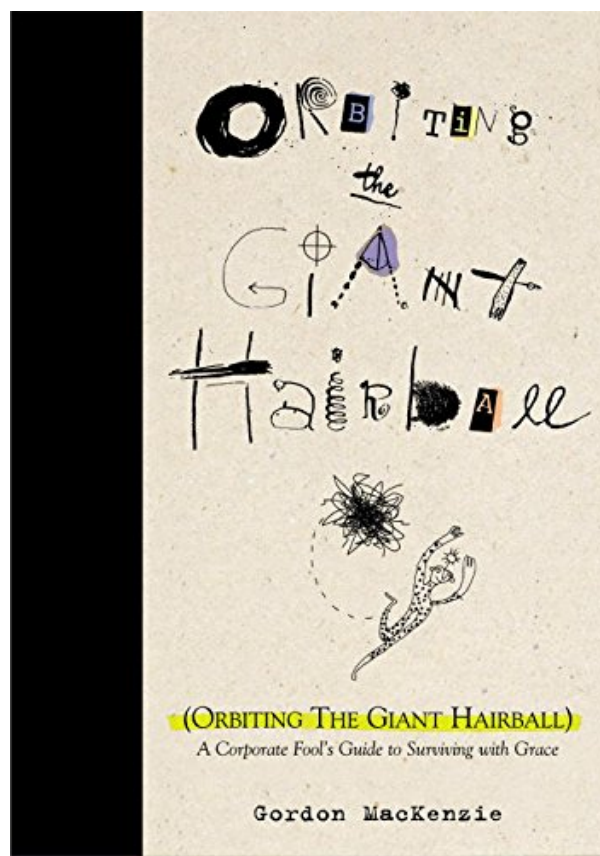
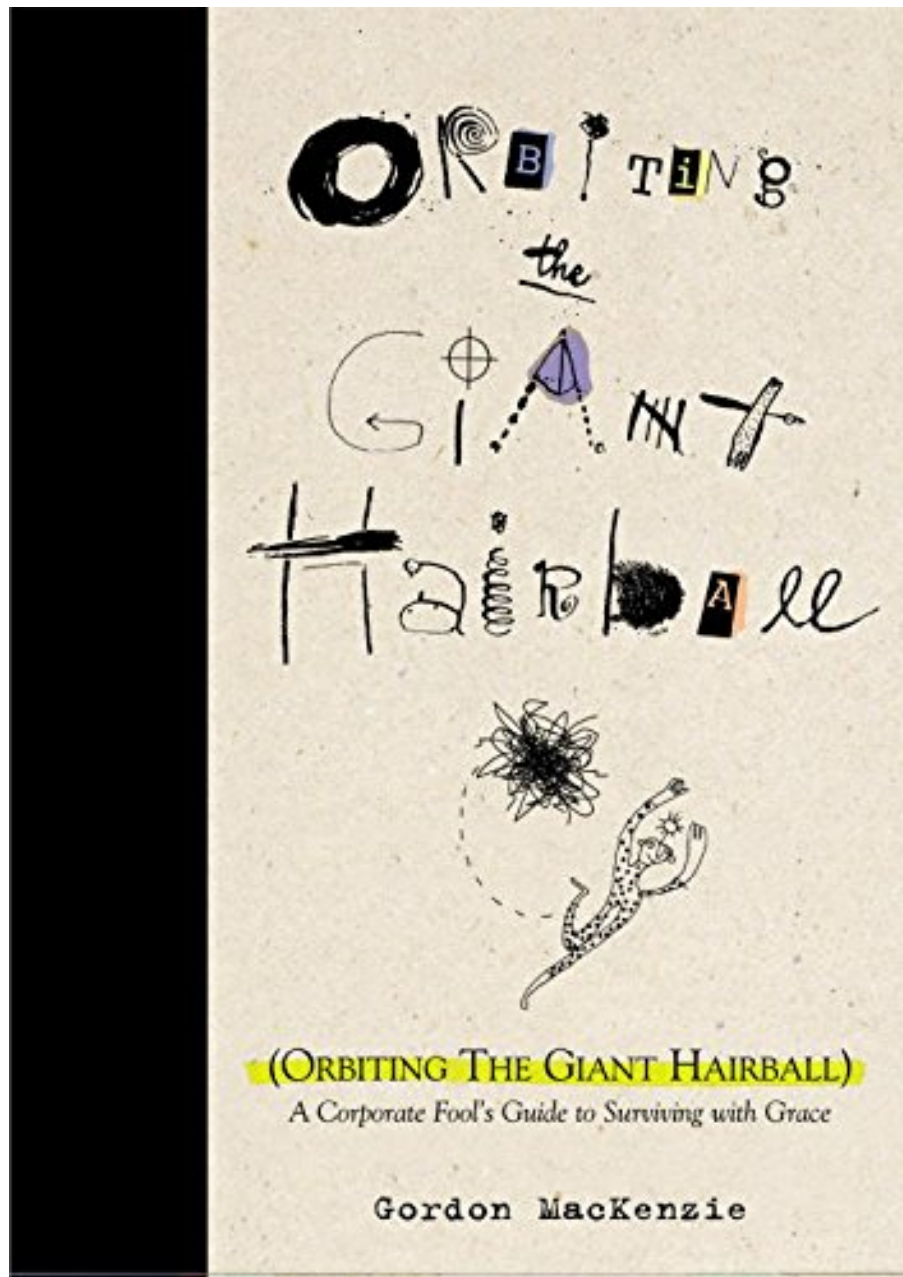


