

Survive and Advance: Lessons on Living a Life without Compromise

Derek Lewis

PageTwo

(308pp)

978-1-77458-468-2

Survive and Advance is a rousing memoir about achieving personal and corporate success.

Blending personal and professional stories, Derek Lewis's inspirational memoir *Survive and Advance* is about overcoming a difficult childhood and becoming successful as a corporate executive.

Lewis grew up in a single-parent home marked by financial struggles, hardship, abuse, addiction, and mental health challenges; reconstructed conversations are used to add immediacy to related scenes. Wanting more out of life, he pursued a higher education at a historically Black university and then became a sales associate at PepsiCo. Via hard work, he climbed the corporate ladder, landing executive roles at PepsiCo. There, he set financial performance records and advanced racial and gender equity: "Our ultimate goal was to increase organizational inclusion for all minorities and vulnerable people across the world." Outlining his path to personal growth, the book encourages others facing adversity to follow its example (by prioritizing values like relationships and their reputation) and seek a brighter future.

As it switches between foci including Lewis's family members, his business advice, and records of his long-term aspirations, the book proves both candid and, at times, rushed. It works to universalize Lewis's experiences, as where it looks at the bigger picture of the issues he faced, including domestic abuse, cancer, and racial inequality, but its use of statistics in handling such topics is less compelling than its more intimate revelations.

Where Lewis's storytelling is focused, it is compelling, though. His prose reaches lyrical heights, as when he reflects on how an oak tree on the Hampton University campus is a symbol of freedom. Apt descriptions, as of pledging a fraternity requiring a lightning-fast immersion in a new cultural world, flesh the picture out even more. Further, Lewis's stories about working with prominent figures, including Shaquille O'Neal, LeBron James, and Magic Johnson, via Pepsi's advertising and sponsorship avenues are tantalizing; many are complemented by photographs depicting Lewis with these sports legends.

Its conclusion galvanizing, the book wraps up by reemphasizing the importance of values like drive, determination, and culture. It encourages its audience to pursue their dreams while also prioritizing personal fulfillment and spending time with family—to both get ahead and give back, lifting others up along the way.

A rousing memoir about achieving personal and corporate success, *Survive and Advance* is about rising in the business world and pressing for social change.

JOSEPH S. PETE (November 14, 2024)

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