

[RETURN OF . . . CONSULTANT DEBUNKING UNIT]

## IN SEARCH OF DWARFS

By Martin Kihn

ASK ANY GREAT EXEC to rank her top management books, and chances are three will appear near the top of the list: In Search of Excellence Built to Last and The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People. These tomes reside within the realm of undisputed classics—business wisdom that is not about cheese yet somehow manages to move.

So it is with genuine pride that the Consultant Debunking Unit returns, after some court-ordered bed rest, to report that these books—all authored, incidentally, by consultants—are actually the *same* book. Although their authors labored separately, poring over masses of data, they all arrived at pretty much the same seven "insights."

But these seven ideas weren't even original to begin with. One has to



go back to the origins of learning, to the earliest moments of childhood, to reveal the true authors of seven-based business theory. We refer, of course, to Snow White's sidekicks, those rascally Seven Dwarfs.

What does Dopey have to do with excellence? Not much, of course. The Dwarfs are a cautionary tale—examples of what *not* to do. They demonstrate the seven habits of highly ineffective people.

In Search of Excellence	Built to Last	Seven Habits	Cautionary dwarf
"Bias for action"	"Try a lot of stuff, and keep what works"	"Be proactive"	Sleepy
"Close to the customer"	"Good enough never is"	"Seek first to understand"	Bashful
"Autonomy and entrepreneurship"	"Big, hairy audacious goals"	"Begin with the end in mind"	Dopey
"Stick to the knitting"	"Preserve the core, stimulate progress"	"Put first things first"	Grumpy
"Productivity through people"	"Cultlike cultures"	"Synergize"	Doc
"Simple form, lean staff"	"Homegrown management"	"Sharpen the saw"	Нарру
7. IT'S NOT ABOUT THE MONEY "Hands-on, value-driven"	"More than profits"	"Think win-win"	Sneezy
	Close to the customer" Autonomy and entrepreneurship" Stick to the knitting" Productivity through people" Simple form, lean staff"	Close to the customer" "Good enough never is"  Autonomy and entrepreneurship" "Big, hairy audacious goals"  Stick to the knitting" "Preserve the core, stimulate progress"  "Cultlike cultures"  Simple form, lean staff" "Homegrown management"	Close to the customer"  Autonomy and entrepreneurship"  Stick to the knitting"  Productivity through people"  Simple form, lean staff"  "Good enough never is"  "Big, hairy audacious goals"  "Preserve the core, stimulate progress"  "Cultlike cultures"  "Cultlike cultures"  "Homegrown management"  "Seek first to understand"  "Begin with the end in mind"  "Put first things first"  "Synergize"  "Sharpen the saw"

Martin Kihn is author of the incendiary expose House of Lies: How Management Consultants Steal Your Watch and Then Tell You the Time (Warner Books, March 2005).

## **CDUniversity**

brain dump (n.) process of a person who actually knows something imparting information to a consultant

Director Mira Nair: Actors are "like sponges: The more attention you give them, the more they shine."



[Q&A]

## **60 SECONDS WITH MIRA NAIR**

Vanity Fair is not, director Mira Nair notes, a "stuffy frock movie." It is, rather, what you'd expect from the force behind cross-cultural films such as Monsoon Wedding: Pigs run through London, flies buzz in India. Potent stuff for modern globe-trotters who fill their lives with work. Nair told FAST COMPANY how she fills her work with life.

FAST COMPANY: Why does this story resonate?

NAIR: Thackeray asked, Which of us, having achieved our desire, is satisfied? That aspiration for more, America has excelled in marketing that. And we don't answer the question, Where will it take us? Thackeray gave us a mirror of his society. I've tried to look past the façade and get into pigs and shit and wigs coming off to show that upper classes look as coiffed as they do, supported by coal mongers and apple sellers. That hasn't changed.

FC: How do you direct so many actors at once?

NAIR: Gabriel Byrne said this was the only film he'd seen in which the director explains as much to the extras as to the

actors. In a scene with 300 people, I wanted to explain everything. Your eye can go to anybody, and therefore everybody in that frame needs to be fully engaged in what we're trying to do.

## FC: What is your job description?

NAIR: My work as a director is to make everybody bloom: to cast for strengths of an actor, mine the strengths, and then maximize them. I cast actors, which is intuitive and informed. Then I see what will work and encourage them in the direction of what's working. I love them into it. They're like sponges: The more attention you give, the more they shine.

-Alec Appelbaum