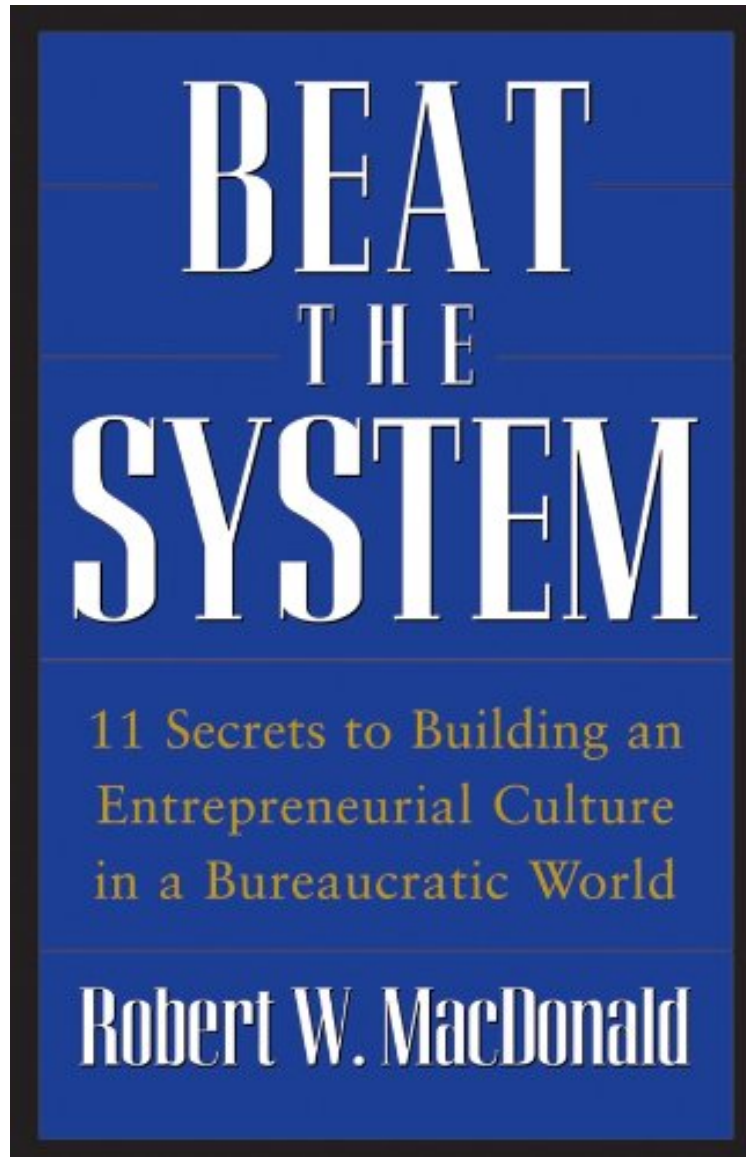


(Library ebook) Beat The System: 11 Secrets to Building an Entrepreneurial Culture in a Bureaucratic World

# Beat The System: 11 Secrets to Building an Entrepreneurial Culture in a Bureaucratic World

*Robert W. MacDonald*

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**Robert W. MacDonald : Beat The System: 11 Secrets to Building an Entrepreneurial Culture in a Bureaucratic World** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Beat The System: 11 Secrets to Building an Entrepreneurial Culture in a Bureaucratic World:

