

developing interpersonal relationships, and improving morale. Along the way, he covers effecting change, making criticism constructive, asking the right questions, avoiding doubters, and leveraging your abilities. He inserts quotes from Ulysses S. Grant, Hannibal, Adm. Farragut, and Napoleon to prompt the reader to lean forward rather than looking back.

Following chapters cover improving your own performance and the work of those around you, upgrading your capabilities and expertise, becoming a better team member, and overcoming burnout and stress. Within these few chapters, the author touches on a wide range of workplace issues, including intergenerational relations, conflict, lack of commitment, and the unexpected problems that always seem to pop up at work.

I found Chapters 8 (Upgrading Capabilities) and 9 (Conquering Burnout and Stress) to be particularly helpful. Quoting from Ashby and Pell's *Embracing Excellence*, Fritz provides 10 areas where coaching can be most helpful. He then offers his own advice for making coaching sessions pay off.

Since I hear lots of clients (and my own internal voice) complaining about stress, I welcomed the Test Your Stress Level questions. Rather than leaving the reader hanging with the bad score she may find, Fritz offers tips for managing stress, coping with burnout, and relieving stress at the office.

The final chapter is just that – a summary of key points covered in the book and a healthy dose of motivation for putting the techniques we just learned to use. He concludes, *Attitude truly makes a difference. ... What you make of it is up to you.*

I strongly recommend this book for managers, employees, and anyone who wants a happier, successful, and more fulfilling life, especially at work. Although this book doesn't cover any topic in depth, it is a wonderful introduction to self-help areas that one can investigate in more detail. Plus, on its own, it is an excellent self-motivational tool to get you on the path to personal improvement. Reviewed by **Freddie Cheek**

***Your Personal Renaissance: 12 Steps to Finding Your Life's True Calling*, by Diane Dreher. 2008. Philadelphia, PA: Da Capo Press, Perseus Books Group. 276 pages. Softcover. \$15.99**

Intended Audience(s): C, F, G, J, K

Major Headings from the Table of Contents: Phase I, The Discernment Journey, includes four chapters on Discovery, Detachment, Discernment, and Direction. Phase II, Making the Renaissance Practices Work for You, comprises eight chapters on Faith, Daily Examen, Renaissance Commu-

nity, Contemplation, Creativity, Reading and Reflection, Physical Exercise, and Discipline and Dedication.

How Is the Book Most Useful for Its Intended Audience?: Phase II, Making the Renaissance Practices Work for You, provides not only practical tools and tips for creating personal practices that support positive change toward meaning and joy, it emphasizes the value of incremental change, supported by consistent practices, for anyone who seeks to follow their calling. Dreher provides a powerful antidote to the *get happy quick* style of all too many self-help books.

The Top Five Things You Learned from Reading this Book:

- 1) Dreher's matter-of-fact comments on the power of play to replace fear with creativity.
- 2) Her concise instructions on using a daily examen to focus attention and motivation.
- 3) The way she relates the Pygmalion effect to having good mentors.
- 4) Her advice to track your energies as part of discernment
- 5) Her wise description of the role of discipline and dedication in bringing dreams to fruition are among the most enlightening aspects of this excellent book.

Diane Dreher's love for the Renaissance and its personalities shines throughout this book. Renaissance, with its connotations of creativity and rebirth, is the guiding metaphor which allows Dreher to tell the stories of both historical and modern women and men who have followed their energies and gifts. Famous personages, such as the Italian painter Giotto and Queen Elizabeth I of England, illustrate the points Dreher makes in this well-written collection of practical and inspiring advice.

Her advice is made current and accessible both by the quality of the writing and by many stories of present-day people. Some of these are probably composites of people Dreher has counseled. Others are her colleagues and students at Santa Clara University, scientists and artists she has interviewed, and a wide range of writers on spirituality, psychology, and creativity. Dreher brings remarkable breadth and depth of knowledge to this book. I was continually impressed not only by her knowledge of Renaissance people and events but also by her wide-ranging references to scholarly and popular works on the psychology of creativity and personal agency, on spiritual practices ranging from meditation and Sabbath-keeping to journaling and the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises, and on music, art, and literature. A reader wishing to learn more on these topics will find plentiful resources in the endnotes to the book, yet the text itself flows easily and smoothly. I do wish Dreher's publishers had decided to include a full bibliography, rather than embedding citations

only in the notes. It can be a bit cumbersome to track back to the full title of works cited more than once.

