College of Business Book Review by Joey Long

Title: Working Together: Why Great Partnerships Succeed

Author: Michael Eisner with Aaron Cohen

Publisher: Harper Business

Length: 283

Price: $ 25.99

Reading Time: 7 – 9 hours

Reading Rating: (1 = Very difficult; 10 = Very easy) 7

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

An iconic figure in American business, mostly known for leading The Disney Company to becoming a multi-billion dollar company from the mid-1980’s to mid-2000’s, Michael Eisner, in his new book, discusses and argues for the benefits of partnerships in reaching levels of success unattainable as individuals. Although it was Eisner who was the face in the news through the mid-2000’s concerning the business of Disney, Eisner gives his business partner, Frank Wells, half the credit for creating Disney’s success. Further, Eisner gives us insight into nine other successful partnerships touching upon different fields of business including home improvement (Arthur Blank and Bernie Marcus), philanthropy (Bill and Melinda Gates), investing (Warren Buffet and Charlie Munger & John Angelo and Michael Gordon), Hollywood (Brian Grazer and Ron Howard), music and culture (Steve Rubell and Ian Schrager), fashion (Valentino and Giancarlo Giammetti), restaurants (Susan Feniger and Mary Sue Milliken), and baseball (Joe Torre and Don Zimmer).

The details into each partnership reveal particular nuances not found in the other partnerships. For example, some partners were good friends before the partnership and remained so during. Some partnerships joined out of business interest and found they worked well together in business, not fraternizing much beyond that. But, despite their differences, Eisner sees common characteristics among the partnerships that make them work. As Warren Buffet is quick to note, partnerships value trust and are not envious. Eisner also states that partners maintain ethical standards between themselves and amongst their business dealings. Partners complement one another in a manner that makes the partnership stronger (Eisner subtitles his chapter “Where I learned 1 + 1 = 3 (if not more).”

But, the most important aspect of the book is the conclusion Eisner draws about each partnership included. Every partner is happy. And, Eisner points out that this happiness is not completely related to the financial success of the partnership. “They enjoy getting up in the morning. They love what they do, and they are among the select few and very fortunate who have found that partnerships create happiness.”

In this book, Eisner and Cohen display clearly how ten successful partnerships were able to succeed (and be happy). The book provides details and characteristics as to what common traits successful partnerships possess and provides insight we may use in deciding whether we are in a successful partnership, or should consider forming one. Unfortunately, the process for finding partners is not covered in detail and we are left to search for and discover our own business partners individually.

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