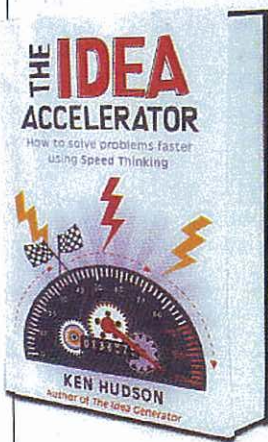


# FOR YOUR READING

A selection of titles worthy of your attention. Reviews by Derek Parker and Tim Mendham

## The Idea Accelerator

BY KEN HUDSON ALLEN & UNWIN, \$19.95



With a subtitle of "How to solve problems faster using Speed Thinking", there could hardly be a clearer exposition of the thrust and content of any business advisory book. This is classic "how to ...", literally – dozens of simple and clear-cut exercises that promote the concept that thinking and making decisions quickly can not only cut through the clutter, but actually make for good and often superior decision making.

The book follows the same format as the author's earlier *The Idea Generator*, with the premise here being that we need to make the most of our scarcest resource, time. Not working harder – most of us do that to the point of exhaustion already – but clearly working better, and according to Hudson that means learning how to think quickly, grab the results, evaluate them and then apply them, all within the shortest time.

Gut feelings feature prominently, as do emotional responses, picking nine options and setting exercises that need to be completed in two minutes (although he also premises the idea of a speed-thinking day, where every decision is a quick one).

This is not the place for prevaricators. Nor is it for the faint hearted – one of the more interesting exercises (to this reviewer) is the suggestion of picking the scariest ideas. Pick the ideas that make you feel most uncomfortable and find out why they are this way, can we reduce the risk and can we find a way to assess them, all in 120 seconds. This is the crux of innovation – going out on a limb and, in many instances, going with what is apparently counterintuitive and unproven (and unprovable?).

For more on the idea of speed thinking, see Hudson's article this issue. For enough simple but challenging exercises to fill a week (or two minutes) of workshops, get the book. – TM

## The Truth about Trust in Business

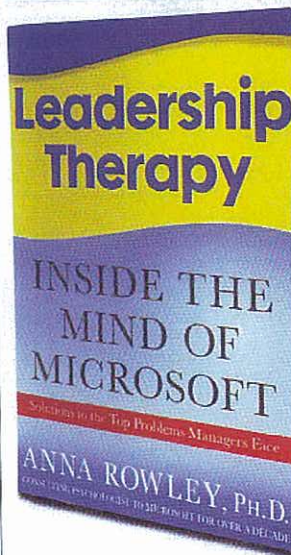
BY VANESSA HALL ENTENTE, \$29.95

This is a self-published book by a management consultant (and some associates) who specialises in the area of trust and trustworthiness.

If trust were an absolute and the norm in business – or anywhere else for that matter – then we'd never need contracts. But as business is fundamentally based around people rather than systems, then there's always a random element in every decision and action, and sometimes an element of self-serving and self-deception.

This is a very personalised book – from the introduction where the author relates a short but telling conversation with her son, to discussions with people on both sides of the trust equation (what you say is not always what others hear), this book is about people. Sure, there are discussions of business practices, case studies and definitions, but it is the real world, human aspects that ring home straightest and true. How scared are you? What do your employees think of you? And a series of quizzes for different occupations that will test the honesty of anyone.

Very readable and (not at all ironically) honest. – TM



## Leadership Therapy Inside the Mind of Microsoft

BY ANNA ROWLEY PALGRAVE, \$55.00

Anyone picking up this book thinking that it will reveal the strategic secrets of Microsoft is in for a surprise. Rowley is not a business analyst but a psychologist, and has been a consultant to Microsoft for over a decade, dealing with a wide range of executives and employees to overcome personal problems that undermine their workplace performance.

In particular, Rowley has developed a program she calls Short Term Corporate Therapy: what you believe about yourself and your work, confidence in your own abilities, awareness of your strengths and weaknesses, an ability to trust in others, and ambition towards realistic goals.

A key issue is when a positive attribute goes too far: self-belief turns to stubbornness, ambition becomes obsession, and so on. A surprising aspect is that many executives realise – at least in hindsight – where the line is, and when it has been crossed. There is the impression that the best service that

Rowley provides is that of an impartial listener, gently helping others to reach the place they know they should be.

She suggests a number of exercises to help people help themselves, such as putting aside an hour a week for personal reflection, or for an activity that is personally rewarding. Another good idea is to 'shadow' yourself for a day and then write a third-person narrative of your observations. In the end, the key lesson is about personal honesty – perhaps the most valuable, and most difficult, asset for a leader. – DP