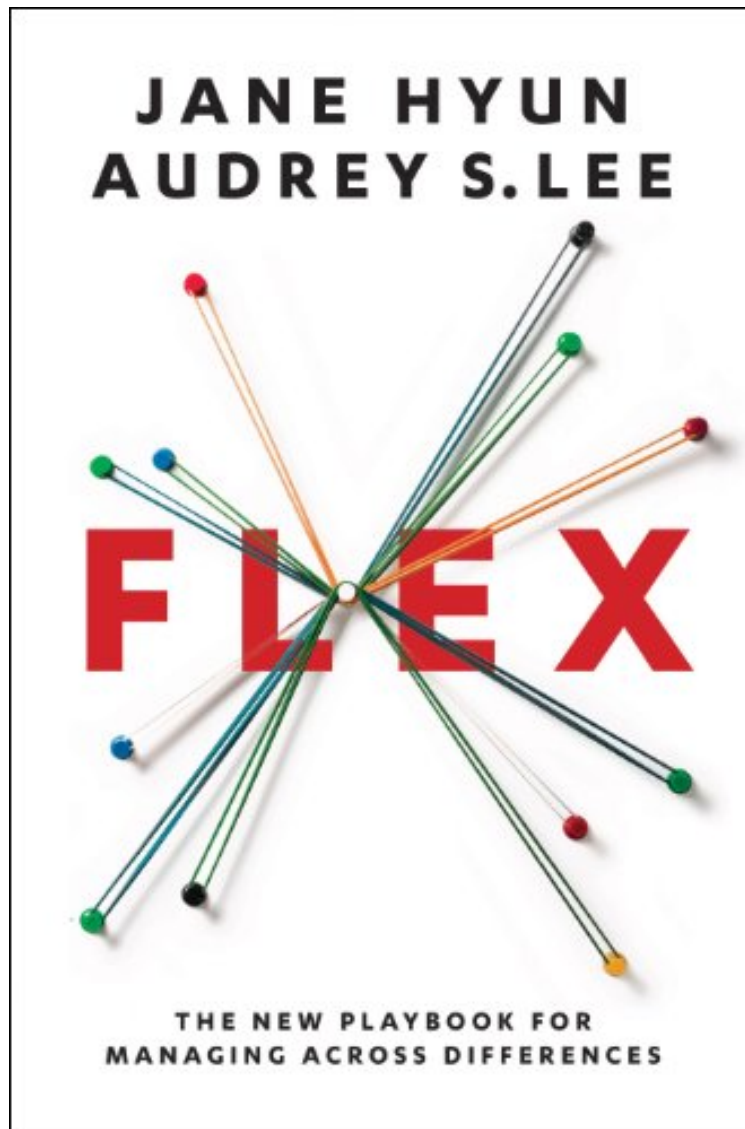


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Flex: The New Playbook for Managing Across Differences

Jane Hyun, Audrey S. Lee

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Jane Hyun, Audrey S. Lee : Flex: The New Playbook for Managing Across Differences before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Flex: The New Playbook for Managing Across Differences:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Great bookBy Momof4Great book on working with diverse group members whether the diversity is age, gender, position level or ethnicity. Would recommend for anyone who works with teams.3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Very useful for corporate managers in diverse companies; less so for othersBy John MartinFlex by Jane Hyun and Audrey S. Lee provides information for corporate

