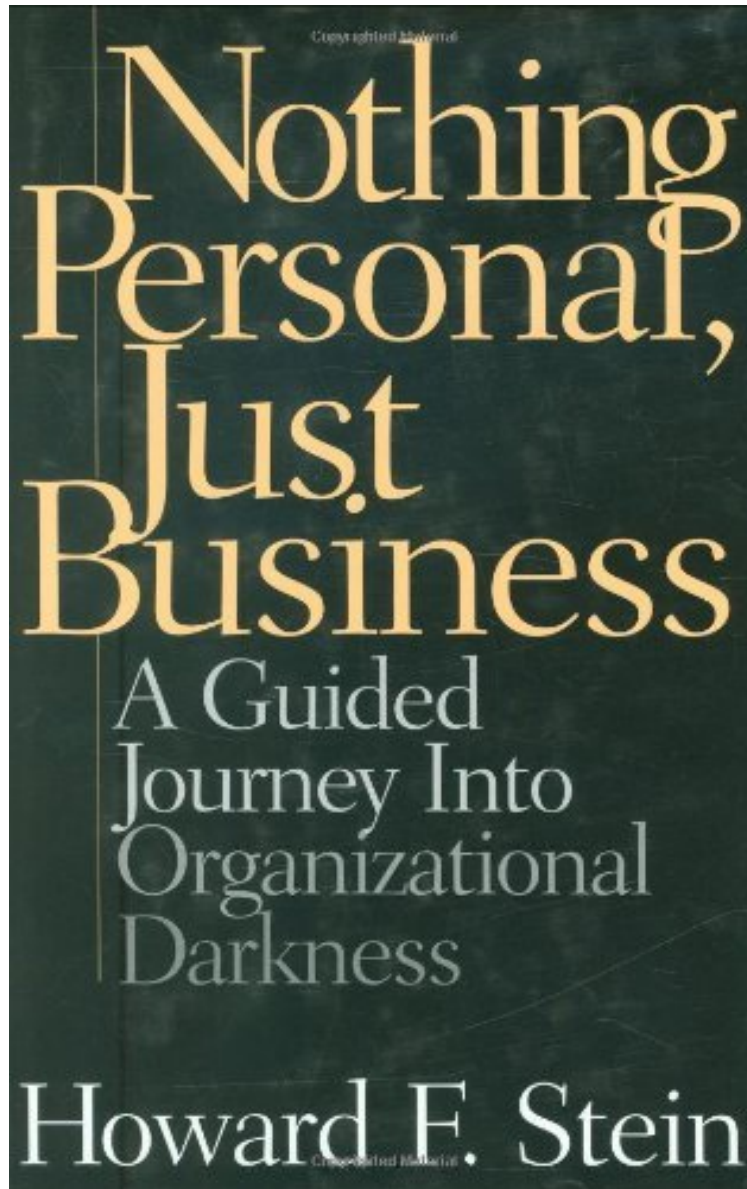


Nothing Personal, Just Business: A Guided Journey into Organizational Darkness

Howard F. Stein

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Howard F. Stein : Nothing Personal, Just Business: A Guided Journey into Organizational Darkness before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Nothing Personal, Just Business: A Guided Journey into Organizational Darkness:

1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Impressive and movingBy G. de GroofThe most impressive

(business)book I read last year (2006). Not so much for the rather provocative parallel Stein draws between the Holocaust and the way employees are treated during downsizing. But mostly for the way he is able to give words to his own emotional reactions as result of his "provocative" statement. For instance how he became a second Howard Stein after a nurse-educator said she did not recognize him drawing this parallel. Stein writes: "I "saw" and "heard" echoes of my mother in her, and in the current interaction: how could I be her son, and still think or act that way? In this reverie, I recognized foreignness to myself in myself. [...] I simply let it unfold, and continued to listen and to observe. I wanted to give her (and us) more room. As if out of the air, she began to speak." Reading this vignette had a physical effect on me and made me aware that reverie is something you can use as a consultant when emotions are high.

