

The Business of Timeshares: Uncovering the Peaks and Valleys of an Enigmatic Industry

W. H. Campbell

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The Business of Timeshares peels back layers of sales talk to show the possibilities and pitfalls inherent to the timeshare structure.

W. H. Campbell's eye-opening business book explores the realm of timeshares from an insider's perspective.

The book begins with a sales pitch about the joys that timeshares can bring. Campbell is a big proponent of the business model, describing some of the fun experiences he enjoyed at properties over the years. However, the text also asserts that the business model that most timeshares follow is flawed, targeting customers who are less well off financially to buy into timeshares, instead of casting a net for individuals with more wealth, which might better serve the industry.

The central concern is that most people who buy timeshares do so using loans or other financing, leading to financial problems and solidifying the need for timeshare businesses to refresh their customers regularly. These situations are so common that they lead to what the text calls "body snatchers," who put the hard sell on existing customers to buy additional weeks and more property. The text suggests that these organizations would be more profitable if they took a different track.

Organized to mimic the progression of a typical investment in a timeshare, the book describes the joys of spending a week in a luxury setting before exploring the business side of such operations, asking pointed and interesting questions about timeshare financing and structures through email exchanges within the company that Campbell works for. These interactions form a large portion of the text; they are first printed, then summarized, with the few answers that Campbell was able to gain pulled forward for reading ease. A series of appendixes further back up this narrative.

Even as it attempts to understand the hidden dimensions of timeshare financial deals, the book has limited success. It recognizes that sales representatives make big promises that clash with the terms in the contracts that follow. Rather than being sound investments, timeshares are recast as a vehicle for personal entertainment—and one that comes with hidden costs and escalating fees, if also with the opportunity to travel to, and explore, new places.

Still, this is enthusiastic work that fully accepts the enjoyable nature of timeshare ownership. At the same time, Campbell urges caution, suggesting that people do their homework before investing. A late turn toward investigating government oversights into timeshares fractures the project further; in its probes into that topic as well, the book makes little headway.

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JEREMIAH ROOD (March 23, 2022)

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