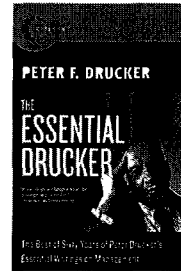


The Essential Drucker

PETER F. DRUCKER

Reviewed by Jack

When we were choosing the books for the management section of our *100 Best* list we both knew that Peter F. Drucker had to be represented. But which book to include? Though his name is often bandied about in business thought circles, Drucker's books are often considered too dense to tackle in order to access his invaluable ideas and observations. Since Drucker wrote thirty-nine volumes on everything from business management to entrepreneurship to nonprofits, the options can be somewhat overwhelming.



Now as a music fan (some might say obsessed music fan), I would never recommend purchasing a "Greatest Hits" CD. The problem with these types of collections is that they miss the nuances of the complete package the artist intended when he or she created the original album. I find this to be true of iTunes and other "singles" sources too, because listeners can pick and choose the tracks they already know. Many times I have found my favorite track only after listening to an entire CD multiple times—and I highly value that opportunity for discovery. Regardless, *The Essential Drucker* indeed a "Greatest Hits" collection of sorts is a must-read because the entire body of Drucker's work is a tall mountain to scale. While I as a self-described music snob may not run out to buy *The Best of Mahler*, there is something to be said for making academic literature accessible to the common reader, and that is what *The Essential Drucker* does for this brilliant man's work.

The genesis of *The Essential Drucker* occurred when Drucker's longtime Japanese editor and good friend Atsuo Ueda, who had retired from publishing and gone into teaching, needed an abridged version for his students to read. The resulting collection was published in Japan in 2000. However, even abridged, it ran three volumes. The American edition published in 2001 was edited down to one volume. Mr. Drucker approved of the edited compilation as a good overview of his work.

The Essential Drucker is organized around the three emphases that

Drucker focused on throughout his career: Management, the Individual and Society. He was intensely interested in the role people play in organizations. Each chapter within these sections is derived from a single Drucker book, and a curious reader will be able to go back to the source book to delve more deeply into the subject. While excerpting from only ten of Drucker's thirty-nine books, the editor acknowledges that there are five other books that could have been included but which are more technical and therefore not included in a book meant to introduce Drucker essentials.

“Business management must always, in every decision and action, put economic performance first.”

Clearly, the man was prolific, but what makes the late Mr. Drucker's writings so important? I read a ton of business books, but reading Drucker is a different kind of experience. His passages require multiple readings, not because the writing is hard to understand, but because every single word is chosen with care to optimize the point he wishes to make. His sentences are sculpted, and the thoughts are read-out-loud important. If you usually read a book with a highlighter to help remember key thoughts, you might be better served to only highlight the words that you *don't* want to remember, because there are far fewer of those and you will save money on pens.

For example, Drucker says that the purpose of a business is to create a customer. Simple. He states that a business enterprise has only two basic functions: marketing and innovation. Important. In the chapter on time management, he presents a strategy I have used many times when writing reviews or other important memos, and I have found it very effective. He suggests that when you have a large writing project, you should go heads down and write a “zero draft”—which is very rough—even before the first draft. The “zero draft” will generally take much less time, and then you can edit and revise the piece in short chunks of time—which are always easier to find. Practical. Yes, these are simple concepts, but the meat is in the implementation. As managers and leaders, we realize that every business has a different way of going to market, but this little volume

offers essential concepts everyone can implement in their individual organizations

Ask those you know who have a business degree and you will be astonished by the number who say they have not read Drucker. Beginning his career as a journalist, this was a man who never stopped writing, never stopped observing, and his insights were always well-founded in industry dynamics. This is not to say his books aren't daunting, and that is why we recommend *The Essential Drucker* as an access point to a world of unparalleled reflection on this pursuit we call business. »

The Essential Drucker: The Best of Sixty Years of Peter Drucker's Essential Writings on Management Collins Paperback Business Essentials Edition 2008 ISBN 9780061345012

WHERE TO NEXT? « Page 12 for the other Drucker book on our list » Page 196 for the subject of Drucker's first case study » Page 314 for an irreverent look at management | EVEN MORE *The Daily Drucker* by Peter F. Drucker *Adventures of a Bystander* by Peter F. Drucker (his autobiography) *The Last of All Possible Worlds* by Peter F. Drucker (one of his two works of fiction)