

FOREWORD

For years practitioners and managers looked at work structure as the reporting relationships and the boxes on the organization chart. This has changed in recent years. Today, it would be hard to find anyone in a complex organization to refute the importance and integral nature of an organization's structure to its mission or competitive advantage. Cichocki and Irwin have moved us further along a path of skill development and enlightenment about the critical nature of organization design and its contribution to organization effectiveness. They provide us with a map and compass to widen the vista of organization design and take us on a journey beginning with strategic design thinking and preparation to defining activities for successful design outcomes. This book positions organization design as a key success factor for any business improvement, cultural shift or transformation effort. The book highlights the notion that a well-designed organization has a unique form related to its needs and that a well-designed organization unlocks the potential of the organization.

Regardless of the organization design methods you have championed or used in the past, this book will add immensely to your organization design portfolio. Too often because we are more familiar with one methodology than another we put lots of energy into one approach and ignore or minimize the benefits of others. We look to find the right design and it is always harder than we anticipate. The current volatile business environment makes it difficult to design an organization for the future. The result is sometimes less than optimal. There are so many scenarios or alternatives possible. Understanding the context and need, finding the right mix and balance of alternatives, and selecting a final design is the core of *Organization Design: A guide to building effective organizations*. The authors draw upon their experience in organizations and put forth a strong organization model – the Organization Design Compass and the OPTIMAL Way. The Compass is used not only to guide the mapping of design options but to frame debates throughout design. The contribution of this book is immense.

The writing is clear, the ideas holistic and the set up user-friendly. The book outlines a four-part process but provides the flexibility of starting at any point and exploring each quadrant as the thinking evolves within the organization, whether it is the broader organization, a business unit or team. The building blocks are ideas from which to formulate appropriate ideas for many situations and can be applied across a broad spectrum of organization size or organization unit. Simple tools and templates are provided to support the process during each phase of design. Each chapter is laid out to move through the process in an organized, modular fashion that is easy to chunk into manageable periods of time.

The book is important to anyone serious about organization design and about ensuring organizations have the practical ‘know how’ to follow through on any type of design or redesign. Whether you are an organization designer, line manager, HR professional, organization development/organization effectiveness specialist, finance or IT specialist, or senior leader you will reap benefit.

As the authors note, ‘A great wind is blowing and that gives you either imagination or a headache. Organization design can ease the headache and stimulate the imagination to build a more effective organization for the future.’ We can all thank Cichocki and Irwin for sharing their experience and know how in ways that will undoubtedly improve our work in building effective organizations.

Mila N Baker, Senior Advisor/Consultant, The World Bank