



Everything I Know About Business I Learned from the Grateful Dead: The Ten Most Innovative Lessons from a Long, Strange Trip

Barry Barnes , John Perry Barlow

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The Grateful Dead is one of the most popular bands of all time and they have enjoyed incredible relevance to this day. But let's admit it, they were not exactly poster boys for corporate America. In EVERYTHING I KNOW ABOUT BUSINESS I LEARNED FROM THE GRATEFUL DEAD, Deadhead and business scholar Barry Barnes proves that the Dead's influence on the business world will turn out to be a significant part of their legacy. Without intending to, the band pioneered ideas and practices that were subsequently embraced by American corporations. And in this book Barnes shares the ten most innovative business lessons from the Dead's illustrious career, including:

- Creating and delivering superior customer value
- Incorporating and establishing a board of directors early on
- Founding a merchandising division
- Giving away your product for free to increase demand

Above all, Barnes explains how the Dead were masters of what he calls "strategic improvisation" -- the ability to adapt to changing times and circumstances -- and that their success lay precisely in their commitment to constant change and relentless variation. For an extraordinary thirty years, the Dead improvised a business plan and realized their vision -- all while making huge profits. EVERYTHING I KNOW ABOUT BUSINESS I LEARNED FROM THE GRATEFUL DEAD will show you how they did it -- and what your business can learn from their long, strange trip.

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Scott Siegel says

The book "Everything I Know About Business I Learned from the Grateful Dead: The Ten Most Innovative Lessons from a Long, Strange Trip" by Barry Barnes and John Perry Barlow is an interesting book about philosophy and business. Their concepts are based on the Grateful Dead, and their business operations during the "long, strange trip it's been" (Casey Jones, Grateful Dead).

The Grateful Dead was a band that played from 1965 to 1995. They were rock and roll legends, with many top songs and a revolution of "deadheads." They also allowed drugs, recording, and 3rd party selling (fans creating and selling Grateful Dead apparel without consent). This did hurt the dead's bank account, but it helped boost their fan population. This was one of the philosophies they had. They kept the consumer in mind, strived for transparency, and kept everyone as equals (the band manager and the asst. roadie got the same salary and privileges, and if 1 person voted no on an idea, it would override everyone else's vote and the idea would be vetoed. This philosophy helped the dead thrive, and become the icon that they are today, even though they disbanded.

This book was a great book, but it had a lot of business in it, and was hard to follow at times. Many of the principles discussed in the book about the customer and product development were confusing (keep in mind that I am a 7th grader, so what I find confusing might not be confusing to a 45 year old with an MBA), but I still enjoyed what I did understand.

In conclusion, this was an o.k. book. I would give it a 4 stars out of 5, for it was a bit confusing, but still fine. This book would be for business people, and is great for any deadhead.

Rob Cavenagh says

Kooky but informative.

Kjell Ljøstad says

I am no big fan of the Grateful Dead, but read this book after a colleague recommended it. He told me I would recognize a lot of my own business philosophy in theirs. And I did!

I am not sure if it is a good sign that I find so many of my own view points in a book about the business strategy of what I thought was a hippie band. But this is absolutely worth a read. Their approach is often counter intuitive, but proven to work over time. Many companies have a lot to learn from the Grateful Dead.

Brett says

Definitely a unique proposition: examining the philosophies of a band that espouses liberalism as a better path to capitalism. If you are a Deadhead or have not read many business books over the last 5 years, you will probably enjoy this book far more than I did. Being a casual fan kept me somewhat involved, but the lessons here are neither groundbreaking nor surprising when you consider the bond between the Dead and their fans. The now-familiar business tenets of collaboration, flexibility and culture are all examined, as well as the benefits of committing yourself to positive values and authenticity. It's a very quick read, and if you find yourself skimming as I did, you'll probably find more value for your dollars in purchasing the Dead's "So Many Roads" box set instead of this book.

Peter says

This book affirms the philosophy I always had and have when conducting business. Like the Dead, I never set out to behave a certain way because it would create profit. The profit occurs from doing the next right thing.

Andrew Ryan says

All in all, A really good read. The book not only touches on some of the Dead's very unique and innovative business/marketing practices, but also delves pretty deep into the band's history. As a pretty seasoned fan of the Dead, I never knew one of Jerry's first gigs was opening up for a young Marvin Gaye at a local dive in California.

It's definitely one of those narrative non-fiction books where they could've probably fit everything covered everything from the nearly 200 pages into a long-form, 20 or 30 page essay and still articulated the major points. Regardless, Barnes does an excellent job drawing up a lot of interesting comparisons and connecting a lot of dots. I'd definitely recommend the book to any fan of the Dead with a passion for business and marketing.

Larry Schardt says

I love the messages in this book. Well written and inspiring. This is one of the best management (human and corporate) books I have ever read. (Actually, it is THE BEST). Tons of great tips for making the world a better place and managing by kindness and all that is good, good, good. Management with a heart. Rock 'n' Roll!!!

Todd says

funny, interesting with solid business fundamentals.

Gabriel Clarke says

Interesting entertaining but frequently Pollyanna-ist take on the Dead. At best, some insightful perspectives on the importance on culture in business. At worst (as when discussing Garcia as a leader) misrepresentative of the darker stretches of Dead history documented more unflinchingly by the likes of Dennis McNally.

Susan says

Clever premise. Unfortunately, the author worked it to death. But, it is the kind of work that gets you a pretty good grade in college.

John T Henry says

This book was a fun read. Unfortunately the author became very repetitive in the last quarter of the book.
