

Birth of the Chaordic Age

By Dee W. Hock, Visa International

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In *Birth of the Chaordic Age*, Dee Hock argues that traditional organizational forms can no longer work because organizations have become too complex. Hock advocates a new organizational form that he calls "chaordic," or simultaneously chaotic and orderly. He credits the worldwide success of VISA with its chaordic structure -- it is owned by its member banks which both compete with each other for customers and must cooperate by honoring one another's transactions across borders and currencies. The book shows how these same chaordic concepts are now being put into practice in a broad range of business, social, community, and government organizations.

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Birth of the Chaordic Age By Dee W. Hock, Visa International Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Birth of the Chaordic Age is a compelling manifesto for the future, embedded within the intriguing story of a personal odyssey. An engaging narrator, Dee Hock is the man who first conceived of a global system for the electronic exchange of value, becoming the founder and CEO of VISA International. He looks critically at today's environment of command-and-control institutions and sees organizations that are falling apart, failing to achieve their own purposes let alone addressing the diversity and complexity of society as a whole. The solution, Hock claims, lies in transforming our notion of organization; in embracing the belief that the chaos of competition and the order of cooperation can and do coexist, succeed, even thrive; and in welcoming in the chaordic age.

The underlying tenets of Hock's ideas are well illustrated by the incredible story of the birth of VISA International, an organization formed on chaordic principles that now links in excess of 20,000 financial institutions, 14 million merchants, and 600 million consumers in 220 countries. Hock deplores an age where ingenuity and effort are wasted on circumventing the rules and regulations of insular, hierarchical bureaucracies. In a bold-type subtext interspersed throughout the book, he examines how this situation is stunting our potential as individuals and communities and contemplates what can be changed. This rumination is propelled onward by "Old Monkey Mind" (Hock's own thoughts). Though the technique allows the reader to engage in stimulating mental discovery along with the author, its New Age spiritual tone is sometimes a bit saccharine. His insights, however, are clear and provocative. In the Chaordic Age, he contends, "success will depend less on rote and more on reason; less on the authority of the few and more on the judgment of many; less on compulsion and more on motivation; less on external control of people and more on internal discipline." Hear, hear. --S. Ketchum

From Kirkus Reviews

If only the world were more like VISA International, chaos and order would be in balance, and people would work happily together in communities based on "shared purpose." At least, that's the utopian vision of Hock, founder and "CEO emeritus" of VISA International and head of a group called The Chaordic Alliance, advising mostly not-for-profits how to reorganize themselves in a new humanitarian way. Hock advocates an evolutionary system of social organization: Top-down control is out, and a blending of cooperation and competition is in. He is not the first businessman to suggest that what he calls "command-and-control institutions," including not only businesses, but social, political and religious institutions as well, are experiencing a "global epidemic of . . . failure that knows no bounds." His solution is harnessing chaos and order in chaordic harmony to the wagon of social evolution. Hock offers a blueprint of sorts for forming a chaordic organization, but warns there is no bottom line, there "is only becoming." That Zen-like mantra echoes the oracular reflections ("Is man machine? Is machine man?") the author shares with an alter ego, Old Monkey Mind, in boldface sections throughout the book. (Sketches of a lively monkey scamper through the pages.) Lighter face type carries the obligatory saga of Hock's early life and his role in launching VISA as a chaordic enterprise in the early 1970s, a winsome narrative that would be better served by more fundamental description of exactly how VISA works and how it differs from traditional credit card operations. Boxed "MiniMaxins" that occasionally rise to the level of "Saturday Night Live" affirmations are scattered throughout. Another successful businessman finds meaning in his life by reinventing corporate culture to save the world in this murky, pretentious, and decidedly unchaordic tome. (First printing of 75,000; \$100,000 ad/promo) -- Copyright ©1999, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.

From [AudioFile](#)

In a powerful memoir, a maverick manager tells how he overcame banking's rigid lending culture to create the electronic payment system we now know as VISA. His strategies for building trailblazing teams are illustrated by fascinating stories, all laced with insights that make the lessons vivid and understandable. The title suggests a broad, abstract agenda for the program--a history of how command and control organizations change into the organic systems required by today's non-linear organizations, organizations he calls "chaordic." But the program is more about the author's journey than the management transformation. It's a riveting story, read with profound understanding by one of today's best voices, a story of a well-lived life at the center of an important societal revolution. T.W. © AudioFile 2001, Portland, Maine-- *Copyright © AudioFile, Portland, Maine*

Users Review

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