BOOK REVIEWS

The Value-Creating Consultant: How to Build and Sustain Lasting Client Relationships

Ron A. Carucci and Toby J. Tetenbaum (AMACOM, New York; 2000; ISBN 0-8144-0502-9) $25

Reviewed by Susan Battley, Psy.D., Ph.D.

This is an intelligent, practical, and prescriptive handbook that focuses on the consultant as change agent. Both authors possess solid credentials in strategic organizational change, merger and acquisition integration, and management development. Carucci works at a prominent change management firm, and Tetenbaum is a psychologist and professor of human resource and organization development at Fordham University. They present here a distillation of five years of focused research on consultant and client characteristics that impact project outcomes. Their principal conclusion—that clients are more likely to fault consultants for negative character traits (i.e., dubious professional conduct) than for insufficient business expertise—serves as the platform from which they launch this study on why and how to optimize client relationships.

The good consultant/bad consultant dichotomy used in the opening chapters is a device that might be helpful to students or novices. However, it is likely to strike experienced practitioners as heavy-handed and contrived. The main points are important but fundamental tenets of ethical conduct, with an emphasis on the prime directive of client welfare. The ensuing discussions about motivational and behavioral patterns are more sophisticated and illuminate how the consultant's role orientation to the client contributes to healthy or unhealthy relationships.

Carucci and Tetenbaum define three destructive roles that consultants can consciously or unconsciously enact—the messiah, the dependency-builder, and the colluder. These roles can emerge when consultants operate primarily from self-interest or have inflated egos that interfere with accurate assessment of a client's capabilities and potential for autonomous action.

- *Messiahs* are those consultants whose excessive need for admiration or guru status produces faulty diagnosis or inflexibility in the light of factual data.
- *Dependency-builders* typically operate from a strong personal need to be needed and may enact this role with clients without being aware they are doing so. Or, they may rationalize their position in terms of possessing superior, unique, or specialized competencies, when self-gratification is the underlying motivating factor.
- *Colluders* avoid tackling issues or offering viewpoints that they anticipate will be unpopular or controversial with management. Taken as cautionary lessons, these destructive roles—and the anecdotal data that the authors cite from actual engagements—underscore the consultant's need for ongoing self-scrutiny and a well-articulated ethical framework.

So how do consultants create value? The authors assert that the defining standard is unswerving commitment to positive client change. And they do mean unswerving. Their modus operandi involves "using every skill available to support the client while pushing the client forward, often against great resistance." Three positive consultant roles are laid out clearly and comprehensively:

- The *partner* establishes mutual accountability and ownership of engagement objectives, processes, and outcomes.
- The *capability-builder* avoids encouraging or creating dependency and instead focuses on enhancing the client organization's capacity to solve similar problems in the future with its own resources and talent.

- The *truth-teller* builds active and accurate feedback systems with the client. Moreover, the truth-teller does not shirk from communicating difficult or sensitive information, but rather strives purposefully to help the client hear and process that information to best advantage.

The authors position these three positive, value-adding roles within a framework of consultant irreverence. This is an unusual and—one would suppose—intentionally provocative term to describe how consultants can help their clients acknowledge and relinquish "reverence" of maladaptive behaviors, values, and strategies. What makes a consultant "irreverent"? Carucci and Tetenbaum identify three essential characteristics:

- Irreverent consultants engage in regular self-reflection. They are comfortable with complexity, ambiguity, and dynamic individual and organizational processes.
- Irreverent consultants take risks in the service of their client's welfare. In other words, they are "gutsy" in tackling difficult issues.
- Irreverent consultants practice "tough love," which involves addressing both the client's good and negative qualities.

Lest all this sound highly theoretical, be assured that anecdotal information from both consultants and clients adds depth to the discussion. Abstruse concepts, processes, and motivational mechanisms are presented here in accessible, compelling language. Lest it sound overly simplistic, be advised that tough issues and thorny dilemmas are included and confronted squarely. Carucci and Tetenbaum walk their talk by sharing first-hand accounts of the untidiness and unpredictability of real-life engagements. Key points and applications really come to life as the authors add layer upon layer of experiential complexity. For example, a discussion of "client of choice" characteristics addresses the other half of the relationship equation. Similarly, a chapter on collaborating with internal consultants highlights success-critical dynamics and partnering strategies. The final section, an extensive engagement simulation, was designed as a group exercise but nevertheless makes for engrossing solo reading.

