

BOOK REPORT

Memos from the Chairman

By Alan C. Greenberg

Workman Publishing, 156 pages

Alan "Ace" Greenberg knows what he wants. Even better, he knows how to tell his employees about it.

Greenberg is the irascible CEO of investment banking firm Bear, Stearns & Co. and his book is a testament to the power of a communique from the chief.

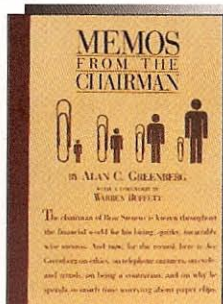
Memos is a collection of actual letters Greenberg posted to his employees from 1978 to 1995. Each one is a fascinating inside look at a leader who believes that if something important needs saying, the

CEO ought to be doing it.

And Greenberg does it with flair. There is a pattern to his patter, a cadence of a whimsical but demanding father figure who is hard on those without common sense, but who cheers loudly for those who succeed.

Greenberg's strength is his consistency. He is committed to a handful of themes that he hammers home, memo after memo, year after year. It's clear that if you work for Greenberg, you know you had better be humble, courteous, accurate, frugal, ethical and driven to make money. If you aren't, to use Greenberg's phrase, you're at the wrong firm.

Even his word choice is consistent. One of the book's first memos,



from 1979, warns all employees not to believe "thine own odor is perfume" — not to be cocky. One hundred-fifty pages and 16 years later, the perfume analogy is still just as relevant to him.

Greenberg's wry, often-bizarre sense of humor is somewhat tiring taken all at once in a bookful of memos. But even when his humor is at its most obtuse, Greenberg communicates with crystal clarity.

If you want an insight on how a leader can graft his business philosophy onto his employees, this book is an excellent place to start.

—Andrew Scott

BOOK REPORT

The Tipping Point

By Malcolm Gladwell

Little, Brown and Co., 279 pages

By Andrew Scott

In 1994, a group of retro-loving hipsters in Soho begin to hit the club scene wearing Hush Puppies, a shoe brand well past its prime. The shoes were a statement. They were ironic. They were so out, they were in. And inside of a year, they were a nationwide consumer smash.

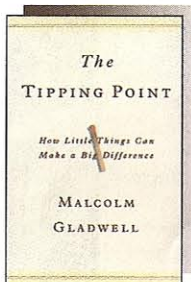
How? A little thing Malcolm Gladwell calls the tipping point, the moment where an epidemic is born of seemingly subtle shifts in behaviors or messages.

It's a powerful notion that these nightclubbers — without even try-

ing — were able to shape spending habits across the country. As you read this anecdote in the early pages of the book, your first reaction might be to think: "If I harness this mysterious tipping point, I could rule the world!"

Whoa, pardner. You should understand that this book isn't "How to Start Trends in 10 Easy Steps."

Instead, Gladwell is better at analyzing social epidemics after the fact — and it's fascinating stuff. You'll love to ponder how New York's drop in crime could be traced to graffiti-free subways. You'll puzzle at the causes and possible solutions for the rise in teen smoking. You'll relish the simple test to see if you're a "Connector," a socially clued-in link



crucial to tipping points.

But you'd be foolish to think you can figure out how to apply Gladwell's three rules of epidemics in advance. There is no handy workbook for this stuff.

But it's still a good book. Understanding how subtle influences affect the world may help you expand your

mind to all kinds of possibilities.

But the book's final call to action is just a little too teasing. Although the world around you seems "an immovable, implacable place" Gladwell writes, it isn't. "With the slightest push — in just the right place — it can be tipped."

How, blast it, how?

Andrew Scott is a free-lance writer based in Chicago.

BOOK REPORT

Making Change Happen One Person at a Time

By Charles H. Bishop, Jr.

Amacom, 260 pages

By Andrew Scott

To truly gauge whether this book lives up to its title, it would help to acquire a mid- to large-size Fortune 500 company and turn its business model upside down.

That way, we may truly find out if the thick prescription of *Making Change Happen* is the cure for corporate change. But unless you're a psychologist or an HR pro, it may just cause dizziness and shortness of breath.

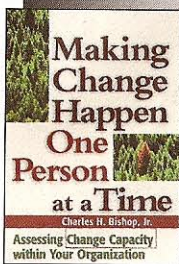
Charles Bishop, president of a Chicago-based consulting firm, has

developed a system to assess "personal change capacity." By cross-referencing a *Cosmo*-like personality chart, and rating employees on a number of squishy variables, you can label people in four categories.

Then when Big Change storms the gates, the right people can be placed in the right places to embrace and lead others through the cultural tumult on your horizon.

But place a few weak employees in critical positions, and your change strategies will self-destruct.

Woe betide you if you don't have enough information to judge your people in these categories. If Bishop's text is any indicator, you'll need to know a lot of



nuances about your employees' performance to judge them properly. Being a solid performer simply isn't enough.

To his credit, Bishop has helpful sections on giving feedback and developmental help to your team during this process. (Hint: The

most development time needs to be spent on your best-developed employees!)

Although this book is not an ad for Bishop's services (it feels more like he's revealing the tricks of his trade), it may have a bonus for him: CEOs feeling weak-kneed at the level of effort suggested here may say, "Bag it all. Just hire the man."

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