

Corporate Undertaker: Business Lessons from the Dead and Dying

Domenic Aversa

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Written by an industry expert, Corporate Undertaker is a motivational work filled with thrilling accounts of applied business tactics.

Domenic Aversa's in-depth business memoir *Corporate Undertaker* is full of drama as it recounts the rises and falls of a variety of businesses.

A memoir-in-corporations, the book is written with confidence and expertise, drawing upon decades of experience with corporate transitions, restructurings, crisis management, and assisting companies transitioning into market economies. As it moves from considering companies in their seed funding phases and toward collapses that seem inevitable, it has a cold-blooded, dry-ink vibe.

The narration is assured in describing how and why businesses fail; it relates each collapse with relish. By the time Aversa is called to scenes, he knows that it's curtains for the corporation: "most of the time I was the last resort before the companies were liquidated."

Focused on the why aspect of businesses' failures—how a "death by a thousand cuts" can reduce even the most robust, billion-dollar company to bankruptcy—the book is full of insights. It claims that there is one market force that outweighs even the gold standard: fear. When that takes over, it tears a business apart.

Ten sections include paired chapters, like "Adversity" and "Lessons for Adversity," that reflect on Aversa's various experiences and the meanings he drew from them. Within such chapters, reflections are shared that can be made to apply to smarter business management. Each "lessons" section includes a short list of insights, like "Dream about the future but work in the short term," and a task to apply its concepts in a tangible way. These range from changing signage to simplifying a mission statement or questioning the motive behind a decision.

The drama of the work is sometimes exaggerated. Sections like "Lessons for Death" and "Lessons for Rebirth" reframe corporate struggles as epic battles, if they are ones won and lost in board rooms. Aversa's behind-the-scenes knowledge is invaluable when it comes to fleshing such dramas out, and the examples he shares are pithy and exciting, including an instance of getting a CEO to wire a million dollars to a bank account in less than half an hour. In spite of the related wins, the book includes instances of loss, too; it's honest work. Luckily, striking out proves to be just as instructive as coming out on top.

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