

Career Boosters 

Unlocking secrets to success

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One day in late 2008, Hong Kong-based investment fund manager Ronald Chan wrote to Warren Buffett, seeking his permission to interview senior executives of companies overseen by Berkshire Hathaway - Buffett's flagship investment vehicle.

The financial crisis was at its height then, leaving many of Chan's peers and other professionals beaten down. Chan, founder and CEO of Chartwell Capital, wanted to send out a positive message by publishing the success stories of top-notch executives.

"I wondered how successful people went through the early stages of their careers. If they could give business and life advice, what would they say?" Chan wrote in the recently released *Behind the Berkshire Hathaway Curtain: Lessons from Warren Buffett's Top Business Leaders*.

The culmination of persistence and hard work, the book features nine Berkshire Hathaway executives that include David Sokol, of MidAmerican Energy, who is tipped by the media to be Buffett's successor, Cathy Baron-Tamraz, of Business Wire, Randy Watson, of Justin Brands, and Stanford Lipsey, of *The Buffalo News*.

Charting the managers' career trajectories, shedding light on their secrets of success and showing how they faced challenges over the years, the book will appeal to seasoned executives who want to develop a culture of excellence and ambitious employees wishing to find their way to the top.

An introduction to each interviewee's business is also included. Fresh graduates and young professionals, who are starting to climb the career ladder, will also benefit from the book.

The author makes the point of asking the managers to explain their early career decisions and how their initial job experiences affected their journey ahead.

Some interviewees took the opportunity to give advice and pointers to young people.

For example, Baron-Tamraz, one of the few women executives at Berkshire Hathaway and president and CEO of Business Wire, a global distributor of corporate news, regulatory filings and multimedia, says young people should begin thinking about the long-term and persist in the same job, especially if they love the work and the company.

"They need the determination to stick around with the company for the long haul. Otherwise, it doesn't matter how talented or intelligent the person is," she is quoted as saying.

The book shows that leadership comes in many different forms. From the art of delegation and the importance of listening attentively, to the courage to lead and change, readers are provided with a wealth of insights and practical tools to decide what kind of a leader they want to be and how they can develop the necessary skills.

The Berkshire Hathaway executives also share the life values they hold dear. These include the importance of striking a balance between work and family, the virtue of caring about others and giving back to society.

Readers will likely learn as many valuable lessons of life from them as they do about achieving at work.



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