

College of Business Book Review by Inhyuck “Steve” Ha

Title: “Swim With the Sharks Without Being Eaten Alive: Outsell, Outmanage, Outmotivate, and Outnegotiate Your Competition”

Author: Harvey B. Mackay

Publisher: Collins Business Essentials

Length: 260 pages

Price: \$15.95 (paperback)

Reading time: 4 hours

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

Overall rating: 3 (1 = average; 4 = outstanding)

You must be blessed if your competitors have not read, “Swim With the Sharks Without Being Eaten Alive: Outsell, Outmanage, Outmotivate, and Outnegotiate Your Competition.” In it, Harvey Mackay offers brilliant insights into the business world. It is an obvious how-to book about business, but he uses parables to make his points more effectively. Some of my favorites are, “If you don’t have a destination, you’ll never get there,” “Make your decisions with your heart, and what you’ll end up with is heart disease,” “It isn’t the people you fire who make your life miserable. It’s the people you don’t,” “It isn’t practice that makes perfect; you have to add one word: it’s perfect practice that makes perfect,” and “Owning one percent of something is worth more than managing 100 percent of anything.”

Do you want more? Buy a copy of this book. If you are entering the business world, you should read this book. If you are not entering the business world, you should also read this book because you may have to deal with salespeople who have already read this book.

Make sure not to miss the central lesson of the book – “Knowing something about your customer is just as important as knowing everything about your product.” This idea shows common ground between eastern and western thought. Similarly, Sun Tzu said, “You won’t get defeated if you know about your enemy” in his Chinese classic – “The Art of War” – which has become a must-read book in the military, business, and law schools across the United States.

In Mackay’s view, sales is about people as much as products. Why would we need a salesperson if customers only cared about the quality of the product? While everybody may not agree with Mackay’s ideas, this book is full of wisdom and wisdom that can be applied to any profession.

You do not have to be a salesperson to follow Mackay’s advice. You can memorize all 300 names of the members in your church or 4-H club. Such an approach may be helpful in sales, but can you imagine how powerful and influential you could be when you call people at church or 4-H by name? I normally remember my students’ faces by name within the first couple of weeks of a semester. It makes a big difference to call a student

by his/her first name instead of saying “hey.” Take the wisdom from this book and apply it. It works.

Mackay is founder and chairman of the \$100 million Mackay Envelope Company. He is also a well-known volunteer, who, for seven years, served as chairman of the task force that oversaw the building of the \$ Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The wisdom introduced in the book has come from his real-life experience and careful thought.

After I finished reading this book, I had the same mixed feeling as Ken Blanchard had when he wrote the foreword. He said “you will not want your competition to get their hands on this wonderful book.”

Inhyuck “Steve” Ha is an assistant professor of Economics in the College of Business at Western Carolina University. His interests include regional economics and community economic development. For previously reviewed books, visit us at our website at www.wcu.edu/cob/.