

## WORTH MENTIONING

A List of New Books Compiled by  
The Management and Government Information Center (MAGIC)  
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*Indicates titles relating to the FISH Philosophy*

**MAGIC** compiles **Worth Mentioning** from a variety of literary sources. The staff recognizes, though, that the list is not inclusive. If you have read a noteworthy book, and believe that it might be of general interest to subscribers, we invite you to submit the title to [magic2@pwcgov.org](mailto:magic2@pwcgov.org).

## GOVERNMENT

**We Don't Make Widgets: Overcoming the Myths that Keep Government from Radically Improving**  
by Ken Miller, 2008

This is one of those singular management books which focus purely on government administration. The author's main theme is overcoming the "myths" that seemingly constrain attempts to efficiently deliver results as in the private sector. Miller believes that "...government will radically improve when we see the world in a different way—free of the myths." He proceeds to illuminate what he perceives as the three major myths: government is not here to achieve a "profit"; government does not have customers; and government does not make widgets. By overcoming those impediments, the author contends that government can deliver a return to its investors and can devise innovative ways to achieve better results. Customer service is such a critical aspect that the author provides a special appendix on *Critical Components for a Customer-Centered Culture*.

## MANAGEMENT/LEADERSHIP

**Fast Strategy: How Strategic Agility Will Help You Stay Ahead of the Game** by Yves Doz & Mikko Kosonen, 2008

Organizations used to formulate a strategy, and then sit back and nurse it along through the maturation process. This procedure is no longer practical opine Doz and Kosonen. To become strategically agile, organizations must learn to make fast turns to quickly effect transformation. In other words, a company must be able to efficiently confront disruptions and discontinuities. Moreover, their leaders must "...want their organizations to learn to thrive on continuous waves of change, not to periodically and painfully adjust to change...." The authors caution that it is a never-ending quest; however, "...every year that organizations achieve and maintain strategic agility makes a fallback less likely." The June 2008 issue of **Harvard Business Review** coincidentally addresses the same issue ("The Secrets to Successful Strategy Execution" pp. 60-70, by Gary L. Neilson, Karla L. Martin, and Elizabeth Powers). The authors analyze the fact that failure to execute strategy frequently results in reorganization. The authors' research, though, demonstrates that successful structural change must be predicated on clearly defining "decision rights and information flow." The authors have developed an online diagnostic and simulation tool to test the effectiveness of change initiatives. Visit [www.simulator-orgeffectiveness.com](http://www.simulator-orgeffectiveness.com).

**George Washington on Leadership** by Richard Brookhiser, 2008

Brookhiser portrays Washington as general, president, and tycoon, and then analyzes how he maximized his strengths while overcoming his flaws. The author's basic theme is that legend obscures Washington's perspicacity in crisis management situations: he readily adapted to changing circumstances; dealt with wildly different classes of men; became an expert communicator; and was an early futurist. The author essentially paints Washington as a man who managed events rather than allowing them to manage him. Above all, he believed that one must keep on learning. Washington once observed "...that people who did not learn from experience, including their experience of the passions of men, ended up dependent, or shunted aside, or dead." Based on Washington's example, Brookhiser concludes: "A leader must know who he is, and who he is dealing with, and then he must lead."

**Love 'Em or Lose 'Em: Getting Good People to Stay** by Beverly Kaye and Sharon Jordan-Evans, 2008

This book discusses "26 engagement strategies for busy managers" to retain talented people. Kaye and Sharon-Jordan recognize that time is a manager's most prized possession and, consequently, have made their suggestions to the point. Three core messages recur: the best employees have choices about where to work; managers have the most influence over their retention; and there are strategies for keeping your most talented workers. Interestingly, the authors encourage managers to also consider "your solid citizens," not just the high performers. "Stars are people at any level who bring value to the organization."

**Questions of Character: Illuminating the Heart of Leadership through Literature** by Joseph L. Badaracco, Jr., 2006

The author believes that difficult circumstances challenge character as much as skill, forcing leaders to "...ask difficult questions about themselves." Moreover, Bardaracco uniquely argues that "...literature helps leaders develop personal answers to specific questions." His point is that serious fiction present various perspectives on classic "...dilemmas facing today's managers and executives." Bardaracco shares insights from eight "celebrated stories" to illustrate his point, from Arthur Miller's **Death of a Salesman** to F. Scott Fitzgerald's **The Love of the Last Tycoon** to **Antigone** by Sophocles. For each work, he raises a question that illuminates an important aspect of character within the realm of executive leadership. The author hopes that this unusual methodology will help both established and aspiring leaders to prepare for the leadership tests which lie ahead.

**Transparency: How Leaders Create a Culture of Candor** by Warrant Bennis, Daniel Goleman, & James O'Toole, 2008

The authors observe that stakeholders in various organizations increasingly clamor for "transparency." The term pops up in stories about everything from corporate governance to government administration. But what constitutes the requisite contemporary transparency? The authors note that it "...is akin to a central nervous system." Bennis and his associates "...explore what it means to be a transparent leader, create a transparent organization, and live in an ever more transparent world." In effect, they have composed three inter-connected essays which examine the dilemmas of creating the free flow of information inherent in a truly transparent organization—within the organization; in terms of personal responsibility; and the ever present digital reality.

