

Books Worth Reading

A Charming Look At A Beloved Maine Company

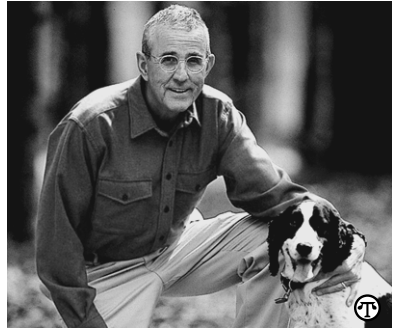
(NAPSA)—He took a dusty operation and built it into a world-wide multibillion-dollar company. When Leon Gorman took the helm of L.L. Bean, the company was struggling to adapt to a changing retail landscape. Today, nearly a century after the company first set up shop in Freeport, Maine, its customers remain fiercely devoted to the Bean brand and what it stands for: integrity and reliability.

So what can be learned from L.L.Bean and the way the company is run? In “L.L.Bean: The Making of an American Icon”

(Harvard Business School Press), current Chairman and former longtime President Leon Gorman offers the first authoritative, true-to-

life account of the iconic retailer and its colorful history and culture. In this readable tale, Gorman candidly reveals the behind-the-scenes struggles to preserve the identity that built the company, as he also opened the door to needed change. Woven throughout the narrative are themes that will resonate with managers and general readers alike.

The company was started by entrepreneur L.L.Bean in 1912. Several decades later, in 1967, grandson Leon was appointed president. Soon after taking over the post, Gorman introduced the “stakeholder concept,” which linked the company’s success as a business to its most important stakeholders: customers, employees and the environment. More than 30 years later, Gorman had turned the well-known catalog company into a billion-dollar, multichannel enterprise, and had left



The leader of L.L.Bean for over 30 years, Leon Gorman tells the story with simplicity, charm and grace. It is a compelling read.

a significant mark on the conservation community through his leadership and contributions.

“L.L.Bean: The Making of an American Icon” offers an intriguing look at the lessons Gorman learned, including:

- Building a powerful brand around bedrock beliefs and values
- Balancing growth and tradition
- Crafting and preserving an authentic corporate identity
- Creating a platform for growth in a time of accelerating change and stiffening competition
- Maintaining family ownership in today’s transient and highly volatile retail arena.

According to David A. Garvin, the C. Roland Christensen Professor of Business Administration at Harvard Business School, “L.L.Bean is much more than a folksy, friendly, direct-mail retailer. It’s an extraordinary corporate success story, with powerful lessons for managers about strategic positioning, marketing and brand, organizational culture and values, and the challenges of explosive growth.”

To learn more about the book, visit www.hbspres.org.

