



15th Annual Summer Reading List

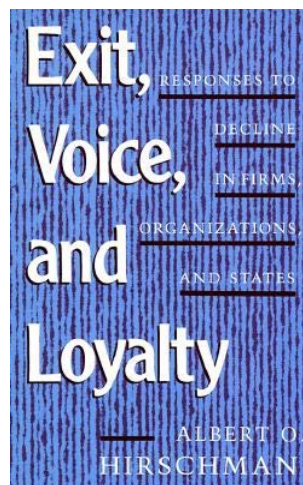
"Exit, Voice, and Loyalty" is over 30 years old, but it remains essential reading for anyone in the changing-the-world business.

Like an insistent visitor, some books have to knock on your door a few times before you let them in. Last year, I heard Marshall Ganz praise "Exit, Voice, and Loyalty" during an interview with Bill Moyers, and I made a mental note to pick up a copy. That note (like so many others, sadly) was promptly lost, but a few months later I read a *New Yorker* article in which Malcolm Gladwell also cited the book as an important and influential work. This time I went online and placed an order, and I'm very glad that I did.

"Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations and States," is one of those books that gives you an entirely new way of looking at familiar problems. Written by Albert O. Hirschman in 1979, it takes an economic theory about human behavior in the marketplace and shows how it can be applied to social issues. At the risk of oversimplifying, let me give you one example:

After several months of reliable service, your mobile phone has suddenly turned on you. The battery is dying sooner and sooner every day. It's dropping calls left and right. You've had *enough*. Considering all the other brands out there, you could easily ditch your current phone and buy something else. In his book, Hirschman labels this the *exit* option.

On the other hand, you could also contact the company from which you purchased the phone, express your displeasure, and insist they fix it or provide a replacement - exercising what Hirschman calls the *voice* option. So, which path do you take? That's where the final word in the book's title comes in: the amount of *loyalty* you feel for the phone (or the company that manufactured it) will determine



July 2014

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Just one book, and it's over 30 years old

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free-range thinking is written by Andy Goodman and edited by Celia Hoffman. To read back issues, download free publications, and to learn more about our work, please visit www.thegoodmancenter.com.

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whether you opt to flee or fight.

Nothing earthshaking so far, right? But now consider America's history through Hirschman's lens. When tens of thousands of men and women fled Europe in the 17th century to settle the New World, they were exercising the "exit" option. And when their children and grandchildren felt confined and discontented, they, too, chose to exit, gradually extending our national border further and further west.

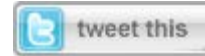
"The United States," Hirschman writes, "owes its very existence and growth to millions of decisions favoring exit over voice." The pride we take in "American ingenuity," and our almost religious faith in our ability to "invent our way out of problems" can also be traced back to this essential exit mentality. "Exit has been accorded an extraordinarily privileged position in the American tradition," writes Hirschman, offering a thoughtful counterpoint to the more familiar story of free speaking, stand-and-fight Yanks.

There is much more to be gained from this slender volume, but I'll add the warning that Hirschman, who died in 2012, was not a breezy popularizer from the Gladwell school. "Exit, Voice, and Loyalty" is dense and slow going at times, but it's well worth the effort. It sits on my bookshelf next to Everett Rogers' "Diffusion of Innovations," another Bible for changing the world, and I hope it will find a place in your library as well.

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