

CREATING PASSION

Leaving the warm water

Daniel
Bloch



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EDITIONS W.

Reading sample | Daniel Bloch |
Creating Passion – Leaving the warm water

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**“WHAT IS NOT
WRITTEN DOWN
IS THOUGHT
IN VAIN.”**

FOREWORD

In July 2016, I returned to INSEAD (Institut Européen d'Administration) business school at Fontainebleau, France, where I had completed my Master of Business Administration (MBA), for a reunion with my contemporaries, 20 years after graduating. It seemed to me an appropriate occasion to reflect on what we had learnt. What trends, theories and visions held sway back then as we set out on our careers? Which of the major subjects and methods we were taught are still valid in practice today, what remains important to me and what has proved irrelevant or even untrue?



I am deliberately writing this from the perspective of an atypical graduate from such a business school. Most of my contemporaries were aiming at securing a good position with a global player, one of the respected consulting firms such as McKinsey or a well-paid job at a major investment bank. Back then in the mid-1990s, few graduates thought of starting their own company. The digital age had not yet fully kicked in, where a start-up based on a single good idea could, starting from scratch, grow to surpass the market value of long-established corporation in just a few years. No, I would rather describe the 1990s as a period of consolidation: after computers had become ubiquitous in everyday life but before the great tidal wave of the digital revolution had gained momentum. For most graduates at the time, a career with one of the major international corporations was the option of choice.

The idea of working for a smaller, traditional, family business geared more to the domestic market, like my designated future employer Chocolats Camille Bloch, was definitely out of favor. For ambitious young graduates, such companies seemed to offer few opportunities for promotion, little prestige and only modest rewards. However, as the grandson of the founder, Camille Bloch, I had promised my father that on completing my education I would enter the family business. Thus I didn't see much point in taking part with the others in the recruitment circus, a process whose

main aim was to land a good job. Large companies have always been intent on attracting young talent, and one way of achieving this at Fontainebleau was through their strong presence on the campus. Here, appointments were made for interviews which would later be held at the headquarters of the companies concerned. At the time, my only regret was that I felt somewhat excluded when it came to their lively anecdotes about lavish head offices, tricky interview questions and attractive job offers.

Today, I am glad that I didn't have to get swept off my feet by accepting one of these deceptively enticing offers. Nonetheless, with hindsight, I am sorry that I didn't have the opportunity to prove myself through the selection process. I would have benefitted from having had to define my own points of view, from acquiring a greater awareness of my own strengths and weaknesses, and from having to subject myself to the judgement of professional interviewers. Later I learned how to assess myself, to examine my motives and thereby discover what I was capable of. Even today, this still helps me to handle the challenges of everyday life.

Later in my career, I did have plenty of opportunities to experience my impact on a critical audience. For example, on the numerous occasions when I was invited to give lectures, which were particularly well-received when I was able to reveal some of my own personal experience. In public life



I have always felt that, as the representative of a respected Swiss family business, I had a duty to express my points of view clearly. Not consciously seeking public attention, but more out of a love of the subject, after repeated requests I finally agreed to take part in competitions where entrepreneurs or their businesses were competing for awards.

Thus it was that the main idea for this book came to me when I was competing for just such an award, the Ernst & Young (E&Y) “Entrepreneur of the Year 2015”, where I had to convince two members of the jury of my entrepreneurial skills. Even though I did not finally win the competition, it made me more aware of the qualities and skills that had helped me succeed in my business career and, above all, how far these differed from conventional management techniques. Had I won the award, I would have turned down the prize money but instead asked E&Y to support the publication of this book. Well, although it didn’t turn out that way, the seed had been sown and so I decided to go ahead and put my thoughts down on paper.

In “Creating Passion” I relate events and experiences from my own company from a somewhat different, personal perspective. To me, the English word “passion” seems more apt than the prosaic German word “Leidenschaft”, perhaps because it is the same as the word “passion” in French, the first language I learnt as a child. Only later, when I went to

school in Bern, did German become the language in which I could express myself most clearly. Despite this, to this day French remains my “*langue du cœur*”.

Passion is indisputably a driving force, yet in the world of business, and particularly in business literature, it does not always have a good reputation. It cannot be analyzed, cannot be measured and cannot be planned; indeed some wonder whether it can be influenced at all. Can the conditions under which people do things with their heart and soul really be channeled and controlled? Probably not directly. Nonetheless, my experience and my intuition have taught me that favorable conditions can be created in a company where passion can flourish. That is what this book is all about.

My reflections are primarily addressed to ambitious and talented young people who, like me, after completing an MBA, are about to enter business life. I want to encourage them to consider a career in a well-established family firm, as many such companies have nurtured an active entrepreneurial spirit over generations. They think long-term, accept that mistakes happen learn from them, and finance products for the future with money earned in the past. Above all, unlike many major corporations, medium-sized enterprises are often better at taking the needs of individual employees into account, thereby making them an integral, indeed an essential, part of a common endeavor. In addition, young people



who have not yet climbed all the rungs of the management ladder but nevertheless have good ideas, can often make a greater difference in a smaller company than in a large one.

It is not my aim to write a textbook, and thus no attempt has been made here to provide an exact definition of the word “passion”. Instead, the book is designed to be read easily, to give the reader an insight into the forces at play in an SME – based on my own experience of a vibrant company. When it comes down to it, passion will always remain something of a mystery, arising out of the conflict between order and chaos, fantasy and realism, creativity and routine, the present and the future, individual needs and the bigger picture.



In his first book, the entrepreneur Daniel Bloch explores the question of which factors are decisive for the success of a company. Often it is not just the application of management dogma. Instead, Daniel Bloch identifies the key difference in awakening a sense of creativity and passion that gives small businesses the ability to compete at the forefront of the market. In an informal style, he recounts episodes from his company which led to a major project to secure the future. With this approach and a view which goes beyond pure economics, he proposes a new concept for people-oriented and successful entrepreneurship.

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