This how-to book, with its copious checklists, schematic charts, and assessment tools, is well suited to graduate-level study and warrants serious consideration as a core curriculum text. Experienced consultants, especially those interested in enhancing their effectiveness as change agents, will also find it a valuable resource.

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The Innovator's Dilemma: When New Technologies Cause Great Firms to Fail

Clayton M. Christensen (Harvard Business School Press, Boston; 1997; ISBN 0-87584-585-1) $27.50

Reviewed by John D. Trudel CMC, CPCM

This book has extreme significance, and not just for consultants who work with technology. It's even more of a wakeup call to consultants whose clients are managers at traditional firms. It has special value for those who work with clients on business strategy and on creating value from new products and businesses.

The author is a Harvard professor whose research papers on technology management are highly respected. His book may be the best in Harvard's series on the management of innovation and change, and is required reading at firms such as Intel. Though the book is a business bestseller, it is not one of the super-hyped, bite-sized, prescriptive books that catch media attention and start fads. If that means you missed it, that's too bad, because it's worth your time and attention.

Insiders will recognize Christensen's theme—technological disruption yields competitive advantages, yet is typically missed by incumbents. Technological disruption is one of five "Engines of Prosperity" that formed the basis of a book by that name that I coauthored in 1998. It is exactly the opportunity that leads to the formation of many successful high-tech new ventures. Sun, Apple, and Microsoft are good examples.

For many years, we in the high-tech industry have pondered a strange paradox. Why is it that the leading firms of one era (the eras of mainframes or transistors, for example) are so seldom the leaders of the next era (PCs or semiconductors, for example)? There have been many books (including my own, *High Tech with Low Risk,* 1990) that give anecdotal examples of this phenomenon, but no one has had a compelling theory of why this is so. Until Christensen.

His book examines the business failures of excellent companies—the kinds of firms that managers have been trained to admire and emulate; those respected for their abilities to innovate and execute. For example, the failures studied include Sears (retailing), IBM (mainframes), DEC (minicomputers), Xerox (copiers), the whole steel industry, Bucyrus Erie (earthmoving equipment), and more.

While companies stumble for many reasons—bureaucracy, arrogance, tired executive blood, poor planning, short investment horizons, inadequate skills and resources, and even bad luck—that is not what this book is about. This book is about well-managed companies that have their competitive antennae up, listen to their customers, invest aggressively in new technologies, and yet still lose market dominance.

Yes, I know you're thinking, "That doesn't apply to my clients." Don't be too sure. Such failures are found everywhere, not just in high-tech. Such seemingly unaccountable failures happen in fast-moving industries as well as in those that move slowly. They happen in industries based on electronics and in those based on chemical or mechanical technology. They happen in manufacturing and in service industries. I assure you that this book applies to your clients.

The high-tech case studies are the most compelling—for the same reason that geneticists study fruit flies instead of humans. If you think about it, the reason is obvious. Human generations come along only every thirty years, but fruit flies are conceived, born, mature, and die in a single day. Similarly, the high-tech industry moves faster than other industries and thus provides better case studies.

The strange truth is that the conventional solutions to companies' problems—planning better, working harder, becoming more customer-driven, and taking a longer-term perspective—all exacerbate the problems when firms are faced with disruptive change. Understanding and dealing with the following four seemingly simple, but truly profound, principles will help where conventional solutions may not:

The first principle is that managers think they control the flow of resources in their firms, but they really do not. Customers and investors do. If customers and investors leave, the businesses suffer.