ORBITING THE GIANT HAIRBALL: A CORPORATE FOOL'S GUIDE TO SURVIVING WITH GRACE BY GORDON MACKENZIE



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From Booklist

There is no denying the creativity of someone who can persuade one of the 50 largest private companies in the U.S. to create a position for him called "creative paradox," or someone who can convince the accounting department of that same company to write off to the company art collection the purchase of more than a dozen roll-top desks to be used in his "creative lab," or someone who could come up with such a goofy title for a book. MacKenzie worked for the Hallmark greeting card company for 30 years, first as a sketch artist and eventually as an upper-level manager, until he escaped the "hairball" by creating his own niche. A corporate hairball is an entangled pattern of behavior or a mess of bureaucratic procedure that discourages originality and stifles imagination. A consultant for the last seven years, MacKenzie tells what he knows about creativity and what he learned about the creative process in a corporate setting. David Rouse

From the Back Cover

Gordon MacKenzie worked at Hallmark Cards for thirty years, where he inspired his colleagues to slip the bonds of Corporate Normalcy and rise to orbit - to a mode of dreaming, daring, and doing above and beyond the rubber-stamp confines of the administrative mind-set. In his deeply funny book, exuberantly illustrated in full color, he shares lessons on awakening and fostering creative genius. He teaches how to emerge from the "giant hairball" - that tangled, impenetrable mass of rules, and systems, based on what worked in the past and which can lead to mediocrity in the present.

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Creativity is crucial to business success. But too often, even the most innovative organization quickly becomes a "giant hairball"--a tangled, impenetrable mass of rules, traditions, and systems, all based on what worked in the past--that exercises an inexorable pull into mediocrity. Gordon McKenzie worked at Hallmark Cards for thirty years, many of which he spent inspiring his colleagues to slip the bonds of Corporate Normalcy and rise to orbit--to a mode of dreaming, daring and doing above and beyond the rubber-stamp confines of the administrative mind-set. In his deeply funny book, exuberantly illustrated in full color, he shares the story of his own professional evolution, together with lessons on awakening and fostering creative genius.

Originally self-published and already a business "cult classic", this personally empowering and entertaining look at the intersection between human creativity and the bottom line is now widely available to bookstores. It will be a must-read for any manager looking for new ways to invigorate employees, and any professional who wants to achieve his or her best, most self-expressive, most creative and fulfilling work.

