

**Work Rules!** By Laszlo Bock. Abingdon: Routledge, 2016, 248 pp., £30.

“Work Rules!”- by Laszlo Bock, Senior Vice President of the People’s Operations sector at Google, has gained remarkable recognition worldwide, especially from aspiring and established professionals. Incorporating operational aspects of work with values and ethics, the book paves way for positive change at both individual and organisational levels.

Fourteen chapters, each with a very attention-grabbing caption, discuss different aspects of the corporate world. Each chapter concludes with a few interesting points that highlight the essence of the chapter. These could also be easily reviewed at the end of the book.

The book provides readers with a comprehensive account of various companies, with a particular focus on their work culture and HR strategies. These descriptions map organisations’ successes and failures with their management strategies, organisational layout and employee relationships. The author sheds light on some important psychological concepts like work culture, need hierarchy, employee expectations and health, which are very different from the conventional HR management approach. In these changing times, organisational autonomy needs to be balanced with employees’ autonomy, diversity and experiences to drive success.

Many organisations like Costco, McKinsey, and Bloomberg etc. have been discussed under these themes. Interesting insights into Google based on the author’s individual interpretation are also shared, such as how the company processes and administers the Googlers.

The sixteen-year-old successful company, Google, wants “to organize the world’s information and make it universally accessible and useful” (p. 33). He identifies that Google has exceptional products with great market value, but that it is its culture that makes it different. This culture hinges on three key aspects: being transparent, giving a voice to its people, and affirming with the mission.

After years of progression, Google provides its services in accordance to the laws while paying equal respect to its users and mission. Many such examples within the book indicate the loyalty of Googlers to their company and clients. The book offers the example of Google’s transparency in China. The laws and policies withheld the company from displaying results for a range of services, thereby in accordance to its mission, Google notified users about the reasoning.

The last chapter submits ten rules (that summarise the major aspects of the book) that could be a start for any professional to transform themselves, their

team and the workplace. Two of these points that I personally found very useful were: 'give meaning to your work' and 'pay unfairly'. The first combines an important psychological relationship between employees and their work. This is foremost in fostering value and performance at an individual level that contributes not only to personal success and fulfilment, but also to the organisational culture and success. Additionally, 'paying unfairly' suggests that monetary benefit should be tied to performance; so people who perform better should be paid or rewarded more than others. This reward mechanism can retain outstanding performers while motivating low performers towards better results. However, the author states that the organisation should be transparent with its measurement of performance, and ensure healthy competition amongst the employees.

Two things that stimulated me several times in the course of reading this book were in relation to confidentiality and the confidence to take risks. Very detailed case studies of several companies were mentioned with their names. I fear whether the details of certain operational problems could tarnish the image of these companies in the minds of the readers and negatively affect the market value of the company. I was also amazed at the confidence through which individuals and companies have the abilities to take risks. The case study of Mr Kelly, who later became the president of Bell Labs, is one such story. This was a big lesson to take back home.

To conclude, this book exemplifies why Google has been consistently rated as one of the best companies to work. Google exemplifies that a culture of innovation, diversity, and employee autonomy could grow and develop the employees and the organisation alike.

*Nimisha Bhatnagar, Organisational Psychology, The London School of Economics and Political Science*