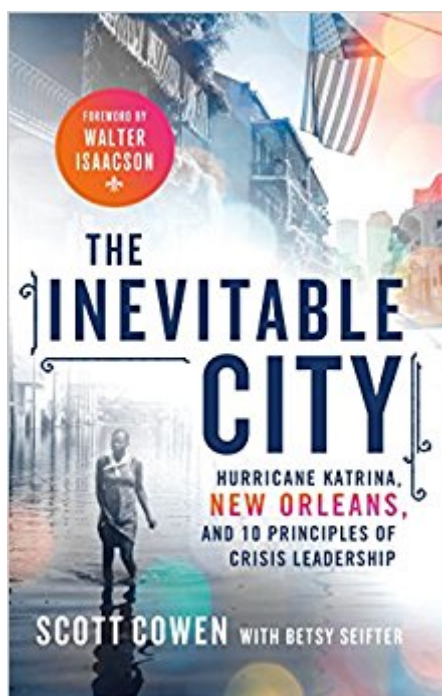


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The Inevitable City: Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans, And 10 Principles Of Crisis Leadership



Synopsis

After seven years of service as the president of Tulane University, Scott Cowen watched the devastation of his beloved New Orleans at the hands of Hurricane Katrina. When federal, state, and city officials couldn't find their way to decisive action, Cowen, known for his gutsy leadership, quickly partnered with a coalition of civic, business, and nonprofit leaders looking to work around the old institutions to revitalize and transform New Orleans. This team led the charge to restore equilibrium and eventually to rebuild. For the past nine years, Cowen has continued this work, helping to bring the city of New Orleans back from the brink. "The Inevitable City" presents 10 principles that changed the game for this city, and, if adopted, can alter the curve for any business, endeavor, community and perhaps even a nation. This is the story of the resurgence and reinvention of one of America's greatest cities. Ordinary citizens, empowered to actively rescue their own city after politicians and government officials failed them, have succeeded in rebuilding their world. Cowen was at the leading edge of those who articulated, shaped, and implemented a vision of transformative change that has yielded surprising social progress and economic growth: a drowned city identified with the shocking images of devastation and breakdown has transformed itself into a mecca of growth, opportunity, and hope."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

“On its surface The Inevitable City is a book about leadership by a man who led his community through a crisis. But what it really is is the story of a love affair, between a man and the

city he did so much to save. One day historians will realize how incredible it was that, in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans found its greatest leader in a university president. They will turn here to see how and why he did what he did.

—New York Times bestselling author Michael Lewis—“Our most famous fictional resident, Blanche DuBois observed that she depended on the kindness of strangers. The truth is in the time after Hurricane Katrina the fate of New Orleans was depending on the vision and competence of a guy that grew up in New Jersey. That person was Tulane President Dr. Scott Cowen. New Orleanians unanimously credit him as being the most significant individual in the resurrection and rebirth of the city. This book is a superb place to become educated on post-Katrina New Orleans.

—James Carville—“Scott Cowen takes us on his personal journey rebuilding and revitalizing his university and community after the worst natural disaster to ever hit a modern American city. His unflinching courage and deep compassion propel a narrative that is at once a leadership epic and an examination of the true meaning of service. Scott reminds us that while we mourn the losses inflicted on our beloved Gulf Coast, we must never let that be the end of the story--we must write the next chapter.

—Lisa Jackson, VP, Apple Inc and former head of the US Environmental Protection Agency—“In this beautifully written book, Cowen describes how New Orleans’ leaders, in partnership with its extraordinary and diverse community of citizens, drew on the history, culture, unbreakable spirit and unquestionable strength of this unique metropolis to reimagine new models of urban renewal and reawakening. The Inevitable City serves both to inspire and instruct all of us who know that while great storms are always possible, revitalization and rebirth are more often the result when men and women of courage and determination face the storm together.

—Vartan Gregorian, president of Carnegie Corporation of New York, former president of Brown University—“The Inevitable City is a wonderful and accurate account of Hurricane Katrina. Scott Cowen saved Tulane University and helped save the City of New Orleans. We had no greater leader.

—Archie Manning—“Dr. Cowen (Scott) articulates how to turn disaster and despair into an opportunity to make our world a better place. By creating a culture that values education, service, faith and commitment we can change the fate of Urban America without eroding its cultural character.

—Chef John Besh, author of Cooking from the Heart—“Cowen offers the blueprint for revitalizing our nation’s urban centers with his experience as a leader through the recovery of The Crescent City after America’s costliest natural disaster.

—Scott Greenstein, President & Chief Content Officer, SiriusXM Radio—“Scott Cowen writes with obvious passion and personal knowledge.

