

BOOKS

BOOK SENSE PICK

"Snow Friends" by M. Christina Butler and illustrator Tina Macnaughton: "Toddlers and parents alike will revel in the colorful artwork, with its hints of magic provided by the sparkling glitter throughout."
— Eileen Charbonneau, Merritt Bookstore Vol. III, Cold Spring, N.Y.



Book Sense Picks are selected by the American Booksellers Association, booksense.com.

Learn to lick the competition

By GINNY STOLICKER
Special to The Oakland Press

Being the best isn't good enough for Subir Chowdhury. When you've done your best and you are top in your field, it's time to figure out how to stay there and do even better.

Chowdhury, chairman and CEO of ASI Consulting Group, shares that advice in his recently released book, "The Ice Cream Maker: An Inspiring Tale about Making Quality the Key Ingredient in Everything You Do."

The inspirational story applies not only to large corporations but could translate to individuals striving to reach their full potential.

A fictional narrator, Peter Delvecchio, tells of his struggles as a plant manager of Dairy Cream. The ice cream, as well as Delvecchio's job, may melt into oblivion if something is not done to save the company. Peter is desperate but resorts to some common sense questions. Why isn't the product selling while others are prospering? The answers, Peter discovers, are with a former neighbor, Mike McMaster, who coincidentally is a manager of Natural Foods, the flourishing market place that has rejected Dairy Cream.

Through a series of meetings with McMaster and learning about the value of focusing on quality by starting on the homefront with employees, Delvecchio begins to see progress in the quality of production.

There are changes as simple as improving the décor of a dreary lunchroom to including employees in meetings and, therefore, instilling passion at the workplace.

Then, of course, there's concentrated research on the quality of the product and its packaging.

Along the way, Delvecchio learns about LEO — listen, enrich and optimize. As one might expect, the research pays off and the ice cream business is saved — for the moment.

As Chowdhury believes, being the best means becoming paranoid, always looking at the competition and continuing to make changes to stay at the top of the game.

"And passion," says Chowdhury, who left his homeland, India, when he worked for Apple, the computer corporation.

"I realized that in India, the technical people concentrate fully on the computer business. Then, when

I got to the United States, I realized there has to be a human element in business. You have to have the passion for your work."

His passion encompasses a workday that begins at 7 a.m. and usually doesn't end until 2 or 3 a.m., the Northville resident says.

There's much ground to cover in an average day. His company, based in Livonia, now has offices in eight countries including the UK, Norway, Sweden, Korea, Brazil, Mexico and India. Chowdhury helps corporations make quality a part of their business culture.

Beyond the consulting business, he writes the manuscript for his books on a laptop while traveling.

Chowdhury's passion for writing surfaced in his childhood.

"My grandfather once said, 'Focus on the pen, the power of the pen,'" he says.

At 38, Chowdhury has written numerous books, including "The Power of Six Sigma," with sales of more than 1 million copies and translated into more than 20 languages.

While focusing on quality, he concentrates on details.

Why ice cream as the subject of a motivational book?

"I thought about it a long time," he says. "I was brainstorming, and it came to me."

There was a commonality in ice cream. The book could appeal to everyone.

"Even my 4-year-old daughter likes the cover," he says of the book jacket that displays an ice cream cone.

Chowdhury says a main ingredient in the book is communication.

"You have to be able to communicate with all people from executives to beggars on the streets," he says.

Still, he turns a deaf ear to others sometimes.

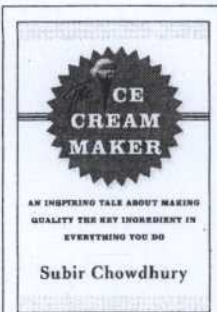
"If anyone says, no, I just don't hear it," Chowdhury says.

Now, not content to rest on his laurels, the book will be sent to legislators in Washington, D.C., and presented during a special reception. Also on his agenda is an appearance as

an inspirational keynote speaker for a DaimlerChrysler meeting.

Meanwhile Chowdhury, the perfectionist, chuckles softly and admits his employees may find his passion to be sometimes overwhelming.

"I'm never satisfied," he says.



"The Ice Cream Maker," by Subir Chowdhury, Doubleday, 115 pages, \$16.95.



Subir Chowdhury