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Humanism in Business – Towards a Paradigm Shift?

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Abstract

Management theory and practice are facing unprecedented challenges. The lack of sustainability, the increasing inequity, and the continuous decline in societal trust pose a threat to 'business as usual' (Jackson and Nelson, [2004](#)). Capitalism is at a crossroad and scholars, practitioners, and policy makers are called to rethink business strategy in light of major external changes (Arena, [2004](#); Hart, [2005](#)). In the following, we review an alternative view of human beings that is based on a renewed Darwinian theory developed by Lawrence and Nohria ([2002](#)). We label this alternative view 'humanistic' and draw distinctions to current 'economistic' conceptions. We then develop the consequences that this humanistic view has for business organizations, examining business strategy, governance structures,

leadership forms, and organizational culture. Afterward, we outline the influences of humanism on management in the past and the present, and suggest options for humanism to shape the future of management. In this manner, we will contribute to the discussion of alternative management paradigms that help solve the current crises.

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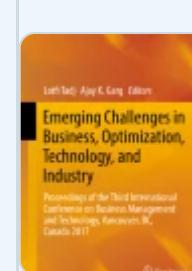
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