

ONWARD, HOW STARBUCKS FOUGHT FOR ITS LIFE WITHOUT LOSING ITS SOUL BY HOWARD SCHULTZ



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Howard Schultz

with Joanne Gordon



Onward

How Starbucks Fought for Its Life
without Losing Its Soul

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ONWARD, HOW STARBUCKS FOUGHT FOR ITS LIFE WITHOUT LOSING ITS SOUL BY HOWARD SCHULTZ PDF

This is an excellent book on how Starbucks fought for its life without losing its soul.

- Sales Rank: #98147 in Books
- Published on: 2011
- Number of items: 1
- Binding: Hardcover
- 350 pages

Features

- Starbucks coffee saga

Most helpful customer reviews

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful.

Starting a business is tough, but keeping it going is even tougher

By Tom Sales

I read this book specifically to better understand a CEO's perspective in starting a company and then coming back to save it. Howard Schultz's very personalized account demonstrates the commitment needed to keep a vision and mission statement going as later leaders start to vary from the initial vision and as the economy inevitably affects the business. Schultz casts some blame on leaders who succeeded him, but most of Starbucks' issues seemed to be caused by the recession more so than internal decisions. If one recalls how many personal finance experts were recommending to skip the \$4 latte as a way of saving money, this loss of business they suffered through 2008-9 shouldn't have been too much of a surprise.

With that said, the book was still interesting in seeing the difficulty of micro-focusing on each individual customer experience while simultaneously macro-focusing on growth. There are definitely advantages to being on every street corner, but the more spread out the company becomes the harder it is to make that experience unique but consistent for those who want the same product and experience in any location, fast but leisurely for those who aren't in a hurry, and successful for the company that can't help but focus on growth when opening multiple stores every day. Schultz effectively describes all the variables he considered through this time period to "thread the needle" to get the best of this small and big focus.

While it's hard to recognize that the successful companies we depend upon are typically short-lived, this book does a good job of showing why. A founder's focus and commitment to the original vision for a company is difficult to pass on to successors who have to be equally if not more committed to pushing it forward and adapting to changing customer tastes and competitive threats. As Schultz points out here, his successors couldn't accomplish that even though they were good people. Like Michael Dell of Dell Computer, Schultz cared and resolved to come back and make the necessary adjustments to carry Starbucks through. The average CEO probably wouldn't do that. And--as other reviewers have observed--what will happen the next time Schultz retires. It's why so many businesses don't last over extended periods and

inevitably submit to competitors who come up with better ideas.

Even several years after it was published, this book is a good read to understand these long-term challenges that all businesses face. Today--as Sears, J.C. Penney and (gasp) even Walmart--seem destined to fail, "Onward" helps to explain why killer business models must be constantly tweaked or else they will eventually stagger and then fail.

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful.

Okay not great

By Morris Massel

Onward: How Starbucks Fought for Its Life without Losing Its Soul by Howard Schultz is a good enough book but should only be on the reading list of those who are passionate about coffee or are interested in business turnarounds. Beyond that, this book has limited appeal. This is Schultz's second book. His first was Pour Your Heart Into It: How Starbucks Built a Company One Cup at a Time.

Howard Schultz is the passionate CEO of Starbucks. He loves coffee. He loves the company that he grew into the ubiquitous purveyor of coffee worldwide. Sometimes, his company even makes a good cup of coffee. As a business, it is hard to argue with their success. Until 2007, Starbucks was a consistent growth company, which kept expanding and expanding. In 2007/2008, they hit a wall. Quality declined. Customer satisfaction declined. Revenues didn't grow. After retiring as CEO earlier in the decade, Schultz convinced himself and his board that he should be brought back to reinvigorate the company. In dramatic fashion, he shutdown all of the stores for a day to retrain the staff (i.e., "partners") on how to make coffee; he disposed of the hot sandwiches that were stinking up the stores; and, he closed many unprofitable locations. What he wouldn't do is cut back on the quality of the coffee or benefits for employees. Those were values near and dear to him. The turnaround succeeded and the company found its groove again.

The results for the company were impressive. The boldness of Schultz's moves are noteworthy. Shutting an entire chain of retail stores for a day was a bold move. There is a lot to learn from him as a turnaround operator--have a defined mission and set of goals; know the values you cannot compromise on; act decisively; be willing to consider all options, even very difficult ones.

So what's wrong with a great turnaround story? Nothing. It is the book itself that has flaws. The book tends to repeat itself (lots of material about how well employees are treated and how even part-time employees get benefits). Also, the book at times becomes an advertisement for the company. It occasionally reads like an infomercial. Finally, Schultz seems to preach at times rather than tell his story. It is a fine line but it comes across to the reader. What is great about the book is the honesty and Schultz's openness.

Two elements of his turnaround are worth mentioning. Schultz swears the best cup of coffee comes from a French Press. I tend to agree. He found a small company in Seattle that invented an inverted press system called Clover. It is used to brew coffee. The results are fantastic. (I had a cup of coffee from the Clover system. What a cup of coffee!). Second, I was a bit surprised to learn that Starbucks' web-presence was so anemic in 2007/2008. But, I guess if you are focused on the coffee, you can miss a few things.

By way of contrast, I am going to re-up my recommendation to read Steve Jobs. While Schultz comes off as a far nicer human being, Jobs also had to turn around himself and his company and did the latter at least with dramatic success.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

A Unique Story

By Jerry Rogers

This a unique story because it traces the struggle of running a company that is built around people and their loyalty to a brand. I say struggle because at the same time it has to answer to its stock holders. This quote from page 306 best sums its up, "As Starbucks now knew all too well, growth for growth's sake is a losing proposition." Rather than hang on and ride out the decline in the economy that started in late 2007, Starbucks made heavy cuts in employees and stores and reinventing themselves to emerge now in 2014 stronger than ever. Going from a stock low of \$7.17 in 2009 to \$77.00 in January 2014 shows that leadership did its stockholders well. But at the same time, I feel sad for the 600 stores and 12,000 employees in the USA that got cut in one big slash.

Very interesting to read how new products came to be and others went by the wayside. Would have liked more details into how some of the decisions were made but how often do we get a CEO writing this frank about a company he dearly loves. What really comes across is how what can only be viewed as a self indulgent commodity can generate so much profit worldwide. Although the economy forced many people to cut back on their trips to Starbucks, those people were the first to go back when their situations improved. That ultimately is what continues to drive Starbucks "Onward".

I use to be a regular customer until my local Starbucks quit serving their Blonde roast after 11am. As Mr. Schultz points out it is the Partners at the local level that makes Starbucks thrive as a whole. Keep the store comps up by selling what the demand is for.

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