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Hairball



(ORBITING THE GIANT HAIRBALL)

A Corporate Fool's Guide to Surviving with Grace

Gordon MacKenzie

Sometime in the early '90's, I read an article about Gordon MacKenzie. "Guru of Creativity" it was called. I guess it made so much sense to me then that I saved it as I came across it a few weeks ago. It made just as much sense to me this time when I read it. Unfortunately, neither the name of the magazine in which the article was published nor the date of the publication appear on my copy anywhere, so I cannot give you a good reference. But, if you drop me a line, I'll send you a copy.

After rereading the article, I shared it, along with the admonition "Don't be Hypnotized!," with all of my colleagues at RED CAPITAL GROUP. [As an aside, I prefer the term "colleague" to "employee" or even to the politically correct HR term "associate". At RED CAPITAL, we do not have a department called "Human Resources". We do not see people as resources to be managed, but rather as partners to be assisted and spirits to be set free. Enough of the aside.] I received a number of positive comments about the article from my colleagues. One of them checked to see if MacKenzie's book had ever been published. It had been. He picked it up, read it one evening, and gave me a copy. I read it one Sunday afternoon. It is a quick read. But, it is much more stimulating and insightful than those other quick reads, like "The 5 Minute Guide to This and That." In fact, it is more stimulating and more insightful than 95% of the business books I have read or started to read and tossed aside.

MacKenzie observes that individuals and organizations, including corporations, must be creative to grow and to prosper. Yet, corporations become giant hairballs which stifle and destroy the creative impulse. From time to time, most of us, even those of us who see themselves as iconoclasts (as I guess I do) contribute to the growth of the hairball or become ensnared in it. Even MacKenzie, as you will read, fell into the hairball trap, "...where the ghosts of past success outvote original thinking..." on several occasions.

As MacKenzie points out, "There has never been anyone quite like you and there never will be. Consequently, you can contribute something to an endeavor that nobody else can." The problem is that in "...work places all over the country... workers [are] being sucked inside out by the corporate milking machines." As in all things, balance is the key. Hairballs are necessary as are corporate controls. But, creativity, inventiveness, ingenuity, can not be driven from the scene if we are to have highly successful companies (and sane workforces).

"Orbiting the Giant Hairball" will help you help yourself, others, and your company find the necessary balance between the corporate order of the hairball, on the one hand, and the power of flow without structure, the value of occasional chaos in which non-linear thinking releases a new whole, greater than the sum of its parts, on the other.



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