



Leaders Read by Aaron Crowley

The slab fabrication industry is maturing. It is obvious on many levels. In the last few years, demand, competition, and customer awareness have all grown considerably.

A striking example of how the industry has changed in the way we sell our product. A few short years ago, we were still trying to convince our customers that *granite* was a superior product while explaining all its functional benefits. Today, our focus is on convincing the customer that our *approach* to providing granite counters is superior, since most customers are now very aware of its functional advantages and beauty.

So if the industry, the competition, and the customer are growing and maturing, where does that leave us, the fabricators? Are we growing and maturing at the same rate? Not growth in terms of size or number of kitchens produced per month, but growth in terms of business skills and ability. Are we adapting and maturing in how we manage and position our companies for success? If we aren't, now is the time to start.

For those of us who started our companies with out formal business training, we too must take matters into our own hands. And the quickest way to do so is to read the right books.

Since there are endless "how-to" books on business, but insufficient time to read them all, here is a short list of "must read" books for the growing fabricator. These are the most influential books on small business and manufacturing that I've ever read and all three have had profound impact on my business.

The short list is as follows; *The E-myth Revisited* by Michael Gerber, *The Goal* by Eliyahu Goldratt, and *The Toyota Way* by Jeffrey Liker.

The E-Myth Revisited is simply the most insightful book on small business management. This book not only proves the theory that small businesses must become systems destined to succeed, but it goes into great detail as to why. It also shows how to develop and implement those systems. If you want a business that can operate successfully while you go to lunch or go on vacation, you must buy this book. But make sure you don't show it to your competitors.

The Goal is a novel that provides incredibly insight into this business of manufacturing. And that's what fabricating is. It explains in detail what our most

important goals should be *reducing* constraints and *increasing* through put. A must read for any fabricator who wants to push more kitchens thru the shop without buying more equipment or hiring more people.

The Toyota Way takes a fascinating look into the Toyota manufacturing process that has become the worldwide standard for manufacturing efficiency. Toyota is *the* example of how a smaller competitor with fewer resources can be wildly successful by eliminating waste, and doing more with less. While being smaller than Ford, GM, and Chrysler, Toyota made more money than all three combined the year this great book was written, proving that a business need not be the biggest to be the best.

The old saying is true - readers lead and leaders read, so buy one of these great books and accelerate your business success. Your competition will hope that you don't.