

College of Business Book Review by Robert B. Carton, Ph.D.

Title: "The Driving Force: Extraordinary Results with Ordinary People"

Author: Peter W. Schutz

Publisher: LeadershipPublishing.com

Length: 335 pages

Price: \$24.95 (paperback)

Reading time: 10 hours

Reading rating: 9 (1 = very difficult; 10 = very easy)

Overall rating: 4 (1 = average; 4 = outstanding)

"Cars don't win races, people do!" In this statement, Peter W. Schutz sums up his philosophy about managing organizations in the book "The Driving Force: Extraordinary Results with Ordinary People." The one enduring asset of a company is its people, and through them the culture and character of the business. Through stories from his career, starting as an engineer at Caterpillar Tractor Company, to vice president of sales at Cummins Engine Company, to CEO of Porche AG, Mr. Schutz delivers one of the best discussions of the integration of value creation throughout an organization that I have read.

Customers must be as excited about your company's products and services as you are, or you have not created the "driving force" to maximize results. Adopting the view of the customer in building an organization that constantly creates value, is the heart of Mr. Schutz's book. The book flows well from first defining this concept, to how you find the winning value proposition for customers, to how you hire to ensure that the right people are part of the organization to deliver the value, to building a culture of excellence, to maintaining your position in the market.

The concept that an organization is limited by the quality of the leader is particularly compelling. In particular, the author argues that organizations should lead to the strengths of their employees, not to the strengths of the leader. Given this approach, it is incumbent upon the leader to select individuals that have the necessary values and skills to deliver the customer value proposition. Schutz states that a good leader hires character and teaches skills because people are most often fired for who they are, not what they know. If you have the right people in your organization, you can empower everyone in the organization to do what is appropriate for the mission of the organization. This is accomplished by setting limits on authority, but not on action.

The author proposes five questions that drive employee performance. 1. Why are we here? 2. What is expected of me? 3. How am I doing? 4. What's in it for me? 5. Where can I get help? These questions naturally flow from the employee empowerment perspective. Design an organization that focuses on the customer value proposition. Hire employees that have shared values and vision. Establish operating parameters that allow for individual initiative to innovate and constantly improve the way the value proposition is delivered. And provide feedback and support for individual involvement in the organization.

Overall, Peter Schutz shares his management insights learned over a distinguished career through stories from his past. It is not about self aggrandizement, it is about teaching others from his experiences. Consequently, it is a fascinating, easy read that has a remarkably effective way of delivering complicated leadership concepts. The book is just as appropriate for people leading organizations of five people as five thousand people. This is not a “mainstream” leadership book, but it should be required reading for anyone that is building or maintaining an organization. I know it will be required reading for my leadership classes in the future.

Robert B. Carton, Ph.D. is a professor of Entrepreneurship in the College of Business at Western Carolina University. His interests include value-based management, creating and building successful new ventures, and measuring organizational performance. For previously reviewed books, visit us at our website at www.wcu.edu/cob/.