



SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES

Article from:

The Stepping Stone

October 2006 – Issue No. 24

Book Review

The Dilbert Principle: A Cubicle's-Eye View of Bosses, Meetings, Management Fads and Other Workplace Afflictions by Scott Adams

by Kristi Bohn

Do you miss Dilbert? I do. While at the library searching for self-improvement books, I saw an audio version of *The Dilbert Principle* and could not resist. It may be too cynical for some of you aimed at lofty management goals, but a good dose of workplace attitudes is wise for anyone in management.

Scott Adams admits in his book how easy it was for him to write it. People liked the Dilbert comic strip so much that they supplied him with most of the material from real office situations. All he had to do was organize this feedback and set the stage. The result—laugh-out-loud funny.



He adds witty insights that you will never find in one of those real management books, but can appreciate because you likely have witnessed the promotional results among your peers. For example, he recommends that women should swear like a sailor, while men should refrain from swearing at all costs. He recommends that you always carry a document in your hand to look very busy, even if it is just a trip to the bathroom. He thanks the invention of the Internet for making thousands look busier, even though they may be actually doing things like shopping for their family or writing Dilbert book reviews. He swings punches at quality initiatives (ISO 9000, Six Sigma, etc.), the way management positively spins widespread layoffs and management's love of pricey consultants (the message: everyone at our company is too incompetent to tackle this issue).

His last chapter is dedicated to recommendations for executives and managers. There are some thoughtful points, such as holding meetings in the afternoon instead of the morning, to coincide with the time people are more and less productive, respectively.

All in all, I recommend this book or audiotape to anyone. At the heart of this book is a plea for us to approach relationships at the workplace with empathy, honesty and care.

The Dilbert Principle is that deep down, people are idiots. That includes you. □



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