

Books to do Business By

Is it possible to read your way to success? **Callum Laing** ponders the options.



Let's Connect! by Jan Vermeiren (Step by Step publishing/Kinokuniya)

Meeting new people and building relationships with them still remains one of the most intimidating things many people have to do. Yet there's never been a greater need to 'grow your network' in order to achieve the things you want in life than there is in this increasingly globalised business world.

In his first book, *Let's Connect!*, Jan Vermeiren provides a comprehensive reference guide covering both the benefits of building a big network and a step-by-step guide on how to do it effectively.

Thorough and comprehensive, this book is as useful for the first time job seeker as it would be for a seasoned business professional. It is well researched, with plenty of suggestions for further reading.

The core of Jan's networking philosophy is that personal relationships are fundamental to your success in today's society. There are no good or bad contacts, as our lives are fluid: you never know when your situation, or someone else's, might change. Additionally, if we do a good job meeting new people, we are not only adding them as potential resources in our network; we are also now only one step away from everyone *they* know. And you never know who they know: it could be a person who has just the job for you, or access to a house in the south of France. At its heart, networking is about increasing your value through the connections you have. This book shows you how to understand and communicate your value to others in order to attract them to your network.

In networking there is an expression: "build your well before you need it." Don't wait until you are out of a job or need something important before you add this book to your reference library.



The Stone Age Company by Sally Bibb (Marshall Cavendish)

If you have never read a business book before and want a gentle introduction into some of the strange practices that still go on in many corporations, then this would be a good soft read to start with.

Light and fluffy, full of contradictions, unsupported anecdotes, massive generalisations and sentences that begin, "Psychologists say..." without any indication of who said psychologists are and in what context they are talking, this book takes us on one author's journey to prove that traditional methods of "hierarchy and controlling ways" in business are outdated and failing, and are "nonsense", as she puts it.

Now, author Sally Bibb may have a point, and as a Director of Group Sales Development for the Economist Group, you would hope she had some good case studies to back it up. It would not be difficult to find some failed or failing 'traditional' companies and make pertinent points about keeping up with the times, and treating staff with more respect, etc. Unfortunately, none of those insights are present here; the book lurches uneasily from one exaggerated and un-referenced tale to another.

Rather than mention her astonishing lack of interest in what customers as well as employees want from businesses, or her blasé dismissal of all shareholders as 'incredibly passive' (these are the same "passive" shareholders who trade over a trillion dollars a day as a response to, amongst other things, the way businesses are run), I will instead suggest that if you're seriously interested in business, stick to the works of Tom Peters, Jack Welch and their ilk.

If, however, you fancy a little business bubble gum then you can while away a couple of hours with this one.