

Book Review on
“The Little Engine That Could” by Watty Piper

(Review by Gary Tomlinson)

Business Leader Magazine – December 2004 Issue

Woman Extraordinaire is the theme for this month’s issue of Business Leader magazine. In selecting a book for this month’s review, I thought I would engage the help of someone more qualified to choose an appropriate business book for women. I contacted the Center for Women’s Business Research in Washington, DC. Their mission is to “unleash the economic potential of women business owners and their enterprises through research, sharing information and increasing knowledge. I spoke with Lizzy Boucher who is their Communications Project Leader. After explaining the purpose for my call, Lizzy said she would talk with her Executive Director and get back to me with their recommendations.

Days later, I received an e-mail from Lizzy. She said that after speaking with her Executive Director, Sharon Hadary, “I can tell you with confidence that her favorite book to recommend to women entrepreneurs is “The Little Engine That Could,” by Watty Piper. While this may seem like a very distant choice from other books you may have in your library, there is a very sound reason Sharon Hadary always recommends this book, as well as using it to close almost every speech she gives. As you read the book and you come to appreciate and empathize with all of the strength and ambition that the little engine has, you also realize that the Little Engine is a she!”

Few people realize that factoid, and what makes it even better is that the very last pages of the book sum up the attitude of woman business owners: “And as the Little Blue Engine smiled and said as she puffed steadily down the mountain...’I thought I could. I thought I could. I thought I could...I knew I could. I knew I could...’” “What’s even better, this book was published in 1930 – which proves that women always have known they could!”

Based on her recommendation, I went out and bought the book. Yes, it is a book normally perceived for children. Yes, it is a very quick read. Yes, it is a very distant choice from other books you would expect to be suggested. Yes, it’s quite motivational and inspirational. Yes, I recommend that you buy this book, read it, and keep it around to remind yourself, especially during tough times, that “I thought I could...I thought I could...I thought I could...I knew I could...I knew I could.”

I know that this book choice strays a bit from the traditional, but I concur with Sharon Hadary that it has a nice spin on all of the other books that are out there for business women. And while we are on the subject of the importance of business books for women, enjoy this amusing Fishing Story and its Moral:

A couple goes on vacation to a fishing resort in northern Minnesota. The husband likes to fish at the crack of dawn. The wife likes to read. One morning the husband returns after several hours of fishing and decides to take a nap. Although

not familiar with the lake, the wife decides to take the boat out. She motors out a short distance, anchors, and starts to read her new business book.

Along comes a game warden in his boat. He pulls up alongside the woman and says, "Good morning ma'am. What are you doing? "Reading a book," she replies, (thinking "Isn't it obvious?")

"You're in a restricted fishing area," he informs her. "I'm sorry officer, but I'm not fishing, I'm reading," she answers. "Yes, but you have all the equipment. For all I know you could start at any moment. I'll have to take you in and write you up."

"If you do that, I'll have to charge you with sexual assault," says the woman. "But I haven't even touched you," says the game warden. "That's true, but you have all the equipment. For all I know you could start at any moment." After thinking for a moment, the game warden said, "Have a nice day ma'am," and then left her alone.

MORAL: Never argue with a woman who reads...It's likely she can also think.

Enjoy this month's selection, "The Little Engine That Could" and share it with others in your life because as Alvin Toffler says; *"The illiterate of the 21st Century will not be those who cannot read or write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn."*

Gary Tomlinson
Tomlinson & Associates