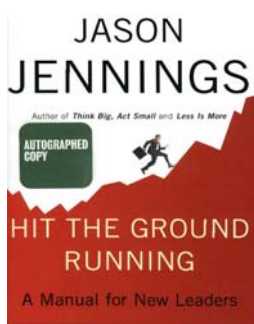


HIT THE GROUND RUNNING A Manual for New Leaders

A book review by Jim Merfeld

As reported in the Spring 2009 *Bunzl Leader* the guest speaker at the 2009 National Sales Meeting in Dallas, Texas was author, speaker and consultant Jason Jennings who has spent the last 20 years leading his successful business while consulting other companies, teaching them how to achieve their full economic potential. Mr. Jennings, an extremely popular speaker with limited availability (he makes about 80 presentations a year all around the world), accepted our invitation to speak only after his staff reviewed Bunzl - R3® and found we were a company that not only showed the best qualities he had seen in other successful enterprises but was a company he had to see and talk to. The presentations made by our corporate leaders reinforced to him how we as a company put value and service above all else when dealing with our customers and each other.

Mr. Jennings newest book, Hit The Ground Running - A Manual for New Leaders, made its world premier at our national sales meeting. In his book Mr. Jennings identifies ten American CEO's that have created the greatest amount of shareholder value between 2000 and 2008. He tells their stories and explains their strategies, tactics and values that allowed them to achieve their remarkable performance.



"The toughest job in business," writes Jennings, "is taking over as a new leader. You have to quickly assess the situation, pull together a strong team, decide on a strategy, and inspire everyone to execute it."

As managers or leaders, when given the opportunity of responsibility, we all want to get it right. If we do, we get another opportunity to do it right again. When we do, we become known as a "go-to" manager, one who can be trusted to deliver results. If we don't get it right, we become part of a list of company question marks, getting a second chance only if the "A" team is not available or does not want the assignment.

Jason Jennings uses his interviews to illustrate the qualities outstanding business leaders have that allow them to reach a company's objective. In a thoroughly enjoyable read, he ends his chapters with a simple Hit The Ground Running Rule each CEO has stated as being most important to them. By the end of book, you come to realize all the CEO's in the volume all possess the qualities listed.

Perhaps the most telling of the ten rules Jennings writes about is his tenth rule: Be a Fish Out of Water. In a chart on pages 201-202 of Hit The Ground Running - A Manual for New Leaders, he compares the traits of a "conventional" leader against those he has written about - his fish out of water leaders.

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A CONVENTIONAL LEADER

Does whatever it takes to hit the numbers

Is secretive about strategy

Demands employees' belief

Avoids revealing any sign of weakness

Sees subordinates as dispensable tools

Talks

Behaves like a politician, going in whatever direction the wind blows

Has a plan and implements it

Creates cover through complication

Is quick to replace the top team

Is imperial

Does a major transformation

Is distant

Points fingers and places blame

Is very sure he or she is right

Fosters an atmosphere where gossip and palace intrigue rule

Hires for experience and credentials

Is bigger than life

Destroys comfort zones

Studies the competition

A FISH OUT OF WATER

Follows the Golden Rule

Lets everyone know the strategy

Earns belief of employees

Asks others for help

Believes a company's only real competitive advantage is its people

Listens

Plants stakes in the ground and rallies people around a noble purpose

Builds a plan and gains buy-in

Simplifies everything

Wins over the existing team

Is accessible

Has an incremental approach to change

Is compassionate

Is personally accountable

Doubts his or her own infallibility

Supports transparency between executives and staff

Hires for attitude and character

Is humble

Doesn't push everyone to change

Studies the customer

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"We found," Jennings concludes, "that the CEOs who have created the greatest amount of economic value for their companies are a new breed of leader with ideals and values. They are good stewards truly committed to helping all stakeholders achieve their full economic potential, making everything better for everyone and making everyone proud."

I know what kind of steward I want to be.

Jim Merfeld

"Jason Jennings is the bestselling author of three highly acclaimed leadership and management books - Think Big, Act Small; Less Is More and It's Not the Big That Eat the Small.....It's The Fast That Eat the Slow. USA TODAY has called him one of the three most in demand business speakers in the world. Jennings and his family split their time between Tiburon, Ca. and Timber Rock Shore in Michigamme, Mi."

