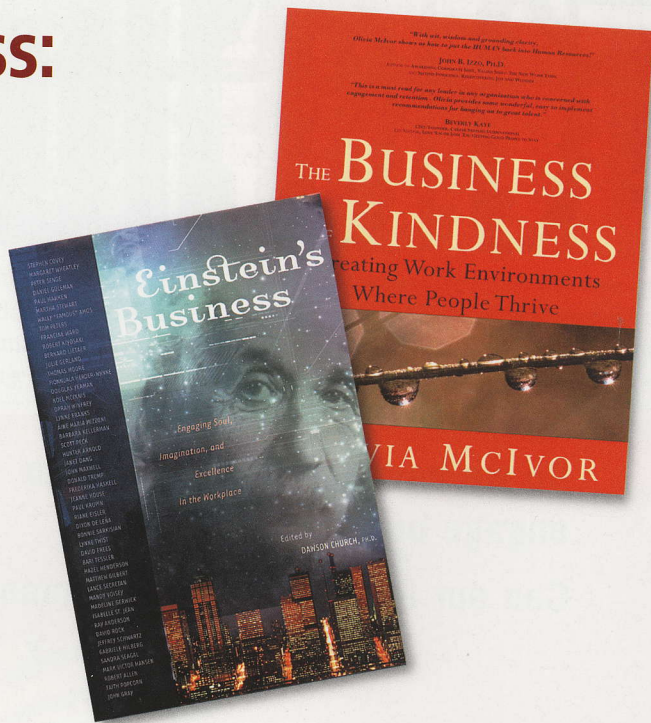


The Soul of Business: Two books promote workplace excellence

**The Business of Kindness:
Creating Work Environments Where People Thrive**
by Olivia McIvor, Fairwinds Press, 2006
ISBN 0968214991

**Einstein's Business: Engaging Soul, Imagination,
and Excellence in the Workplace**
edited by Dawson Church, Elite Books, 2007
ISBN 1600700152



IF YOU THINK WORDS SUCH AS KINDNESS, soul, and imagination are too “warm and fuzzy” for any serious business application, read no further. If you believe, instead, that such concepts can deeply transform a workplace and employees into a more successful, vibrant whole, then you’ll enjoy two recent books: *The Business of Kindness: Creating Work Environments Where People Thrive* and *Einstein’s Business: Engaging Soul, Imagination, and Excellence in the Workplace*. Both offer inspiring tales from a different B.C. Lower Mainland businesswoman:

the author, in the first case, and the writer of the book’s introduction and a chapter, in the second.

Author shares life lessons

The strength of *The Business of Kindness: Creating Work Environments Where People Thrive* lies in the engaging, first-person accounts of author Olivia McIvor, a BC HRMA member and national corporate mentor. How many writers, for instance, can describe first-hand what they’ve learned after free-falling 305 metres (1,000 feet) a minute with a delayed parachute,

winding up with a triple-fractured pelvis and other injuries? McIvor openly shares her on-the-job life lessons, whether it’s demonstrating trust and respect with an infamous shop steward or analyzing why a particular work procedure didn’t work.

The book begins with an overview of the world kindness movement, then has three main sections: kindness to oneself (authenticity, attitude, resilience, excellence), kindness to colleagues (trust, compassion, courage, friendship), and kindness in the community (service, responsibility, integrity, tolerance). Each chapter includes many

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helpful exercises, from a 15-question self-assessment on kindness to oneself to 10 ways to gain commitment from your volunteers.

When it comes to implementing a workplace kindness initiative, McIvor provides nine questions that prompt readers to consider their level of passion, engagement, and commitment to an idea or project. Some of the book's exercises address what behaviour to stop doing, start doing, and sustain when contemplating or undergoing change. This approach is much needed; too often, business-improvement authors trumpet new behaviour and thinking, but don't tell people *how* to get from their current state to a better one.

