

Building the Future: Big Teaming for Audacious Innovation

By Amy Edmondson, Susan Salter Reynolds

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Building the Future

Machiavelli famously wrote, “There is nothing more difficult to take in hand, more perilous to conduct, or more uncertain in its success than to take the lead in the introduction of a new order of things.”

That's what this book is about—innovation far more audacious than a new way to find a restaurant or a smart phone you can wear on your wrist. Amy C. Edmondson and Susan Salter Reynolds explore large-scale systemic innovation that calls for “big teaming”: intense collaboration between professions and industries with completely different mindsets. This demands leadership combining an expansive vision with deliberative incremental action—not an easy balance.

To explore the kind of leadership required to build the future we need, Edmondson and Reynolds tell the story of Living PlanIT. This award-winning “smart city” start-up was launched with a breathtakingly ambitious goal: creating a showcase high-tech city from scratch to pilot its software—quite literally setting out to build the future. This meant a joint effort spanning a truly disparate group of software entrepreneurs, real estate developers, city government officials, architects, construction companies, and technology corporations. By taking a close look at the work, norms, and values in each of these professional domains, we gain new insight into why teaming across fields is so challenging. And we get to know Living PlanIT's leaders, following them and their partners through cycles of hope, exhaustion, disillusionment, pragmatism, and renewal. There are powerful lessons here for anyone, in any industry, seeking to drive audacious innovation.

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