

The best books of the week

Business books

Business books: what to read this month

Careful listening, long-life companies and lessons from a social entrepreneur



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‘Another Way: Building Companies That Last And Last And Last’, by Dave Whorton with Bo Burlingham

Another Way appears, serendipitously, just days after Warren Buffett [announced](#) he would step down from Berkshire Hathaway. The legendary US investor is credited here as one inspiration for author Dave Whorton’s interest in “evergreen”, purpose-driven companies that are built to last.

The book is structured largely as an orthodox story of Whorton's progress from ambitious Silicon Valley venture capitalist, learning at the feet of John Doerr of Kleiner, Perkins, Caufield & Byers, through up-and-down experience of tech entrepreneurship, to the epiphany that there is more to capitalism than Doerr's get-big-fast approach.

Whorton's account of his exhausting Silicon Valley days, which included a seat at the table for Google's first tumultuous board meeting, is a familiar tale of fundraising and backbiting. When he moves from Silicon Valley to Sun Valley, Idaho, though, his perspective changes radically. He becomes intrigued by the prospect of helping companies with a longer-term vision, founding a VC firm to invest in them, and then the [Tugboat Institute](#) to foster and spread the values of businesses that range from a jewellery start-up to the mighty Enterprise car hire group.

Another Way lists those seven values — purpose, perseverance, people-first, private, profit, paced growth and pragmatic innovation — and explores how to apply them. Whorton has a slightly hokey, Buffett-esque style, but he paints an attractive picture of the benefits of taking the slower path to enduring growth. *Andrew Hill*

‘Deep Listening: Transform Your Relationships with Family, Friends and Foes’, by Emily Kasriel

In *Deep Listening*, Emily Kasriel draws on her BBC career as well as work as an executive coach and mediator to explore how we can move beyond superficial exchanges towards genuine connection — even with those we fundamentally disagree with.

Her method, shaped by psychologist Carl Rogers and enriched by insights from law, psychology and indigenous traditions, offers a practical guide to avoid “hollow, performative” acts. Deep listening, she says, can transform our relationships, and affirms others’ “dignity as individuals who are fundamentally equal to us, yet unique and irreplaceable”. Listening is an “essential act of citizenship”, even as we are often taught, at school and work, to approach conversation as a battle to thwart alternative viewpoints or facts.

Kasriel draws on real-life stories from politics, business and the arts, and the result is a toolkit for anyone looking to deepen conversations, soften conflict or simply be a better human.

The book outlines an eight-step approach to deeper listening that begins with creating a safe space, then encouraging presence, curiosity and empathy. It emphasises non-verbal cues such as eye contact and silence, and culminates in reflecting back the essence of what is shared — spoken and unspoken — to reveal a deeper narrative.

One wonders, however, if readers most drawn to a book about becoming better listeners are least in need of it. The real challenge lies in persuading the resistant to pick it up in the first place. *Anjali Raval*

‘How to Change the World: How social entrepreneurs can go from initial ideas to global impact’, by Jo Owen

How often do we declare that we could do a better job than the government? Often renowned for inefficiency and short-termism, governments, a sceptic might argue, can be more motivated by polls and media rounds than by enacting meaningful change.

Charities and NGOs offer a potential solution — one that is laid out in this action-oriented book by social entrepreneur Jo Owen. The third sector, he argues, can fill policy gaps left unseen by overstretched departments, with the dynamism required to tailor their approach across regions.

“Just as everyone has a book in them, so everyone has an idea in them which can change the world,” Owen writes. He walks us through the steps social entrepreneurs should take if they wish to achieve long-term change, lessons guided by his own experience of founding eight NGOs, including the British teacher recruiting charity Teach First.

In *How to Change the World*, Owen encourages would-be social entrepreneurs “to look beyond the symptom of the problem” and target its causes, whether the issue is girls’ literacy skills in Kenya or educational disadvantage in the UK. Owen is also the author of more than 20 books including *Smart Thinking* and *Smart Work*.

Right to Succeed, one initiative of which Owen was chair, exemplifies the necessity for local integration to streamline results and avoid the fatigue faced by one bedraggled headteacher in Blackpool: “We already have 90-plus initiatives in town. It is chaos, no one is in control.” *Leah Quinn*

‘The Stoic Capitalist: Advice for the exceptionally ambitious’, by Robert Rosenkranz

Part memoir, part guide to a well-lived life, this is a great read for anyone — but would be an especially good gift for a young person. Robert Rosenkranz, now in his eighties, has an inspiring story: he came from working-class roots, went to Harvard Law School, made a fortune in finance and is now a philanthropist.

The Stoic Capitalist tells, roughly, the story of Rosenkranz’s life and work. The twist is that he weaves in both the guiding rules of his chosen ancient philosophy and the much newer tenets of cognitive behavioural therapy, or CBT, of which Rosenkranz is a fan. It’s a fascinating combination of old and new.

“Use reason to regulate emotions” is a key point throughout the book, as is acknowledging anger as the “most destructive emotion”, as Seneca writes. The author details high-stakes meetings and deals that could have gone horribly wrong. By keeping to Stoic principles, he keeps both his reason, meaning he can make good decisions, and his cool. “Feeling angry may be an involuntary response, but the Stoics would counsel that acting angry should be a conscious decision.”

The Stoic Capitalist is a good entry point for anyone who is ancient-curious, but does not want to go all-in on Marcus Aurelius and Epictetus and their precepts for a good life. It is also, though, a great tale of an adventurous life in finance. Rosenkranz writes, for example, that he spotted that Bernie Madoff’s promises were too good to be true, well before that empire was revealed to be a giant fraud. He did try to warn a reporter at The New York Times, who disregarded his tip. Reason, at that time, had gone out of the window. *Isabel Berwick*

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