Poor proofreading weak link

For readers who seek the nitty-gritty ROI on workplace kindness, McIvor highlights the destructive impact and costs (low productivity, absenteeism, high turnover, reduced profits) of its opposite: on-the-job violence, stress, and conflict. She presents an array of stats that reveal the emotional and financial benefits of a healthful job atmosphere, such as B.C. Hydro's savings of at least three dollars for every dollar spent on its wellness program.

The book's appendix offers good reference material, quotations on kindness, and web addresses for world kindness movement groups. You'll find inspirational products and services for employee rewards and recognition, and programs that support a kindness campaign.

The weakest link in *The Business of Kindness* is its poor proofreading. Even before the main text starts, typographical errors appear on the first page, table of contents, and acknowledgements. The contents page has three inconsistent uses of punctuation. Missing words or extra words appear far too frequently throughout the book.

Contributors seek a sustainable world

In *Einstein's Business: Engaging Soul, Imagination, and Excellence in the Workplace*, Isabelle St-Jean asks readers: "How do we work and prosper in harmony and integrity, while co-creating the socially and ecologically sustainable world we need?" As a B.C. Lower Mainland life coach and educator, St-Jean typifies the approach of the book's 47 contributors. Each shares the personal and/or business paradigm shift taken to follow Einstein's urging: "to free ourselves from the prison of our

illusory separateness" and "to embrace all living creatures."

The book, edited by Dawson Church, serves as a strong prompt to challenge conventional frameworks in all fields, from psychology and marketing to human resources and finance. Seven of its 10 sections incorporate themes from "heart-centred leadership" and "inner-directed change" to "business as a sacred activity." Two sections—"leading us astray" and "the power of mistakes"—address life's negative influences, from bad leadership and compartmentalization to overconsumption. The book's broad issues range from the limitations of our economic models to finding creative solutions under pressure using quantum thought.

Content spans activists and corporate thinkers

Among the contributors, you'll find many familiar names of cutting-edge corporate thinkers, from Lance Secretan and Daniel Goleman to Tom Peters, Stephen Covey, and Faith Popcorn. Others, such as Riane Eisler and Paul Hawken, share their ideas from powerful, grassroots movements and activism.

In his chapter *Kicking the Consumption Habit*, Hawken chastises the hypocrisy of companies whose environmental programs hide behind misleading public relations campaigns. Ray Anderson, featured prominently in the Vancouver-made documentary *The Corporation*, explains how he foregoes the bottom line as his ultimate goal as a highly successful business leader; instead, he makes "doing good" his first priority. The book includes chapters from requisite celebrities: Oprah Winfrey, Martha Stewart, Prince Charles, and Donald Trump. Oprah's contribution is an amalgamation of quotations from secondary sources; in general, reprinted content comprises about 30 per cent of the book.

Book soulful and provocative

The cynic in me cringed at the sight of Trump's chapter on the importance of a positive attitude. He proclaims: "[N]egativity... just bounces off me within a moment of getting near me." What about all those nasty verbal barbs he hurled at Rosie O'Donnell in the media late last year? Similarly, Lance Secretan applauds the commitment of Wal-Mart's CEO towards environmental sustainability; only time

will tell whether this global company, which has faced fines for violations of environmental laws in nine U.S. states, for example, will carry this out.

As a further criticism, one could argue that some of the content oversimplifies pathways to success. Despite the book's subtitle, "soul" is mentioned infrequently in the book. Yet overall, the content itself stands as a soulful, provocative reference.

For bottom-line thinkers who dismiss or minimize the more intangible aspects of life and workplace change, this book serves as

a resounding reminder: quality of life and work has huge, inherent value and rewards in and of itself – even without the concrete reassurance of stats and ROIs. (These appear in the book in many cases too.)

Sadly, this new book is not readily available in bookstores. You can order it from Chapters and www.Amazon.com, but it's cheaper to order directly from the website of Isabelle St-Jean (www.inspiredmomentum.com). Partial proceeds from book sales are going to a developing project in Bali that sponsors youth education. 