

The Secrets of Business: Empower Yourself with the Business Secrets I Used to Go from Being a Broke Immigrant to...

Ehab Atalla

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Personal anecdotes of his own road to financial success bolster the credibility of this guide to overcoming the challenges of opening and running a business.

The evocative headline font of *The Secrets of Business* hints at an arcane manuscript that will provide untold riches to those who browse its pages. One might expect the mysteries the author reveals to involve some secretive submarket known only to a very few, or a labyrinthine financial process mind-boggling in its complexity. Instead, the answers in Ehab Atalla's book are both captivatingly straightforward and enchantingly elusive at the same time. It provides a significant amount of detail, in accessible language, on various challenges business owners face, while maintaining a lively pace and not getting bogged down in overly specialized topics.

A crucial takeaway from this manual is the importance of seeing the big picture first: how much money the business will generate; the financing necessary to enable its acquisition or growth; and a long-term plan for its development or re-sale. Then, and only then—and the author is quite emphatic on this point—is it advisable to grapple with the day-to-day details of operations and processes. However, once the finer points of operations are being figured out, they should be automated and delegated as soon as possible so the potential mogul can move on to surveying and evaluating other future revenue sources.

This well-laid-out entrepreneurial manual has its key points in bold throughout and back matter summing up the author's core principles and guidelines. Each chapter is followed by a summary that reinforces core lessons. There is also a section detailing the founding and expansion of each of Atalla's businesses—a quirky and fascinating addendum.

Atalla is especially effective when he portrays the emotional ups and downs of his own road to fortune. Early on, he deftly captures his recently widowed mother's heartbroken reaction when he gives up his secure bank teller job to focus more on his sideline operations. She frets the odds against him in the business world are insurmountable. In perhaps Atalla's most telling remark of the book, a concept indicative of his whole philosophy, he remarks that while business is not easy, it is by no means a specialized subject requiring intensive study and inbuilt aptitude like advanced physics or chemistry.

Atalla warns the would-be wealthy to seek advice wherever they can find it, yet to always be aware of the adviser's own perspective. Ideally, it pays to find someone who was in the same situation as you are now. If you're living paycheck to paycheck, somebody who greatly increased his inherited wealth might know a lot about augmenting an existing fortune, but very little about saving up sufficient startup funds on the income of an average Joe.

In addition to much useful information on availing of business opportunities, it's ultimately the author's own relatability as someone who has had many hurdles to overcome—including his initial poor grasp of English and his outsider status as an immigrant with no connections—as well as his willingness to poke gentle fun at his own shortcomings

that make this a lively (and hopefully profitable!) investment of time for its readership.

SEAMUS MULLARKEY (November 10, 2013)

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