

Business Bullseye: Take Dead Aim and Achieve Great Success

Jim Spurlino

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Business Bullseye is the memoir of a successful entrepreneur; it includes advice for other small business owners.

In his memoir *Business Bullseye*, Jim Spurlino looks back over his career as a small business owner and recounts lessons learned along the way.

Spurlino, an entrepreneur who owned a prosperous, multistate chain of concrete suppliers, recounts working to satisfy his employees, suppliers, union negotiators, and buyers, all while facing marketplace realities. He recalls the situations and personalities that challenged him, showing how they contributed to his personal business philosophy.

The book suggests three components of a successful career: the need for a formal education, industry knowledge, and knowledge of one's own company and customers. Its chapters address issues of specific interest to other single-owner businesses, including leadership roles, and creating healthy, productive company cultures; building customer loyalty; negotiating with unions; staying alert to employee expectations; and riding out changing markets. It also considers small business issues, like hiring professional accountants and attorneys, entering into partnerships, and analyzing the worth of a business. Lessons learned from others round out the book; they include remembering to look at the person you're speaking with, getting work done ahead of time, and eliminating meetings that waste time.

This positive text reflects Spurlino's satisfaction at having grown a small single business into a successful chain. Its fusion of business writing with memoir elements is not always seamless, though. Its business points are presented in the form of general statements; they do work such as stating goals, like adjusting to changing business circumstances, but are underdeveloped in terms of helping others replicate Spurlino's success. Some of the analogies they rely on depart from business circumstances too much to be helpful, and some of the situations mentioned, which occurred decades ago, aren't contextualized to reflect current business conditions.

When it comes to sharing his personal experiences, Spurlino focuses on incidents like a labor struggle that lasted for years; the book covers court actions, delays, and seeming changes of fortune, sometimes losing a sense of focus in the process. In the end, not all of the personal accounts return to the messages that their chapters are meant to convey. More involving are Spurlino's accounts of mistakes and setbacks, which are recounted in brisk, precise terms, and which are analyzed to arrive at useful messages, like not to avoid preliminary research. The book's tone is candid and accessible in discussing such missteps, though sometimes not specific; an account of "muddling through" a recession, for example, arrives at improved conditions, but leaves questions of how Spurlino got there unanswered.

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SUSAN WAGGONER (March 1, 2021)

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