



# **Companies We Keep: Employee Ownership and the Business of Community and Place, 2nd Edition**

*John Abrams*

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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.

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