

Don't "Bleeping" Do That

Sarel Gous

Authorhouse (May 31, 2013)

Softcover \$18.24 (182pp)

978-1-4817-9673-6

Gous's take on what not to do in running a small business imparts solid, serious advice in a package that will surely elicit a few smiles if not belly laughs.

It is likely that small business owners will have some fun reading Sarel Gous's quirky and amusing *Don't "Bleeping" Do That*—even if it has a serious intent. Gous approaches the subject of managing a small business from the perspective of what not to do. The result is a kind of guide to the land mines in the small business landscape. The message is delivered in a no-nonsense style, but with a delightful and sometimes dark sense of humor that makes for enjoyable reading.

Gous, a South African who left government and corporate work to start several businesses, sets the reader's expectations in the introduction: "You don't want to hear some of the things I am now going to tell you. It hurts. Nobody wants to be hurt. You will find that there is nothing new about what I am saying; you knew it all the time. Yet you keep on falling into the same traps." Those traps are, in part, what the author covers in his book.

The book is divided into four sections: "You the Small Business Owner," "Family and Friends," "The Company," and "Company Business Partners." In each section, Gous writes about knotty issues in short, punchy chapters. Some of his "don'ts" are basic advisements that could appear in any business book; for example, he exhorts readers to be good listeners, keep the promises they make, and learn how to understand buyers' needs. But some content is less ordinary. In the section about family and friends, Gous writes about spouses (primarily wives), suggesting that while their influence and support is essential, the small business owner should be wary of both "high-maintenance" and "busybody" wives. To some, this may seem sexist, but Gous humorously excuses his perspective when he writes, "I am a man who does not understand women."

In the company section, Gous discusses "coyotes"—individuals in a company who target other employees they don't like, even to the point of lying about them to get them fired. Gous calls this behavior "a cancer in your company, and it must be eradicated when detected." He also addresses a topic often regarded as taboo; having an affair in a small company. With tongue in cheek, Gous advises the small business owner: "Don't dip your pen in the company's ink pot."

Gous closes the book with a "Post-Mortem," in which he appropriately writes, "Please let me know if you have not made any one of these mistakes. I would like to know which religion you belong to, so that I can join it." This exemplifies the pervasive tone of the book and ensures that, even if the small business owner is dealing with seemingly insurmountable problems, laughing about them a little bit is perhaps the best medicine.

This book is far from comprehensive. In fact, it is more of an informal "fireside chat" than a substantive volume. As a result, *Don't "Bleeping" Do That* is both educational and entertaining.

BARRY SILVERSTEIN (November 26, 2013)

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