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# DAILY NEWS

## 'Map for finding, keeping job'

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*"Welcome to the Real World: Finding Your Place, Perfecting Your Work, and Turning Your Job into Your Dream Career," by Lauren Berger. New York: Harper Collins, 2014. 210 pages, \$16.99.*



"Here I get the opportunity to tell you what no one told me," Lauren Berger explains near the beginning of "Welcome to the Real World: Finding Your Place, Perfecting Your Work, and Turning Your Job into Your Dream Career," her recently published road map for finding and keeping a job in the ever-evolving global marketplace.

"I get to tell you how bad it can be but also how good it can get. By the time I finally realized things needed to change in my work life, it was too late. The opportunity to be promoted and to move to another department within the company had already passed me by. I had gotten to the point where I was stuck."

In those few sentences, Berger reveals her motivation for writing this book – and it is obvious she is a woman on fire when it comes to dispensing cautionary tales and identifying red flags. Anyone looking for solid recommendations on what to do, and more importantly what not to do, in order to succeed as an entry-level professional in the 21st century would do well to read this book.

Even though my entry-level days are well behind me, I still found much of what she has to say about the modern workplace to be applicable and relevant to my own career.

"The point of this book isn't to teach you how to play games, be nice to certain people, be catty in the office, and participate in POP (petty office politics)," she writes in "Relationships and Schmoozing," the fifth chapter and one of my personal favorites. "I don't want you to leave this book ready to backstab, lie or mislead people to get ahead. At the same time, you can't be blind to office politics. They exist – in almost every company of every size."

The author explains what to look for when co-workers seem engaged in this kind of nonproductive nonsense as well as some carefully considered strategies for minimizing the effect these shenanigans can have on your life, career, relationships and personal happiness.

“Welcome to the Real World” consists of 10 relatively straightforward chapters that can easily be digested in a couple of sittings. Although the book is not extensively researched in the traditional academic sense, I did find it to be full of invaluable wisdom for anyone looking to make it in today’s fast-paced, customer-oriented business environment.

It is obvious Berger knows what she is talking about; her in-the-trenches perspective comes through as insightful and brazenly honest. See if you can relate to this truism from “My Rules for the Workplace,” the inaugural chapter: “Learning how to not take things personally is one of the most difficult concepts to wrap your head around as you grow in your environment. It’s human nature to want people to love you, respect you and go out of their way for you. And when they don’t, it’s hard not to be offended. You have to learn to separate your work life from your personal life. At work, rejection isn’t personal. Don’t take it personally – you will just overthink it.”

The chapter I found most enlightening was “Your Money, Your Finances, Your Life,” the next-to-last installment. Here, Berger offers some sage advice on how to survive on a very limited budget – something that most of us have had to do at least once in our lives.

“The quickest way to go into debt is from late fees and shut-off fees,” Berger notes. “Make sure you track all of the due dates for your bills. Pay them a week ahead of time if possible. Make sure you are aware of which day of the month that company will be taking money out of your account and mark it on your calendar. You want to give yourself a day or so to make sure you have the available funds.”

Those of us who have been around the block more than once will no doubt see many of the things Berger relates as falling into the “common sense” category. But remember, most of what we now consider to be “common sense” often came at the expense of painful lessons we learned from making questionable decisions. What the author is trying to do is to give younger, less knowledgeable individuals the benefit of her experience. The key is to take what she has to say seriously and incorporate it into your conscious awareness and habits.

Berger is CEO and founder of InternQueen.com, a website devoted to matching employers with prospective employees who are looking to get on-the-job experience in a real-world business setting. After reading “Welcome to the Real World,” I can see why Berger is in such demand. I would love to have her speak to my career counseling class at WKU. An hour with her would probably be worth more than several class periods spent sifting through overpriced textbooks written by academics whose last exposure to the “real world” was decades ago.

I recommend this book without reservation for anyone who is serious about his or her career – or life in general. We all want to be successful; there is something to be said for listening to someone who is.

— *Reviewed by Aaron W. Hughey, Department of Counseling and Student Affairs, Western Kentucky University.*