History notes only a few cases where strong leaders at incumbent firms managed to defy their boards, Wall Street, and their current customers to innovate and build new prosperity. Sarnoff did that at RCA to build a new industry, color television. Intel's leaders bet their company on a migration from computer memory chips to microprocessors. Boeing took a huge leap of faith to develop jet airliners, and probably succeeded only because they got the military to pay for a tanker version of the Boeing 707. Bill Gates turned huge Microsoft on a dime to target the Internet and quash the insurgent Netscape. Despite these examples, the failure to adapt to change is much more common and sometimes fatal.

The second principle—that small markets don't meet the growth needs of large companies—speaks to the reality that most established companies will not invest adequate resources in disruptive technologies; that is, in lower-margin opportunities that their customers do not want—and keep investing until their customers do want them. Customers don't ask for new things like cell phones, CDs, or digital photography. Instead they ask for refined versions of what they have been getting. DEC went out of business that way, and Wang went bankrupt, both in growth markets. Think about the difficulty of trying to sell this "heresy" to your client's sales manager or VP of marketing: "Harry, the worst thing you can do here is to listen too much to what your customers want." So, Barnes and Noble listened to its customers and stuck too long with traditional stores. AT&T listened to its customers and stuck too long with expensive, switched long-distance service. And the recording industry is still sticking with plastic disks.

The third principle—that markets that don't exist can't be analyzed—really drives many of our potential clients crazy. True, on the face of it. But most MBAs in the last three decades have been taught that if it can't be quantified and proven with numbers, it isn't important. The incorrect conclusion was, for example, that the new markets for wireless phones were unimportant. The fact that McCaw Cellular had never made a profit "proved" it—until the founders sold out to AT&T for billions.

This mind-set is especially difficult for those in finance. Technology, like all knowledge assets, can't be counted and valued in reserve, or money, in the same way as real estate, machines, or natural resources. Knowledge-based businesses beg for new ways to value assets. (Issues of dysfunctional financial criteria and inappropriate metrics are two of seven management challenges I discuss in *Engines of Prosperity.*) Still, to say the least, the notion that quantifiable, financial analysis doesn't work upsets most CFOs. The dot-com phenomena—where companies without profits (or even prospects of profits) obtain high evaluations—delights investors and those lucky enough to have stock options. But it thoroughly rattles traditional businesspeople. Can't you just see the bean counters lighting candles and praying for a market correction to prove they're right?

The fourth principle—that technology supply may not equal demand—while quite correct, is not one of this book's stronger points. For those interested, other writers (such as Geoff Moore in his signature book, *Crossing the Chasm,* and its successors) treat this topic better. Suffice it to say that the early customers for a new technology seldom represent the mass markets. And when the mass markets do develop, the early implementations of the technology, however well accepted they may have been by the early adopters, may not fit the mass market's needs. Recall RCA's ill-fated laser disks, IBM's PCjr, Sony's Beta tapes and VCRs, and Apple's Newton.

Such are some of the dilemmas of the new era of business, and this book comes as close as any to explaining the new realities, why they are happening, and some options for action. Still, as you think about using these ideas in your consulting practice, I must warn you that not everyone will receive you warmly. Scouts, messengers, and change-agents often get shot.

We can divide businesses into four groups: The first two, call them groups A and B, reject the new realities and dismiss or shoot the messengers. Group A is far too busy with business-as-usual to worry about these issues. Its members are unaware and ignorant. Group B is in denial. Its members have noticed the new technology, but they think it doesn't apply to them, at least not yet. Both of these groups are operationally focused and shrinking as their margins slip and companies are merged. Their focus is "faster-cheaper," so Christensen's book and its ideas will not appeal to them. They're apt to find its message irrelevant, if not irritating. Some will even call it utter nonsense.

The second two groups, call them C and D, desperately want to learn about the innovator's dilemma, but for different reasons. Group C accepts these new precepts and intends to apply them. This group includes venture capitalists and those bailing out of mature firms to join the dot-coms. Group C embraces change and is growing faster than any segment of our economy. Group D consists of strong incumbent firms that see the emerging future and generally view it as undesirable. Examples include the recording industry and its cartel (the RIAA), which litigate to block Internet-based music distribution, and phone companies that lobby to block high-bandwidth local service because it will destroy their lucrative long distance model. After all, if consumers were allowed fast computer connections for a flat fee, they might shift to Internet-based phone service. And if consumers were allowed to record their own music, they might stop buying CDs.

