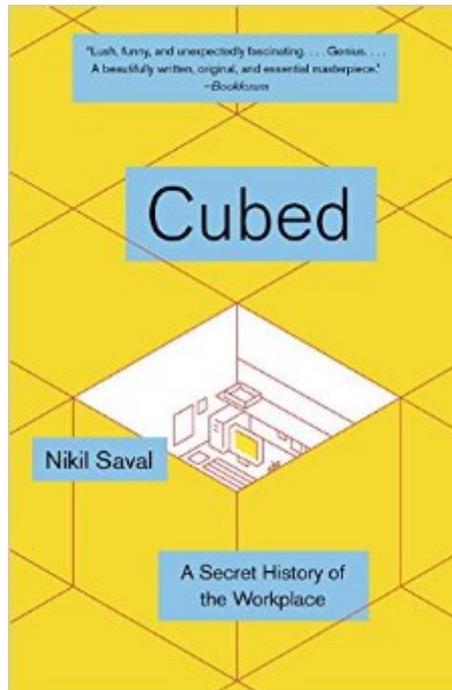


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Cubed: The Secret History Of The Workplace



Synopsis

A New York Times Notable Book • Daily Beast Best Nonfiction of 2014 • Inc. Magazine's Most Thought-Provoking Books of the Year • Man is born free, but he is everywhere in cubicles. • How did we get from Scrooge's office to Office Space? • From bookkeepers in dark countinghouses to freelancers in bright cafes? • What would the world be like without the vertical file cabinet? What would the world be like without the office at all? In *Cubed*, Nikil Saval chronicles the evolution of the office in a fascinating, often funny, and sometimes disturbing anatomy of the white-collar world and how it came to be the way it is. Drawing on the history of architecture and business, as well as a host of pop culture artifacts—from *Mad Men* to *Dilbert* (and, yes, *The Office*)—and ranging in time from the earliest clerical houses to the surprisingly utopian origins of the cubicle to the funhouse campuses of Silicon Valley, *Cubed* is an all-encompassing investigation into the way we work, why we do it the way we do (and often don't like it), and how we might do better.

Book Information

Paperback: 368 pages

Publisher: Anchor; Reprint edition (January 6, 2015)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0345802802

ISBN-13: 978-0345802804

Product Dimensions: 5.1 x 0.8 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 12 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.1 out of 5 stars • See all reviews (64 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

Saval's book is a "must-read" for anyone interested in the world of work. For one thing, the author chose a topic that's gotten little attention from researchers or popular writers. He takes us through the history of the office, going back to the days of all-male offices with male clerks. He traces the development of office equipment - not just typewriters, but even desks and filing cabinets. We also get reminded of past workplace trends. Remember Gllbreth's *Cheaper By The Dozen*? This family

dynamic was fueled by an offshoot of Taylorism, a system of measuring productivity that seems cruel to many of us today. And then remember the 40s, 50s and 60s? The world of *Mad Men* and the movie *The Best of Everything*? Women dressed up in dresses, hose and heels (girdles, too!) sitting at rows of typewriters. Katherine Gibbs School was the female Harvard MBA, an entry to the most elite secretarial positions. Cubed then fast forwards to the present, where companies experiment with a variety of formats, including open offices resembling coffee shops and coworking spaces. Cubed is best read as a series of loosely themed chapters. My only quibble is that the focus of the chapters (what social scientists call the unit of analysis) shifts. Clerks, secretaries, engineers, call center workers, and software developers might work in similar spaces, but their perspectives will be different, as they have widely divergent opportunities for promotion, marketability and day-to-day flexibility. An engineer sitting in a cubicle probably can take off a couple of hours to get a hair cut or run an errand; a clerk or call center worker probably cannot do the same. That's huge.

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