

I had no knowledge of finance, accounting, personnel management, hiring, sales, marketing or any of the other requirements to build a long-lasting business. For the first seven years, I struggled because of ignorance. I thought of going back to school, but by 1990, I had a toddler running around the house and a thrilled stay-at-home mother chasing him.

In reality, the biggest revelation I received after reading *Swim with the Sharks* was that even if I had gone back to school, any knowledge I acquired would come, in one form or another, from books. So, for the last 10 years I have been a “continually educated student,” using every form of business education material available on the planet.

The first thing I learned in my quest for business knowledge was that there were people I could hire (such as a lawyer and an accountant) that already possessed the knowledge I would need. These people would be able to take care of those important areas so that I could concentrate on building a business.

In the next few minutes we have together, using what I call the “read according to need” method, I’m going to share with you the books that have made the most impact on my business career since 1990 and why. The books I’ll share with you are some of the easiest books to understand and will give you the ability to apply what you’ve learned almost immediately. Keep in mind that when I read a business book, it’s not for entertainment—it’s for knowledge. And knowledge is worthless unless it’s put to work and produces something beneficial.

I also want to remind you as to what age we are currently living in. It’s not the agricultural age or the industri-

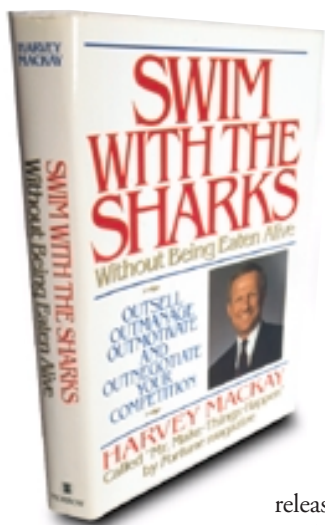
al age—it’s the information age. You must learn that in the highly competitive business world in which we live, most of the successful people you’ll meet didn’t stop learning after college, and those that possess superior knowledge usually get superior results.

Sales and negotiation

My No. 1 recommendation to anyone that needs to learn a philosophy about the art of selling and negotiating will no doubt be *Swim with the Sharks without Being Eaten Alive*. Published and released in 1988, it was on the *New York Times* Bestsellers List for 54 weeks in the No. 1 slot. Recently, it was named in the top 10 of the most inspirational business books of all time. As I understand the history, it was also the first business book ever to be released with more than 100,000 copies in hardback. The average for any other unknown author of a business book prior to this was 10,000.

In the book, Harvey Mackay covers three short courses that he has gleaned from over 30 years as an envelope manufacturer. The first short course is on salesmanship, the next on negotiations and the last one on management. Each course is filled with lessons that inspire and challenge you to be the best you can be.

The final part of the book contains what Mackay calls “quickies,” which are little bits of



wisdom that can be applied to everyday business and personal life. This book is a timeless classic that I predict will never reach the point of saturation.

Another great little book on sales was an offshoot of a best-selling management book. *The One Minute Sales Person* is a fabulous book about the style of selling I enjoy and from which I have seen the greatest results. One of the authors, Spencer Johnson, brings out that the key to success in selling is being more aware of the needs of your client or prospect than your own need to sell.

The book is based upon a following a “game plan.” It starts with a purpose and deals with things to consider before, during and after the sale. The “game plan chart” also branches off into areas of discipline that every salesperson needs to be a success. Just like all of the *One Minute* books, this book has things that will definitely challenge you to become a “Super Salesperson.”

Management

The best-selling management book I referred to in the previous paragraph is Kenneth Blanchard and Spencer Johnson’s classic *The One Minute Manager*. In this book, the authors bring out a series of goals that every person can implement with expected results. Even though every company has its own diversification of personalities and employee work ethics, this book has the ability to cover the areas important to obtain common goals for most any company.

I especially enjoyed the “one minute praises” and “one minute reprimands.” This book is a must for anyone headed for a management position. After it was first published in the early ’80s, this book was followed by several sequels that add tremendously to the development of management skills.

One area every manager will deal with