Group D is the wealthiest and most diverse of the four groups, but its members disagree on how to proceed. Some seek to embrace the new models, some want to stamp them out, and some aim to give token signs of being in step with the new economy, perhaps simply to placate investors or board members. Those in groups C and D are our best prospects. Those of us who are professional consultants should read and master the ideas in Christensen's book. Whether we do or not, our clients who aspire to leadership will sooner or later find *The Innovator's Dilemma* essential.

Charles Dickens said in 1859, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." Christensen says the same, and tells the story for our day and time. This book and its concepts get my highest recommendation.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: An excerpt from Clients for Life *titled "The Soul of the Great Professional" appeared in the last issue of C2M (Volume 11, Number 2, September 2000, p. 9). Reprints are available from C2M@C2M.com.*

Clients for Life: How Great Professionals Develop Breakthrough Relationships

Jagdish Sheth and Andrew Sobel
(Simon & Schuster, New York; 2000; ISBN 0-684-87029-0) $26

Reviewed by Geoffrey M. Bellman

Clients for Life begins with a story about Harry Hopkins, President Franklin Roosevelt's most trusted advisor. I was hooked. My earliest leanings toward a career in consulting were in graduate school while writing a paper on Hopkins. This book returned me 35 years later to thoughts of Hopkins—and other historical advisors, seven from the twentieth century. The authors look to Aristotle, Kissinger, Machiavelli, Merlin, Drucker, and more for guidance on what it takes to become an extraordinary advisor. They mix the wisdom from 14 sages with their own extensive corporate consulting experience. And all of us need to pay attention to the thought-provoking principles, practices, and models that emerge.

The substance of *Clients for Life* is more about life than about clients—your life, our lives. Again and again, Sheth and Sobel ask us to look at ourselves. They make the mirrors and hold them up for us. They write to us and about us. They ask us who we are and who we are becoming. Their book is rich with words like *wisdom, soul, trust, dignity, judgment, knowledge, loyalty,* and *reliability.* They remind us that as important as success in the marketplace might be, its roots are not planted there, but in ourselves.

They define seven attributes essential to becoming an extraordinary advisor and form the book around them: selfless independence, empathy, depth and breadth of knowledge, the power of synthesis, great judgment, the strength of values, and trust through integrity. The authors excel at disassembling an attribute such as the power of synthesis to help us to see its interrelated, complex parts.

Sheth and Sobel do not just write about what they have learned, and they do not just tell stories. They extract useful models from their experience. For example, there's a model for multiplying our perspectives, a model for three levels of knowledge about clients, a model for defining the ingredients of breakthrough relationships, and nine more. These models frame what consulting to management is most fundamentally about so as to demystify our work and describe what success is. That's a real service. In addition to the models, the authors offer examples from history and their experience, and action lists. Every chapter concludes with a self-assessment tool that moves us from reading toward action. Through their models, lists, questions, and examples, they pin down what they see as vital to success in consulting work.

Sheth and Sobel are seasoned consultants to management, and they move easily along the halls of the top floors of global corporations. Their insight is from the executive suite. From that height, they bring perspective less available on lower floors, but the comfort of all that deep-pile carpet also cushions their message. I looked in vain for more about worry-in-the-night, trudging-the-streets, and sweat and fear to balance their views. More expression of that dark side of the reality of consulting would have connected me even more deeply with their message. On the other hand, maybe my expectation was more about my envy than about their book.

