

What Makes This Book Unique

As a kid on a farm in the Nebraska Sand Hills, I decided early on I didn't want to be a farmer when I grew up. Instead, since 1972 I've owned and managed a stainless-steel fabricating company in Omaha, Nebraska. We design and make equipment for the food-processing industry – chicken cookers the size of boxcars, for instance, and convoluted conveyor systems as long as a football field.

Through 30 years of roller-coaster business cycles, I've never laid off a worker for economic reasons, despite substantial short-term losses. My employees and I have grown the company from \$250,000 in sales to nearly \$10 million today. Our annualized average rate of turnover for fulltime employees is eight percent. And we've developed a standard-setting, state-of-the-art operation in an industry in which workers' compensation claims are expected and visits from representatives of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) feared.

I learned a lot about managing the challenges and responsibilities of running a business, as a member of a family eking out a living during the shortages brought on by the Great Depression and World War II. I've learned a lot more owning and running my company.

So my wife, Judith, and I have written *Manager's Mentor: A Guide for Small Business* to help others gain from my experiences and avoid my mistakes. It's for both the doers and the dreamers – those who already own or manage a small business and those who are thinking about either prospect. It provides an insider's insight, from someone who actually runs a company; reading it will help you gain additional business wisdom.

To say writing this book was a labor of love might sound trite, but I mean it. I love capitalism and free enterprise. However flawed it is, our economic system is still the best in the world. It provides a setting in which we can chase and fulfill our dreams, provide for our family, and give others a means to earn a living. Here we can conquer new

challenges and grow in ability and responsibility. And we can get ahead enough to give to others who are less blessed and to the community for the greater good.

I especially love small business, which generates most of the steam that keeps our great economic system running. According to the Small Business Administration (SBA), small businesses constitute 99 percent of the country's employers. They create two of every three new jobs.

In 2000 alone, 612,400 new small firms opened, says the SBA, joining the other approximately six million chugging along. It's no surprise, then, that small-business development centers, business-incubator programs, training seminars, consultants, magazines, newsletters, and, yes, books are proliferating. People want – and need – to know how to make their enterprise succeed.

Many books on the market purport to be the complete guide to starting and running a business. Nonsense. No single book can be that comprehensive. The smart individual reads across the spectrum and incorporates ideas from many sources, including, I hope, this one.