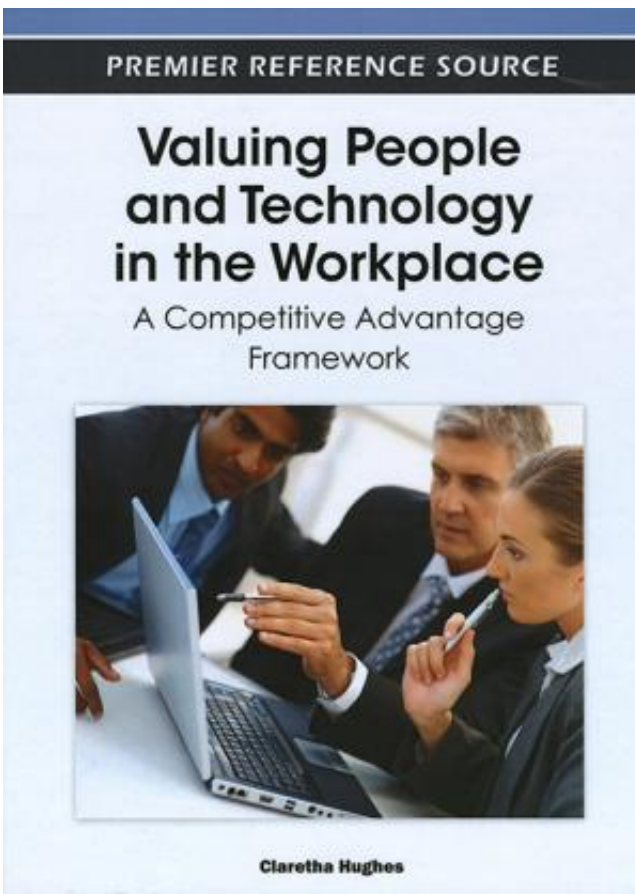


Machines and people can coexist, work together more productively

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Valuing People and Technology in the Workplace: A Competitive Advantage Framework.

We live in the age of technology, and in many businesses, machines have replaced workers. In Valuing People and Technology in the Workplace,

Claretha Hughes proposes a framework that will allow managers to get the most out of their workers by valuing them on the same level they value technology.

Hughes, an associate professor of [human resource](#) and [workforce development](#) at the University of Arkansas, spent 20 years working in corporate America and consulting for [corporations](#). She noticed that as technology and machines became a continually growing part of the workplace, the people who work around the machines, operate the machines and perform maintenance on the machines became undervalued.

“I want people to think about how machines and people can co-exist effectively,” Hughes said.

Using her two decades of experience, Hughes developed the “Hughes Value Creation Model for Organizational Competitive Advantage.” The model is based on five values: location, use, maintenance, modification and time, as well as three organizational perspectives: cognitive, behavioral and cultural. Each job environment has its own set of skills and requirements. Hughes argues that leaders must be aware of those differences and understand them in order to be effective.

Location Value: As a person becomes more comfortable in the work place, his or her performance improves, providing value to the organization. Location value also helps determine team cohesion. If members of a team are spread out across a floor or building, they are less likely to feel and act like a team.

“In some instances before the company ever bought a piece of new equipment, we tore down walls and built entirely new spaces to house the equipment, but we’d bring an employee in, and pretty much wherever they ended up was where they worked,” Hughes said. There was no

consideration about placing the new employee based on their understanding of the complexity of working with other people or their understanding of the organizational culture.

Use Value: Hughes emphasizes the importance of employees effectively using their knowledge, skills and abilities on the job. By continually analyzing a team member's improvements and the job he or she is performing, the company and the individual can increase the employee use value.

Maintenance Value: As companies change techniques, strategies and procedures over time, Hughes said that it is important to maintain the value of the employee through training, development and motivation to maintain optimal job performance.

Modification Value: As the expectations of both workers and managers are better understood, modifications to knowledge, skills, abilities and performance are made to better achieve those expectations.

Time Value: According to Hughes, time is the most important of all the values, and understanding how to manage time makes an organization more effective and builds the morale of team members.

A second part of the model is about perspective. Perspectives are the foundation of any organization. Hughes identified three primary perspectives — cognitive, behavioral and cultural — each with its own set of initiatives that can be used to improve the company.

Cognitive: Academic institutions, for example, are typically thought of as cognitive, meaning that the emphasis is on learning and conceptual and contextual thought processes.

Behavioral: Companies that produce goods operate based on the

behavioral perspective. The emphasis for behavioral type organizations is on the “technological impact on the workplace rather than employee roles.” The feelings of the employees are not the primary focus; their ability to operate technology is the focus.

Cultural: The culture of an organization covers everything from traditions and activities to how employees relate to their bosses. The motivation of a team and the value of employees’ feelings of self-worth are influenced directly by the culture of the organization.

Hughes has used the model successfully for over a decade in industry. She hopes her model will help companies improve their productivity by emphasizing the importance of the human worker in the company. This is not a book about how people should be more like machines, she said. Rather, this book provides guidance that can help employers and managers value their employees the same as they value the [machines](#), instruments and tools that make up their company.

Provided by University of Arkansas

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