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Maverick: The Success Story Behind The World's Most Unusual Workplace



Synopsis

It can if you think like Ricard Semler, the maverick CEO who turned his own company into a model for the 90's and beyond. In MAVERICK, Semler will tell you how he changed his company and how you can change yours...if you dare! The extraordinary true story of 34-year-old CEO Ricardo Semler and of the rebirth of his family owned Brazilian manufacturing company, Semco. MAVERICK is a chronicle of corporate change--a change so vast and successful that Semco has been visited by over 400 corporate representatives from around the world who want to see it in action. In 1980, 21-year-old Ricardo Semler took over the reins of the company his father founded and built. Ricardo proceeded to break every rule of doing business, firing an entire echelon of upper level managers. Once he opened the floodgates to change, Semler never--even when he was tempted to--closed them again. Semler's management system allows employees to work at home, study and discuss the company's financial statements, make corporate decisions, take over the cafeteria kitchen, start their own business with company assets, and redesign the products Semco builds and how they are built. The result: in 10 years of constant experimentation--a time period in which Brazil's economy faltered--Semco has achieved a growth rate of 600%! In chronicling Semco's inner revolution, Semler shows how his radical ideas and strategies, as well as his nuts and bolts specifics, can be applied to any company anywhere.

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Customer Reviews

Shortly after Ricardo Semler took over Semco, his family's moribund manufacturing business,

employees began referring to him as Dr. Dickie. In the context of a hardened and confrontational union work environment, this nickname signaled the changes that were about to come. Maverick tells the story of the transformation of Semco into a radical and high performing organization. Here's a sampling of Dr. Dickie's good ideas...*

- * Make each business unit small enough so that those involved understand everything that is going on and can influence the outcomes.*
- * Implement a rounded pyramid organization structure with floating coordinators. Coordinators are the only supervisory level and are all at the same organizational level but different pay rates.*
- * Demonstrate trust by eliminating symbols of corporate oppression as well as the perks of status.*
- * Share all information and eliminate secrets. You can't expect involvement to flourish without an abundance of information available to all employees.*
- * Every six months bosses are evaluated by their subordinates and the results are posted.*
- * Salaries are public information unless the employee requests that they not be published.*
- * Allow employees to set their own salary. Consider these criteria: what they think they can make elsewhere; what others with similar skills and responsibilities make in the Company; what friends with similar backgrounds make; how much they need to live on.*
- * Share 23% of pretax profits. Employees vote how the pool will be split. They must vote to determine the manner of each quarterly distribution. In practice they always vote for equal dollar shares.*
- * Substitute the survival manual for thick procedure manuals. Eliminate policies and rules wherever possible.*
- * Job rotation; 20% of managers shift jobs each year.*
- * Set up workers in their own businesses as suppliers to the company.*
- * Eliminate the wearing of wristwatches whenever and wherever possible. It is impossible to understand life in all its hugeness and complexity if one is constantly consulting a minute counter.*
- * Either you can create complex systems so as to manage complexity, or you can simplify everything.

My company used Maverick as assigned reading for a management retreat some years ago. The result was a change of direction that it's hard to imagine would have been arrived at otherwise. Highly recommended for those open to having their organizational paradigms shifted.

Semler recounts the evolution of his family's company, Semco, from being a paternalistic, strictly hierarchical one, when he takes over the reins from his father, to a company like no other. The book reads like an autobiography, and it is, but only with the focus on the transformation of Semco and how Semler and his colleagues evolved through it. The reader is escorted through the many gestation periods of Semler's organizational theories. It's an amazing trip that you can hardly believe took place. Instead of paraphrasing Semler here I want to use a pretty long quote from one of the last pages of the book. There Semler has such a succinct description of his core theories and

the way he put them into practice that I feel his words summarize the plot of this book far better than I ever could:"To survive in modern times, a company must have an organizational structure that accepts change as its basic premise, lets tribal customs thrive, and fosters a power that is derived from respect, not rules. In other words, the successful companies will be the ones that put quality of life first. Do this and the rest - quality of product, productivity of workers, profits for all - will follow. At Semco we did away with strictures that dictate the "hows" and created fertile soil for differences. We gave people an opportunity to test, question, and disagree. We let them determine their own futures. We let them come and go as they wanted, work at home if they wished, set their own salaries, choose their own bosses. We let them change their minds and ours, prove us wrong when we are wrong, make us humbler. Such a system relishes change, which is the only antidote to the corporate brainwashing that has consigned giant businesses with brilliant pasts to uncertain futures."I truly enjoyed every page of this book and I highly recommend it.

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