

# Liz Cornish

Founder, First 100 Days Consulting and Author of McGraw Hill Leadership Book,

**Hit the Ground Running: A Woman's Guide to Success for the First 100 Days on the Job**

## Cornish's advice starts new execs off right

By Paul Sanders, Columnist: Business Book Review, April 6, 2007

In *The Devil Wears Prada*, a young woman takes a new job as an assistant to the head of a fashion magazine. In her first few weeks, she discovers, among other things, that she is absolutely wrong

her from a few sins — or at least helped her make a better deal with the devil.

This is a great book. It addresses an area of leadership that is chronically overlooked. While most companies have well-constructed plans for retirement, fewer than 30 percent have plans for incorporating new executives. Yet, research clearly shows that a well-planned beginning is vital to a leader's success.

Cornish offers a creative blueprint that stakes out the steps ensuring a new executive a strong foundation as a leader. Unlike other resources that give cut-and-dried business formulas, Cornish excels at enabling the individual to discover personal strengths, needs and rules of engagement that work for self-satisfaction as well as professional success.

The author's vibrant optimism and enthusiasm for her topic is contagious. She doesn't premise her book on the fact that women consistently are underrepresented at the executive level in business. Instead, she suggests that there is a need for the ideas she is sharing due to "an evolving Leadership Culture." She suggests that both men and women are learning to adjust to changes in leadership expectations.

Too bad she didn't read Liz Cornish's new book, *Hit the Ground Running: A Woman's Guide to Success for the First 100 Days on the Job*. This first book by the Kentucky-raised author might have saved her from a few sins — or at least helped her make a better deal with the devil.

for the position. She fails to research the company, create a going-in strategy or even dress for success. And she discovers that her boss (fantastically played in the movie by Meryl Streep) is indeed the devil in heels.

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face those certain moments of organizational truth. They can be used to give strength in making painful personnel decisions and help to create first connections. Acting authentically and in accordance with your anchors solidifies your credibility and increases trust, the author suggests.

Cornish further divides the 100-day period in half and focuses on specifics that are pertinent to each period of time. She suggests the first few weeks are an opportunity to be "with" but not "of" the organization. Being new is an advantage that happens once in each situation. When this honeymoon stage is completed, there is a new set of challenges to be met.

The book's title, *Hit the Ground Running*, is also descriptive of the author's writing style. At a fast pace, she takes you through an incredible amount of well-organized material. It can be argued that this reflects the data overload that anyone faces when starting a new job. Fortunately, the information is effectively brought together. An extensive appendix provides excellent worksheets and questions for referral. Cornish is a superb coach; she is determined to help you win this race.

And she is an expert on the details of creating success. For example, in one section she details common "Message Mistakes":

- Overusing tentative language or tone
- Overusing questions
- Giving in and being polite
- Failing to take credit for accomplishments
- Apologizing too quickly

the Japanese process of Kaizen, or continual improvement, but it has another principle as well: "Be who you are, flaws and all." Having the courage to live your values at work, communicating and living by your anchors will secure you as a leader well beyond the first 100 days.

That's a message that has appeal for anyone seeking to be more successful in today's workforce — whether the Prada you're wearing is for a woman or a man.

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For creating a going-in strategy, or what the author refers to as an entry plan, she focuses heavily on the process of identifying "Leadership Anchors." Anchors are the rules of engagement that govern leadership style. An anchor can be a personal vision, mission or ambition. It can also refer to the values and behaviors that support these anchors.

Anchors are used to build a foundation, develop credibility, build a team and face those certain moments of organizational truth. They can be used to give strength in making painful personnel decisions and help to create first connections. Acting authentically and in accordance with your anchors solidifies your credibility and increases trust, the author suggests.

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- Overusing questions
- Giving in and being polite
- Failing to take credit for accomplishments
- Apologizing too quickly
- Criticizing indirectly
- Relying on verbal crutches.

Cornish's message is on track with the Japanese process of Kaizen, or continual improvement, but it has another principle as well: "Be who you are, flaws and all." Having the courage to live your values at work, communicating and living by your anchors will secure you as a leader well beyond the first 100 days.

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