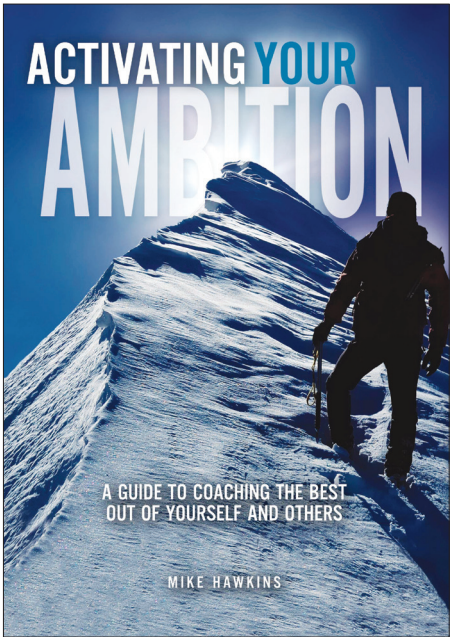


MOTIVATION IS AN INSIDE JOB

Activating Your Ambition: A Guide to Coaching the Best Out of Yourself and Others
By Mike Hawkins
(Brown Books Publishing Group, 314 pp., \$24.95)

Reviewed by Dean Smith



Sifting through the mass of literature on the subject, it is a rare occurrence when a self-development book infiltrates your consciousness and subtly goads you into action. It's a challenge to set aside time in this economy to focus on anything other than an increased workload and meeting revenue targets—but now is as good a time as any for a gut check.

Written in an engaging and straightforward style, *Activating Your Ambition* offers a realistic belief system grounded in experience and humility—and it carries a powerful message for professional as well as personal development. Author and executive coach Mike Hawkins has raced motorcycles, built houses in the mountains from scratch, overcome a fear of presentations, held leadership positions in major companies, and flourished in the aftermath of personal and professional adversity. He has turned ambition into reality and achieved his goals by developing a roadmap based on eight principles for embracing change that works in the office as well as in the living room.

Light on theory and heavy on practical approaches, the author's imperative style implores the reader into action from start to finish. The tone is infectious and gets under your skin in a good way. In writing about increasing self-awareness, a critical component in developing motivation, he instructs readers to “be your own observer, seek feedback from others, capture yourself in action on video, change your surroundings, seek out new experiences, increase your energy level, and find time to relax and reflect.” And that's only the beginning of the journey. The idea for the book was a natural outgrowth of Hawkins' coaching

experience. In the course of conducting leadership programs, he found that his participants' retention and application of the material was less dependent on the knowledge they gained and more dependent on their mindset. As his programs evolved, he spent increasingly more time with them to develop their attitude toward change, overcome their fears, and build their excitement about their future. When trying to put his concepts into a model a couple of years ago, Hawkins noticed the first letters of the words spelled out AMBITION. From establishing “awareness” to securing “motivation” to “belief” in oneself to a state of “normalcy” in being at one with change at the end of the journey—his eightfold path of improvement is designed to help with learning and leadership, but also enables the reader to make changes that improve his marriage, parenting skills, fitness program—and life in general. The success of the program hinges on a person's willingness to explore the root cause of his behaviors. “True awareness requires digging beneath the symptoms and finding their cause,” Hawkins writes. “It requires getting beyond your rationalizations and self-deceptions, pushing aside the excuses, and focusing on the truth.” Each chapter begins with a vignette from Hawkins' life, each of which sticks with you. In a chapter about helping others, he recalls the story of a family living in the abandoned cab of a pickup truck. In helping an executive with her poor physical condition, he uncovered that she did not believe in herself. He created a frame of mind that would allow her to confront temptations and obstacles as they cropped up. A small thing like keeping an unfavorable picture in your wallet will help remove the desire to eat that extra bonbon.

With the economy in recovery and leadership a precious commodity, now is as good a time as any to look in the mirror and take an inventory. *Activating Your Ambition* benefits from a simple and direct writing style—and includes quotes from the likes of Samuel Johnson and Oscar Wilde—which work to get you out of your comfort zone and into action. After finishing the book, I can say that having an unfavorable picture of a recent trip to the beach has helped curb my appetite for that extra Five Guys burger. I give it four piping hot skim lattes.

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