



Letter of the law

Reuben Glynn reviews a new title on effective leadership in small businesses

For most of this week, I have had Lynne Burden's business handbook as company on my many train journeys around the country. I say business handbook, but it's also a great autobiography of the law firm Bolt Burden. It's actually a cleverly written hybrid. I have to say I have thoroughly enjoyed reading and learning from it.

The book uses as real case studies Lynne's two law practices, Bolt Burden and Bolt Burden Kemp. It focuses on strategies which apply best to 'small firms', defined by the author as businesses with up to 150 staff. The case study is a law firm, but the lessons included in the book equally apply to any small or medium-sized enterprise (SME).

The author Lynne Burden has enjoyed a stellar legal career for over 30 years, and has written this book to pass on the 20 lessons of effective leadership she has learnt while managing partner of two very successful law firms.

It is obvious that, over those 30 years, Lynne has read a considerable number of the leading business management books in the market. She has also studied extensively to obtain an MBA, as well as qualifications in neuro-linguistic programming and executive coaching. Lynne credits and references all of the material she studied within this book. She has spent those 30 years applying what she has learnt to her law practices, and shares the results with us, the readers. Results, sometimes bad but mostly good, are explained with care, so we can all learn from her minor mistakes and many successes. The true genius of this book is we can see how this business theory was applied to the real-life case study, and we get the immediate feedback.

Lynne places her 20 'laws of leadership' into four groups. Each rule forms a chapter; they can be read all together in one sitting, or individually. That's why this book achieves handbook status. One aspect of the book I really

enjoyed is the summary questions at the end of each chapter or rule. They really do test your understanding and get you thinking deeply about your own business. This gives the book a textbook feel.

Rules 1 to 6 deal with 'big picture' issues: purpose; strategy; motivation; road map; business planning; and communication. My favourite part of this section is the 'why'. My own business has seen considerable success since we all identified our 'why'.

Rules 7 to 11 deal with employing staff; getting recruitment right; not worrying about losing people who don't fit; keeping the right people; having a great place to work; and getting recognition right. Professional businesses stand and fall on the staff, so the sentiment of these rules is crucial.

Rules 12 and 13 deal with partnership issues. However, they could easily be as useful when considering corporate relations, joint ventures or dealing with business stakeholders. My grandad once told me that 'partnerships' are the worst ships to sail in. Getting business relationships right is so important.

Rules 14 to 19 the author christens as 'everyday guidance'. These rules cover: stay ruthlessly on plan; be decisive; embrace innovation; stick close to the detail; have a brave face; and be an inspiration. These chapters struck a chord with me. I will try to be an inspiration for my company every day.

The final rule, number 20, is 'Do your best work – live your best life'. It essentially covers the work-life balance question in a slightly different way. I believe we all need to understand when to work, when we work best, and when we should play.

Throughout each chapter, Lynne brings in extremely good and pertinent quotes from various other business, health and investment texts. It really gives you the feeling that Lynne has put these to work in her own life over the last 30 years. I really like this. It means you can either simply take the singular message from the chapter, or you can do as I have done: go out and buy some of the other books mentioned. I have been intrigued by some of the theories. Lynne has read them on your behalf and used them in her business. You can see the effect within this book.

I know that Lynne is launching an executive coaching business. Having read this book, I truly believe Lynne has a lot to add in the business consulting world. She would obviously add value to a number of SMEs.

This book is an easy-to-read, light-hearted business manual, based around an actual real-life case study. It presents honest, warts-and-all feedback throughout the book, allowing you to really get to know the author. I would say it's very much worth the £19.99 as a one-off read. However, the true value of this book is that you can leave it in your library for years and use it as a reference resource to dip in and out of as and when you need it.



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Lynne's Laws of Leadership

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