—Jonathan Yardley, Washington Post

Scott Cowen is president of Tulane University and was one of the key players in the rebuilding of New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. He is the co-author of *The Inevitable City*. His work has been widely covered by the media, including *Fast Company Magazine*, Newark-based *The Star-Ledger*, *The New York Times*, and *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. He is also a guest panelist on the Sirius talk show "Doctor Radio." TIME magazine has named President Cowen one of the nation's Top 10 Best College Presidents and New Orleans CityBusiness called him one of the 30 "Driving Forces" in New Orleans in the last 30 years.

I read this book because I was a part of the Tulane Katrina recovery experience and have a huge respect for the leadership of Scott Cowen. The book is a great reference source for those researching community development post disaster or any other urban crisis. However, I did not find it easily readable for those who might pick it up just interested in the recovery of New Orleans. I became very bogged down in the naming of so many organizations and their various focuses and to be honest, I felt this gave the recovery process a very scattered feel. On the positive side, Cowen was in a unique position to be able to see all of this going on while most of us were bogged down in the daily struggle. So, if you are looking for inspiration toward a social outreach, this could be the book for you. If your looking for an exciting narrative of recovery, not so much.

Both my spouse and I gave up part of the way through this book. My husband bought it after hearing the author speak with a not unreasonable expectation the book would be similar to the author's ability as a good storyteller. It is no doubt a great come back story but one that needs to be better written. Tedious, overly generous in the insignificant details, boringly repetitious and oddly not illuminating in places where it begged to be (such as terms specific to the area a general readership might not be familiar with), we both found it impossible to read more than a third of it. Too much political and bureaucratic slogging to sift out any gems of what actually works in catastrophic failure setting. The editors of this book did the author no favor whatsoever. I wondered why there were only six reviews before this one and now I know.

New Orleans and what happened after Katrina existed for me only as a parade of groups of people who went to help. Scott Cowen's story humanized this complex city in a well-written story which underscored the full range of issues involved. In addition, this is a story of leadership: of hard choices, of moving forward, of sacrifice.....and most of all, of caring. I would suggest this book to

anyone interested in how cities work, how unprepared we all are for tragedy, and how to act by seeking cooperation through positive intent.

Scott Cowen is brilliant. I bought 3 copies and I'm passing them on to leaders in our Community. He has a true vision of how to solve problems. Too bad we can't lend him to other cities.

Learned a lot about New Orleans and their challenges. Worthwhile!

I loved this book. LOVED IT. I feel so inspired and hopeful after reading it! Problems are not insurmountable when there are creative, realistic leaders available. I was surprised by the candor of the book, both recognizing his own compromises and the failures of leaders who should have stepped up after Katrina. I think the author makes an important point: we always say "the perfect is the enemy of the good," but we don't realize this applies in everything. If you're going to accomplish anything, it will never be perfect. Some people will be let down or angry, and they have every right to be. But it's better to choose some progress than none. Every step of progress has hurt throughout history, and that hurt is often unevenly distributed. A good leader recognizes that, empathizes, but remains firm and committed to the bigger picture. They may not like you (though I suspect the author is probably well-liked), but they will respect you and know where you stand.

The Inevitable City: The Resurgence of New Orleans and the Future of Urban America, by Scott Cowen with Betsy Seifter, is a book of hope. New Orleans had problems, big ones, before Katrina hit in 2005. The author, the president of Tulane University, became more aware of the problems of New Orleans as they were worsened by Katrina and the aftermath. He realized that he wanted to be a part of the solution. I was interested in this book for two reasons: I grew up near New Orleans in a hometown also affected by Katrina and I am now in a large city with similar problems. Many urban areas are hamstrung by the problems of racial divide, persistent poverty cycles, and an inability or unwillingness to address those issues. In this book, Cowen tells his story as he worked to lead New Orleans out of the aftermath of Katrina, and overcome some of what made the city so vulnerable. While I may not have enjoyed all of the book, the self-help book generalizations were outweighed by the stories he told of New Orleans and its recovery. The emphasis on bringing the whole city back, rather than just trying to restore the Tulane and the "nicer" parts of New Orleans should be applied in other cities. The whole area is vital to success, even survival, of a city. I recommend this book for anyone interested in New Orleans or reviving struggling cities. The descriptions of all

the organizations involved in New Orleans's recovery may be a bit tedious, but it shows how many must be ready to act to bring a large city back to life. It is a story that needs spreading.

This is a good book for a very narrow audience. The subject is the recovery of the city of New Orleans after Katrina. Although there are some human interest stories here the book was written by the former President of Tulane University so there is definitely an administrative bent to it. So, I see this book as most beneficial to someone who cares about leadership from a governmental perspective. Essentially the author tries to figure out what worked and what didn't in New Orleans post Katrina.

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