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Roots and Wings: Ten Lessons of Motherhood that Helped Me Create and Run a Company

Margery Kraus
Phyllis J. Piano
SparkPress (Oct 22, 2019)
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Inspiring and affirming, Roots and Wings *is a business memoir with pithy lessons for both work and home.*

Margery Kraus's personable career memoir *Roots and Wings* is about both leading a company and the parenting lessons that enhanced that business.

Kraus is the founder and executive chairperson of APCO Worldwide, a global consulting firm in Washington, D.C. Believing that children need strong grounding to develop their abilities to succeed, Kraus applied the same principle at work, where employees were asked to buy into a company's mission before accepting challenging new opportunities. Stories from her upbringing as the daughter of Polish immigrants, her late career start, and situations at home and in business lead into insights on effective management.

Each chapter focuses on a familiar, pithy notion, from "no whining" to "set clear boundaries." Many center on creating a positive company culture wherein employees feel like family, even if the reality that employees can be fired makes the analogy imperfect. The lessons are a refreshing companion to profit-driven models. There is also an appealing, idealistic case made for only entering a business if there's an ethical purpose to it, if also accepting the practical aspects that make growth beneficial. Leadership by example is illustrated with accessible scenarios, both from business and parenting.

The book mines Kraus's midcentury past for lessons, recalling a time when people didn't expect a woman to pursue a career. Kraus's accomplishments are recounted with pride, and the writing is salient and applies to a general readership, holding up notions of women's determination. The narration is inspiring and optimistic as it relates how Kraus started college before finishing high school, among other feats, and her shared memories include her parents' divorce and helping out at her family's store. Ideas on problem-solving and self-motivation factor in.

Some lessons seem geared toward the particular audience of Kraus's children, two of whom work with her. They feature anecdotes specific to those children. "Praise in Public/Criticize in Private" highlights an incident from Kraus's son's teenage years and includes his reflection. Family photographs, anecdotes regarding Kraus's grandchildren, comments written by family members, and employee testimonials also create an impression of an intentionally close audience of relatives and APCO employees. Some details overlap, including the roots and wings motif and relations of Kraus's vision for her company, and the book winds and loses momentum as a result.

Roots and Wings is a business memoir that argues that there's no such thing as work/life balance, and that shows an accomplished woman ebbing and flowing between the two for enrichment.

KAREN RIGBY (September 4, 2019)

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