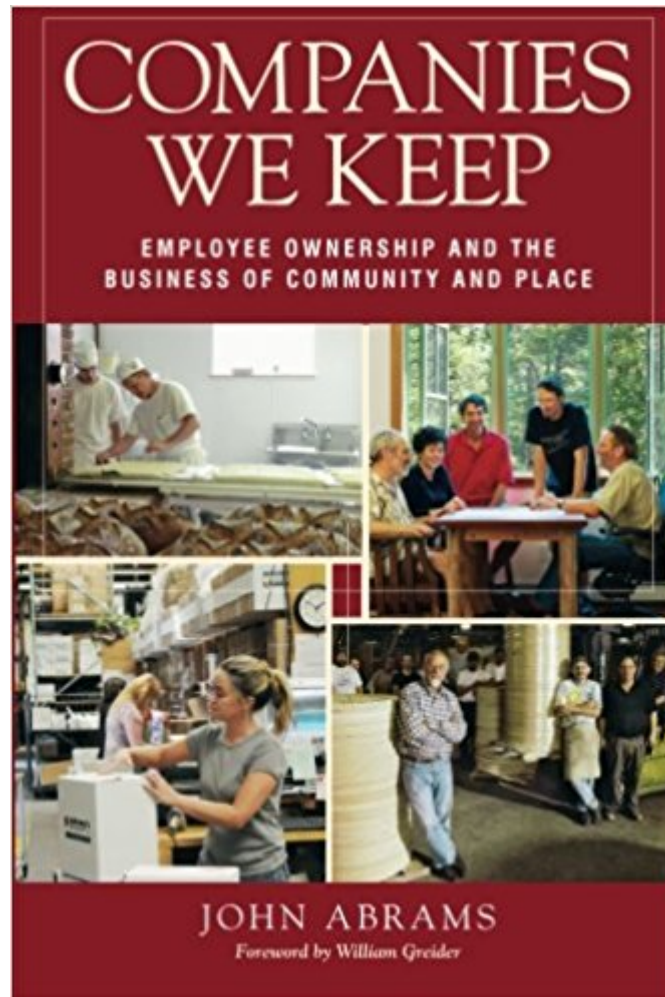


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# Companies We Keep: Employee Ownership And The Business Of Community And Place, 2nd Edition



## Synopsis

Part memoir and part examination of a new business model, the 2005 release of *The Company We Keep* marked the debut of an important new voice in the literature of American business. Now, in *Companies We Keep*, the revised and expanded edition of his 2005 work, John Abrams further develops his idea that companies flourish when they become centers of interdependence, or "communities of enterprise." Thoroughly revised with an expanded focus on employee ownership and workplace democracy, *Companies We Keep* celebrates the idea that when employees share in the rewards as well as the responsibility for the decisions they make, better decisions result. This is an especially timely topic. Most of the baby boomer generation "the owners of millions of American businesses" will retire within the next two decades. In 2001, 50,000 businesses changed hands. In 2005, that number rose to 350,000. Projections call for 750,000 ownership transitions in 2009. Employee ownership "in both the philosophical and the practical sense" is gathering steam as businesses change hands, and Abrams examines some of the many ways this is done. *Companies We Keep* is structured around eight principles "from "Sharing Ownership" and "Cultivating Workplace Democracy" to "Thinking Like Cathedral Builders" and "Committing to the Business of Place" that Abrams has discovered in the 32 years since he cofounded South Mountain Company on the island of Martha's Vineyard. Together, these principles reveal communities of enterprise as a potent force of change that can "and will" improve the way Americans do business.

## Book Information

Paperback: 352 pages

Publisher: Chelsea Green Publishing; Revised and expanded second edition edition (November 8, 2008)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 160358000X

ISBN-13: 978-1603580007

Product Dimensions: 6 x 1 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (10 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #527,208 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #155 in [Books > Business & Money > Processes & Infrastructure > Green Business](#) #174 in [Books > Business & Money > Processes & Infrastructure > Infrastructure](#) #589 in [Books > Business & Money > Management &](#)

## Customer Reviews

I've now read both editions of this book and can strongly recommend either for every current or future entrepreneur or small business leader who is trying to look beyond the bottom line. There are at least 5 stand-out qualities that separate this from other business books, including those on socially responsible business:- It's actually written by the man who led the remarkable accomplishments of this impressive company. It's not ghost-written nor the product of an outside observer who is one or two steps removed from the real work & struggles.- John Abrams is a really good writer. You won't just benefit from reading this. You'll enjoy it.- Unlike many successful business leaders who want to write a book, John is notably humble. This is not a vanity project. It's about the company and what they did differently, why, and how it turned out. It also offers useful concrete examples of other companies that have modeled unusual and encouraging humane business practices.- It's full of meaningful, helpful details of real decisions or practices that will help the business leader. It's not just a new theory stretched out over 150 pages and filled out with vague anecdotes and other fluff.- The South Mt Company has made - and successfully executed - many unorthodox decisions, like consciously choosing NOT to grow, and to turn the ownership and control of the company over to the employees. And when you read why and how they did it, and how it turned out, you might reconsider what a business can be for and what is possible.

If you care about the world and one of the ways we can create a golden world, this is a book to read. We have to do business differently, more humanly, more connected, where the employees own the business. So that we all may live in harmony and peace...

I highly recommend this book. It is a revision of Abrams' 2005 book, *The Company We Keep: Reinventing Small Business for People, Community and Place*, which I read when it came out. He takes you through the history of South Mountain, a 32 year old design/build company he founded and examines the eight cornerstone philosophies and practices that underpin South Mountain and any green business that wants to harness the power of employee ownership, workplace democracy and community commitment. I met Abrams at the Green Business Conference in San Francisco in 2005. He is a wonderful, warm, down to earth human being and highly experienced business person. I love small business and how it can positively impact individuals and communities, and I could not book his book down.

I just finished reading John Abram's "the Company We Keep" and found it truly inspirational. As the founder of two building companies that have struggled to bring many of the ideas discussed in this book, I truly appreciate the challenges faced and opportunities seized John describes so eloquently. He has figured out the right balance of fun and utility. The book is full of practical examples and real world applications. It is a must read for anyone considering creating or converting to an employee owned business. I highly recommend it and hope he continues to document his ever evolving story.

Found it very interesting and helpful. the author knew what he was taking about as he had experienced and was still experiencing his company's employee participation.

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