

Book reviews

Negotiating Partnerships, Keld Jensen and Iwar Unt, London: Financial Times Prentice Hall, 2001, pp. xviii + 232. ISBN: 0-273-65659-7

Negotiating Partnerships starts from a simple premise. In order to conclude a successful partnership, it is necessary to treat negotiations not as a zero-sum game, in which one side 'wins' a better deal at the expense of the other, but as an opportunity to build a new whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. Throughout the book, the authors stress this theme continually. Negotiators are not opponents: they are parties drawn together by a common interest, whose primary aim should be to seek to add value for all participants, not just themselves.

The argument is presented in a compelling fashion. Jensen and Unt are experienced consultants who have observed over the years many thousands of negotiators and negotiations, and have not always been impressed with what they have seen. In their view, around one-third of all negotiations fail entirely, with concomitant waste of time and resources for all involved. Of the remaining two-thirds, very few succeed in maximising the value available to them; that is, they do not get the best possible deal under the circumstances. Clearly this situation needs to change, especially if, as we are so often told, the future direction for many businesses lies in collaboration and co-operation rather than head-to-head competition.

Negotiation failures are commonplace and follow on from a number of factors: poor negotiation skills, lack of preparation and, often, a basic distrust of potential partners and their motives. Most of all, though, negotiators often fail because they can see only the advantage for themselves in a deal. But even if they do conclude the negotiation successfully and get the deal they want, say Jensen and Unt, they have still not maximised value. The greatest value comes from establishing a partnership, usually long-term, based on mutual understanding and trust. If *both* partners feel that they are profiting by the deal, then the partnership is likely to last.

This leads onto another point: not just any deal will do. By concentrating on 'success' in terms of scoring points against an opposition, negotiators often fail to see that even the best deal in any given set of circum-

stances might still be the wrong one. The right deal also means the right partners, and companies need to choose and assess their potential partners with care before they sit down at the table.

Once there, the keys to real success include thorough preparation and selecting negotiators with good communication skills, but most important of all is an ability to assess the situation objectively and see the benefits to all parties. A good negotiator does not just win for his own side; he or she opens doors for the other party and helps them to win too.

This is a necessarily simplistic overview of what is in fact a complex approach to relationships and partnerships, one deeply grounded in psychology and motivation. Readers interested in the Scandinavian approach to management will find this book especially interesting, as it shows that model in action in a number of different situations. The question must arise as to whether cultural relativism plays a role: can this Scandinavian style of 'win-win' negotiations work in the harder, more confrontational business cultures of Britain and the USA? It will be interesting to see if Anglo-Saxon negotiators can get away from the *macho* approach which characterises the mainstream of negotiation techniques and learn from this collaborative view. At all events, *Negotiating Partnerships* deserves to be read not only by practising managers but also by academics looking for alternative models with which to experiment.

Morgen Witzel
London Business School
London NW1 4 SA
United Kingdom

The Contingency Theory of Organizations,
Lex Donaldson, Thousand Oaks, London and
New Delhi: Sage, 2001, paperback, 326 pp.

Long an avid crusader for the 'Aston' approach, Lex Donaldson has written a robust defence of contingency theory. Professor Donaldson, a pillar of the Australian Graduate School of Management at Sydney, is an authority on the bureaucracy of organizations and the organization of bureaucracy. His new book spells out his ideas on these important themes.

This work, in ten compact chapters, is written in concentrated prose and will leave the student in search of enlightenment in OB with plenty to reflect upon. The Aston approach has contributed much to the advancement of organizational theory and research and the author pulls no punches in his defence of both the conceptual and methodological dimensions of this tack.

Donaldson covers not only the founding authors of contingency theory but also the most recent contributors to the field. He is himself a staunch defender of this approach and many experts say that he 'takes no prisoners'. He has previously set out many critiques of those who have attacked the Aston model and here he elaborates his defence of contingency theory and the overarching view that 'fit determines performance'. There is however much in this book that overlaps with his earlier books on the approach.

He does here set out eight useful lessons to enhance organizational performance (pp. 240–242) but one fears that this account will remain unread by most practising managers, as most will find it 'rather heavy-going'. Academic readers of HSM will, on the other hand, will find much to update their acquaintance with OB (and their lecture-materials as well, no doubt). But many will also look elsewhere for their understanding of how organizations work.

The Aston model has less and less appeal to younger scholars in the field these 'post-modern' days. Even so, this book will certainly appeal to many undergraduates, BBAs and MBA students, who perhaps have to write essays and projects on the contingency approach and may even be bought as it is relatively reasonably priced in its paperback version.

