



Made to Stick

5 Shares

What CSR and Nonprofit Leaders Are Reading - Part IV

By Alice Korngold

Following up on last Sunday's Part III with recommendations for holiday gifts and your own reading list, here are additional ideas from CSR and nonprofit leaders. You can also check on the books that were recommended in Part I and Part II at the end of last summer. These are delightful, eclectic selections from a variety of perspectives--from Michelle Rhee to Matthew Bishop, and the heads of companies and nonprofits.

 **Michael Green**, Co-Author with Matthew Bishop, of *Philanthrocapitalism* and *The Road from Ruin*; and Co-Author of the Philanthrocapitalism Blog: Why do brussels sprouts always taste bitter, no matter how you cook them? You will find the answer in *McGee on Food and Cooking: The Science and Lore of the Kitchen*, by Harold McGee the definitive guide to the science of what's going on in your saucepan. I would not want to stretch the analogy between cooking and social change too far, but McGee is a reminder that if you want to manage change, you need to understand the underlying structure.

Tony Blair: A Journey. Love him or loathe him, Tony Blair's memoir is a must-read. I worked for the British government for more than 10 years (never directly with Mr Blair), which taught me the crucial role that philanthropy can play to inform and influence public programs. 'A Journey' provides little insight into the man but it is a fascinating study of the complexity and frustrations of getting things done in government.

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 **Paul Ellingstad**, Director of Global Health, Office of Global Social Innovation, Hewlett-Packard: *Made to Stick* and *Switch*, by Chip and  Dan Heath. After nearly 5 years at the top of my must read/must follow (blog) list, *Freakonomics* authors Dubner and Levitt now compete with Chip and Dan Heath for my admiration in making topics most wouldn't voluntarily read altogether popular and accessible. First with effective communication in *Made to Stick* and then with change management in *Switch*, Chip and Dan Heath show narrative flair that keeps you glued to each book in one sitting and referring to the anecdotes on a regular basis thereafter. *Made to Stick* and *Switch* are the types of practical yet altogether relevant reference tools that can make anyone or any team more effective.

The Next 100 Years, by George Friedman. Our strategic business partners at Volans recommended this book as we embarked on the transformation of our group from a philanthropic to a social innovation model late last year. Whether you're a business line manager or a social innovator, this is a book that will make you think about your ecosystem and 'the bigger picture'. Friedman provides a proactive world view of possible scenarios based on social, political, and economic trends and assumptions while reinforcing George Santayana's warning that, "Those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it." *The Next 100 Years* was a great referral!

Mountains Beyond Mountains, by Tracy Kidder. Global Health is a relatively new strategic priority for HP from a social innovation point of view. We are collaborating with Partners in Health and are genuinely inspired by their tenacious pursuit to provide a preferential option for the poor in health care--'whatever it takes'. Reading this account of Paul Farmer and his life's work left me thoroughly imbued with a sense of moral obligation and desire to play an active role in improving global health.

 **Aman Singh**, Editor, Corporate Responsibility, Vault.com. My most recent read was *CSR for HR: A Necessary Partnership for Advancing Responsible Business Practices*, by Elaine Cohen. With her vast experience of working in human resources, Cohen not only manages to weave a compelling argument for why HR executives must embrace the tenets of corporate social responsibility, but actually does so in an easy-to-read conversational style. 2010 has been a busy and eventful year for the CSR and sustainability discussion and my take on how these are redefining recruitment and hiring strategies has gained a lot of clarity after reading *CSR for HR*.

Currently, I'm reading *The Twentieth Wife*, by Indu Sundaresan. A fictional account of real events, the book delves into 16th century India replete with nobility and splendor. What makes Sundaresan's account of Mughal India much more than a work of historical fiction from my perch at the intersection of corporate responsibility and career development is one simple reason: Her India, while seemingly fictional, deals with problems that are unnervingly similar to the issues we continue to fight today: Gender equality, democracy, ethics, social responsibility, and women empowerment. So how are we the *modern age*?



Premal Shah, President, Kiva: I recently read and highly recommend *Portfolios of the Poor: How the World's Poor Live on \$2 a Day*, by Collins, Morduch, Rutherford, and Ruthven. The book gives us a clearer picture of how the global working poor financially manage the ups and downs of their lives. It was fascinating for me to see how access to savings, insurance and credit can help the poor cope with the uncertainty that comes with poverty (e.g., sudden illness or natural disaster can affect the household for years). For example, while a loan might not be used to grow a small business, it is still valuable as the ability to turn small payments into a lump sum of cash helps the poor manage through difficult periods. It's a fascinating look because the book's insights are based off of household data from India, Bangladesh and South Africa. These households were interviewed every two weeks over the course of a year, reporting on their most minute financial transactions. It is rare to have a book that is based off of difficult to obtain empirical data that is also clearly written. Essential reading for anyone curious about how earth's 2 billion people who live on less than \$2/day actually live.



Christopher Mikkelson, Co-Founder, Refugees United: *Post Office*, by Charles Bukowski. With his sharp wit, laconic musings and complete disregard for everything and everyone, Bukowski's bone-dry insight into the life of a fallen poet/postman/derelict, serves as a stark reminder what few words can achieve. Trim the fat. Detailing the drunken stupor of Henry Chinaski, *Post Office* sees disappointments of life as hallmark moments and the anticipation of doom a behavioral guideline. The free spirit(s) roaming every page with a stale smell of booze and disregard makes for a delicious read. When working through long-winded negotiations, discussions and KPIs, it's sometimes good to step back and remind yourself what really matters, which is where Bukowski comes in handy ;)

Rework, by Jason Fried and David Hansson *Rework* succeeds, much like Bukowski, in draining excess weight from words, and workflows, to push through tried and tested methods for optimizing your work force, your efficiency and in dealing with competition. In succinct spurts of inspiration and to-the-core advice, the authors detail how they built 37signals from the ground up through simple techniques and implementations, coupled with hard work and dedication--and ignoring a lot of "rules." It's refreshing in that most of the advice and examples are immediately available to anyone through simple re-structuring/reinforcement within your organization. Moreover, *Rework*, in a no-BS fashion, argues against some business-beliefs about what it takes to be successful, and as such is a great counterweight to a lot of literature out there.



My own favorites from the fall include these two: *Sustainable Excellence*, by Aron Cramer and Zachary Karabell; you can read my review here.

And *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*, by Rebecca Skloot. In 1951, doctors at Johns Hopkins took cancerous cells from Henrietta Lacks, a poor 30-year old African-American woman who was dying of cancer--without her knowledge or permission. Since then, the cells have become among the most important tools in medicine. Known as HeLa cells, they have been vital for developing the polio vaccine and essential in discoveries related to cancer, viruses, and gene mapping, just to name a few. In spite of the tremendous industrial, financial, and scientific successes of doctors, scientists, pharmaceutical companies, and others, the Lacks family--husband, children, and grandchildren--has continued to live in poverty, lacking adequate education, health care, and social services. To prepare *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*, science journalist Rebecca Skloot immersed herself in the lives and communities of the Lacks family for a number of years to uncover the full story of Henrietta Lacks. The highly engaging book reminds readers of experimentation on African-Americans, and raises ongoing issues with regard to race, poverty, bioethics, and patients' rights.





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