Each chapter caused me to reflect on what has given me long-term clients, those that have stayed with me for 5 to 14 years. In these long partnerships, my clients valued me (and I, them) more as a person than as a commodity—and this fits well with what this book talks about. I don't know how to grow a partnership that lasts for years without making it a personal relationship. My long-term clients do not use me again and again primarily because of my expertise, as similar expertise is available from many others. They call me because of my knowledge of them and their organizations and the pattern of trust and accomplishment we have crafted together over the years. Sheth and Sobel's book underlines the importance of certain questions for these kinds of partnerships with clients:

- What is our pattern of accomplishment in the work we have done with our clients? Practical people all, clients invest in partners who demonstrate repeated ability to succeed. We must build that pattern and help clients see it. Since we also love that pattern, all that sequential success builds our confidence, too.
- Do we like our clients? Are we open to being friends with them? Caring and friendship—even love—are still difficult concepts in many work settings. Liking the people we work with has too many benefits to be ignored as we think about building clients for life. Though not essential, it is a deepening element.
- Do we respect our clients? What they do? Their intentions? Their aspirations? When we do, we show it. If not, we will not be able to hide this over the long term, and we will be caught in our charade.
- What do we know about our clients' lives? What do they know about ours? What is our reaction to knowing and sharing more of the personal side? Since long-term relationships thrive on the personal, we will likely need to share more of our life than the work might seem to require. This may provoke a struggle between the consultant in us and the other part of us. A deeper partnership usually

SIR THOMAS MORE

Selfless Independence

"Pray for me on earth as I will pray for you in heaven," the unshaven, gaunt man told the crowd. Then, the executioner raised his ax and beheaded him with a single stroke. So ended the life of Sir Thomas More, former Lord Chancellor of England, chief advisor to King Henry VIII, and the most brilliant legal mind of his age. More, who had risen to become the most powerful man in the country after the king, fell from royal favor when he refused to endorse Henry's divorce from Catherine of Aragon and his break with the Catholic church. More found these actions, which were contrary to his fundamental beliefs and principles, repugnant. Despite his dedication to his client, he refused to give up his independence as an advisor, even if it cost him his life.

Sir Thomas More is a heroic example of selfless independence: he was completely devoted to King Henry, yet he had principles that he would not compromise. Today, fortunately, professionals don't have to endure such a severe penalty for disagreeing with their clients, but selfless independence remains a fundamental quality of great advisors.

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> includes elements that are definitely outside the consultant role. And learning more about our clients' lives potentially deepens the partnership—and complicates it.

Sheth and Sobel talk a lot about developing the difficult, softer side of breakthrough relationships. For those still in doubt, consider their seven core attributes quite pragmatically. Most of our work in organizations is about change, about letting go of the familiar in favor of something new and different. Change requires risk for those changing. People are more willing to take risks when they have confidence in the professionals who support and advocate the change. Clients have almost unlimited access to information and expertise; ours is not seen as unique. Client confidence builds when we demonstrate the seven core attributes; in this, we can be quite unique, making it likely we will be chosen again and again. That creates clients for life.

Geoffrey M. Bellman has 30 years experience as a consultant to management and is the author of Getting Things Done When You Are Not in Charge, The Consultants' Calling, *and most recently,* The Beauty of the Beast: Breathing New Life into Organizations. *He is in Seattle, Washington (USA), at GBellman@ aol.com; fax 206-365-6220.*

Profit Patterns: 30 Ways to Anticipate and Profit from Strategic Forces Reshaping Your Business

Adrian J. Slywotzky, David J. Morrison, Ted Moser, Kevin A. Mundt, James A. Quella (Random House, New York; 1999; ISBN 0-8129-3118-1) $27.50

Reviewed by David Bushko

Book review" hardly seems the right term to describe something that is a book, a website (www.profitpatterns.com), and the topic for a special issue of *Mercer Management Journal*. "Concept review" would be more appropriate.

The concept here is pattern thinking; more specifically, profit pattern thinking, as it is elaborated not by an author but by a committee. Those listed on the cover are executives at Mercer Management Consulting, and we wonder why it took five of Mercer's senior people to write this. While the book offers a useful framework and some valuable tools for anticipating change, its content is neither dense nor profound enough to justify five authors.

The term *patterns* implies something visual, but what the authors really mean is a linear sequence of events, a trend, or a series of trends that drive change and to which a business must respond to remain viable. *Profit patterns* are intended to help consultants and managers identify sequences that lead to vital shifts in a marketplace, so a business can make key strategic moves before its competitors do. Actually, this isn't about strategy per se, but about how to identify the circumstances a strategy must address. Kenichi Ohmae, the Tokyo-based consultant, once said something to the effect that it's no use rowing fast if you're rowing in the wrong direction. This book offers a compass to get rowing in the right direction. That can be very useful to consultants and clients who want help anticipating an uncertain future.

