



The Paradox of Control in Organizations (Complexity and Emergence in Organizations)

Philip J. Streatfield

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Business leaders are expected to be 'in control' of the situation in which their businesses find themselves. But how can organizational leaders and managers control matters entirely out of their hands; such as the next action a competitor takes, or the next law a government may pass? In this book, Philip Streatfield reflects on his own experience as a manager to explore the question: who, or what is 'in control' in an organization?

Adopting the perspective of complex responsive processes developed in the first two volumes of this series, the author takes self-organization and emergence as central themes in thinking about life in organizations. He focuses on the tension between spontaneously forming patterns of conversation and intentional actions arguing that the order of organizations emerges through a combination of collective interaction and individual intentions. The argument is developed by considering the day-to-day experiences of life in a large pharmaceutical organization, SmithKline Beecham.

In today's organization, managers find that they have to live with the paradox of being 'in control' and 'not in control' simultaneously. It is this capacity to live with paradox, and to continue to participate creatively in spite of 'not being in control', that constitutes effective management.

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