



Book:
"Rengen: The Rise of the Cultural Consumer"

Author:
Patricia Martin

Book Club Discussion:
December 9, 2009

Discussions are open to CADM members only. Guest passes are available by contacting CADM. Please email George Buckley: info@CADM.org.

Schedule: The Book Club meets the first Thursday of every other month (8-9:30 a.m.). See below on next book.

In today's era of celebrity news obsession and reality TV-inspired bad behavior, a book suggesting we are on the verge of a cultural renaissance seems a tad optimistic. But with "Rengen," Patricia Martin suggests that our collective mindset will lead a cultural upheaval on par with the European Renaissance from the late 1300s to late 1500s. She finds many similarities: Examples: the rise in individual spirituality; the quest for personal knowledge; and the increased accessibility of knowledge to more and more of the population. (To illustrate the parallel, Patricia compares the intercity roads of ancient Rome to the information highways of today's Internet.)

Fueling the new Renaissance Generation—the Rengen, will be a redoubling of the human learning instinct - "Edutainment" is already a growing field. The main difference in the current advancement is that it is happening at a much faster pace (decades) than it did in the last millennium (centuries).

The common thread to both cultural shifts is an awakening to the value of life and each person's ability to contribute. But for our renaissance to blossom, five areas need to converge:

- 1) Death Comes First, (a dissembling of the old order)
- 2) The Rise of the Beautiful Mind,
- 3) The Collaborative Context,
- 4) Catalytic People, and
- 5) Facilitating Medium.

What will emerge is higher creative and intellectual production because of a more enlightened and energized citizenry. The growth will take place in urban areas best suited to the new order. Patricia makes the case for "second cities" such as Seattle and Chicago, as being key to the new society model.

Examples of hers we liked most were:

Collaboration vs. Teamwork: Patricia illustrated the difference: Teamwork is best used to solve clearly defined issues or problems. Collaboration can address emerging areas which may not have a clear or specific desired outcome. Collaboration will rule in the Rengen.

Likening the Rengen to Web 2.0: Just as the Web has become a more interactive environment in which to share knowledge, so have humans, becoming more open in their work and family relationships.

Our group felt that some of the book's rosier predictions were not as relevant in today's recessionary environment. Also, the generation gap may impact the adoption of some of Patricia's beliefs on societal trends (Boomers and Silents may not be so accepting of the new order).

RATING: 7.25 on a scale of 10

The book does not provide any new answers, but we agreed that it raises profound questions on values. In doing so, Rengen provides a behavioral guide that we all can apply to our professional and personal endeavors.

Next Discussion: February 11, 2010
"The E-Myth Revisited: Why Most Small Businesses Don't Work and What to Do About It" by Michael E. Gerber.