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The Balanced Manager: Bringing Both Efficiency and Joy to the Workplace

Addi Somekh
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Sass and Addi Somekh, a father and son team, have used their entrepreneurial business experiences to create a formula for success.

Sass, who holds a PhD in electrical engineering from Caltech, was the executive vice president of an unnamed multi-billion dollar corporation in the 1990s before founding a venture capital firm. With a master's degree in human resource management, Addi longed to travel the world making people laugh through his balloon art so he teamed up with photographer Charlie Eckert to record how people in all countries and situations reacted to balloon hats in the shape of a crown. The pair needed funding, and that's where Dad's expertise came in.

In alternating chapters narrated by father and son, they detail the process of developing business plans, applying for grants, and finally making the dreams happen with spin-offs projects such as books, documentaries, and wall calendars. In each chapter, Addi offers readers (downloadable from the authors' book Web site) a practical to-do list leading to the project's next stage. For example, the Single-Page Visit form guides readers through an interview with a grant or funding organization and includes tips for researching the backgrounds of committee members, potential problems, strategies, and desired outcomes. The book includes completed forms used by Addi and Charlie for the balloon project.

While the writing is conversational, at times it feels contrived. For instance, Addi says to his father, "I can't tell you how much I've gotten out of using those Single-Page concepts of yours."

Examples of problem solving and planning are also helpful. When discussing the elements of a successful presentation, Sass suggests thinking about the factors that make movies or television shows likeable: "…you want to get your audience involved and keep them involved, you want to keep things moving…"

Upon the conclusion of the presentation process, Charlie and Addi received their $100,000 grant, and after their world travels, their balloon art book was published by Chronicle and another goal was met.

The book's strength is its single-page forms and how the family used them successfully. Unfortunately, very few actual companies or individuals are cited, eroding credibility. *The Balanced Manager* would also benefit from showing how other successful ventures employed the Somekhs' innovative approach. Thirty-four pages of notes add considerable length to the sixty-eight pages of text.

Without a doubt, the authors' Single-Page model, however, offers practical advice for corporations, start-ups, or entrepreneurs seeking grants or loans.

LINDA SALISBURY (October 21, 2010)

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