

Making the Impossible Possible

In *Making the Impossible Possible*, Kim Cameron and Marc Lavine recount the remarkable story of the cleanup of Rocky Flats – considered to be the most polluted place in North America.

In 1995, estimates of the cleanup began at a minimum of 70 years and \$36 billion. Ten years later, 60 years sooner than anticipated, Kaiser-Hill completed the cleanup at a cost of \$6 billion – \$30 billion **under** budget. In addition to this extraordinary financial performance, the authors show that a severely divided community could come together and developed solutions that worked for almost everyone.

Cameron and Lavine carefully map out the reasons for this spectacular performance and propose that it can be largely explained by Kaiser-Hill's abundance approach and focus on positive deviance. Success was achieved through the company's willingness to pursue the best of the human condition and seek to realize the potential of both the organization and the individuals working for it.

They further argue that organizations adopt different styles of leadership as part of their dominant culture. Yet, successful organizations embrace leadership paradoxes such as the need for control and creativity and change their strategies to accommodate these needs. In the authors' view, the outstanding achievement at Rocky Flats can be attributed to leadership choosing the right strategy for the right time.

The centerpiece of Cameron and Lavine's analysis is the application of the Competing Values Framework to the Rocky Flats case. As the authors note, the CVF "highlights the competing and seemingly paradoxical requirements necessary for achieving high levels of excellence." *Making the Impossible Possible* is a provocative examination of the possibilities that exist when leaders say, "What would happen if we identify what's working well in our organization and build on that?"