and disciplines including health care, higher education, mergers and acquisitions and customer service.

Molly earned her MBA from Stanford University and her undergraduate degree from Harvard University. She lives with her husband and two children in Northern California.

# What Others are Saying about The Corporate Lattice

## **Marshall Goldsmith**

*World-renowned executive coach and New York Times best-selling author*

“The right model for the times. Lattice takes on outlived corporate ladder assumptions and convincingly argues that the workplace must adopt more nimble ways to engage its people. Lattice illuminates a much-needed path forward for organizations everywhere to tap into each individual’s performance power to achieve exceptional bottom line results.”

## **Shelly Lazarus**

*Chairman, Ogilvy & Mather Worldwide*

“The war for talent will never end. Victory will go to those organizations that solve the high performance and career/life quagmire. This book, a sequel to *Mass Career Customization*, moves beyond theory to everyday practice. It describes how this approach has been made to work in real companies with great success. Anyone responsible for driving results should read this book.”

## **John Seely Brown,**

*Former Chief Scientist, Xerox Corporation; co-author of *The Social Life of Information* and *The Power of Pull**

“Read this book immediately if you want to crack the code on how to build and sustain a truly engaged, diverse workforce. A fascinating read with stunning data and chock full of pragmatic ideas and evocative examples.”

An interview with Cathleen Benko and Molly Anderson,  
authors of **The Corporate Lattice**

**Why the need for a dramatic change in the way we get work done?**

Workplaces aren't what they used to be. Knowledge and service work dominate the economy. Compared with traditional production processes, much of this work is less bound to a physical location. As a result of technological advances and globalization, workers are less tethered to traditional offices and set hours. And, the makeup of work is changing, too. Companies use 40 times as many projects as they used twenty years ago, heightening the need for teamwork. Work is changing so fast that the U.S. Department of Education estimates that 60 percent of all new jobs in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will require skills that only 20 percent of current employees possess.

**How does the Corporate Lattice differ from the traditional corporate ladder?**

In the corporate ladder world, participation is generally tied to a person's physical location, department and a box on the organization chart. The higher your position and the closer you are to the head office, the more in-the-know you are on key decisions and the greater voice you have in shaping them. Internal communication cascades down the chain of command, and access to information is on a need-to-know basis. Social networks are fostered through in-person interactions and water cooler conversations. Information also flows up, often in a filtered fashion, from rank-and-file workers. In many companies, the unspoken assumption is that those at the top are the only ones whose opinions are worthwhile.

In marked contrast, the lattice organization recognizes the opportunity for enables broad-based participation across all levels and departmental boundaries. Relationships are more loosely coupled and not as strongly tied to hierarchy or location. An unprecedented amount of unfiltered information is accessible through formal and informal networks, often online. There are more avenues for building networks, gaining expertise, making distinctive contributions and becoming known—the rock-solid links between participation and careers.

Employees, therefore, have more knowledge and insight to contribute, and with a greater voice, they are more engaged. People feel connected when a company

communicates and collaborates with them in the multiple ways they use in their own increasingly networked lives.

### **Let's talk a bit about the growing talent deficit.**

Nations around the world face an acute shortage of skilled workers, even during recessionary times, because of the growing gap between the supply of educated workers and the demand for their services. The economic downturn that began in 2007 put this mismatch into sharp focus: U.S. unemployment rates for people with college degrees were half of the overall unemployment rate. While the average unemployment peaked at 10 percent in the fall of 2009, unfilled jobs remained in critical sectors such as health care, accounting and government, because employers could not find applicants with the right qualifications. And, the issue isn't confined to a single country: a 2009 Manpower survey found that 30 percent of companies around the world reported having difficulty filling open positions owing to shortages of people with key skills.

### **Is this trend likely to change in the foreseeable future?**

No, not likely. Simply put, there will not be enough qualified people to do the important work that needs to be done in the years ahead. While government and some businesses are investing in education, the investments will take many years to bear fruit. In the meantime, an aging workforce, coupled with growing gaps in global skills and achievement, means that companies will have to compete fiercely for top workers for years to come. And, they will need to fight over the dwindling supply of critical talent using strategies far different from those of the past.

### **How important is work/life balance in retaining and attracting new and talented employees?**

We believe that work/life balance is an unfortunate term since it gives a sense that work and life are opposing forces (*work versus life*). We strongly believe that career and life are intertwined and need to be blended together—what we call career-life fit. And this is more important than ever before. Even in a period of high unemployment, for example, a 2009 Corporate Executive Board study found that the importance of fit is second only to compensation in attracting new employees to an organization. The finding held true for both genders and across generations. Some 56 percent of men and 58 percent of women said it is critical, and 90 percent of millennials and 72 percent of boomers want a better balance. Among the under-thirty crowd, it is *the* most important factor when

deciding whether to join or remain at an employer, even *more important* than growth in compensation or skills.

### **How is the nature of work evolving and changing?**

Technology has fueled this decades-long evolution: in addition to providing platforms that connect employees across time and place, technological advances are digitizing many work processes. The result is an increased demand for a broad, dynamic range of organization and employee capabilities. Information analysis, innovation and adaptability, for example, are competencies that are growing in importance as companies adapt to markets that are changing at accelerating rates.

Routine work that's highly structured and repetitive is being replaced by non-routine tasks that require greater autonomy and critical thinking skills. Job descriptions are also becoming more malleable; many companies today define jobs according to the competencies a worker needs rather than defining the job as a static list of tasks.