

## **Tarzan and Jane – How to thrive in the new corporate jungle**

Margot KATZ

*Profile Books (2007), 256pp., £9.99.*

Samuel Smiles wrote his famous treatise *'Self-Help'* in 1859, and became a standard school prize for Victorian children: still in print, it has been the model for didactic texts ever since. *'Tarzan and Jane'* is another self-improvement manual and (in the judgment of Philip Whiteley, author of *'Unshrink'*) *'has the potential to be in the brief case or handbag everywhere'*. Conceiving her book from the standpoint of *'Me Jane'*, the author seeks to help women *'thrive in the corporate jungle'*, but, in working on the text, she came to see that gender difference could be an enabler rather than a barrier, since most of the women who wanted to *'be on top'* in business already were. The issue that emerged was to help individuals clarify their ambitions and succeed through competence and differentiation. The book has four themes:-

'The Inner Game' – reflecting on aspirations, beliefs, values and passions *'which are right for you'*;

1. 'Be Bloody Good' – excelling at your craft and *'keeping ahead in the game'*;
2. 'Turn up the Volume' – clarifying your personal brand in the age of the sound bite;
3. 'Don't Just Sit There' – connecting with your market and getting known.

These themes are developed, using interviews with selected role models to illustrate the points made, and each theme has a detailed checklist for self-assessment supported by schedules of key attributes. The tenor of the book is

reminiscent of the mentoring process which not all its readers will have been fortunate enough to enjoy. Networking is recommended as a source of new insights and to seek out best practice in *'being bloody good'*.

The purpose of 'Tarzan and Jane' is to acclimatise readers to the challenges of corporate life and equip them to succeed despite the dangers and discomforts of the corporate jungle. One section helps readers to assess the true nature and competence of their organisation and to stimulate them to seek changes which may be necessary. Another chapter - entitled 'The Leader's Part' - examines leadership and how employees can be empowered to effect change. But it is significant that most of the role models are in positions of power - there is less clarity about empowering junior employees.

In his Foreword, Neil Holloway (President of Microsoft EMEA) sees the book as an instrument for building *'the workforce of the future'*, which gives it an interesting new dimension. From the employers' viewpoint, he sees four key areas of focus:

1. Hire smart people who are 'Blood Good' regardless of age, gender and race;
2. Keep people engaged, seek feedback and listen to them – that creates 'buy-in';
3. Vision is needed for the organisation and for all its members. Values are needed to underpin this vision, and leaders must be role models;
4. Accountability is essential, and leaders must enforce it.

Given this formula, it would seem that the dangers of the corporate jungle – lack of openness, bullying, exploitation, corruption and predation – can be

tamed by a virtuous circle of good practice. Samuel Smiles would have heartily approved.

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