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BUSINESS BOOK REVIEW

Guidebook for change puts its premise into practice

by Paul Sanders

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Lexington, KY - The business of books has undergone seismic shifts recently. As an industry that had largely gone unchanged for hundreds of years, the landscape has been transformed dramatically.

The \$40 billion-per-year retail book industry is still feeling the aftershocks of changes that just keep coming. At the top of the list are new electronic devices, or e-readers, used to download, store and read books.

Best known is the Kindle, the e-reader that has been a huge success for Amazon. Even Barnes & Noble, the world's largest retail bookseller, has gotten into the game with the NOOK Reader. Among other offerings are the SONY PRS-505, Apple iPad, ALEX, Skiff and Kobo.

E-readers have been partially credited with changes in the way books are made, produced and published. Both Barnes & Noble and Borders have suggested e-readers as one of the reasons for retail store closings in 2010.

Is the book, as we know it, dead? Do most readers prefer a metal-and-plastic electronic screen to the feel and texture of well-crafted paper?

In a newly expanded green edition of her award-winning book, Lexington author Mary Claire O'Neal provides an appealing answer. *Becoming What You Want to See in the World* is a book that leads by example, not only in its prosaic and positive message but also in the design of the book itself.

A soft-hued cover reminiscent of a sepia-toned photograph sedates the eye with its warmth and provides a welcome for the text that is to come. It is an appreciated reprieve to the high gloss of many texts. This is both a simple and beautiful book, balanced between the two. It asks to be handled and read.

River Birch Publishing, a Lexington-based firm founded by O'Neal, is a member of the Green Press Initiative. Thoroughbred Printing, another Lexington firm, is a Forestry Stewardship Council-certified printer. The green edition of *Becoming* was printed on 100 percent recycled paper (meaning no trees were cut down to create any part of the book). The paper was processed chlorine-free, eliminating usual dioxins noted for creating illnesses in people and animals.

The book's preface notes resources that were saved in the green edition, including three tons of wood, seven million BTUs of energy and 9,811 gallons of water. In addition, 2,037 fewer pounds of greenhouse gases and 596 fewer pounds of solid waste were produced.

Considering there are more than 6,000 publishers in the United States and tens of thousands more self-publishers (according to bizstats.com), the impact of this is mind-boggling. Conserving natural resources and protecting public health through this process could have a staggering effect on the publishing business.

The significance of a single individual's ability to create change is both O'Neal's exceptional contribution and the book's message. *Becoming* focuses on the hopefulness of change and the impact of an individual's action on the larger world.

Using the metaphor of the journey, O'Neal reminds us that, "We all have a mountain to climb — our path in life." The most important reminder is that "only you can decide what works best for you."

Unlike many other authors, O'Neal does not suggest a "one-path-fits-all" approach. She makes a disclaimer in the

opening paragraphs that “there are many ways to travel up a mountain.” What she offers are principles and practical tools that may make the hike easier, but what is offered is not the only way.

Each of the book’s short chapters focuses on a particular principle, followed by tools for consideration and action. Included are tools to help:

- understand the “physics” of happiness to bring more balance into daily living;
- create gratitude for consistent success;
- overcome fear of change and the unknown;
- take action to make your goals realities;
- change your inner attitude to change your outer life; and
- practice compassionate communication.

Drawn from her experience as a business consultant and coach, O’Neal openly shares the personal “potholes” of her own journey. Her stories are engaging and often simple, giving them a universal context. Readers may find themselves nodding in agreement, for example, when she discusses how the American work ethic often causes relationships to suffer. They may also feel lightened by her seemingly simple but proven solutions.

To change the world, O’Neal writes, we first have to change ourselves. As this remarkable book suggests, greening ourselves to this idea may just be the most powerful personal technology we can develop.