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people found the following review helpful. No Secrets, No Stunning Insight, Just Good Advice By Wally Bock If you like books where successful entrepreneurs lay out their philosophy, then *Beat the System: 11 Secrets to Building an Entrepreneurial Culture in a Bureaucratic World* by Robert W. MacDonald will be an enjoyable read. If you're looking for the "secrets" promised in the title or if you're looking for some stunning new leadership insight, you'll be disappointed. This book gives you one person's thoughts about based on how that person succeeded in one situation and industry. If you're in insurance, you will probably get more value from the book than a reader in manufacturing. But there's value for both of you. Success leaves clues and there are clues here. The author's core belief is that entrepreneurship and bureaucracy are mortal enemies. He believes that entrepreneurship is a lifestyle. In that context, he lays out eleven principles for acting like an entrepreneur. He calls them "secrets." Here are MacDonald's 11 Secrets: Build parallel interests. Be an architect of the future. Be decisive, multifaceted and ethical to a fault. Know the risk--measure the reward. Communication--be a shower and not a teller. Power to the people. Become a trust builder. Sharing wealth increases wealth. Be constant, consistent, and concise. Treat important people like important people. Do simple things--simply do them. There's lots of good advice here. Most of it seems targeted to people who are working in large companies. There's specific advice, for example, about how to propose a daring action. There are also "Bonus Secrets" that fill up later chapters. These will be especially valuable for you if you're starting up a business. This is not a carefully reasoned treatise on how to be successful. It's the perspective of a single successful individual. That's either a strength or a weakness, depending on what you're looking for. You won't find a lot of facts to support the author's statements. On page 95, for example, he states that "The number one complaint of employees working in a bureaucratic institution is that they don't know what is happening." That may be true, but there's no support offered for the statement. It's likely to be opinion stated as fact. There are lots of interesting tidbits in this book. Take page 61, where you find this: "Traditional business plans, no matter how meticulously developed and presented are, for the most part, a waste of time, money, and effort." On the downside, the author's style is a bit wearing at times. Cheap shots abound, nestled in parenthetical comments. These are gratuitous negative comments about Republicans, the French, and Gerald Ford, among others. None of these advance the book or give you any special insight. They're an author's indulgence that I wish had been left out. This book is intended to be an inspirational book. So the challenge for you, if you're considering buying it is: will this be a book that's inspirational for you? 25 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Perhaps not "secrets" but certainly sensible guidelines By Robert Morris As I read this book, I was again reminded of a GE annual meeting during which Jack Welch explained why he admires entrepreneurial companies: "For one, they communicate better. Without the din and prattle of bureaucracy, people listen as well as talk; and since there are fewer of them they generally know and understand each other. Second, small companies move faster. They know the penalties for hesitation in the marketplace. Third, in small companies, with fewer layers and less camouflage, the leaders show up very clearly on the screen. Their performance and its impact are clear to everyone. And, finally, smaller companies waste less. They spend less time in endless reviews and approvals and politics and paper drills. They have fewer people; therefore they can only do the important things. Their people are free to direct their energy and attention toward the marketplace rather than fighting bureaucracy." By implication, Welch describes the "system" to which the title of Robert MacDonald's book refers, one whose bureaucracy manifests what James O'Toole has aptly characterized as "the ideology of comfort and the tyranny of custom." Anyone who thinks it is easy to "beat" that system has underestimated the resistance that change initiatives inevitably encounter. For individuals as well as for organizations, MacDonald suggests that it is imperative "to recognize the system for what it is and how it seeks to control and limit your future." He introduces and then devotes a separate chapter to each of eleven "secrets," none of which is a head-snapping revelation and all of which are best revealed within his narrative, in context. With all due respect to the lessons to be learned from the exemplary companies MacDonald discusses, each of those who read this book must decide what is of greatest relevance to his or her own organization. In this context, I presume to offer a head's up: bureaucrats feel personally threatened by entrepreneurs and will do everything they can to undermine their initiatives. In most organizations, bureaucrats [begin italics] are [end italics] the system. In my opinion, the greatest value of MacDonald's 11 "secrets" lies in the framework they provide for a self-diagnosis, a "reality gut check" if you will, that will enable decision-makers to identify areas in which a bureaucratic mindset is weakening the entrepreneurial spirit that Welch obviously admires. Another substantial benefit of this book is that the information and, more importantly, the counsel that MacDonald provides can help decision-makers to take corrective initiatives. For example, simplify and clarify all policies, procedures, and especially processes; improve communication between and among everyone involved; and meanwhile, do everything possible to nourish and support individual initiative and personal accountability. For example, those whose performance is measured must be directly involved in determining what must be done and how to do it. One of the best indicators of an entrepreneurial culture is the widespread use of first-person plural pronouns, although I concede that over the years I have known a number of knuckle-dragging bureaucrats who frequently used first-person plural pronouns when presuming to suggest that they spoke for the entire (given) organization. Here are two final points. MacDonald makes it quite clear that the entrepreneurial mindset is not determined by the size or nature of an organization. It can be pervasive throughout Southwest Airlines and totally absent in one of its vendors with only seven people on the payroll. When making the second point, I invoke direct

address: If you remain trapped and smothered in your current situation, don't blame the bureaucrats. Don't blame Robert MacDonald. Whether or not you develop and then nourish the entrepreneurial mindset is entirely up to you.

Smart guidelines for building flexible, innovative companies Beat the System is a follow-up to Robert MacDonald's controversial but successful first book, Cheat to Win. Packed with proven, real-life advice, Beat the System shows readers how to deal with the bureaucracy that can smother the creativity and entrepreneurship essential to long-range business success. Beat the System teaches readers how to beat the bureaucratic system by building entrepreneurial cultures in their businesses, their departments, or even their individual jobs. MacDonald skillfully describes how business cultures develop, how bureaucratic procedures and processes seep into them, and how to build an entrepreneurial culture even as we live in a bureaucratic world. At the heart of his system are practical steps that create a sense of ownership among employees, invites their participation, creates a common mission, fosters an entrepreneurial atmosphere, and shares the rewards with all. Robert W. MacDonald (Wayzata, MN) is a true visionary in the financial services industry who rose from a door-to-door insurance salesman to the CEO of Allianz Life of North America. He was also the founder, CEO, and chairman of LifeUSA.