



A Mind-Stretching Fable That Will Teach You Quite a Few New Tricks!

Reviewer: Donald Mitchell "coauthor of *The 2,000 Percent Squared Solution*" (a Strategic Management professor and management consultant in Boston)

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Let's face it. Given the choice between reading a typical management book and a business-based fable to learn better management practices, few would choose the typical management book. Imagine how much greater will be the preference for *Follow the Other Hand*, which provides great sleight-of-hand entertainment values above and beyond any business fable I've read before. You've got a treat ahead of you!

This is a book about creativity in business, and the content lives up to the book's intention. Here's an example. The introduction opens with this sentence: "I, Jonathan West, like to tell people that I am in the oil business." Visions of billions light up in your eyes, no doubt. But the second paragraph qualifies that sentence with "I import olives, olive oil and related gourmet products."

In those two paragraphs you get a sense of Mr. Cohen's interesting way of communicating. He tells you something. You jump to a wrong conclusion. Then, he corrects your false assumption in a humorous way. It's a sort of verbal magic trick, as it were.

West and Company is doing poorly. It may have to be sold or closed. But Jonathan West called a college friend, Wilcox, whose business is doing well. Wilcox recommends someone who can help, George Miles, a magician named Merlin. Wilcox believes in Merlin so much that he offers to pay Merlin's fee if Jonathan is not satisfied.

Intrigued enough to go ahead, Jonathan is about to experience the lessons of a lifetime.

Merlin combines magic and business in a most unusual way. In Lesson #1, Jonathan is challenged to figure out how a card illusion is done. The advice: "Think Differently--Follow the Other Hand." A magician draws your attention in one direction while something is going on elsewhere. A business, likewise, does things in a certain way . . . and ignores the alternatives. Like Dr. Stephen Covey in *The 7 Habits of Highly Successful People*, you are encouraged to think what you want to accomplish ("Begin with the End in Mind") and then figure out how to get there. At the middle of the chapter, you receive instruction in how to do the "Two Card Monte" trick. Jonathan is then able to take the trick back to his office and use it to re-direct his colleagues' thinking.

Lesson #2 is Building Trust-Making the Audience Part of the Act. We've all seen how magicians let the audience check out the magician and the equipment to be sure there's no rigging going on. This checking is part of how we are able to suspend belief and go along with the illusion. Merlin suggests that we offer customers choice, control and the chance to get engaged emotionally in our offering before they buy. The chapter is filled with intriguing examples of companies that are doing this in a variety of ways. I found this chapter so impressive that I re-thought how to market some of my professional services. This chapter shares the secret of the illusion of how to let the audience pick an object that you can guess correctly.

Lesson #3 is Defining Your Brand-Creating a Magical Experience. The secrets are to add drama (often using technology), let people have an experience of discovering the offering on their own (so they feel the brand is them) and then listening to the reactions to be flexible in how you perform for the customer . . . adapting to their experience. This chapter also has some fine examples in it such as Build-a-Bear and Jones Soda. You also learn how to use a photograph on a cell phone as part of an illusion.

Lesson #4 is Idea Heckling-Removing the Obstacles to Thinking Differently. This is a chapter about stall-busting, eliminating barriers to thinking differently. The chapter's illusion, appropriately enough, is how to match wits to decide how many matches are in a matchbook.

Lesson #5 is Discovering Your Competitive Edge-"What's Your Magic?" This is where you turn what makes you unique into an advantage that others will appreciate. This is obviously the most open-minded of the chapters . . . but probably the most important. The chapter ends with a chance to make a coin disappear into "thin" air.

Through the five lessons, Mr. Cohen does a fine job of building a new business model for West and Company that should open up many new doors of opportunity.

The metaphor of magic illusions is a powerful one for this book. Mr. Cohen picks up on the experiences we've all had in trying to figure out magic tricks, providing the illusions for others and feeling deeply engaged in illusions that we couldn't figure out where our senses were excited by the experience. In all three senses, that's what being in business can be about: Solving problems to make a business more successful and trying to figure out who to buy from; developing and delivering superior offerings and seeing thrilled customers enjoying those offerings; and the breakthrough experiences of creating something new and unexpectedly wonderful.

Anyone who doesn't think they can be more creative in business will probably find that this book will help them remove some of those mental blocks.

In my case, I was so impressed with Mr. Cohen's book that I decided to use its principles in my new few briefing documents and assignments for The Billionaire Entrepreneurs' Master Mind.

Bravo, Mr. Cohen!