

Book Review

Creating Entrepreneurs: Making Miracles Happen

Edited by Fred Kiesner

Reviewed by

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When I heard that my old friend Fred Kiesner was writing a book, I knew it would be good. I knew this because Kiesner only does good work. He almost single-handedly built the entrepreneurship program at Loyola Marymount University into an award-winning program. He has been an entrepreneur, and currently holds the Conrad Hilton Chair of Entrepreneurship at LMU. He has been actively involved in entrepreneurship education for forty years. He has been president of the U.S. Association of Small Business and Entrepreneurship (USASBE) and the International Council of Small Business (ICSB). During his career, he has been a mentor to literally thousands of potential entrepreneurs and many faculty members.

So, the question of whether the book would be good or not was not the main issue. The bigger question involved the

sort of book it would be. The answer is that it is a “Fred Kiesner book.” Only if you know Fred personally will you understand the nuance of that statement. Kiesner is a professional, a quality researcher, and an excellent teacher. But he is also a fun-loving individual who has a story for every occasion and can entertain colleagues and students alike for hours on end. Once you understand this, then you know that *Creating Entrepreneurs* is a “Fred Kiesner book.” Let me explain that in more depth.

One of my personal annoyances in professional writing is large numbers of exclamation marks. I have always held the theory that quality of writing is inversely proportional to the number of exclamation marks. To me, they are the bane of good writing. The same goes for bolded text. Bolded text is, in my mind, simply the result of the self-important and slightly warped mind of some

writers who think that every other sentence is so overwhelmingly wonderful that it must be bolded and end in an exclamation mark. Yet, Kiesner's book is purposely full of exclamation marks and bolded text. However, that is part of Fred Kiesner's personality and part of a "Fred Kiesner book." In fact, Kiesner explicitly states in the introduction of *Creating Entrepreneurs* that he WILL have exclamation marks and bolded text. Acknowledging this, I accepted these annoyances and moved on.

In my years of teaching entrepreneurship and strategy, I have always emphasized the need to know your target market. In fact, one of the biggest causes of failure among entrepreneurs is to misread their target markets. As I read *Creating Entrepreneurs*, I looked for the target market Kiesner had in mind. The book is clearly not a textbook, nor is it a typical trade book like you might find for sale at Barnes and Noble or Amazon. It is a book of readings, including contributions from Kiesner himself. Fortunately, in the contributions from other writers – all experts in the field – there are not as many exclamation marks and bolded text, although some of the bolded text that appears in those chapters seems to be gratuitous and misplaced. The target market, then, seems to be entrepreneurship professors and consultants who would buy the book for casual reading, perhaps over the holidays or summer. I am not convinced that this is a large market, but I doubt Kiesner is terribly concerned about that. The book was clearly a fun project for him, and

you can literally see his enjoyment in the chapters he wrote.

The chapter contributors are well-known, respected educators and researchers, as well as a few entrepreneurs. Kiesner states in the introduction that one should not necessarily read the book in order. He suggests reading a couple chapters at a time and in any order desired. I agree. Trying to read it in some sort of theory-evolution order would be truly frustrating and would cause one to miss the thrust of the book. There is no logic in the order of the chapters, only in the topics included, which Kiesner felt were important. In most cases, I agree.

Don Kuratko wrote a chapter on entrepreneurship at Indiana University. Chuck Hofer wrote a chapter on business plans, something that most readers already know well but can benefit from seeing another perspective. Leo Dana, who has authored scores of articles on entrepreneurship in international settings, wrote about entrepreneurship in Asia. Ted O'Keeffe wrote about entrepreneurship in Ireland. Arthur Gross-Schaefer contributed a chapter on ethics – an important topic in today's world. Several different authors wrote about youth entrepreneurship. There are chapters on entrepreneurship centers, social entrepreneurship, global entrepreneurship, corporate entrepreneurship, and entrepreneurial training, which are all current, important topics.

Some of the chapters, including some of Kiesner's, are motivational in nature, while others seem to be more descriptive. The book does not break

new ground for members of its target market, but it is not intended to be a ground-breaking treatise. It means to be entertaining through its plethora of nuggets of knowledge or what some people call take-aways – bits of information that readers can use in their

own lectures, workshops, or discussions with clients.

Overall, I found *Creating Entrepreneurs: Making Miracles Happen* to be quite enjoyable and worthwhile. I recommend it highly, even with those exclamation marks and bolded sentences.

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