

Christensen, Clayton M; Allworth, James & Dillon, Karen – How Will You Measure Your**Life?** *Harper Business*, 2012, *[Surrounding Knowledge]* Grade ★★★★★

Disclaimer: I am a huge fan of Clay Christensen.

This wonderful book by Harvard Business School Professor of Management Clay Christensen, HBS student James Allworth and Harvard Business Review editor Karen Dillon is not about business in the everyday sense. The purpose is rather to help you to live a full life without disruptions. And if you do, as a result you might probably be a better, more focused decision-maker. The authors' approach is far from intuitive, using lessons from some of the world's best businesses as guidance to achieve fulfillment in life. This unconventional approach might sound strange but I think it works out well. The business examples, although found in several of Christensen's other splendid books and speeches, are among the gems in this short book. In my view, this book is far more meaningful – quite similar to Randy Pausch's *The Last Lecture*, but the lessons from the business world are enough to make reading it worthwhile.

Ever since reading *Innovator's Dilemma* – one of the books on strategy and management that has given me the most sparkling aha-moments - I have followed Christensen's work with extreme curiosity. He reminds me in some ways of Charlie Munger with his latticework of mental models and also of the ancient Greek philosophers who helped, not by giving the answers, but by asking the right questions. The use of solid theories is Christensen's mastery. This is manifested in the book's concept: "I don't have an opinion, the theory has an opinion". The chapter on theory and its applicability is truly rewarding. For example, I believe too few distinguish between the correlation of two observed factors on one hand and the causality mechanism on the other. Feathers don't make you fly... *"The theories in this book are based on a deep understanding of human endeavor – what causes what to happen and why. They've been rigorously examined and used in organizations all over the globe, and can help all of us with decisions that we make every day in our lives, too."*

In the spring of 2010, recently diagnosed with cancer, Christensen made a widely acknowledged speech to the graduating classes of HBS. It even became an article in HBR and was the reason Dillon joined this book project. Christensen used his own HBS class reunions as an illustration of what might happen in

life. All these smart students wanted to do good things, be happy and successful. Initially, almost everyone participated in the first reunions, but eventually more and more started to drop off as time went by. Why? Their lives did not turn out as they had envisioned they would. No one fore-casted this outcome – why did it go so wrong for some?

The authors believe it is critical to find purpose in life, trying to stay the on course and avoiding the shortcuts. *"I promise my students that if they take the time to figure out their life's purpose, they'll look back on it as the most important thing they will ever have discovered"*. *"In the long run, clarity about purpose will trump knowledge of activity-based costing, balanced scorecards, core competence, disruptive innovation, the four P's, the five forces, and other key business theories we teach at Harvard"*.

This well written, non-fluffy book consists of three major sections called: Finding happiness in your career, Finding happiness in your relationships and Staying out of jail. The set-up is straightforward, a typical scenario of a proven economic theory transforms to predictable outcomes for private life decisions too. It is quite fascinating. Maybe the second section is slightly lengthy in comparison to the others. In today's secular and rather cynical world, I guess that some will view the book as too cozy or feel uncomfortable with Christensen mentioning of his religious beliefs, but there is no preaching - far from it. I like the authors' passion for the subject and their aim to provide some support for how to approach challenging crossroads in life.

There are plenty of interesting topics in the book to consider. Currently, I am pondering about full and marginal costs, both professionally and personally. We have learned to think in terms of marginal costs since Economics 101. *"This doctrine biases companies to leverage what they have put in place to succeed in the past, instead of guiding them to create the capabilities they'll need in the future. If we knew the future would be exactly the same as the past, this approach would be fine. But if the future's different – and it almost always is – then it's the wrong way to go."* The epilogue about purpose is very suggestive. For a purpose to be viable - it needs likeness, commitment and a metric. What metrics will you use to measure your life?

Michael Persson, May 4, 2013