

12 Second Tutorial: Becoming a great Manager

T.J. Everett

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Management books run the gamut from parables, popularized by Ken Blanchard's *The One Minute Manager*, to pontifications by business consultants. T. J. Everett's book is neither of these; instead, the author uses a fanciful, creative approach to get his points across about management.

Everett employs the technique of weaving a fantasy tale that allows a frazzled, inexperienced manager, Alex T. Pilgrim, to meet numerous "management masters" in various significant locations around the world, all while Pilgrim is lying unconscious in an emergency room. Apparently, Pilgrim's job causes him so much stress that he winds up having chest pains and admits himself to a hospital. It is during his supposed twelve seconds of unconsciousness (hence the title) that Pilgrim travels from master to master, learning the secrets of great management.

While the premise is nothing short of far-fetched, it is a uniquely different method of imparting management advice. The reader can't help but wonder whom Pilgrim will meet next and what the significance of each exotic location will be. Everett uses dialogue between Pilgrim and the masters to add personality to each character and to keep the story moving at a swift pace.

Each master discusses a management "imperative," of which there are, of course, twelve. For example, master manager Marc Weiber focuses on inspiring a sense of urgency. From his location in Rocky Mountain National Park, Weiber tells Pilgrim a story about a park dam that broke, requiring staff to address an urgent situation immediately. Weiber relates the actions of the staff directly to a situation in Pilgrim's own work setting.

Every scenario is followed by a quick review of the "management competencies" embedded in the story. At the end of the book, Everett offers a tidy summary of all twelve lessons that Pilgrim learns along the way. Pilgrim is able to return to his job both wiser and healthier (thankfully, his medical condition was not serious), and put the lessons to good use.

Readers who are not willing to suspend reality may find the approach of this book somewhat sophomoric. At times, the story may seem silly (the reader is told, for instance, that Pilgrim's heart stopped for twelve seconds when he was "exactly 12,012 days, 12 hours and 12 minutes old"). But it's all in good fun. Everett does a fine job imparting serious advice in a light and entertaining fashion. The result is a management book that is anything but dull.

BARRY SILVERSTEIN (July 9, 2012)

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