

Where my ideas come from *continued*

am involved in a start-up called The Reading Room (thereadingroom.com); reading reinforces learning] and is very thought provoking, but doesn't deliver the skills. Why, if books have been written about better management practice for decades, don't we practice it? Management is about skills and experience.

My ideas come from observing people, reading and talking – and lots of it. I definitely like sharing experience with other people and hearing how they have dealt with challenges. I get a lot of opportunities now, because of the network I have, to ask for advice and give advice.

A CEO rang the other day and said "I have a performance issue with a senior executive, what do I do?" I gave him some advice: make sure it's not personal and talk about behaviours you think are important for the business. And ask them how they feel and what they think they contribute to the business and give them feedback. There are other examples. A person was sharing a challenge as a leader with me recently, but I was not sure if I was the best person to advise, and I said, "Tread carefully and tell me how you go." So I spend time mentoring and being mentored.

In terms of websites, I get business stuff coming through my network of academics and business people. Right now, there could be 12 reports in my inbox. The *Telstra Productivity Report* I want to read. In terms of actively searching the web, I haven't had to do a lot of that.

There's a difference between having knowledge and a skill. That's where I think we are missing a bit of our discussion of management capability. There's not enough recognition of the fact there's a set of skills that needs to be developed and not just a list of needs.

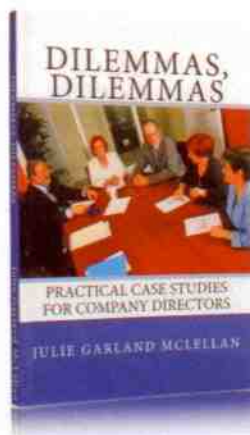
How do you tell someone they need to improve? We need to make people understand we are doing more harm than good if we haven't even given people the right feedback. There's nothing like experience and I still learn from mistakes. Confronting new challenges, that's where I get my ideas – and from dealing with people.

Thirty years ago, as a 50-year-old male, you believed you couldn't learn anything else. The difference now is a whole lot of old heads who are [more flexible]. If you can match experience with being changeable, that makes a difference.

SKE is conducting a study on workplace management practices. See ske.org.au
Catherine Fox

BOOK REVIEWS by Mike Hanley

- Buy it, read it
- If you are interested
- If you must



- **DILEMMAS, DILEMMAS:**
Practical case studies
for company directors
Julie Garland McLellan
Self-published
\$35

Readability ●●●
Usefulness ●●●

HARVARD BUSINESS Review used to do a nice line in case studies at the beginning of each issue. Inevitably, the business director in question would rush into the lift and be faced with an awkward situation with a colleague, or lean back in her chair and cast an eye over her view of the city in order to consider with great detail the latest management conundrum involving kickbacks in a developing market or a mentally ill subordinate. A set of wise and long-

toothed consultants and executives would helpfully respond to the case, giving their perspective on the dilemma.

But now that *HBR* has stopped publishing them, how will you get your fix of forehead-wrinkling, head-scratching cases? Sydney-based Julie Garland McLellan, an independent director and consultant on board issues, has put together a book of her own, with short, sharp cases and responses from a wide variety of experts.

What would you do if you had just taken up your first board appointment, only to find the board was hugely dysfunctional, leaking like a sieve, with a chairman who whispers behind everyone's backs

and inadequate documentation or minuting? How about if the auditors of the company demand a resolution from the board that the CEO's yacht is used only for legitimate purposes, when you know he uses it as his personal weekend runaround? How would you get rid of a crusty old board member who won't vote for any new ideas?

The book contains 22 cases, each of which is shorter than a page and has written responses from three experts. Contributors include CEOs, directors and consultants from organisations around the world. A hugely thought-provoking and useful resource for those embarking on, or embedded in, a career as a company director.

- **STRATEGY BY DESIGN:**
A process of strategy
innovation
James Carlopio
Palgrave Macmillan
\$110 (available online)

Readability ●●●
Usefulness ●●●

"DESIGN" IS the buzzword of the day. Whether it's the hype over Apple and the iPad or the "design thinking" of IDEO's Tim Brown or Rotman's Roger Martin, the business world is twiggling that the way designers work may have something to offer executives.

It's one thing to wave your arms in the air and say design is where it's all at, another thing altogether to come up with a formal process for applying design to the everyday world of building a business

