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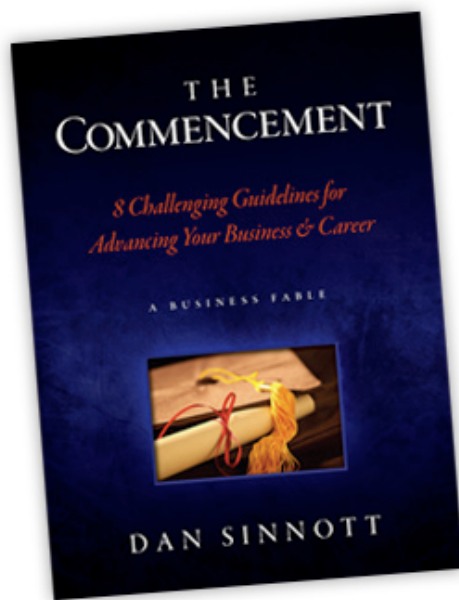
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His tips for career success are no fable

Former hospital executive writes how-to story on business success

By Mike Lang, Staff reporter

Throughout his career as a hospital executive, Dan Sinnott picked up numerous pointers on running a business, such as this nugget imparted by a friend: Start your day with a six-pack. For almost the last five years, the 55-year-old Sinnott has been teaching fellow business leaders to begin their day listing six things they want to accomplish, making a prioritized "six-pack." "Whatever your overall goals are for the business, what are the six most important things you have to do today to make them happen or improve the chances for success?" Sinnott explained. "Then go back and look at those six and prioritize them."



"The Commencement" is a business fable based on real experience.

As chief executive officer of Sinnott Executive Consulting, he is in a position to do what he loves the most: teach, mentor and lead. He's put his thoughts on leadership into a book, "The Commencement: 8 Challenging Guidelines for Advancing Your Business and Career." The book is a business fable, set at a fictional Catholic college where a Jewish businessman who's an alumnus comes back to teach. He sees problems in the school, tries to bring them to the attention of the school's leadership but is not well received. In the classroom, however, he's very popular. The businessman teaches his students the eight guidelines for advancing one's business and career. "They're so well-received that they ask him to give the commencement speech," Sinnott said recently in north Wilmington, where he lives with his wife, Gail, and their three children, Dan Jr., Devin and Jackie. During the commencement speech, the professor in the book lists the eight guidelines to help the students remember what they've heard.

Sinnott, a member of St. Mary Magdalen Parish, said the idea for the book was born when he was asked to deliver the commencement address five years ago for Temple University's business school. "I thought about what I could say to these graduates with an MBA from a great organization that would help. So I talked on not all of these points but a few of these points. ... That was the beginning of it." In addition to always wanting to write a book, Sinnott said he wrote "The Commencement" to give "a message of hope to either current leaders or future leaders because unfortunately too much of what we hear in the press are bad things about leaders. There's a lot of good leaders out there but we don't hear enough about them." He also hopes his book spurs more speaking opportunities so he can share his guidelines with larger audiences.



Dan Sinnott

He published the book the second week in December. By mid- February, about 200 copies had been sold, and the reviews on Amazon.com have been positive. Sinnott said he has received good feedback from those who have read it.

From health care to health crisis

Sinnott was a social worker after graduating from Mount St. Mary's University in Emmitsburg, Md., but he found health-care administration to be his real calling. He came to Wilmington in 1987 as chief operating officer at St. Francis Hospital, and five years later became chief executive officer of St. Agnes Hospital in Philadelphia. Shortly after, he added the same duties at Nazareth Hospital, also in Philadelphia, then also became CEO back at St. Francis. "I jokingly say that I didn't have any gray hair prior to that," Sinnott said. From there, he moved to the top spot at Catholic Health Initiative's hospital group in the mid-Atlantic region, covering 10 institutions from Towson, Md., to Trenton, N.J. He was responsible for 13,000 employees. The hospitals lost \$44 million the year he joined the organization. By the time he left three years

later, CHI turned a \$16 million profit. Sinnott called it "the most challenging, most rewarding opportunity" of his career in administration.

His next stop was at Temple University Hospital, "another challenged organization," but his health-care career was interrupted by a health crisis. He was diagnosed with kidney cancer just before his 50th birthday. While recovering from surgery to remove a tumor, he wondered if something else was calling him. "I turned to my wife and I said, 'You know what, Gail, something's missing.' She said, 'What are you waiting for? We always say we don't want to look back on our lives and say we wish we did.'" From that conversation Sinnott Executive Consulting was born, Sinnott wrote "The Commencement," and he now lectures at the Wharton School of Business in Philadelphia.

Despite his years in management, Sinnott said he's still learning. "I learned how organizations worked; I learned what they do, but now I'm learning why — why certain organizations are more successful than others." Sinnott has a favorite way to describe his new career: "It's scary as hell but I'm having the time of my life."

In "The Commencement," Dan Sinnott elaborates on these guidelines to advancing a business and career:

- There is one chance to make a first impression.
- Candor is a gift. The higher you go, the less candid feedback you receive.
- Become a great salesperson. You must be able to motivate and move people to action.
- Treat your career like it's a business.
- Play to your strengths.
- Identify six priorities each day.
- Maintain a balance in professional, personal, physical and spiritual life.
- Without integrity, "You got nothing."