

Business as Unusual: The Journey of Anita Roddick and the Body Shop

By Anita Roddick

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Anita Roddick is one of the world's most outspoken, controversial and successful businesswomen. "Business as Unusual" turns the tables on the way society looks at business and forges a move toward greater corporate responsibility and accountability. The book charts the progress of Anita Roddick and her company, The Body Shop, through the 1990s. She talks openly about the "greed culture" of the 90s, The Body Shop vs. Shell, Trade Not Aid (the pleasures and pitfalls of trading with indigenous communities), taking on the US, creating community both within and outside the workplace, how to campaign for human rights in the business environment and women in business. Ranging from personal issues - such as self-esteem - to wider political issues like the human rights abuses associated with globalization, Roddick offers her own vision for dealing with the demands of ethical business. Roddick believes we should never underestimate the power of the individual to create change.

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
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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Flaunting a title like *Business as Unusual*, Anita Roddick's company biography is anything but your run-of-the-mill book on how to create, nurture, and run a successful company. While it does give a firsthand account of the birth of The Body Shop and Roddick's own particular leadership style of creative (and sometimes chaotic) passion, it doubles as a clarion call for business to tackle the big issues of life alongside the pursuit of profits, with heart, soul and conscience.

Roddick grew up in a large Italian immigrant family in small town in blue-collar England, where she was instilled with an intense work ethic and an irreverent, entrepreneurial spirit. Though she admits to having opened her first Body Shop as a way to make ends meet, Roddick developed the company around her zealous belief that, since there is "no more powerful institution in society than business ... it is more important than ever before for business to assume a moral leadership in society." Her concern for protecting the environment and indigenous people's cultures, and of seeing all of life as interconnected, have directed the growth of the company and inspired much of this book. Her account moves from an initial description of what she sees as the problem with "business as usual," through a history of The Body Shop as illustrating her philosophies on fostering passionate activism, building community, making it as a woman, and succeeding in business. Though Roddick's tone occasionally lapses into what might be interpreted as a rather self-righteous one (particularly in her references to most of the company's competition as merely "imitation"), it is driven by a feisty belief in her ideals. The chapter that describes The Body Shop launch into the U.S. market and its subsequent problems with intense competition is not exactly an American love-fest, but for those readers on this side of the Atlantic who don't take themselves too seriously, it's an informative and often amusing take on the trials of cross-cultural marketing. While praise of The Body Shop's good deeds to date is woven into much of what she discusses, Roddick is not afraid of being honest. Indeed, she presents some of the company's less flattering underbelly, such as a failed experiment in trading directly with an indigenous tribe and the unsuccessful "reorganization" of the company by an unresearched external consultant, which is far more daring than most business leaders are in discussing their corporate offspring. The book would have benefited from a more detailed and less defensive presentation of the media storm that surrounded the company from 1992 to 1994 (which comes dangerously close to being a diatribe), but Roddick's conversational writing style--extremely effective in relaying fervent dedication--doesn't leave room for a lot of legal analysis.

This is an entertaining read with a serious message, a lilting and somewhat whimsical manifesto. Not merely the story of one woman's pursuit of business success and the history and philosophy of The Body Shop, it is an invigorating guidebook for anyone eager to marry an entrepreneurial, principled spirit with a keen sense of social justice. --S. Ketchum

From Publishers Weekly

The founder of an upscale English cosmetics company well established on these shores, Roddick fervently believes that companies should be more than simply profitable: they "must actively do good" in the environment and for labor, serving as "incubators of the human spirit." Roddick has put her money where her mouth is by making the Body Shop one of the first companies to integrate recycling into its daily operations, and committing time and money to various environmental causes. In this rambling autobiography/management tome, she tells how she founded her company. Done of the first to introduce a mix of organic products now offered by many (most notably Bath & Body Works). She also describes her successful court challenge to the BBC and ABC documentaries that nearly destroyed her company by suggesting that, contrary to her claims, her products were tested on animals. Roddick can be hard to take when she soapboxes

about the need for businesses to change the world. Her keenest insights are on how passion and opportunism can launch a business; she also has much of value to say about how she refashioned her business in order to survive.

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Review

'Most CEOs aren't fit to lick peppermint lotion off Anita's feet.' The Observer 'Inspirational' Time Out 'A Deafening Manifesto' Management Today

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Arnold Browning:

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