Clarion Review

Business & Economics

Great Question! Reflections on Professional, Project, and Organizational Performance
Bill Smillie
Tamarac Consulting, LLC
978-1-105-00418-6
Four Stars (out of Five)

Bill Smillie, a former IBM executive who now runs a management-consulting company, knows success in business comes to those who ask the right questions. *Great Question!* is as much a testament to Smillie's wisdom as it is a collection of provocative questions and insightful answers.

Prompted by questions that address professional, project, and organizational performance, the author presents reflections from his experiences. The question-and-answer format works well in this book because Smillie poses good questions and answers them thoughtfully.

In the first section, he asks, "What does it mean to be 'professional?'" Smillie responds by addressing such concepts as "executive presence," "thought leadership," and "personal branding"—intriguing answers worthy of close consideration by anyone whose goal is to be the consummate professional.

Smillie also discusses a form of professional behavior he calls the "Virtual Intelligence Quotient (VQ)." Virtual intelligence, he says, relates to the way a professional works in virtual settings. A sixteen-question self-assessment is provided for the reader to determine his or her own VQ.

In "Reflections on Leading High-Performance Projects," the author identifies the differences between a project manager and a program leader, along with a useful discussion contrasting a "project" with a "program." He includes "seven keys to success" in project management and devotes part of the chapter on how to function in tough economic times—particularly useful in today's business climate.

The final section concerns leading "high-performing organizations" and focuses on the need for businesses to adapt to organizational change. In an effort to help the reader imagine

change, Smillie provides several interesting visuals depicting a “current” vs. a “future” organization.

Throughout the book, the author challenges the reader with pointed questions. Like any good consultant, he doesn’t always have answers. Instead, some questions are simply included to stimulate self-reflection, further consideration, and action.

Smillie writes well and engages the reader with thought-provoking questions and informed answers. The one significant weakness of the book, however, is its brevity. At less than fifty pages, *Great Question!* is more like a long essay. It simply cannot address performance—the topic the author has chosen—in a comprehensive way.

While the reader could benefit from being exposed to considerably more of Bill Smillie’s insight, this does not diminish the book’s value to those who aspire to a successful career in business.

Barry Silverstein