

Book Review

HOW STELLA SAVED THE FARM- A Tale about Making Innovation Happen

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Name of the Book: How Stella Saved the Farm- A Tale About Making Innovation Happen

Edited By: Vijay Govindrajan and Chris Trimble (2013).

Name of the Publisher: Macmillan Publishers

Price: Rs. 239

Pages: 160

ISBN No: 978-0-230-76429-3

Abstract

How Stella Saved the Farm is a simple and logical book based on a story which narrates the learning process about making innovation happen. The book is divided in two parts and consists of total nineteen chapters. First part carries nine chapters and remaining are under the second part, which explains the conversion of idea into innovation and then great success. The story is about the competition of two farms one run and managed by animals (Windsor farm) and another by human beings (McGillicuddy's farm). Windsor farm is working through change and innovation where the status quo is no longer good enough. Interestingly, in view of poor performance of Windsor farm McGillicuddy is hoping to take over the Windsor farm, but due to the innovations, Windsor farm crosses all hurdles and gets a remarkable status in the business.

Keywords: Farm, Innovation, Competition, Experiment

Redefining future, "How Stella Saved the Farm" is a straight forward lesson guide which resonates with organisations of myriad types, from trivial companies looking forward for innovation to the elite corporations worldwide. It is a simple and logical book based on a story which narrates the learning process about making innovation happen. The book is divided in two parts and

consists of total 19 chapters. First part carries nine chapters and remaining is under the second part, which explains the conversion of idea into innovation and then great success. The story is about the competition of two farms, one run and managed by animals (Windsor farm) and another by human beings (McGillicuddy's farm). Windsor farm is working through change and innovation where the status quo is no longer good enough. Interestingly, in view of poor performance of Windsor farm, McGillicuddy hopes to take over the Windsor farm, but due to the innovations, Windsor farm crosses all hurdles and gets a remarkable status in the business.

Part-I

The first chapter starts with the introduction of Deirdre, the upcoming president of Windsor farm under the leadership of Deirdre's father Marcus. Marcus leaves and the whole responsibility lies on Deirdre. Marcus is apprehensive about the fact that someday there will be no choice other than to sell Windsor Farm to McGillicuddy, the owner of the neighbouring farm. McGillicuddy does not respect animals and would not treat them well, which highlights the inimical behaviour of humans towards animals bringing out the yet another but brave side of reality.

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When a person doesn't get promotion and recognition on time, motivation level of concerned could decrease and may be a problem for the whole organisation. This is discussed in the second chapter. Same happened with Bull, he was the successor of the farm but he didn't get the president's post which created a lot of misunderstanding between Deirdre and Bull. After getting the news of relieving of Marcus, Bull was very angry, even after Deirdre offers to create a new role for him as chief operating officer.

The third chapter being more elaborate elucidates the history of the Windsor farm that how Marcus's grandfather converted this farm into animal run farm successfully. Most of the organisations are spending lots of fund on research and developments activities for innovation. But Windsor farm didn't adopt it due to the involvement of animals. Currently, farm is in problem due to the increasing cost of production, but still they are earning profit.

The fourth chapter articulates that there are three major business units in the farm: ovine ops, bovine ops, and crops. The farm was operating as efficiently as ever. But the prices for the farm's products were dropping across the board and squeezing profits. If the current trend continued, Windsor could be forced out of business in just a few years. Now Deirdre discusses the farm's declining performance with Bull, Rambo, Rex, and Rob. Rambo suggests a plan to increase yarn-making capacity through better scheduling. But, Rex recommends about new feed for the cows that promised to increase milk production and Rob suggests that rotation crop method.

An appeal for bold ideas to be taken takes shape in the fifth chapter demonstrating that new ideas, innovative thinking, and suggestions for improvement are needed in every organisation especially for Windsor like poorly performing organisations. The animals are very afraid of the possibility that in case of continuous poor performance of Windsor farm, McGillicuddy may take over the Windsor farm.

The sixth chapter informs that coincidentally Stella returns from Peru with the idea of a new luxury wool business for the revival of Windsor farm. Further, seventh chapter depicts that Deirdre and Bull predicted that luxury wool is the best idea. They have organised a big celebration to announce the name of Stella as a winner of the big idea hunt.

