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Dennis W. Bakke

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JOY AT WORK

A Revolutionary Approach
to Fun on the Job



DENNIS W. BAKKE

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Dennis W. Bakke : Joy at Work: A Revolutionary Approach To Fun on the Job (Pocket Wisdom Series) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Joy at Work: A Revolutionary Approach To Fun on the Job (Pocket Wisdom Series):

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. From Boring Work Dulldrums to Pulsating JoyBy Boer, Jan H.For

decades I have been interested in revolutionary approaches in the world(s) of work, industry, and business. I have experienced the rough contours of factory work first hand for almost five years during the 1950s. That experience created within me a longing for revolutionary change, though it took me many years of thinking, reading and writing, to develop some alternate perspectives on that world, but never enough to fully satisfy me--until I recently read Bakke's *Joy at Work*. That book gave me everything I have ever looked for and more. Bakke's is a combination of practical--and, I need to add, extremely successful-- experience combined with sound theoretical thought and rich imagination that enabled him to move out of the box into a totally different set of work, industry and business models that challenge almost every orthodox practice ever devised and institutionalized. It is marked by a profound degree of humility that made Bakke willing to forego the power traditionally accorded a CEO of a huge corporation like his and distribute it throughout the company's workforce. This book needs to be regarded as the bible for the areas it deals with, from basic practice to profound theory. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Great insight into running large organisations with integrity By Craig Campbell Great insight into running large organisations with integrity, values and human fulfilment as central - rather than profits and power and elitism 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Good Read By Deborah Blake The title made me curious and once I began reading it I could not put it down.

Imagine a company where people love coming to work and are highly productive on a daily basis. Imagine a company whose top executives, in a quest to create the most "fun" workplace ever, obliterate labor-management divisions and push decision-making responsibility down to the plant floor. Could such a company compete in today's bottom-line corporate world? Could it even turn a profit? Well, imagine no more. In *Joy at Work*, Dennis W. Bakke tells the true story of this extraordinary company--and how, as its co-founder and longtime CEO, he challenged the business establishment with revolutionary ideas that could remake America's organizations. It is the story of AES, whose business model and operating ethos --"let's have fun"--were conceived during a 90-minute car ride from Annapolis, Maryland, to Washington, D.C. In the next two decades, it became a worldwide energy giant with 40,000 employees in 31 countries and revenues of \$8.6 billion. It's a remarkable tale told by a remarkable man: Bakke, a farm boy who was shaped by his religious faith, his years at Harvard Business School, and his experience working for the Federal Energy Administration. He rejects workplace drudgery as a noxious remnant of the Industrial Revolution. He believes work should be fun, and at AES he set out to prove it could be. Bakke sought not the empty "fun" of the Friday beer blast but the joy of a workplace where every person, from custodian to CEO, has the power to use his or her God-given talents free of needless corporate bureaucracy. In *Joy at Work*, Bakke tells how he helped create a company where every decision made at the top was lamented as a lost chance to delegate responsibility--and where all employees were encouraged to take the "game-winning shot," even when it wasn't a slam-dunk. Perhaps Bakke's most radical stand was his struggle to break the stranglehold of "creating shareholder value" on the corporate mind-set and replace it with more timeless values: integrity, fairness, social responsibility, and a sense of fun.

.com Dennis Bakke was co-founder and eventually CEO of AES, a large energy company which grew to over \$8 billion in annual revenue and over 40,000 employees. Bakke's *Joy at Work* is in part, a CEO memoir, as it chronicles AES's growth, complete with anecdotes about boardroom confrontations, employee relations, and new openings of production facilities. *Joy at Work* goes beyond the standard business tale, though: Bakke believes in moral values as ends in themselves, as opposed to means towards the end of greater financial return, and he's not afraid to say it. A number of authors in recent years have made the case that companies which embody humanistic values, and which nurture uplifting cultures, come to house happier, more productive employees. "Values" should be embraced, the argument goes, because they lead to better business results. Bakke shuns such thinking. He wants "values" for values' sake--because he believes they are an integral part of the human experience, and one that daily work should incorporate. He argues that financial return is only one good alongside others. As Bakke writes at one point in *Joy at Work*: "Why should enriching shareholders be more important than producing quality products and selling them to customers at fair prices?" Readers who start off sympathetic to Bakke's worldview will likely enjoy Bakke's book. "Joy at Work" is situated perfectly within values-led business literature, alongside books like Howard Schultz's *Pour Your Heart Into It*, the Body Shop's Anita Roddick (*Take It Personally*) and Ben Jerry's *Double Dip*, by the ice-cream guys. *Joy at Work* provokes questions and warrants a read, if, for no reason other than its impressive string of blurbs from friends of the author: Everyone from President Bill Clinton to Seattle Seahawks coach Mike Holmgren vouches for Bakke and his gospel. --Peter Han From Publishers Weekly Bakke cofounded international energy giant AES in 1981 and was its president and CEO from 1994 to 2002. This memoir-cum-inspirational business book has an everything-but-the-kitchen-sink feel; in relaxed, roundabout prose, Bakke tells of his first work experience (chasing cows to the barn for milking at age five), his schooling, his friendships and partnerships, and how it all coalesced into a philosophy of work that puts employee satisfaction ahead of profit as a company's goal; a frightening thing for most managers. Bakke believes worker autonomy and self-determination to be the straightest path to success. Most of the book takes AES as a case study; his matter-of-fact descriptions of the Houston power plant's experience with

"honeycombing"mdash;or transition to egalitarian, collective self-supervision, including spendingmdash;or of humility as a managerial necessity, are genuinely inspiring, though job elimination is involved in the transitions he proposes. Bakke argues that his values and techniques did, in fact, lead to profit (until, he says, the energy industry scandals of the past few years), but that profit is not the point of work. While most managers would not dream of experimenting with Bakke's ideas, they will find it difficult to deny their potential. 22-city author tour.(Mar. 8)Copyright copy; Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. "A timely and inspiring book that challenges us to rethink the purpose of business in society. It is all the more important because Dennis Bakke's personal life mirrors the principles he advocates." - President Bill Clinton"A must-read book for anyone who wants to make work fun, fulfilling, and financially rewarding." - Jack Kemp, former HUD secretary and vice presidential candidate "Joy at Work is simply the best book I have ever read about integrating human values and economic success. Bakke has changed the nature of the game of business forever. The book is an answer to our cynicism and materialism and to the loss of faith in our leaders. It is required reading for all who are in a leadership position, are studying leadership, or know someone who is doing either." - Peter Block, author of Stewardship and The Answer to How Is Yes "Dennis Bakke's book is a 'coaching manual' on how to make fun and success synonymous in the workplace." - Mike Holmgren, coach of the Seattle Seahawks