The heart of this book's value for career changers or for anyone seeking greater joy and creativity lies in its subtitle, *12 Steps to Finding Your Life's True Calling*. The steps are concrete and practical, but not simplistic. Dreher provides a range of activities and advice suitable for introverts and extroverts and for adults of all ages. She advises keeping a Renaissance Notebook in which to record values, goals, and personal experiences with practices ranging from spiritual reading to physical exercise.

I particularly appreciate Dreher's inclusion of play, art, walking, and friendship as practices to cultivate and her specific suggestions on how to integrate new practices into a busy life. I was also delighted by her emphasis on discernment. I consider discernment a much deeper concept than self-assessment, especially because it implies ongoing attention to oneself as one grows and changes. Dreher's definition of discernment as *following what inspires you and releasing what diminishes you*, (p. 14) is pithy and apt. At another point (p. 63), she says that discernment involves *a journey from what is to what we are called to be*, a stance which is consistent throughout the book.

Dreher understands finding and following one's calling is a journey, an ongoing experience of discovery guided by one's inner compass. She has integrated understandings from positive psychology, such as the works of Martin Seligman and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, with a depth of spiritual understanding of the human heart and soul. The stories she tells do not minimize challenge, hardship, and risk, whether in past centuries or in modern times. But her focus is always on creative response to challenge, on strengths in contrast to weaknesses, and on building practices which support one's destiny.

Dreher is not afraid to use words like destiny, courage, and wisdom, and she is also willing to address the probability that discernment and action will bring up uncomfortable feelings such as restlessness, old resentments, and fear. Her emphasis on building practices that support your true calling means that she can acknowledge that some people encounter deep-seated fear, depression, and anxiety, which may call for professional help, while she offers practical tools, such as mantra meditation, for dealing with what she calls *ordinary garden-variety mental debris*. (p. 162) That distinction is itself powerful, reframing the presence of *mental debris* as a part of a healthy adult life. Exercises such as the story exercise to find one's personal themes (pp. 194-195) include not only recognition that such journaling can dredge up negative as well as posi-

tive feelings about oneself but specific and useful follow-up practices for naming, reframing, and learning from such feelings (pp. 195-197).

The two phases of Your Personal Renaissance, four chapters on *The Discernment Journey, Renaissance Wisdom for Your Life Today*, and eight chapters on *Making the Renaissance Practices Work for You*, add up to a powerful combination rarely found in the same book. They provide tools for creating motivation and change that are worth returning to in times of both stability and transition. Intentional career changers, people responding to changes in the economy and employment opportunity, and career professionals will all find this book profoundly valuable. Reviewed by **Deborah Gavrin Frangquist**

The Greatness Guide (Powerful Secrets for Getting to World Class)
by Robin Sharma

2006. New York, NY: HarperCollins. 221 pages. Hardback. \$21.95

Intended Audience(s): L

Major Headings from the Table of Contents: The book contains 101 mini chapters, each with a different topic or story.

How Is the Book Most Useful for Its Intended Audience? This book is a motivator that ponders many human traits and offers ways to shape them for the good: the good of the reader, the good of one's employer, one's customers, one's neighbors, one's community, the global community.

The Top Five Things You Learned from Reading this Book:

1) Know Your Genius: *Here's the big idea: Focus on any area or skill with a relentless devotion to daily improvement and a passion for excellence and within three to five years, you will be operating at a level of competence (and insights) such that people call you a genius. Focus plus daily improvement plus time equals genius.*

2) Grow Leaders Fast: *The ultimate competitive advantage of your enterprise comes down to a single imperative – your ability to grow and develop leaders faster than your competition.*

3) Be Wildly Enthusiastic: *Samuel Ullman observed: Nobody grows old merely by living a number of years. We grow old by deserting our ideals. Years may wrinkle the skin but to give up enthusiasm wrinkles the soul.' Enthusiasm matters.*

4) What's Missing from Your Coolness?

What's missing from my authenticity? What's missing from my greatest life? Awareness precedes choice and choice precedes results. ... With better awareness of what needs to improve in your life, you can make better choices. And with better choices, you will see better results.

5) Define What the Mountaintop Looks Like: *I suggest you articulate, in*

Copyright of Career Planning & Adult Development Journal is the property of Career Planning & Adult Development Network and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.