Malcolm Warner
Judge Institute of Management Studies
University of Cambridge
Cambridge CB2 1AG
United Kingdom

Blood, Sweat & Tears: The Evolution of Work,
Richard Donkin, London and New York: Texere, 2001,
£ 18.99, pp. xxv + 374, ISBN: 1-58799-076-8

Work, in modern management theory, is usually considered as part of larger, more abstract concepts. Economists, for example, have considered labour as a factor of production; human resource management theorists tend to focus on the nature of the worker and relationships inside the firm. Relatively few major works

consider the nature of work itself: what it is, who does it, why it is done, what its purpose is. Yet these are surely major issues of importance, especially in this day and age when the nature of work is changing in many ways. Changes in the nature of and motivations for work have a strong impact on both the economics of labour and human resource management policies and practices. It follows that, in order to manage work more effectively, we need to know more about what it is.

Blood, Sweat & Tears is in part a historical look at how work has developed and evolved in Western society since ancient times, and in part a critical examination of how we perceive and practice work today. The author, Richard Donkin, is a journalist with the *Financial Times*, who notes that his views on work have been highly influenced by his own work experiences and also those of his father, a welder in a steel works. The book is narrative and episodic in nature, and those looking for hard statistical analyses of workplace behaviours and motivations will be disappointed. On the other hand, those looking for some useful hypotheses concerning what work is and how it is changing will find much that is useful here.

Starting with early societies and the classical world, Donkin notes that in the classical societies of Greece and Rome, menial work was performed largely by slaves; people of status did not work, and in some cases were prevented by law from doing so. He then traces the development of work through the Middle Ages and the Protestant Reformation, noting the development of the so-called 'work ethic', and then through the emergence of the industrial proletariat of the nineteenth century, ending up with a portrait of the modern office worker. Here, old distinctions between white collar and blue collar workers are disappearing, and there is increasing confusion as to what work actually is. For example, many companies employ people for their intelligence and critical reasoning, employing them to think. But is 'thinking' actually work? Is mental activity equivalent to manual labour?

Donkin also questions whether the effort expended by modern workers is as useful as it might be, to themselves or to their companies and the economy. The Internet, for example, was supposed to make life easier, by reducing the burdens of work; in fact, technologies such as e-mail have exponentially expanded the potential volume of work faced by each worker. The Greeks used slaves to perform their work; can we in the twenty-first century employ machines in the same way? Donkin thinks it unlikely, and there is a real danger that instead, we could end up becoming slaves of

our machines (he tells the story of standing on the banks of a river with a senior executive in a large corporation, who was ostensibly on trout fishing but was in fact spending most of his time on his mobile phone).

This danger has been noted before, most famously by Mumford in his conception of the 'megatechic wasteland'. Donkin does not go to Mumford's extreme, but he questions whether the work that we do is not ultimately damaging. He argues that a number of important changes need to take place. Among these are the breaking down of the rigid demarcation between work and leisure, and – especially – reforms of our Western system of education, designed for the industrialized world of Frederick Winslow Taylor and the rational systems of Max Weber and now out of step with modern needs.

Perhaps the book's main drawback is that it is ultimately a Western text: work in Japan is discussed primarily in terms of the quality revolution of the 1950s and 1960s, and China and India are only touched on. But for all that, this is a highly readable and quietly forceful account of the nature of work which not only sketches an important history but asks some equally important questions.

Morgen Witzel
London Business School
London NW1 4 SA
United Kingdom

Biographical Dictionary of Management,

Witzel, M. (Ed.), Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 2001, 2 vols, hardback, 1130 pp.

Finding your way around the management literature is often frustrating and even searches on the Web do not get always you to the right biography you may seek. There is a vast army of *personae dramatis* who inhabit the camp of business and economics. It is, we

must recall, real people who make management history, as well as shaping the world of commerce and industry we find today. Looking up their biographies is not only sometimes necessary if you are compiling a lecture or a research paper, it is also often a personal pleasure.

It is with these thoughts in mind, that we turn to a new work of reference. This major tome consists of two volumes and is edited by Morgen Witzel, who has been associated with the London Business School for some years now. He is an experienced editor and has written on a wide range of management topics. The dictionary extensively covers the A–Z of the major 'movers and shakers' of Management Studies, both new and old and represents a labour of love and scholarship.

His two-volume compendium, consisting of over 600 entries, covers a vast army of management theorists and practitioners, some in brief and others at greater length. The work is very well-structured and user-friendly. Like the curate's egg, however, some parts are more easily digested than others. It is a work, no doubt, to be tasted in small bites rather than digested in one whole gulp.

Yet, it stands out as a truly comprehensive guide to management thinkers and doers and as solid a work of library research as can be found in this field. Witzel has produced a work that is of course essentially a reference-tool rather than a research-tome but it will no doubt enrich many a management student's essay for many years to come! It is strongly to be recommended as an essential acquisition for any respectable business school or corporate library.

Malcolm Warner
Judge Institute of Management Studies
University of Cambridge
Cambridge CB2 1AG
United Kingdom