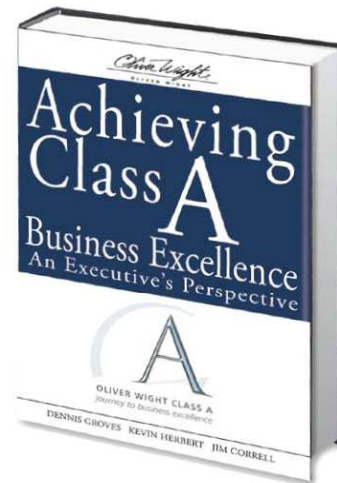


Achieving Class A Book Review  
December 2008

Book Review

## Achieving Class A Business Excellence – An Executive's Perspective

Dennis Groves, Kevin Herbert, Jim Correll  
John Wiley & Sons, Inc. 2008



Ever since Goldratt's, industrial bestseller, *The Goal*, the idea of the "industrial novel" has become very popular. Many writers of books, which in the past would have been written as dry textbooks, have realised that a novel with a story is easier to read and puts messages more clearly into a context, which the reader can identify with. In other words, they become textbooks, which are fun to read. The "Achieving Class A Business Excellence" written by experts from the well-known business consulting and education company Oliver Wight, uses that technique to good effect. Employing the Oliver Wight business excellence approaches, tools and techniques it describes how Greg Sanders, President of a cosmetics division of a large US company gets a job to sort out a dysfunctional business. It describes very well how he flounders but, after attending a business excellence seminar, employs business consultants from Effective Management Inc. (aka Oliver Wight?) to set up a business change programme with his team, which transforms the business and leads him and his team members to glory and financial reward.

The story is not all that imaginative but the lessons are excellent and there are many of them. Some readers might balk a bit at the message of "use our consulting

methodology and all your problems will be solved" - it all seems a bit too simple. But, to the credit of the authors, they do take the reader through the whole process, describing step-by-step how Greg and his team plan and execute the programme, how they overcome obstacles, how they deal with resource and people problems and how they battle their way through to success. It would be overstating it that this a gripping book but it is a good read. Many busy executives might be a bit concerned by its length; it really does need a bit of dedication to go through the nearly 400 pages of quite small print. But that should not put you off. This is the first time that I have come across a "novel" which really takes the reader through all of the stages of a successful business transformation project. Persistence and patience are therefore well rewarded – and that in itself is a useful lesson for the theme of this book.

I liked the fact that the book takes the reader through every stage towards reaching business excellence and it was easy for me to understand the scope and challenge of the process. That alone makes the book essential reading for all senior operations executives. The fact that it addresses the cosmetics sector is no problem. The messages translate well to any businesses and the book makes frequent

cross reference to other industry sectors, through the experience of the supporting consultants and visits to and exchange of ideas with other companies who have gone down this path in different industrial environments.

I cannot claim that the book is perfect. It really is a bit too long and some might (to their cost!) not stay the course and give up before the happy end. The authors are clearly very experienced business managers with an excellent insight into people and the way they think and behave; they are not in the Ian Fleming league of suspense writers though and readers will not for long forget that this is mainly a textbook rather than an entertainment novel. Also, the constant reference to those wonderful chaps from Effective Management Inc. will probably grate on the typical UK reader a bit.

I have, in the past, been in Greg's position in a very similar business and all I can say is, "I wish I had read the book at that time; I would have been much more effective in my role."

I would therefore strongly recommend that you read this book and be inspired by Greg and his team.

Reviewed by Dr. Günther Kruse HFIOM  
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