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BOOK REVIEW:

Delivering Happiness—A Path to Profits, Passion and Purpose, by Tony Hsieh¹

Review by Jamie Shallow

“...at the end of the day it’s not what you say or what you do, but how you make people feel that matters the most” (p. 176).² I found this to be the most profound statement in the book, *Delivering Happiness—A Path to Profits, Passion, and Purpose*, by Tony Hsieh (the CEO of Zappos.com, Inc.). If you want to be a successful leader, or run a successful business, this is a key concept. When I think of the businesses that I return to consistently, they are the places that genuinely make me feel like I’m a special customer. In fact, it is this idea that underlies the concept of customer relationship management (CRM) that many corporations are adopting. It is a change in focus from making sales to developing long-term customers, and Hsieh believes one key to profitability is to deliver WOW experiences to your customers.

It’s important to treat the customer by the Golden Rule and then exceed their expectations. Some keys to delivering WOW include (pp. 160–168):

- Be innovative and unconventional
- Embrace change
- Encourage employees to express their personality at work
- Encourage people to fail forward.

Hsieh also discusses the importance of developing strong relationships, referred to as the PEC—Personal Emotional Connection (p. 145), with the customer. Hsieh makes this investment because he believes the lifetime value of the customer is not constant, but is a moving target that can increase. Additionally, his philosophy of business goes beyond profits to include passion and purpose, and to ultimately change the world.

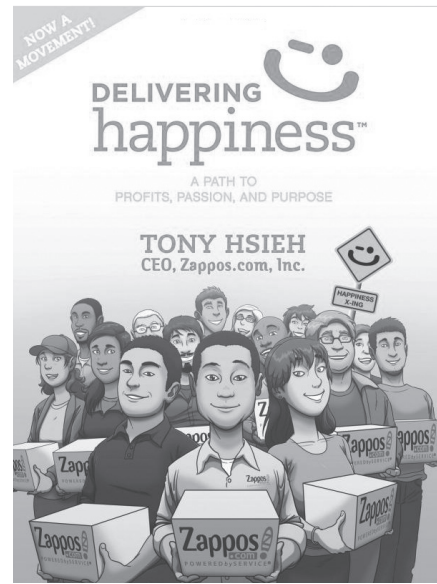
The companion critical element needed to build an organization that can actually deliver WOW to the customer is culture. As Hsieh says, “*For individuals, character is destiny. For organizations, culture is destiny*” (p. 184). In fact, he suggests that culture, and therefore leadership, is even more important

than customers. To deliver WOW, it’s vital to instill the following elements into your organization’s culture:

- Passion for the mission
- Working as a team
- Sharing of information, not hoarding
- A feeling of connectedness and compassion.

In reading the book, I was reminded of a story I recently heard a pastor tell, as he was being candid at a men’s conference. He said when Adam awoke after God formed Eve from his side he must have felt different. He must have said, “Wow, something is different! I feel, I feel, I feel ... well, maybe that’s it ... I DON’T feel.” Maybe men aren’t from Mars, but as a left-brained type, I found the book’s right-brained concepts to be good balance for reflection. After all, studies on emotional intelligence (EQ) reveal that IQ contributes only 20 percent to life success. The rest of our achievements come from EQ.

Ultimately, Hsieh is saying that the path to happiness and profits is not found in seeking profit (personally or corporately), but to find your mission that can change your world for the better. Although there are probably numerous good companies that don’t subscribe to this, Hsieh also reminds us of another classic point—Good is the enemy of Great! ●



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END NOTES

¹ Business Plus, New York, N.Y., 241 pages.

² This is a variation on a quote most frequently attributed to Maya Angelou: “I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”