

booksinbrief with Stephen Matchett

Emotions, expressions and behaviour”, this kind of rage is considered “rancorous rage”. This article says this rage involves feelings of “disgust, contempt, resentment” and tends to manifest itself in non-verbal signals. It is much more preferable to “retaliatory rage”, the other type of rage, which involves “ferocity, malice, fury, rage” and their physical expressions. You wouldn’t want to enter that in a busy car park (the article notes many cases between customer rage and road rage).

to avoid their customer relationships – considered a company’s most important relationships – turning sour, many companies have invested in specialised call-centre technology that can detect increasing levels of anger in customers’ voices, according to the first article. The authors generally advise companies to treat their customers as individuals, instead of simply as consumers. For example, how easy it would be to keep this Australian insurance customer quoted in the article happy if you simply took the time to understand her problem: “I asked her to help me ... can you please look at my file [in the system]. I have called nine times and no one else will help me. I have a sense of helplessness, no one would listen to me ... I had no control any longer over what was happening.” The authors suggest ways of avoiding customer rage, say the authors, by training staff to identify situations that could escalate and by identifying workers with the right personality for customer service. Companies can create a culture in which complaints are treated as a positive experience for the company. The authors give the example of Australia’s St George Bank, where staff are taught that complaints represent a chance for the company to salvage a customer relationship.

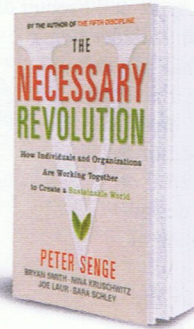
There are a thought for those who work in customer service, particularly those based in call centres. As an article in the *British Journal of Industrial Relations* points out, these jobs are stressful and employees have limited control over their work. “It is common for employees to be forced to express emotions they do not feel (such as being friendly and happy) or suppress emotions they genuinely do feel (such as anger or frustration) in the face of customer hostility and abuse.”

Customer Rage: Triggers, tipping points and take-outs, by Janet R. McColl-Kennedy, Amy K. Smith and Paul G. Patterson, *California Management Review*, Vol 52, No 1.
Customer Rage Episodes: Emotions, expressions and consequences, Janet R. McColl-Kennedy, Paul G. Patterson, Amy K. Smith and Michael K. Brady, *Journal of Retailing*, Vol 85, No 2.
Strategies in Call Centres: Work intensity and the impact on workers and supervisors, Stephen J. Deery, Paul G. Patterson, Janet R. McColl-Kennedy, Amy K. Smith, Janet R. Iverson and Janet T. Walsh, *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, Vol 48, No 1.



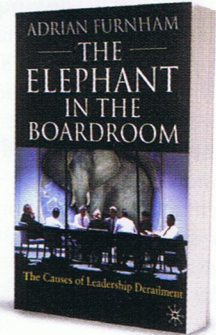
MARKETING FOR FAST GROWTH
 Graeme Gladman et al
 New Holland, 144pp.

The principals of the BrandQuest marketing consultancy explain how to build your business, promoting their own expertise in the process. This is straightforward stuff, designed for business people thrust into sales roles and expected to handle marketing in their spare time. It clearly and concisely covers the basics of the discipline without the complexities of an academic text or the self-help sophistry of inspirational authors. Instead, it sets out the key principles and why they apply to every organisation that needs to communicate what it offers. While the authors do not explain how to come up with the messages, they define the issues involved, making it easier for readers to recognise quality creative when they see it. This is not a book telling marketing graduates or experienced practitioners anything they did not already know – but they are not the book’s intended audience.



THE NECESSARY REVOLUTION
 How individuals and organisations are working together to create a sustainable world
 Peter Senge et al
 Allen & Unwin, 406pp.

Peter Senge’s idea of the learning organisation made his famous 20 years ago. His army of admirers will undoubtedly adore this paperback edition of a book (first published in mid-2008) which argues that the GFC proved we need a world in which people like us do not devour more than our share of the world’s resources. Senge is far subtler than the usual green ranter and includes examples of innovations and organisations which, he says, show the way to a new age. “Business people with traditional competitive win-lose mindsets are closing their eyes to the fact that there are really only two long-term options when it comes to dealing with sustainability issues: win-win or lose-lose,” he writes.



THE ELEPHANT IN THE BOARDROOM
 The causes of leadership derailment
 Adrian Furnham
 Palgrave Macmillan, 283pp.

Despite the title, this useful book does not deal with dysfunctional boards. Instead, it examines why leaders fail at all sorts of levels. Furnham looks at leadership styles and personality types and considers which work, which don’t and why. With a heavy reliance on emotional intelligence arguments, he describes individuals we all know and explains why they work the way they do. The problem is that the characteristics he describes apply to just about everyone. Rather than pathologies, he is describing people in general. Anybody who doesn’t recognise they have some of the failings mentioned is less self-satisfied than delusional. But readers interested in why smart people stuff things up or self-destruct in roles they are well equipped to undertake will find this worth reading. He is better at describing failure than showing how to deal with it, but identifying the problem is a start.