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Mother Teresa, CEO: Unexpected Principles for Practical Leadership

Lou Faust
Ruma Bose
Berrett-Koehler Publishers (July 2011)
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Finding a new spin on a leadership book is a difficult challenge because the category is always brimming with titles. Ruma Bose and Lou Faust have managed to add a new twist with *Mother Teresa, CEO*.

The authors set up the premise of the book very effectively by describing an organization "founded by a lone entrepreneur" in 1948 that today employs 4,000, has over one million volunteers, conducts operations in over one hundred countries, and has raised billions of dollars. That organization is Missions of Charity, started by Mother Teresa.

The book tells some of Mother Teresa's story from the perspective of Ruma Bose, who spent a life-changing year with the nun. Bose says she never forgot that experience which led her, fifteen years later, to co-found a company that helped the less fortunate. Bose asked Faust, a veteran businessman, to team up with her to write the book.

The objective of their efforts is not so much to tell Mother Teresa's story as to convey the principles by which she lived. In that respect, *Mother Teresa, CEO* offers insight into the way the famous humanitarian conducted her life. But the trick of the book is to draw comparisons between Mother Teresa's principles and business leadership. Bose and Faust do a fine job.

Eight principles are contained in as many succinct chapters. Each principle includes an overview and examples of how Mother Teresa applied it, while relating the principle to the business world, and offering key points in summary.

The authors are careful to always bring the discussion around to business relevance. In describing Mother Teresa's vision, for example, the authors write: "Great business leaders, like Mother Teresa, start with a simple vision they can evangelize internally and externally. Simplicity and strength of message are essential. The vision needs to be set up early, even before you start your company. Mother Teresa had the vision of serving the poorest of the poor before she founded the Missionaries of Charity. Her personal vision became the vision for the organization."

Mother Teresa, CEO easily could have been a contrived gimmick, but as the passage above demonstrates, Bose and Faust have done a masterful, innovative job of drawing a common thread between Mother Teresa's leadership and the leadership of a CEO. Another nice touch is the fact that each author occasionally departs from the text to relate a personal experience that further illuminates each of the principles.

Mother Teresa, CEO is short and easy to read, but it will leave a business leader with much to ponder. It is as much a spiritual guide as a simple handbook that preaches more effective leadership. Considering the individual who inspired the book, that combination couldn't be more appropriate.

BARRY SILVERSTEIN (August 30, 2011)

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