ForeWord Reviews

BUSINESS & ECONOMICS

!nnovation: How Innovators Think, Act, and Change Our World
Kim Chandler McDonald
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Interviews with some of the world's top innovators are conducted and smartly organized by a skilled professional.

For a book on innovation, what could be more pertinent than interviewing more than one hundred of the world's leading innovators? This is exactly what Kim Chandler McDonald does, but *!nnovation* is more than a collection of interviews. One of the book's distinguishing qualities is the background of the interviewer herself. McDonald was a writer, editor, and radio show producer prior to forming her own innovative company, KimmiC. An accomplished interviewer, McDonald has an ability to ask the right questions to elicit intriguing, insightful answers from her subjects. Her added skill is in editing the interviews and excerpting the most meaningful portions to include in the book.

While McDonald uses the traditional "Q&A" for many of the entries in *!nnovation,* she occasionally departs from that format, inserting long quotes from some of her subjects. This ensures the book is not restricted to one interview after another. Also smart is dividing the interviews into relevant topic areas. McDonald organizes them into forward-thinking sections with intriguing titles, such as "Flat world navigators connecting the dots," "The power of the media," and "Being grounded when the sky's the limit."

She introduces each of these sections with a well-written overview of an area of innovation that nicely dovetails with the interviews themselves. The section overviews appear in a different typeface from the interviews and quotes, a well-chosen design touch. In fact, the design and structure of the book are innovative: Each chapter begins with a keyword cloud, and peppered throughout the book are "Keyword imagination exercises" that encourage readers to use certain keywords to brainstorm their own ideas.

In choosing the innovators to include in the book, McDonald cast her net far and wide. The book is filled a dazzling array of individuals, working in very diverse fields, who come from varied geographies. For example, Tara Hunt, founder of the online retail site Buyosphere,

sees an “interesting phenomenon happening.” She observes that many e-commerce sites are opening traditional retail stores so customers can see, touch, and feel products.

Gerd Leonhard, a futurist and international thought leader, believes consumer empowerment is an important and lasting trend. Now consumers are beginning to realize their involvement in companies, brands and products is “currency.” Says Leonhard, “this attention economy will undoubtedly change the business paradigm.”

Bill O’Connor, founder of the Innovation Genome Project sponsored by Autodesk, is studying history’s greatest one thousand innovations “to find the patterns and the best practices that would really help people be actually innovative.” O’Connor discusses the five phases every innovation goes through in his interview. This is heady stuff and makes for fascinating reading.

It is clear that McDonald was exceptionally prepared and informed when speaking with each innovator. Sometimes her questions include observations and commentary of her own, turning the interview segments into interesting conversations and keeping the interviews lively and engaging. By developing a rapport with the innovators, the author allows the reader to get a peek at their personalities.

!nnovation is a book that will offer readers the rare opportunity to learn firsthand about the kinds of innovations that are changing our world from the revolutionaries who are behind them. By creating and sharing such a unique collection of interviews, McDonald has done an invaluable service to readers, advancing our understanding of innovation.

Barry Silverstein