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28 Business Thinkers Who Changed the World: The Management Gurus and Mavericks Who Changed the Way We Think about Business

Rhymer Rigby
Kogan Page (June 2011)
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With the 2012 American political season well underway, there's little doubt politicians and pundits will be unable to avoid playing up the divide between Main Street and Wall Street. It's an easy sound bite and looks great in bold print. But this false dichotomy obscures the important work of regular people whose ideas have generated huge profits and changed the business world.

In his new book, *28 Business Thinkers Who Changed the World*, Rhymer Rigby provides a delightful antidote to the empty hyperbole already filling the airwaves.

As a journalist living in the United Kingdom, Rigby's professional background is as varied as the subjects of his book. He's covered everything from the FTSE-100 directors to eating dog. Since going freelance in 2003, Rigby's articles have appeared in several publications, including *GQ* and *Conde Nast Traveler*. And he writes a weekly column, "The Careerist," exploring social and technological issues in the office for the Financial Times.

Surveying business leaders throughout the second half of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first, Rigby focuses on what unique experience helped shape each individual. With Mary Kay Ash, for example, his focus on her struggles with sexism in the workplace identifies the winning philosophies behind her phenomenal achievements in the world of cosmetics. "It doesn't take a genius," Rigby writes, "to work out that one of the greatest ways to motivate people is to offer them the opportunities that have been denied to them everywhere else."

For more controversial figures, like Starbucks CEO Howard Schultz, Rigby explores mistakes within the context of successes to highlight current challenges. "The coffee chain's shares have regained some of their vim," Rigby notes when exploring the fruits of Schultz's return to the struggling company in 2008, "but it's difficult to escape the impression that, for Starbucks, the low-hanging coffee beans have all been picked."

Rigby's tight style falters when he takes on storied successes like Google Duo Sergey Brin and Larry Page. Due to the radical effect Google has had on the world, Rigby reduces Brin's and Page's personal histories into two anemic paragraphs with the rest of the space devoted to the company rather than the business thinkers.

Overall, however, *28 Business Thinkers Who Changed the World* is a well executed introduction to men and women who have left an indelible mark on society of late. By outlining their lives alongside analysis of the decisions they made, Rigby uncovers a fundamental truth about business: regardless of the different directions the roads lead, true success lives at the intersection of both Main and Wall Streets.

JOSEPH THOMPSON (July 12, 2011)

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