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"In Search of Business Success"

In recent years companies and their leaders have turned to a wide range of likely and unlikely "advisers" to help them improve their performance. In addition to a host of consultants, academics from the leading business schools, and peers, they have sought insight from politicians and war heroes, professional athletes and coaches, religious figures, barbarians, and even a lovable bear from Pooh Corner. Are they desperate for answers? Simply confused? Or trying hard to think "out of the box" in the hope that very different ideas, approaches, and contexts will offer the breakthroughs needed to compete in very complicated times?

One thing is clear. After all of the downsizing, reengineering, reinventing, total quality managing, visioning, strategizing, knowledge managing, balanced scorecarding, ERPing (enterprise resource planning), and a host of other very important "-ings," companies are left with a most fundamental and perplexing problem: "How in the world do we actually grow our business?" It turns out that it was a lot easier to get rid of people, plants, equipment, and old products and practices than it is to create successful new products, services, and market opportunities. To paraphrase a few dozen country music songs: "Growing is the hardest thing to do."

If that's the case, why not take a few lessons from small children? After all, they are veritable engines of growth and development who are busy growing every minute of the day. Close your eyes for ten seconds and a toddler will be taller, wider, and likely to need a larger pair of shoes. They will also be smarter, wiser, and more skillful. Small children are unmatched in their abilities to learn quickly, innovate instantly, and process amazing amounts of new information. Not even a Pentium V chip can match their skills. Kids have even figured out how to grow in their sleep, which stands in marked contrast to adults who often have trouble paying attention (let alone growing) while they're awake. Yet not until children start to speak with some proficiency do we realize how smart they actually are.

It turns out that the world of small children provides a powerful context for explaining why most companies fail to reach their full potentials and how to succeed in business today and in the future. This book will show how companies, their leaders, and employees can grow their businesses and improve bottom-line performances dramatically by rediscovering how to think and act more like small children...and mastering children's innate abilities to play, learn, lead, innovate, and create magical results. Most of us have lost track of these are gifts somewhere between the sandbox and the workplace.

Before going any further, consider two concepts essential to this book and the success of companies. The first is the concept of a "gift," though not in the sense of receiving a present from someone. When we were young, we were endowed with a set of wonderful abilities that enabled us to grow, learn, and engage the world around us. They weren't habits we developed



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or skills we acquired, though the right habits and skills certainly were valuable contributors to our growth and success as we got older. Instead, these were part of our very natures. And they remain part of our natures even though the world around us has often discouraged us from putting them to good use. The following chapters will look closely at these gifts and their great relevance to success in the world of business.

Gift, *n.* a special ability or capacity; natural endowment; talent

The second concept is of creating "magic," though not in the sense of a magician pulling a rabbit out of a hat or making an elephant and a moving van disappear at the same time. When we were young we created magic all the time. We did amazing things almost every day and in the process made great breakthroughs that delighted our audiences. Granted, our audiences were most often mom, dad, grandma, grandpa, and our siblings, but they were only slightly biased in their reactions to our feats.

Mag-ic, *n.* the ability to create something that is honest and full of wonder

In a nutshell, as kids we used our special gifts to create constant magic. If only we could do that again for our customers, colleagues, employees, and shareholders.

Questions? Comments?
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