Throughout the United States and indeed the world, organizations have become places of darkness, where emotional savagery and brutality are now commonplace and where psychological forms of violence--intimidation, degradation, dehumanization--are the norm. Stein succeeds in portraying this dramatically in his evocative, lucid new book, and in doing so he counters official pronouncements that simply because unemployment is low and productivity high, all is well. Through the use of symbolism and metaphor he gives us access to the interior experience of organizational life today. He employs a form of disciplined subjectivity, based on Freud's concept of counter-transference, and other methods to help us comprehend what such dominating notions as managed social change really mean. Downsizing, reengineering, managed care, endless organizational restructuring--all are presented as just business but in reality, says Stein, they are devastatingly personal in their effects. With numerous vignettes and anecdotes drawn from his formal and informal research, Dr. Stein shows us in often horrifying detail what work has come to be in so many of these dark places--but also what must happen, and can happen, to lift them into the light. Through consultations, observation, and personal experience, Stein documents the ordinary assaults on the human spirit, a form of violence in the workplace that usually escapes common classification. By that he means culturally sanctioned violence, such as everyday forms of intimidation, ridicule, goading, and doubling of workloads--all in an asserted effort to make the workplace more productive, more competitive. His examples, metaphors, symbols, images come from the Holocaust and the Vietnam War, and refer back to other horrors in other times, the Crusades and the Spanish Inquisition among them. His book demonstrates precisely how brutal so many of our rational business practices have become, and how disposable all of us ultimately are, at all levels, in all organizations. Stein draws upon a variety of research techniques, including a form of counter-transference based on Freud's concept, to understand the inner meanings and feelings contained in workplace metaphors and symbols. An incisive foreword by Dr. David B. Friedman, Associate Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at the New York University School of Medicine, comments on this, puts the book in perspective and offers additional insights into Stein's themes and how brilliantly he develops them.

"This book is the most recent of several that Stein has written, alone and with others, on the emotional dynamics of the workplace. He has offered psychohistorians who have the heart and the will a foundation to work from that might at last help us understand the why of the workplace and the nature of what we have done to ourselves. Think about it..."-Journal of Psychohistory"[A]ll is not well in organisations and this book offers valuable insights to redress such a state, a challenge made more manageable."-The Occupational Psychologist"Yacute;Auml;ll is not well in organisations and this book offers valuable insights to redress such a state, a challenge made more manageable."-The Occupational Psychologist?[A]ll is not well in organisations and this book offers valuable insights to redress such a state, a challenge made more manageable.?-The Occupational Psychologist?This book is the most recent of several that Stein has written, alone and with others, on the emotional dynamics of the workplace. He has offered psychohistorians who have the heart and the will a foundation to work from that might at last help us understand the why of the workplace and the nature of what we have done to ourselves. Think about it...?-Journal of Psychohistory"Through telling vignettes and extended case studies, Stein demonstrates the importance of psychodynamic mechanisms (especially counter-transference) in understanding and healing dysfunctional business, medical, and educational organizations. He argues that institutional change creates feelings of loss and grief that are often denied, leading to an inability to mourn' that can destroy trust and produce aggression. Stein also examines the brutal nature of corporate actions that result in the use of Holocaust imagery to describe experiences of downsizing' and re-engineering.' The insights in this book should be valuable to managers and administrators as well as consultants and counselors."-Philip K. Bock Presidential Professor Emeritus University of New Mexico About the Author HOWARD F. STEIN is a professor in the Department of Family and Preventive Medicine, University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center, Oklahoma City. A medical and psychoanalytic anthropologist, organizational consultant, political psychologist and psychohistorian, Dr. Stein specializes in teaching clinical behavioral science to residents and graduate students in Family Medicine and in Occupational Medicine. He is a former editor of The Journal of Psychoanalytic Anthropology, has published more than 200 articles and chapters in books, and has written and edited more than 20 of his own books, most recently Euphemism, Spin, and the Crisis in Organizational Life (Quorum, 1998).