***BUSINESS/ENTREPRENEURSHIP***

**The Answer: Grow any Business, Achieve Financial Freedom, and Live an Extraordinary Life** by John Assaraf & Murray Smith, 2008

Assaraf and Murray explain that every day we are "trading away the moments" of our lives for whatever it is we are creating or experiencing at that point in time. In that context, the authors detail "...new ways to harness the power of your mind and imagination..." while expending that time. In turn, they offer practical steps to grow any organization or business into a profitable enterprise. It is the

essence of entrepreneurship. Their interactive exercises are applicable for the solo entrepreneur, a business owner, a professional in private practice, or a corporate executive.

### **Just Enough Anxiety: The Hidden Driver of Business Success** by Robert H. Rosen, 2008

Rosen contends that today's rapid rate of change is anxiety provoking for businesses as well as for those who manage them. He recognizes that it is a natural instinct to try to avoid anxiety and its sometimes debilitating affect. But he also believes that the right amount of anxiety can motivate and encourage. Consequently, the author views it as "...an untapped source of energy and the hidden driver of success in business." The author encourages the reader to overcome the "faulty thinking" regarding change and uncertainty, and demonstrates how to work with the emotion. **The Publisher Weekly Review** (March 13, 2008) notes: "Rosen's insights are thought provoking and helpful."

**Worth Mentioning** occasionally includes books which employ sports hyperbole to emphasize leadership techniques. In a similar vein, two recent books invoke gamesmanship to illustrate theories about the game of business:

**No Limit: The Texas Hold 'Em Guide to Winning in Business** (by Donald G. Krause & Jeff Carter, 2008) promotes the tactics of a popular variety of poker in every competitive situation. The same strategies and tactics "...can be used to win in situations involving critical business, wealth, power and relationship issues." The authors claim that the game represents a "...structured microcosm of the conditions, challenges, and decisions faced time and again in every career...." On the other hand, Bob Rice's **Three Moves Ahead: What Chess Can Teach You about Business** (2008) touts the mental discipline of chess to remain competitive in the ever-changing contemporary marketplace. He provides examples of "...how the world's top executives use chess tactics to thrive in the face of incalculable complexities and unexpected change." Win or lose, Rice believes that the entire chess match exemplifies the business world. "Don't just look back to find your mistakes in your losses; your wins have as much to teach you."

### **The One Minute Entrepreneur: The Secret to Creating and Sustaining a Successful Business** by Ken Blanchard, Don Huston, & Ethan Willis, 2008

Management icon Ken Blanchard has again adapted his now classic parable style for a current hot topic: entrepreneurship. In this particular work, Blanchard *et al* explore many of the typical problems which entrepreneurs face in starting up their businesses. The authors opine that one of the primary reasons small businesses fail is that entrepreneurs "...make the fatal mistake of continuing to do the work they're skilled at while ignoring other vital parts of the business." The authors instruct the reader to focus on the three vital elements of entrepreneurial success: finances, people, and "...taking care of your customers." As with Blanchard's previous best-sellers, invaluable advice is also presented through *One Minute Insights*.

Is the 'fist bump' making inroads within the world of business? **USA Today** ("Can the fist bump mix with business?" by Del Jones, July 22, 2008, p. 3B) examines the phenomenon versus the traditional handshake. As personified by Howie Mandel, host of the TV program *Deal or No Deal*, it is defined as "...two people tapping fists lightly...." Jones reports that academia apparently believes that the handshake "is too entrenched to be replaced." In general, however, the fist bump "...is catching on mainly among younger men"; is dismissed by older CEOs; and is considered "male-dominating interaction" by female employees.

## **CUSTOMER SERVICE**

### **Do the Right Thing: How Dedicated Employees Create Loyal Customers and Large Profits** by James F. Parker, 2008

*Doing the right thing* refers to maintaining a dedicated and energized workforce. "The ultimate success of any organization requires consistently excellent performance at every level." Parker reviews why many companies, though, conversely elect to stay profitable by cutting headcount, replacing well-paid employees with lower-paid or outsourced workers, and ultimately reducing customer service. The

author focuses on Southwest Airlines as a model to emphasize his message. Post 9/11, the airlines made three critical decisions: no layoffs, no pay cuts, and no-hassle refunds for customers. Southwest remains profitable, underscoring his point. Parker concludes: "The way we treat other people largely determines the way they will treat us back. This is one reason why the Golden Rule is not just a good rule of ethics; it is a good rule of business." Ironically, an **USA Today** article, "Electronics Retailers Find Service Sells" (by Jayne O'Donnell, July 23, 2008, pp.B1&2) could serve as a veritable appendix to **Do the Right Thing**. O'Donnell compares the divergent paths of two electronic giants, Best Buy and Circuit City. The former is thriving even in a weak economy due to "...its emphasis on service," particularly retaining its highly trained Geek Squad. By contrast, Circuit City is struggling, primarily because it "...laid off thousands of its best-paid and most knowledgeable sale staffers, only to see many of them snatched up by Best Buy."