managers on how to manage effectively in a diverse company. The book also contains advice for employees and on orientation programs. The book focuses on three kinds of differences: cultural, such as having employees from different countries, gender, that is to say between men and women and age, including people from several age categories. The authors say that the usual approach in such companies is to ignore differences, saying, in effect, we respect all our employees and treat them in the same manner. Such an approach they say is incorrect and instead managers should recognize these differences and actively seek to become "fluent" in dealing with them. There is a need for "intentional learning" to develop in leaders the ability to work and communicate effortlessly with many types of people who are different from themselves. One aspect of this fluency is "code switching" using more than one language in a single conversation with someone else whose native language is different. The authors state that there are four stages of competency: unconscious incompetence (don't know and don't know you don't know); conscious incompetence (know you don't know); conscious competence (know how to use something but have to think about it to use it) and the ideal which is unconscious competence (know how to use something and can do so without conscious effort. Their book is about reaching this last state. All great relationships are built on trust and respect, but understanding and relating to people who are different in significant ways is critical to success. Thus the book is about adaptive leadership behavior and being fluent across differences. All organizations have some sort of hierarchy and thus there is a "power gap," an organizational distance that separates people based on their status and position in the organization. Closing this power gap is a big part of being fluent across differences. U.S. leadership style is "aggressive self-promotion, good will, positive intent." They also describe the traits of fluent leaders. Regarding cultural differences they describe the contrast between (1) direct and indirect communication; (2) expressive and restrained communication; (3) relationship and task orientation; (4) individualism and collective orientation; and (5) high and low context. They go on to consider gender and age differences. The book also considers the topic from the point of view of those being supervised and peers. It also considers orientation of new workers, saying that "onboarding," which is a longer process of orienting new workers is preferable to the traditional short, orientation approach at initial hiring. In sum Flex is a valuable book for corporate managers who have a diverse work force, but it is also useful for anyone since all of us deal with diverse people in our everyday lives. I rate it at four stars because the benefit is not equal for everyone. I would rate it as five stars for corporate managers in diverse working environments, but at three for the average person who is not in such a situation. 3 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Invaluable information, insights, and counsel with regard to how to be come and help others to become a "fluent leader" By Robert Morris According to Jane Hyun and Audrey S. Lee, "This book offers what courageous, thoughtful leaders need in order to operate successfully in today's diverse, global marketplace." What specifically do they need? The core competencies include being able to understand, respect, and acknowledge differences between and among those for whom they are responsible; adjust ("flex") their management style to accommodate those differences; and minimize (if not eliminate) any "power gap" defined in terms of gender, age, or cultural differences. I agree with Hyun and Lee about the importance of cultural fluency at all structural levels and in all operational areas of the given enterprise. This fluency does not invalidate authority. On the contrary, for both leaders and followers, it [begin italics] enriches [end italics] it. That is to say, cultural fluency is by no means limited to the C-level nor to managers elsewhere. Mutual respect and trust (worthy of the name) can and should be established and then nourished regardless of title or status. Emotional intelligence is best demonstrated by body language and tone of voice as well as by behavior over time, not by what is said, however eloquent that may be. However, Hyun and Lee are spot on when observing that a fluent leader "is more than just someone who is emotionally mature, demonstrates empathy, and is able to make an accurate assessment of [people and their emotions]. The fluent leader must also demonstrate elements of innovative thinking, but there are other aspects of this style that go beyond creativity and thinking outside the box." Such as what? Hyun and Lee offer a full-range of defining characteristics as well as leadership beliefs and behaviors that, in their shared opinion, a fluent leader possesses. These are among the dozens of business subjects and issues of special interest and value to me, also listed to indicate the scope of Hyun and Lee's coverage.

- o The High Stakes of Losing Our Best Talent (Pages 5-7)
- o What Women Bring to the Leadership Table (14-15)
- o Hardwired for Sameness (19-22)
- o The Key Competency: Fluency (24-26)
- o Identifying the Power Gap, and, How the Power Gap Manifests Itself on Your Team (34-46)
- o The Art of Flex (68-70)
- o The Fluent Leader Mind-Set (79-87)
- o Look for Creative Ways to Bridge the Power Gap (101-111)
- o Tap into Hidden Potential and Promote the Right People (121-124)
- o The Importance of Navigating the Power Gap with Peers (130-136)
- o Obstacles to Closing the Gap from the Bottom Up, and, Don't Put Authority Figures on a Pedestal (152-156)
- o Working with Bosses Who Maintain Their Power Gap (164-169)
- o Meaningful Engagement Begins with Closing the Gap (210-212)
- o Great Onboarding Models (221-226)

Note: Hiring great talent is essentially worthless if the onboarding process fails.

- o Multiple Ways to Support, Guide, and Grow Your Employees (236-238)

Note: All great supervisors have a "green thumb" for doing this and help direct reports to develop one.

- o Fluent Leadership is Needed to Facilitate Innovative Thinking, and, How Difference Drives Innovation (265-267)
- o Encourage Management Styles That Spur Innovative Thinking (267-271)

I agree with Jane Hyun and Audrey S. Lee that divergent thinking can drive innovation. This is what Roger Martin has in mind, in *The Opposable Mind*, when suggesting that integrative thinking

involves "the predisposition and the capacity to hold two [or more] diametrically opposed ideas" in one's head and then "without panicking or simply settling for one alternative or the other," be able to "produce a synthesis that is superior to either opposing idea." Throughout his presidency, Abraham Lincoln frequently demonstrated integrative thinking, a "discipline of consideration and synthesis [that] is the hallmark of exceptional businesses [as well as of democratic governments] and those who lead them." Principled dissent is essential to the success of this process. Obviously, no brief commentary such as mine can possibly do full justice to the abundance of information, insights, and counsel that are provided in this book but presumably I have, at least, indicated why I think so highly of it. Given the challenges that await leaders in years to come as well as those with which they must cope now, fluency and flexibility are not only desirable and important, they are essential and imperative. * * * More a quibble than a complaint, the book has no index. Hopefully one will be added if and when there is a second edition.