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There is no denying the creativity of someone who can persuade one of the 50 largest private companies in the U.S. to create a position for him called "creative paradox," or someone who can convince the accounting department of that same company to write off to the company art collection the purchase of more than a dozen roll-top desks to be used in his "creative lab," or someone who could come up with such a goofy title for a book. MacKenzie worked for the Hallmark greeting card company for 30 years, first as a sketch artist and eventually as an upper-level manager, until he escaped the "hairball" by creating his own niche. A corporate hairball is an entangled pattern of behavior or a mess of bureaucratic procedure that discourages originality and stifles imagination. A consultant for the last seven years, MacKenzie tells what he knows about creativity and what he learned about the creative process in a corporate setting. David Rouse

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Most helpful customer reviews

56 of 60 people found the following review helpful.

I LOVE this book!

By P. Lozar

This is far and away THE most delightful book I've bought in a long time. It's stimulating visually as well as intellectually, fun to read, and the chapters are short enough to be assimilated by even the most harried business person. But it's not fluff: the points he makes about education, the way businesses are run, and the continual tension between creativity and corporate inertia, are crucial ones (every manager in every large firm should read Chapter 18, "The Pyramid and the Plum Tree"!). And MacKenzie's recommendations are not, as some critics have argued, applicable only in an "entertainment" industry like greeting cards: in today's fast-paced business world, a company's most important asset is its ability to be flexible and continually come up with new ideas; the "giant hairball" of entrenched structures and organizational habits won't cut it any longer. While I agree that the people who most need to hearken to this book's message are educators, I think it's equally important for business people: even if you've been trained (first by your schools and then by your employers) to stifle your natural creativity and become a good little corporate clone, it's not too late for you to recapture what you started out with. I wish I could rate this 10 stars!

57 of 62 people found the following review helpful.

Working Creatively and Effectively Inside the Corporation

By Donald Mitchell

This book deserves more than five stars.

Although I have read many excellent books about nurturing creativity and working creatively in companies, this is the first book I have read where the author has been someone who has done that repeatedly and in a variety of ways. That perspective is uniquely valuable both to those who want to have more creative jobs and those who would like to encourage creativity.

Although the analogies seem far-fetched at first (orbiting the giant hairball means taking a creative tangent and refocusing it to have relevance for the company's purpose), they serve to open your mind to thinking differently about creativity and organizations.

Although the author's key points are not summarized anywhere in the book, you will begin to get a sense of how the ideas connect together. That's useful, because otherwise why should he try to teach us so much? Except in the chapter that deals with them, any of the key observations would have been enough for a whole book on the subject. The overall theme is that our minds are subject to being too quickly anesthetized, rather than stimulated to ground-breaking insights. You'll love the story about hypnotizing hens where he introduces that concept.

One of my favorite stories in the book described when the author was asked to create an introductory course on creativity. The first session was wildly successful. The author then analyzed why it worked and created a more organized version of this course (called Grope). That session didn't work as well. Then he went back to being unstructured (operating at the edge of chaos), and the course worked again. He learned from this the delicate connection between groping and rote. You need more of the former and less of the latter.

Another of my favorite stories related to the joy he experienced when he first started parachuting. But within six months, it was getting to be boring. He could only make it more exciting by taking the parachute off, but that would be suicide. On the other hand, if he never tried something new, he would be vegetating. So we

want to stay somewhere between suicide and vegetation for the most effective results.

You will enjoy reading this book because it presents a fresh perspective that will stay with you. The successful point of entry is a story about children. When the author shows children about making sculpture from sheets of steel, he asks them if they are creative. All first graders raise their hands. By sixth grade, no one will say that they are creative. The pressure to be like everyone else makes the creative people want to hide. It just gets worse from there. Everyone who reads that story will remember experiences from childhood where their creativity was actively discouraged by teachers, parents, neighbors and classmates. Such a pity! Each story is imaginatively illustrated to help you get a sense of a different reality. It also makes the material more accessible to people of all ages.

In addition to reading and changing your own behavior, this book should be shared with young people to reinforce the idea that it is desirable to be creative. This would be a good book to discuss with your coworkers, as well.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Retain Your Soul and Inspire Others in a Corporate World

By MFFunmaker

Great book that will help you retain your creativity and soul as you navigate the corporate world. Applies generally to more than the corporate world, but that is the intended audience. Whatever you do, this book will help you realize and stay true to your true, honest potential, whatever that may be.

It's a quick read. Very well written. Gordon MacKenzie has a lively voice that will keep you engaged and inspired from start to finish.

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