

BOOK REVIEW

LIBERATION MANAGEMENT:

Necessary Disorganization for the Nanosecond Nineties.

by Tom Peters. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. 1992.

This book is about business and for business. However, its implications for the way we run our "businesses" on local college campuses as BSU directors are many.

Peters looks at every aspect of an organization and challenges us to take a new look at each aspect and determine if change is in order. Paradigm shift is the name of the game if an organization is to survive the 90's.

"Dull leaders for dull times. Zany leaders for zany times.

"To wit: If you don't feel crazy, you're not in touch with the times!

Nutty organizations, nutty people, capable of dealing with the fast, fleeting, fickle, are a requisite for survival.

To discuss "business" is too broad and so in a search for a metaphor, Peters uses the attributes of a carnival to introduce the reader to concepts in this volume. One in particular is the idea that the customer creates his or her own carnival. He calls it "customerization" and latter spends an entire chapter on this concept. This concept is applicable to ministry and would be beneficial for any college ministry director to study.

The rest of the volume is loaded with examples of organizations that are adjusting to the future and those that are not. Peters looks back at organizations that have failed and analyzed what went wrong. The reader will have the opportunity to view the way many of the world's top corporations look at their customers and how their views makes or breaks them. Through this experience a ministry director should be able to assess present views of customers (students) and make decisions based on these assessments.

"Look through clear eyes and you will find that almost all enterprises--hospitals, manufacturers, banks--are organized around, and for the convenience of, the "production function"... I'm not arguing there's no benefit to customers from these practices.

The patient generally gets well, the car or zipper usually works, the bank account is serviced... But how many [organizations, corporations, etc.] build the entire logic of the firm around the flow

of the customer through the A to Z process of experiencing the organization? Answer: Darn few!

Peters' book has assisted in the evaluation of the what and the why of student ministry on the campus that I serve. We are in the process of changing what we do, and why we do it. In the past, we looked at "what was good for the organization". Now, we are trying to shape an organization based on what students are saying they need and want.

Too many business books that I have read in the past could be used for a sure cure for insomnia. Not this one! Peters humorous, down to earth style of writing... his complaints and critiques of hotels, airlines, service stations, and other businesses that he has dealt with... his assessments of good experiences with firms and his insights into the future make for a worthwhile reading experience.

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