Clarion Review

Business & Economics

Betterness in Business
Bob Deneen
CreateSpace
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Three Stars (out of Five)

Believe it or not, “Betterness” is in the dictionary, defined as “the quality of being better or superior.” Betterness in Business is intended as a guidebook to help entrepreneurs of small/midsize enterprises (SME’s) achieve “peak potential when authentic marketing is the prime directive.” It’s one of several “Betterness” books by Bob Deneen, author of Betterness in Life. A graduate of the University at Buffalo School of Management Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership, Deneen draws on his years of networking with business leaders, as well as his experience in sales, product management, executive management, and entrepreneurship, to provide advice to entrepreneurs.

The book maintains that most new firms fail because of insufficient long-term planning and poor marketing. It offers five basic rules for betterness in business, which involve attracting customers, profitability, marketing, innovation, and seeking peak performance. Betterness means continually improving products, services, processes, and people, through SWOT assessment (looking at a market’s strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities), management audits, and other techniques described in the book.

Novice entrepreneurs may find this book helpful, as it’s a high-level summary of the elements of success for small and medium businesses. It’s so high level, though, that readers may want to consult other books with more specifics on marketing, funding, promotion, and e-commerce. Critical startup issues are discussed briefly, but additional detail, examples, and explanations of how startup issues can be resolved would have been useful. It makes the point that economic development agencies don’t do enough to help local SME’s, but it would have been beneficial to reference the Small Business Administration resources available, as well as other sources of assistance, grants, and more.

Readers crave true-life examples that lend credibility to the concepts and demonstrate

applicability in the real world. A few examples are cited in this book but they are lacking detail. Additional recent scenarios from actual businesses with enough detail to grab readers' attention would have been helpful. Many relevant statistics are used throughout the book and they very effectively support the main points; including the dates from all statistics referenced would further reinforce the timeliness of the information.

An excellent feature of the book is the Management Helper workbook section at the end, with useful checklists, worksheets, and notes that support the five rules. Readers can use the worksheets repeatedly to assess their businesses, and can customize them as desired.

Section two, on software for management, contains information and recommendations that readers should definitely consider. Deneen advocates using database management systems (DBMS), software for creating business plans and customer relationship management, as well as an enterprise system like Everest to manage and integrate information within all areas of business operations.

Although Betterness in Business would benefit from more specifics and closer attention to detail, the concept is great, and the book clearly outlines the major steps that novice entrepreneurs need to take to be successful.

Cindy Kryszak