

# “THE MOST EFFECTIVE ORGANIZATION IN THE U.S.”

## Watson writes on Salvation Army

BY ROBERT DOOPER

To be frank, I had considerable resistance to reviewing this book at all. I thought the title would be perceived as highly self-serving. Then I started reading it. I was clearly wrong.

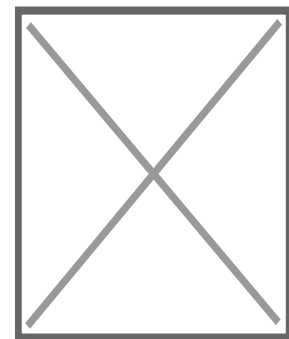
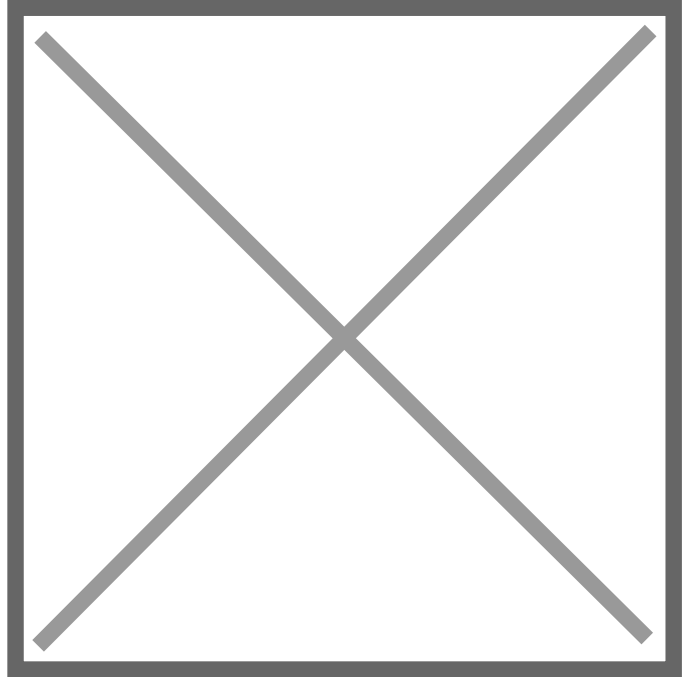
*The Most Effective Organization in the U.S. — Leadership Secrets of the Salvation Army* is a “must read” book by everyone seeking to gain insight into “America’s favorite charity.” That includes many who might believe they understand it already.

Written by former National Commander Commissioner Robert A. Watson and Ben Brown and published by Crown Business Books, the book has already attracted considerable attention with extensive pre-publication sales. It is extremely well written with illustrations of organizational principles used by the Army and drawn from both history and present day.

It’s not afraid to be presumptuous and audacious. It seeks to explain why organizational guru Dr. Peter Drucker might have described the Army in a *Forbes* magazine article as “the most effective organization in the United States” — the quote from which the book’s title grows. The opening sentence of the book states: “We want this to be one of the most important books you’ll ever read. It’s about the meaning of life.”

The chapter headings lead one to believe it is an organizational textbook. It is much more. It examines the “holistic ministry” of the Army — this double mission of obedience to Christ’s great commission as well as his charge to rescue the “least among us.” The “big idea” of the book then, is to “engage the spirit.” The Army, as it works with those from whom spirit has been drained, recognizes the power of non-discriminating inclusiveness as it facilitates a spiritual change within people that moves them from despair to hope and salvation.

Once the spirit becomes engaged, organizations need to address a series of sub-principles.



Commissioner  
Robert Watson

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Among these principles — “Put people in your purpose” reveals the strong commitment of the Army to meeting human need. It also explores how people grow when trusted with responsibility. “Embody the brand” talks about the value of maintaining a core ideology in such a way that the public can assess your work and hold you accountable. “Lead by listening” implies a genuine relationship between people where one “listens to learn and commits to act.” It urges organizations and individuals to know their “inviolable principles” and to examine how and what they are doing reflects those principles.

The principle of “spreading responsibility” opens creativity in significant ways. It “sucks the air out of traditional hierarchies and demystifies leadership.” In trying to cope with rapid change, the Army has sought to “organize to improvise” and found that freewheeling improvisation with deliberate comprehensiveness can be designed to insure effectiveness.

As an example of the importance of “acting with audacity” Watson reveals some dramatic and costly course changes taken by the Army. One such change was the abandonment of the Farm Colony model of treating the urban poor. The Army shifted its policies 180 degrees and recognized that poverty in urban settings could not be remedied by seeking escape to the country. The final principle states that “joy is contagious.” We instinctively move toward people, places and things that warm our hearts.

Watson draws on innumerable illustrations — many of which come from well-known people and programs of the Western Territory.

To Order

*Books will be on sale November 6, 2001. Copies may be reserved in advance at your local bookstore or you may order online through any bookseller; books will be shipped after November 6.*

*The full retail price is \$25.00 and the ISBN is 0-609-60869-X.*

*All author royalties are being donated to The Salvation Army.*