## **WORKPLACE**

### **Don't Retire, REWIRE: 5 Steps to Fulfilling Work that Fuels Your Passion, Suits Your Personality, and Fills Your Pocket** by Jeri Sedlar & Rick Miners, 2007

A "working retirement" is one of the fastest growing trends. "For the people who have hobbies, passions, and dreams, the longevity bonus is a gift." But, the authors warn, for those without, "It's a curse!" Sedlar and Miners explore the various popular options of part-time work, volunteer work, and even a second career. They enumerate their successful five step formula as seeing the opportunity; identifying your "drivers"; linking to your activities; creating your vision; and developing an action plan. In effect, Sedlar and Miners envision the process as a planned metamorphosis. Succinctly put, they don't want you to flunk retirement.

### **The Hard Truth about Soft Skills: Workplace Lessons Smart People Wish They'd Learned Sooner** by Peggy Klaus, 2008

Klaus advises that missed opportunities and derailed careers rarely reflect a shortfall in technical or professional expertise. "Instead, it invariably stems from a shortcoming in...soft skills repertoire..." She defines titular skills as "...the nontechnical traits and behaviors needed for successful career navigation." For example, these could include managing your workload, handling critics, or navigating office politics. The author provides practical tools and techniques for developing appropriate soft skills. Klaus cautions, however: "Mastering these practical and tactical skills doesn't happen over night." It takes persistence.

### **New Girl on the Job: Advice from the Trenches** by Hannah Seligson, 2008

As noted in the foreword, Seligson's intent is to help women entering the workforce "...seek out satisfying, fulfilling careers rather than existing in humdrum jobs...." The author knows from experience. She was fired from her first job. And that experience provided the impetus to convey the valuable lessons that she has learned. Seligson explains how to handle a wide range of situations which are common to young people starting out, especially specific to young women. Seligson ranges over a broad spectrum of "how to" categories; e.g., not to take things personally; develop a thick skin; stand up to a difficult boss; assert yourself; and even to quit without burning bridges.

## **SELF-ENHANCEMENT**

### **Brain Rules: 12 Principles for Surviving and Thriving at Work, Home, and School** by John Medina, 2008

Medina is a molecular biologist who has had a lifelong interest "...in how the brain sciences might influence the way we teach our children and the way we work." But don't be concerned that this book is a scientific exposition. As **USA Today** ("This Brain Book's No Teaser," June 9, 2008, p. 5B) notes: "What could be a daunting subject becomes enjoyable through a writing style that makes words leap off the page." The author introduces 12 things known about how the brain works, which he terms Brain Rules.

He then presents the science for each rule, and offers suggestions on how to successfully apply each rule to our daily lives. All of it is supplemented not only by a website ([www.brainrules.net](http://www.brainrules.net)) but also by a DVD included with the book.

**Flight Plan: The Real Secret of Success** by Brian Tracy, 2008

The author's intent is to help you "...to fulfill your complete potential and become everything you are capable of becoming." But Tracy allows that there really isn't any secret of success; nor does he believe that success is a matter of luck. His point is that success is the summation of a proactive stance. He believes that the great goal in life should be to fulfill your potential and to rise to the apex of your capabilities. To achieve exactly what you want, he states: "You need clear goals, plans, and schedules...." Tracy is confident that if you follow his principles, you will become a successful person. Visit [www.bkconnection.com](http://www.bkconnection.com) for additional information.

**How to Wow: Proven Strategies for Presenting Your Ideas, Persuading Your Audience, and Perfecting Your Image** by France Cole Jones, 2008

Jones claims that in today's fast-paced world, any encounter may be a preamble to a business transaction; ergo, "...knowing how to market yourself in any situation is vital." Her point is that we're rarely off duty. And each of us has a unique set of attributes and circumstances to exploit. Consequently, she shares her strategies for influencing colleagues, employers, and neighbors. She stresses that "...when you want to make a good impression no detail is too small." She admits, however, that sometimes there is no right answer; "the best way to handle the situation is to beat a stylish retreat."

***ET CETERA***



**The Thirteen American Arguments: Enduring Debates that Define and Inspire our Country** by Howard Fineman, 2008

Fineman believes that traditional American issues have always compelled healthy and heated debate, because "...hot-button topics, media 'cross fires,' and blogs reflect the deepest currents in American life." He is concerned, though, that current "...public disagreement seems shrill and meaningless." The author, therefore, has composed "Thirteen American Arguments" as a locus to return to the traditional norm of national debate. They range from *Who Is an American* to *The Role of Faith to Presidential Power* to *America in the World*. Fineman states that the message of this book is: "We need to calm down, get engaged, and look for leadership." Ultimately, Fineman is not concerned about a system-wide failure, since he views America as "...the ultimate in distributed computing."