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Posted Jul 21st 2010 7:42AM

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by Geoff Roth



Jeff Havens

I'm supposed to do this book review, but I don't really feel like reading the book. So, I'll just read the liner notes, make up some stuff about the book and go back to checking my Facebook page and drinking coffee. No one will ever know, since you'll probably never read the book anyway.

And, that is how I would start this article if I took to heart the tongue-in-cheek advice in a new book called 'How to Get Fired, The New Employee's Guide to Perpetual Unemployment' by Jeff Havens.

But, since I value my job and do have a good work ethic, I did read the book, and I'm actually going to take the time to write a review of it that hopefully will give you some insights.

Jeff Havens is a former English teacher-turned comedian and public speaker who has a very simple philosophy: Do exactly the opposite of what I tell you to do. In 'How To Get Fired,' Havens focuses his wit and wisdom on recent college grads who are either looking for their first job or, if they are lucky, actually working their first job.

If you are over 35, you'll read this book and probably laugh a lot because you know people who actually do what seems like incredibly stupid things on the job. If you are graduating from college or starting your career, you could learn a lot from the book.

Four Pillars of Poverty

Havens bases his "advice" on what he calls the Four Pillars of Poverty:

1. Fake your resume
2. Establish your incompetence
3. Destroy your work ethic
4. Alienate your coworkers

With chapter titles like "Treat Your Job Like College" and advice like how to sleep at your desk, the book is a slacker's guide to making sure you never hold a job longer than a couple of weeks. Of course, there is a serious side to this book, which Havens gets to at the end in a chapter titled "What You Really Need To Know." In that chapter, Havens does a great job of driving home the point that you need to take your job seriously and that it is your job to impress your employer, not the other way around. Some of what Havens says in this final chapter may sound a little "lecturish," but, trust me, a lot of people out there need this lecture.

Not just stories

What really impressed me about the the book was that Havens backs up the things he says with real-life facts and examples. He actually gathered statistics about the top reasons why people get fired. He pointed out some high-profile cases of people who got fired because they lied on their resumes, such as George O'Leary, former head football coach at Notre Dame. He got fired a week after being hired after the school discovered he didn't have the master's degree he claimed he had, and he lied about receiving three letters playing college football when he actually never played a game.

If you are in that over-35 crowd, you may look at the book and say to yourself, "Geez, don't people just know this stuff?" Trust me, the answer is "no." As both a former manager and a college professor, I can come up with hundreds of examples that Havens could have used in his book. There's the former employee who actually said she couldn't take on an assignment she was given because it would interfere with the time she needed at work to plan her wedding (true story!). Or, the student who asked me if she could postpone taking her final exam because she thought her boyfriend was dumping her (another true story!).

'How to Get Fired' is a great book to read if you are just getting started in the grownup world, or a great present to give a college student or recent grad to help set them on the right path.

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