The question, of course, is how to identify profit patterns as soon as possible so clients can take maximum advantage of them. To help, the authors propose a process that isn't quick, but can save time in the long run. The process is initially described in the chapter "Accelerated Pattern Detection," but I recommend going directly to "The Abridged Patterns Workbook." It steps through the pattern-recognition process with references to appropriate parts of the book.

The authors say the first step is to learn the 30 patterns they've collected. This will be formidable for most people. For one, most industries are impacted by multiple patterns, and these may be variations rather than exact replicas of the ones the authors describe. In addition, these combinations work themselves out at varying speeds. Put the 30 patterns together in all their possible combinations of multiples, variations, and cycles, and the possibilities boggle the mind. The authors' metaphor is chess, and chess masters must memorize vast numbers of sequences; most consultants and executives won't make the effort.

A more practical approach is to learn the authors' seven categories that cover all thirty patterns. They are:

- *Mega patterns* that cut across and transcend such specific business dimensions as value chains, customers, channels, and so on
- *Value chain patterns* that involve profit and value shifts regarding companies and their economic neighbors
- *Customer patterns* that pertain to value creation and destruction resulting from customers' decisions
- *Channel patterns* that focus on the rise and fall of distribution channels
- *Product patterns* that describe profit and value shifts about products
- *Knowledge patterns* that recognize shifts in the value and profitability of knowledge
- *Organizational patterns* that highlight shifts in power and value due to organizational systems.

If you consider these seven categories in the context of your client's industry and its neighbors, you'll see that some of these patterns get more attention than others. Then it's time to go back to the book to review the specific patterns within those categories for similarities to the situation at hand, remembering there may be multiple patterns and that some patterns may occur in variant forms. Consider too where the patterns are in their time cycle. You might also ask why the other patterns aren't getting attention and what the implications of that are. Before staying away from their dance cards, be sure none of the wallflowers aren't your client's next belle of the ball.

You can enhance your analysis of a specific client or industry by using what the authors call the most fundamental method of identifying future profit patterns: Write down the ten-year history of the client's industry and company; then, study the key stories that have reshaped the client's industry, and think through the stories that will redefine its future.

The authors include histories of Cisco Systems, SAP, Staples, Dell, and Amazon.com to show how to do this. A lot of what they have to say, however, is not news to people who follow business trends and developments. Furthermore, their conclusions about those companies' futures simply describe what the companies are already doing—Dell, for example, has joined with Cisco to offer a complete high-speed Internet-access solution; Amazon has made the right moves to becoming a household name. Or their recommendations are rather obvious generalities—Bang & Olufsen, for example, must anticipate changes transforming the electronics and luxury goods industries; and Staples must respond to emerging patterns if it is to continue its growth and market leadership. In this area, the authors don't give away any consulting nor do they demonstrate much imaginative or intellectual vitality.

Nonetheless, the historical approach is useful if it gives you and your clients a much-needed sense of time's trajectory and if it gets you thinking differently about your client's business. To do your own historical compilation, ask the fundamental questions of who, what, when, where, why, and how about the beginning of your client's industry, the company's founding, major milestones in the history of the industry and the company, major products/services, the evolution of customers and competitors, and so forth.

The important thing is to consider key aspects of the business over time. Don't take a snapshot, make a videotape. Concentrate on significant sequences and trends. How did they start? What impact did they have? What have been the major product, value chain, customer, and other shifts of the past decade? Where did they go? Why? Where might history repeat itself? In what form? And such.

Next, identify the key players and events that could trigger and define the profit patterns affecting your client in the future—customers, prospects, traditional channels, new channels, competitors (both traditional and nontraditional), investors, media, sources of talent, sources of innovation, and more.

Then, decipher conditions and triggers. These are underlying factors—such as changing customer priorities, technological or regulatory changes, and commoditization—that catalyze patterns in an industry. Eventually, when several of these drop into place, they set new patterns in motion.

