Title: "The Google Way"

Author: Bernard Girard

Publisher: No Starch Press

Length: 247 pages

Price: $24.95 (paperback)

Reading time: 6 hours

Reading rating: 8 (1 = very difficult; 10 = very easy)

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

Businesses around the world have adopted different management approaches to meet challenges and opportunities that come with rapid growth in technology and its use in this global economy. Among the prominent and successful companies, Google adopted innovative approach in developing the search engine, in creating its economic model, and in managing its resources.

The author compares Google search engine to Swiss Army Knife, as the search engine’s user interface is clean, simple, and functional. The complexity associated with the search is hidden from the users. Larry Page and Segey Brin, co-founders of Google, developed the company based on the needs of its employees and end users. The author argues that Google co-founders, as trendsetters in management, are comparable to the likes of Henry Ford, Bill Gates, and Taiichi Ohno (Toyota). The book presents Google approach with a focus on: the economic model for developing the organization, innovative management methods for managing resources, the environment in which Google was developed, and the challenges it is likely to face as it continues to grow. When reading this book, it becomes obvious that Google’s approach to management is quite different from conventional practices.

Google‘s adoption to open IPO bid system and its revolutionary approach to generating revenue from advertisements are interesting aspects of managing financial resources. Advertisements are bid on key words and theses informative advertisements are relegated to margins to avoid uses’ frustration. Further, from advertiser’s perspective, the cost is minimum and result-based. Among the management strategies, recruitment and retention are noteworthy. Its rigorous hiring process benefits from using multiple interviews and involvement of many employees to ensure that the most qualified person is selected. The author also presents detailed information about why California is a good environment for entrepreneurs and how it played an important role in Google’s success.

Of particular interest is Google’s management approach, which has certain unique features. Free flow of information is encouraged and decision-making is based on gathering more information from different perspectives. Even at the helm, not one but three people managed Google. This triumvirate structure allowed Google to reverse its erroneous decisions quickly. The leadership is characterized by mutual respect, shared values, and different perspectives.

Google allows employees to spend 20% of their work time on projects not necessarily initiated by the company thereby demonstrating its trust in employees. Employees are allowed to do pursue their personal research agenda during this time. This incentive approach presents several benefits to employees and the company. Obviously, Google attracts talented people, specifically from Generation X and Y. Google’s approach to managing teams is pragmatic as the size of the team is kept small, which ensures effective and efficient communication within the team. Being a technically savvy company and hiring qualified people for the job also helped Google in using effective tools, similar to Twitter, for internal communication.

Google is a huge success story so much so that many users refer the term Google is as a verb. Those who would like to emulate the success of Google or curious to learn about its success story must read this book. The value of book comes from the author’s effort. Girard, a management consultant, He portrayed an outsider’s view and presented his findings based on his research. This book presents a good insight about what actions and strategies contributed to its phenomenal growth. While Google management strategies led to its success, one must have a clear understanding of the implications of applying these strategies in a different context, which is likely to present different challenges, threats, and opportunities.

Vittal Anantatmula is a professor of global management and strategy in the College of Business at Western Carolina University. His interests include project management, knowledge management, and management of change. For previously reviewed books, visit us at our website at www.wcu.edu/cob/.