Clarion Review

Business & Economics

The Art of the Possible: Create an Organization with No Limitations

Daniel M. Jacobs
Federal Market Publishing
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Five Stars (out of Five)

Inspired by a compliment from the author's friend and coworker, the title of The Art of the Possible reflects Daniel M. Jacobs' intent to teach readers about "creating an organization where things get done, where anything is possible."

The book cites examples of leaders such as Jack Welch who turned General Electric into a $300 billion-plus company, Elizabeth Dole who saved over $140 million in operating costs in two years as leader of the American Red Cross, and Charles Schwab who sold and later bought back his company and subsequently developed it into the largest discount brokerage firm in the country.

Jacobs is a recognized expert on public contracting and the author of several books on the subject. He is chairman and CEO of Federal Market Group, an organization in Washington, DC, that provides training, research, and consulting to government and industry. Based on his research and over thirty years of experience working with successful businesses, government agencies, and non-profit organizations, he has observed that a key factor to an organization's success or failure is its leader, the person who creates the environment to enable success.

The Art of the Possible integrates seven leadership and management best practices used by great leaders into a concise, high level, step-by-step approach to facilitating success. It helps leaders get focused on the organization's goals and differentiates between defining a vision and a mission. Jacobs discusses building talent by establishing centers of excellence and high-performance teams. He also urges leaders to use a "toolbox" for their organization that standardizes "checklists, flow charts, proven approaches, best practices, software, and other tools for consistent, effective, and practical performance support," such as the Measures of Effectiveness Tables, developed and used by the Federal Market Group.

Jacobs suggests managing the fundamentals via processes, procedures, and baselines. As

a member of the Project Management Institute (PMI), he advocates following proven project management disciplines and developing a work breakdown structure (WBS) to identify fundamental organizational tasks and allocate resources.

The writing style is smooth, succinct, and tactical, and is intended to move the reader to action with inspiring true stories and examples from a good cross-section of industries—government, corporate, non-profit—that are applying the book's principles. Chapters are devoted to each of the seven best practices, and at the end of each chapter are handy checklists and personal action plan scorecards that readers should find helpful in assessing their requirements and plans.

Although the concepts aren't original and they're covered at a high level, what sets this book apart from many other leadership books is that it provides a turnkey management system developed from proven best practices.

The Art of the Possible is an excellent playbook for business leaders, entrepreneurs, MBA students, or others interested in applying a systematic, practical approach to creating a successful organizational culture that focuses on the potential.

Cindy Kryszak