The authors acknowledge these are often hard to see, and unfortunately they provide no examples to help. They do, however, point to three areas to watch:

- Variability in the range of customers' priorities, in competitors' relative performance, or in economics
- Acceleration in the rate, or a shift in the direction, of change in customer priorities, economics, technology, infrastructure, or business designs
- Emerging friction, as in inefficiency or mismatches in the value chain, the organization, or the customer population.

In strategy, timing is everything, and the book's section on time and strategy is illuminating. The key strategic question about time is not how to be faster; it is how to use time to its best advantage. One way to determine that is to know when the inflection point will occur. (This useful term appears on a chart, but nowhere else, according to the index.) If we know when the triggers will be pulled and conditions will shift, we know how much time we have to prepare. This gives us a substantial edge in using time to our best advantage everywhere—in finance, human resources, operations, and marketing.

Yet, though the point of the book is to anticipate and be ready for this, the content is aimed almost entirely at how to determine what will happen, while giving only passing notice to assessing when it will happen. Are there ways of determining the when, even within a range? How can we, for example, measure rate of variability or speed of acceleration? I find these questions intriguing and am sorry there isn't more in the book to answer them. Too much concept here and too little practical advice.

Once you've gathered your information, you can use it to multiply strategic options and identify the best moves for your clients. Here the authors are helpful. They provide a repertoire of possible responses to various patterns—for example: invent a new business design, accelerate, hedge with a double bet, emulate or improve upon what someone else has done, and so on.

Overall, while it takes some filtering and extrapolation to find them, *Profit Patterns* provides an instructive framework and some useful tools to help guide clients profitably through time's unpredictable passage into the future.

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Selling Is a Team Sport: Turn Your Whole Organization into a Living, Breathing, Selling Machine

Eric Baron (Prima Publishing, Roseville, CA; 2000; ISBN 0-7615-2530-0) $24.95

Reviewed by Stewart A. Washburn CMC, FIMC

This is not a must read, but it is highly recommended. A caveat, however: Much of it is poorly written. Its style brings to mind that of a preacher with a sure way to salvation in this life and to heaven later on. The author takes his message seriously and, less you miss anything important, he repeats almost everything ten or a dozen times, sometimes in specially highlighted and annoying NEWSFLASHES.

But if you make sales calls occasionally, and all of us do, or if you teach clients how to make sales calls, the book is filled with valuable insights and ways to refine technique. And if you occasionally conduct problem-solving meetings with clients or teach clients to do this for themselves, the book is even more valuable.

Baron has three main ideas. One is that selling is a team sport. In the sense intended, it certainly is. A sales rep, or whoever else maintains the relationship with a customer or a prospect, is entitled to full corporate support. Those who provide it should learn to work together with the sales rep as a team. The second and more interesting idea is that sales calls are like problem-solving meetings. The third idea is that both sales calls and problem-solving meetings fail when content is stressed at the expense of process. Demonstrating this idea is what drives the book.

The first 40 or 50 pages explore the process to follow in order for problem-solving meetings to succeed. For the most part, Baron describes the process developed by Synectics, his former employer. It is a good description, and made me understand why some of my problem-solving meetings don't work.

The rest of the book, except for the last 60-odd pages, is devoted to showing how to turn sales calls into problem-solving meetings. The process to follow to make sales calls effective is described, and their similarity to problem-solving meetings is elaborated. The interview techniques that enable sales reps to uncover the real needs of customers or prospects are explained quite clearly and then explained again and again. There are a great many refinements offered to the sales call process as it is customarily presented. My reaction here was simple and direct, "Why didn't I think of that?"

The final section of the book discusses teams and the processes that make them work. It is based on Jon Katzenbach and Douglas Smith's book *The Wisdom of Teams* (1992). Once again, Baron extracts the essence of other work and presents it clearly and succinctly. Unfortunately, when he writes about his own ideas, it's a mess.

My copy of this book is now on my active reference shelf. Index cards mark those pages I will refer to later as I review meeting guides and associated handout and presentation materials.

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