



Feathered Quill Book Reviews

P.O. Box 304
Goshen, MA 01032
Fax: 413-268-0381
www.featheredquill.com
info@featheredquill.com

The Biker's Guide to Business: When Business and Life Meet At The Crossroads

By: Dwain M. DeVille
Publisher: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
Publication Date: August 2009
ISBN: 978-0470481202
Reviewed by: Ellen Feld
Review Date: November 3, 2009

Grab your helmet, climb aboard your motorcycle, rev its engine and get ready for one heck of a ride down the intersecting roads of life and business. Consultant Dwain DeVille has written a book that charges full throttle into helping entrepreneurs grow their businesses while also having time to enjoy the open road.

The Biker's Guide to Business opens with a brief introduction to the author, his initiation into the business world, past experiences with the banking world turning around distressed banks, and finally to his consultant business, WaterMark International, Inc.

The author is brutally honest about his career, the ups and downs, and particularly his mistakes. He doesn't mince words when he talks about his blunders, such as a project he was working on that came crashing to a halt (partially) by 9/11, which led to a parting of ways with his two partners. DeVille goes into great detail about what caused the demise of the organization; mistakes he made that the reader can avoid. Next, the author proceeds to clearly outline, again in great detail, what he (and thus others who find themselves in similar situations) needed to do to recuperate and move on.

The Biker's Guide to Business is not for those running "big" businesses, but rather for entrepreneurs who want to grow their own smaller organizations. The author makes it clear that "...what works in a behemoth like GE doesn't necessarily transfer to a company of 10, 20, or 100 people." Throughout the book, the author weaves his love of the open road into analogies with the business world which work well, even for those such as myself who are unfamiliar with motorcycles. He also frequently stresses that no matter how driven you are (pun intended), it is vitally important that you put aside time for your hobbies and personal life.

An key aspect of this book is the need to answer "the question" before you can grow your business. What is "the question"? It is a statement/question that DeVille uses, both for himself, and for clients, to assess a business. It requires an extensive, critical review of where a company/entrepreneur is (emphasis on the entrepreneur), and where he/she hope to be in the future. In DeVille's words, "It's five years from now and my entire life has gone according to plan – every challenge overcome, every goal achieved. What does it look like now?" The author states that answering this question is essential to improving your

company, its future direction, and your happiness. DeVille outlines the thinking process involved, then gives his answer but makes it clear that your personality and needs might well take you down a different road. He presents a four-page questionnaire to help one answer “the question,” and discusses the various points within those pages.

Perhaps the most useful sections of this book are those dealing with actual hands-on case studies. DeVille gives an overview of the companies, what their problems were, and how he/they re-organized, made changes, etc. to correct the problems and grow the companies. From a woman whose tiny business couldn't compete with the enormous rival so her solution was to always try to undersell them and quickly fumble towards bankruptcy, to the father who left his business to his eldest son although it was the younger son who needed to be in charge, DeVille gives specific examples of how he worked with these businesses to resolve their daily challenges. The real world examples work much better than dry, theory driven advice.

There is so much more in *The Biker's Guide to Business* that can't be covered in a simple review. DeVille tackles topics such as how to rally your team, dealing with the “in-between” growth time, tools for planning sessions (down to having on hand post-it flip chart paper!), dealing with dysfunction, how to use outside resources such as local MBA students, how not to waste time during meetings and even how to conclude a meeting. Presented at the end of many chapters are “Road Rules” that summarize the proceeding chapter. The author also includes a list of additional rules at the end of the book, as well as frequent reminders to visit his website BikersGuidetoBusiness.com for free tools to help “plan your ride.”

A review of *The Biker's Guide to Business* would not be complete without mention of DeVille's great sense of humor that is splashed throughout the book and keep it humming along at a brisk pace, “...consultants will separate the team into groups with instructions to solve a complex puzzle using toys and sticks...the only thing that separate activities like these from kindergarten are cookies and a nap!”

Quill says: Not just for bikers, this guide should be on every entrepreneur's bookshelf.