10-1-2004

Doing Business With the Bard

William "Skip" Boyer

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholars.fhsu.edu/alj

Part of the Educational Leadership Commons, Higher Education Commons, and the Teacher Education and Professional Development Commons

Recommended Citation

Available at: https://scholars.fhsu.edu/alj/vol2/iss4/5

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by FHSU Scholars Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Academic Leadership: The Online Journal by an authorized editor of FHSU Scholars Repository.
This is a good time to leave Phoenix, Arizona. The Valley of the Sun is about to officially become the Surface of the Sun, tempers are short, eggs cook on the sidewalk, small children melt, etc. Time for locals to seek cooler climes.

So, I went to the Shakespeare Festival in Cedar City, Utah, at the Southern Utah University. It is an exceptional festival that continues throughout the summer, as it has for many years. A year or so ago, it won the Tony Award for Best Regional Theater. No surprises there. I've attended before and always enjoy it. (Pardon the plug. We're seeking sponsors for these columns and you just never know who might kick in.)

Shakespeare, of course, is the ultimate role model for all writers. Here's a writer who did all right while he was alive and became a major industry after he died. My personal goal is to have people studying my stuff 500 years after I'm dead. Can you imagine? Entire academic programs and rituals built around this stuff?

Shakespeare has proven to be amazingly versatile. We study him in college literature courses. We used to study him in high school English classes, too, back in the days when high school students could still read.

However, the Bard is also making waves in a variety of other areas today. For example, leadership and business management. What?! You doubt?!

Britain's Prince Philip once noted, "A man can be forgiven a lot if he can quote Shakespeare in an economic crisis." Good advice. It confuses everyone.

There is even a great book available at your local booksellers:

Shakespeare on Management by Jay M. Shafritz, another writer who has figured out a way to scam a living by riding the coattails of the Bard of Avon. Don't mind me. I just wish I'd thought of it first. Most of the following I pretty much stole from him, anyway.

So, the bird and I went to the Shakespeare Festival to study management. This way, we can write the whole thing off and maybe figure out a way to expense it as a budgeted training seminar. We, too, are amazingly versatile.

Lest ye doubt our sincerity of purpose, leave us quote to thee certain words of wisdom from the Bard as they relate to our vocations. You got that, right?

In the general business category of dressing for success, for example, Will (we writers tend to be a
familiar bunch) suggests in Hamlet:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy,} \\
\text{But not express'd in fancy, rich, not gaudy} \\
\text{For the apparel oft proclaims the man.}
\end{align*}
\]

Or in the general area of “getting even” with troublesome colleagues, this advice from The Merchant of Venice:

\[
\begin{align*}
The \text{ villainy you teach me, I will execute, and it} \\
\text{Shall go hard but I will better the instruction.}
\end{align*}
\]

In other, more contemporary words, ‘dis me and I’ll come back and kick your tush. Or words to that general effect.

On business ethics, also from Hamlet:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{This above all: to thine own self be true,} \\
\text{And it must follow, as the night the day,} \\
\text{Thou canst not then be false to any man.}
\end{align*}
\]

On strategic planning, or the lack thereof:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{For all sad words of tongue or pen,} \\
\text{The saddest are these: “It might have been!”}
\end{align*}
\]

All right. So I cheated. Shakespeare didn’t write that. John Greenleaf Whittier did. But the Bard would have if he had thought of it.

On performance appraisals and recommendations, from Henry VIII:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{His promises were, as he then was, mighty;}
\end{align*}
\]
But his performance, as he is now, nothing.

Ooh. That hurts.

Shakespeare was even aware of what we today refer to as Murphy’s Law. Of course, the Bard probably knew it as MacMurphy or even Hamlet’s Law.

When sorrows come, they come not single spies,
But in battalions.

That was King Claudius in Hamlet, and, Lord knows, he had plenty of sorrows. Mostly of his own making.

And finally, on public relations, in the words of Iago in Othello:

Reputation is an idle and most false imposition; oft
Got without merit, and lost without deserving.

See what I mean? This stuff beats the Harvard Business School all to hell! And everyone knows there’s no BS like HBS!

So, we’re studying management with the Bard, a fact that would probably amaze him and cause him to mutter these immortal words, “Oh, hell...what hath we here?”

That’s the Elizabethan version of “What the hell?”

VN:R_U [1.9.11_1134]