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BUSINESS & ECONOMICS

Gift Card Guy: The Entrepreneur That Revolutionized the Gift Card Industry
Gary T. Dinkin
Doodle Vision Productions
978-0-9887753-0-5
Four Stars (out of Five)

A firsthand account of an entrepreneur's ups and downs, this engaging read is more of a memoir than a traditional business book.

In his often amusing memoir, Gary Dinkin demonstrates that being a successful entrepreneur is as much about having the drive to survive as anything. Dinkin's circuitous route to running his own business passes through such experiences as getting fired from a telemarketing job, becoming a partner in a computer sales firm, dissolving a marriage, and surviving the dot-com bust. Along the way, he gets bruised and battered (mostly psychologically, but sometimes physically), yet he never loses his optimism or self-confidence. Somehow, Dinkin manages to move on and learn from each challenge.

Eventually, Dinkin discovers gift cards: the credit-card-like plastic cards that replaced paper gift certificates. He finds that there are two main companies that dominate gift-card systems. His genius is not in entering the business, it is in creating an entirely new pricing model. As Dinkin admits, in all capital letters, "I DID NOT INVENT GIFT CARDS. I created a unique alternative model and method for processing gift cards different from anything else in existence, thereby revolutionizing the gift card industry."

Gary Dinkin is nothing if not a born storyteller. From tales of his childhood to his trials and tribulations in business, his book is rarely boring. There are moments of insight and inspiration, and there is a great deal of humor as well.

The fifty-nine "Life Lessons" that Dinkin sprinkles throughout the text are what make the book particularly relevant to would-be entrepreneurs. Each lesson relates to a particular incident and encapsulates something the author learned from an experience. Many of these statements have broad applicability, as with "Life Lesson #9: Don't ever back down when you know you're right," and "Life Lesson #18: Don't ever do something that you will be ashamed of later in life, even if you feel justified at the time." Others are very specific to running a business,

such as “Life Lesson #47: You can never over-prepare for a business meeting or underestimate your client. Be ready for the client to ask anything and be able to deliver on everything.” Just skimming through the text for these bits of wisdom will be an education for anyone with a desire to start a business.

The book’s design enhances its readability. Each chapter’s heading is set against an illustration of a gift card. The type is large and the chapters are short. The cover carries a cartoon illustration of the author holding a gift card.

Sensitive readers should be cautioned that Dinkin can be a bit vulgar, inserting perhaps an unnecessary profanity here and there, but it is all in good fun. Most everyone should find *Gift Card Guy* very enjoyable to read.

Barry Silverstein