



WHAT WOULD STARBUCKS DO?

By Greg Wiens

Pour Your Heart Into It:

How Starbucks Built a Company One Cup at a Time

By Howard Schultz

Hyperion, 368 pp. \$15.95

Even if you don't know what *venti* means and can't tell a *macchiato* from a *cappuccino*, *Pour Your Heart Into It*, the autobiography of Starbucks CEO Howard Schultz, is a great read. The book highlights the company's journey as it adjusts to the ever-changing market in the effort to remain impactful. Many of the book's lessons apply to the challenges facing the church today.

Howard Schultz was a salesman with no background in coffee. The company he worked for sold coffee grinding equipment to Starbucks, just a coffee roasting operation at the time. Starbucks bought so much equipment that Schultz decided to pay them a visit to see what their business was all about. He enjoyed the hands-on environment so much that he went to work for them.

LESSON #1: Don't pigeon-hole yourself

If you can imagine, Starbucks did not make drinks at first. They strictly roasted and sold coffee. During a trip to Italy, Schultz fell in love with the romance and theatrics of the baristas in the cafes, and dreamt of bringing that experience to America. Starbucks resisted; it just wasn't "what they did". With nothing but a vision and a hunch, Schultz left Starbucks to open an espresso bar called *Il Giornale*. Seeing what they missed, the Starbucks' owners sold Schultz their roasting company, and that's how Starbucks began.

The lesson for the church

Few of today's cutting edge leaders in churches are seminary-trained clergy. People who didn't grow up in the church are free of preexisting notions of "church as usual". They push boundaries and think outside the box more readily than those who were church-raised in the traditional sense.

LESSON #2: Let the needs of the culture dictate your methods

Starbucks grew quickly. They had opened about 30 stores by the early 80s when customers began requesting that their lattes be made with non-fat milk instead of whole milk—the only kind available. Although competitors had added non-fat to the menu, Starbucks had not. They were determined to adhere to the practices of the Italian cafes, which use only whole milk as it provides the best flavor. That all changed the day Schultz witnessed a dissatisfied customer walk out of Starbucks and across the street to a competing coffee shop in order to get a non-fat latte. Schultz and his team had to

determine what their non-negotiables were, and what they could adapt. The addition of non-fat and subsequently soy and organic milk to their lineup paid dividends in both their profits and customer satisfaction.

The lesson for the church

The modern church has become blinded by its own sub-culture and ways of doing things. Those methods should not become points of contention and subject to adaptation, whereas the mandates of the Christian faith should be the only non-negotiables. The church will become more relevant to the world around it when it stops telling the people what they *should* want or need, and listening to what the people say they actually want or need.

LESSON #3: Create Community

As Starbucks continued to grow, Schultz realized that it was not just the coffee that was drawing customers through the doors. People were coming for a complete experience: baristas offered smiles and friendly greetings and learned customers' favorite beverages and wrote their names on the cups. Upon this discovery, Schultz ensured the quality of the customer experience was just as important as the quality of the coffee. The term "Third Place" was formed to describe the nature of a Starbucks store: not home or work, but someplace in between. Stores were kept small and cozy, designed with comfort in mind, and the baristas offered a sense of belonging.

The lesson for the church

Of course the church needs the help of its members to be fully functional, but many churches have lost sight of what they provide in return. Churches must remember that people need to feel welcome and valued for who they are in Christ regardless of what contributions they might bring to the table.

After Schultz wrote *Pour Your Heart Into It*, Starbucks continued to enjoy meteoric growth. After stepping down from CEO, the man Schultz left in charge strayed from Starbucks' proven framework for success, and the company lost business. Schultz returned as CEO in 2008 to realign the company with the principles outlined in this book, and restore Starbucks' success.

The book is engaging and readable. I believe that when viewed through a Christian worldview, the applicability to today's church is easily seen.

Quotes the church can learn from

"A lot of what we ascribe to luck is not luck at all. It's seizing the day and accepting responsibility... It's seeing what other people don't see, and pursuing that vision, no matter what tells you not to." —p. 44

"There is no more precious commodity than the relationship of trust and confidence a company has with its employees." —p. 57

“It appears to me that people who succeed have an incredible drive to do something...They spend the energy to take the gamble. In this world, relatively few people are willing to take a large gamble.” —p. 71

“I told them [I] was to reinvent a commodity. We would take something old and tired and common—coffee—and weave a sense of romance and community around it. We would rediscover the mystique and charm that had swirled around coffee for centuries.” —p. 77

“If you are building an organization, you realize quickly that you can’t do it alone. You’ll build a much stronger company if you can find a colleague you trust absolutely, someone who brings different strengths to the mix, but who still shares your values.” —p. 83

“We never needed to take a vote. When one person disagreed strongly, we took the time to work it out and come up with an acceptable solution.” —p. 151

“To any entrepreneur, I would offer this advice: Once you’ve figured out what you want to do, find someone who has done it before...They know where to look for the mines in the minefield. If they have thought and acted boldly in their own careers, and proven successful, they can help you do the same. If they share your values and aspirations, and if they freely share their counsel, they can help you through rough patches and celebrate your victories as their own. That’s the kind of mentor I never had as a kid... If one doesn’t find you, beat the bushes until you find one who will take you on.” —p. 152

“We have to lead with our hearts. In business, as in life, we each should have an internal compass that guides our decisions, an instinctive understanding of what matters most in this world. For me, it’s not profits, or sales, or number of stores, but the passion, commitment, and enthusiasm of a dedicated group of people.” —p. 330

“Success should not be measured in dollars:
It’s about how you conduct the journey, and how big is your heart at the end of it.” —p. 337