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Insightful Business Books To Read This Fall

By: Marc Kramer , Special To The Evening Bulletin

This final quarter of the year is probably the most important quarter of the year for two reasons. One, most companies years are made or broken if they hit their sales numbers. Second, company leadership is gearing up for the next year.

If you are a company leader, you are thinking about three components of success. First, how are you going to build sales? Second, how are you going to differentiate your business from your competitors to attract and retain customers? Third, how are you going to attract and retain the right employees that will allow you to succeed?

There are actions you can take to prepare you and your company for 2007. You can develop a business plan, read business magazines and make a list of ideas gleaned from the articles you have read, go to conferences and see what other companies are doing and speak to other business leaders to pick their brains. Those are all good options, but I think good business books can provide more substantive insights than magazines and conferences. Here are some of the books I think you should pick up that will improve your competitive position.

How to Recognize and Reward Employees, by Donna Deepröse - Retaining employees is critical to long-term success. How you reward those employees will determine whether you are able to keep the most talented people! This book provides ideas and ways to motivate employees through deeds, compensation and written and vocal recognition.

Your Attention Please, by Paul Brown and Alison Davis - Written communication has become more important now than any time in history because of business people's high reliance on e-mail and Web sites. The book provides advice on how to improve one's written communication to attract customers, prospects, referral sources and the media and, at the same, time motivate employees.

Crunch Point, by Brian Tracy - Brian Tracy is one of the world's premier motivational writers. I have read some of his books, which are well written, but, to me, they aren't very inspiring or original. This book is different. It deals with the subject of how to pick yourself and your organization off the ground when events go wrong. Anyone over the age of 40 knows that bad times follow good times and that is life, but how you handle the bad times will play a significant impact on future prosperity.

Word of Mouth Marketing, by Andy Sernovitz - Incredibly, this author created a national organization out of this concept. As any business person knows, word of mouth recommendations are more powerful than multi-million-dollar marketing campaigns and cheaper to execute. The best example is Myspace.com and Youtube.com, which became overnight sensations just from people telling other people, and you probably know of other examples of businesses in your town that are very successful with no or little marketing budget.

Small Business Book of Lists, by Gene Marks, who happens to be a local business consultant - This is an absolute must-have book because it provides small businesses with advice on finance, marketing and sales. It tells how to select a bank, how to reduce your taxes and Web sites to visit for new ideas.

Consultative Closing, by Greg Bennett - I have sold financial, marketing and sales services. I have sold memberships to trade associations, sponsorships and advertising. If there is one thing anyone with sales experience learns. it is that the salesman pictured in the movies isn't reality because people don't like to be sold or conned into buying something they don't want or need. They want an advisor to go through the options and determine what they need and how that will best fit into their business. This book provides a process, methodology and examples on how to do it.

I have always been a big book reader because books give you practical, focused, fully formed ideas with examples of how to make the concepts espoused by the author work. Every successful business leader, from Jack Welch to Bill Gates to Warren Buffett, will tell you the power books have on their decision-making process, and without the ideas books bring, their organizations wouldn't reach their potential.

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