The eighth chapter portrays that Deirdre and Bull selected Mav to lead luxury wool business. Deirdre instructed Mav to report to Rambo, since luxury wool is most closely tied to ovine ops. According to the Stella's estimations the luxury wool business would consume only one-third of the farm's savings before it reached to the profitability, but situation was worse than anticipated. Deirdre was worried about the poor economic position of the farm, same day McGillicuddy offered fair price to her in lieu of the sale of Windsor's farm. But, Deirdre rejected his offer straightway.

In the ninth chapter, Mav learns how hard it is to push a new idea in an established business. There are few rules that make sense for the core business but same rules are hurdles in Mav's way, such as tight standards for bringing new animals in the farm, compensation standards, and spending guidelines. Further, nobody seems to have enough free time to help Mav. Deirdre is very angry about the poor performance of luxury wool business lead by Mav.

Part- II

The idea is only the beginning in any great innovation story which is best depicted in the tenth chapter. Deirdre realised that expecting one leader to just go and make it happen was a woefully inadequate approach for moving an innovative idea forward. So, she decides to give more powers to Mav, like Mav should report directly to her and she gives a dedicated team of threeworkers to Mav namely Maisie (marketing), Matt (sales), and Max (manufacturing). Bull is angry after losing three talented people of his team but Deirdre managed to convince Bull.

The eleventh chapter demonstrates that Deirdre called the farm-wide meeting and stressed for giving sufficient freedom to luxury wool business. But, Bull informed that he doesn't expect any better from luxury wool business. But, he was not able to come up with a good answer for Deirdre's argument that doing nothing is the biggest risk of all.

Chapter twelve reveals that Deirdre knew that Stella had been disappointed about not being involved in the luxury wool business, because this business is the result of her idea. In view of that, Deirdre has decided to transfer Stella from crops to ovine operations. The foremost responsibility will be to support Rambo, according to Deirdre.

Chapter thirteen narrates that due to the efforts of Stella, Sheep and Alpaca were living together peacefully. Resulting, Rambo admitted that combined care of Sheep and Alpaca proved much easier than he had expected. After hot discussion with Rambo, Mav made a proposal to Deirdre for a separate manufacturing facility for luxury wool business instead of combined yarn making operations.

In chapter fourteen, Stella observed the picture of Andrea in an article, elegantly dressed Alpaca with a rather haughty expression and the award winner of luxury wool marketer of the year. After deliberations Mav and Stella decided to hire Andrea in a management team for luxury wool business. Later on, Andrea joined the Windsor farm.

Chapter fifteen informs that six months later Windsor farm was shipping alpaca yarn every day. To keep up with demand, Mav was hiring more and more Alpaca. On the other side, Alpaca starts to feel their importance and irritating the others. There was almost a fight between the sheep and alpaca. Mav and Rambo shout at each other during a meeting with Deirdre, who decides to solve the problem by hiring another farm to care for some of the sheep.

Chapter sixteen illustrates that after review Deirdre found luxury wool business was far away behind its projections, Deirdre decided to take the advice of an analytical person like Einstein. Einstein suggested that put learning first, learning through disciplined experimentation, then you will make better decisions and the business will earn profit soon.

Chapter seventeen proves that Mav and Einstein are

working together to follow a disciplined process of managing an experiment. Andrea wants to invest in marketing through social networking websites. Einstein notes that Andrea's idea is itself an experiment – an experiment within the bigger experiment, the luxury wool business. Deirdre approves the investment.

In chapter eighteen, it was the time for the annual performance review of all the departments. But, after formally revising twice his plan Mav missed his plan by a mile. Deirdre was holding Mav accountable for not generating profits but Einstein convinced Deidre, that it's not the correct time to judge the business and Mav. So they postpone the review for few months.

The last chapter reflects that several months later with the support of Einstein and others luxury wool business was on the top and earning handsome amount of profit. Now they had no need to sell Windsor farm to McGillicuddy, because Mav and his team had tested and resolved all major uncertainties related to luxury wool business. In Deirdre's view, "it was innovation that made us great in the first place and it is only through innovation that we can remain great". The book vividly focuses on a handful of the most fundamental principles for managing an innovation initiative, not to thoroughly scrutinise the subject. The book thus is short, easy-to-read book that easily and gradually makes one to comprehend effective management style of an innovation plan. The realistic approach to the book is deteriorated as characters are the farm animals with unoriginal roles which in turn reduce the value of the story.