Renowned executive coaches and global leadership strategists Jane Hyun and Audrey S. Lee offer lessons on the vital skill of "flexing"—the art of switching leadership styles to more effectively lead people who are different from you, allowing managers to successfully manage the multicultural workers of today and tomorrow. Flex offers a proactive strategy for managers to navigate and leverage diversity effectively in this new global economy, showing managers how to: understand the power gap, the social distance between you and those in the workplace of different cultures, ages, and gender; flex your management style, by stretching how you work and communicate with others, and bridging the gap with more effective communication, feedback tools and building healthy teams; and multiply the effect, by teaching these skills to others and closing the power gap with clients, customers, and partners to create innovative solutions. Creating flex in a company's management style will impact all aspects of developing the talent you have, attracting future talent and building relationships with customers in this competitive marketplace. Now, Flex: The New Playbook for Managing Across Differences shows you how.

"If you are in leadership or want to remain competitive and you don't have a culturally diverse board or staff, you are part of the past. We need to focus now on understanding the need for developing this untapped pipeline. This remarkable resource will set you on the right path." —Dr. Frances Hesselbein, President, Leader to Leader Institute (formerly The Peter Drucker Institute)
"A solid, common-sense guide to creating a successful and diverse workplace in terms of culture, age, and gender...clear and illustrative." (Publishers Weekly)
"Hyun and Lee's book accomplishes what few guidebooks for employers do: It empowers leaders not only to manage differently, but to think differently by cultivating cultural fluency that will enable them to work more effectively with diverse teams." (Sylvia Ann Hewlett, CEO, Center for Talent Innovation, author of Forget a Mentor, Find a Sponsor: The New Way to Fast-Track Your Career)
"Sylvia Ann Hewlett, CEO, Center for Talent Innovation, author of Forget a Mentor, Find a Sponsor: The New Way to Fast-Track Your Career"
"FLEX provides a way for leaders to re-define how to lead by understanding, embracing and seeking out differences." (Karyn Detje, Chief Talent Officer, Tory Burch)
"Flex is the first real field manual for managing across differences. Its lessons are relevant to people at every level and stage of their career. Flex is required reading for every manager who wants to empower his/her employees to reach their full potential." (David A. Thomas, PhD Dean and William R. Berkley Chair Georgetown University, McDonough School of Business)
"David A. Thomas, PhD, Dean and William R. Berkley Chair, Georgetown University, McDonough School of Business"
"Read this book. If taken seriously, you will certainly challenge yourself to change the way you lead in today's global marketplace." (Steve Reinemund, Dean of Business, Wake Forest University, Retired Chairman and CEO, PepsiCo)
"Flex is about thinking -- managing one's thinking to meet the demands of business relationships inside and outside of your organization. From the conceptual rationale to the practical how-to, take this journey with the authors!" (J.T. (Ted) Childs, Jr., Principal, Ted Childs LLC)
"...a solid, common-sense guide to creating a successful and diverse workplace..." (Publishers Weekly)
"Coauthors Hyun and Lee provide the modern manager with a playbook on how to switch among leadership styles to get the most out of employees." (Library Journal)
"Hyun and Lee offer convincing evidence to illustrate how to enhance communication skills across various workplace divides." (Kirkus)
From the Back Cover
"The workplace around the world is changing—growing increasingly multicultural, female, and younger. Experts often tell CEOs and managers what not to do, and corporate diversity programs can often appear to be like defensive measures against lawsuits and harassment charges. While technology has connected all of us as a global workforce, it has not equipped us with the capability to interact genuinely with people. In order to be successful in this new global business environment, we need to rethink the way we lead others. Flex offers a new approach—a proactive strategy for managers to understand and leverage difference effectively in this new global economy. Flex shows managers how to understand the power gap—the social distance between you and those in the workplace of different cultures, ages, and gender; stretch your management style and bridge the gap with more effective communication and feedback tools; and multiply the effect by teaching these skills to others and closing the power gap with clients, customers, and partners to create innovative solutions. Creating flex in a company's management style will affect all aspects of

developing existing leaders, attracting future talent, and building relationships with customers in this competitive marketplace. Flex shows you how.

About the Author
Jane Hyun is an internationally renowned executive coach and global leadership adviser to Fortune 500 companies, business schools, and nonprofit organizations. She speaks frequently on the topics of authenticity, culture, and leadership. A graduate of Cornell University with a degree in economics, she is the author of *Breaking the Bamboo Ceiling*. She lives in New York City.

Audrey S. Lee is an executive coach and global leadership strategist for Fortune 500 companies, universities, and nonprofit organizations. A sought-after speaker, she is also a performer who combines her onstage experience and business acumen to deliver effective leadership programs focusing on culture, communications, and executive presence. Prior to her work in leadership development, she managed key marketing initiatives in high-tech companies. She lives in New York City.