

Profile: Frank Adoranti

Author of *The Lazy Executive's Guide: How to Lie, Cheat and Steal Your Way to the Top*

By Elen Lewis*

Frank Adoranti doesn't think David Brent is bright enough to follow his 60 rules for corporate survival. That is, he clarifies, that the lazy executives he depicts in his humorous book, *How to Lie, Cheat and Steal Your Way to the Top* are clever enough to appreciate their shortcomings, unlike the bumbling star played by Ricky Gervais in the TV show, *The Office*.

For the author of a book that advocates fighting dirty, treating corporate money like your own and employing blackmail; Frank Adoranti is surprisingly strait-laced. He readily admits that: "I'm the opposite of a lazy executive. I work, work, work and don't follow my own advice."

Indeed, the Australian corporate lawyer has been known to work 23-hour days in order to juggle his writing career with the demands of being a lawyer with global clients. And it is Adoranti's 20-year law career that has inspired the anecdotes and jokes that punctuate his tongue-in-cheek manual on how to triumph in office politics.

Its characters are slithery, slimy bosses who have no merit of their own and need to advance on other people's coat tails. And the book promises the chance to snaffle at least a shiny new Range Rover, season football tickets and the snazziest mobile phone in the climb to the top. His rules could take readers in one of two directions. They'll either become the chief executive of their company or they'll end up in jail.

"In the law profession you witness the worst of human nature. I've seen enough people in the upper echelons of a corporation who've advanced on anything other than merit. I wanted to unmask the scoundrels. It's a hazard of training – law brings out the worst in people," he says, chuckling.

Adoranti does like to chuckle. Nearly every sentence he utters is accompanied by a hearty laugh and a throw-back of his head. Perhaps his corporate life as a lawyer doesn't give him the opportunity to joke around?

"I lead a double life," he admits. "Being humorous doesn't come out in my professional life. When a client is charged with corporate manslaughter, you don't get to cut loose. When I do – this is the product," he says, with yet another chuckle. "I've always considered myself funny - my kids certainly think I am."

In the first chapter of his book, Adoranti advocates the importance of thinking like captains of industry and highlights some amusing differences between staff and their bosses. For example, when you take a long time, you're slow; yet when your boss does, it's because he's methodical and thorough. Or when you make a mistake you're an idiot, whereas your boss is only human.

Many readers will be able to identify individuals within their own offices that mirror Adoranti's characters. He suggests it's an inevitable symptom of corporate life. "Where there's a collection of people there will always be one upmanship, a 'mine's bigger than yours' mentality, especially among blokes. It's a world dominated by bravado," he suggests.

“I’ve seen people who’ve missed out on promotions because someone else stole the limelight. It’s really affected them, it crushes them. I wanted to turn these skirmishes into something I could laugh about,” he continues.

Initially Adoranti considered using a pseudonym when he wrote the comic manual. It was going to be S. Lees. Then he decided that his corporate clients would realise the book was meant to be funny, rather than a statement of his moral position. In his next book his proposed pseudonym was to be C. Rooke.

And what of all those paranoid clients, who might flick through the pages nervous about being parodied somewhere? Adoranti admits that there have been one or two characters that he’s come across in his 20 year career that provided a great deal of inspiration.

There was the client who claimed his personal yacht’s mooring fees as work expenses, despite the fact that his customers had not been within a million miles of the boat. Or there was the client who fired one of its employees for not turning up to work without an excuse. The problem was the employee’s termination notice turned up just as his family were returning home from his funeral.

In his first law job, Adoranti was trained up by an old solicitor in his 80s. It sounds like a Dickensian world. It was the last solicitor’s office in the city to get a fax machine and it used a ghetto blaster rather than a Dictaphone. On one occasion, Adoranti recalls being introduced to the photocopying machine by his ageing leader. “Look, this does the work of three girls,” marvelled his boss, in admiration.

In his early career, Adoranti carved out a reputation for himself as a divorce lawyer with a speciality following of doctor’s wives. “Maybe doctors all attend some course on how to dump your wife after 35 years of marriage,” he chortles. “We had a lot of fun turning the tables.”

When he moved into corporate law, he decided to write a series of books helping managers understand the nature of commercial contracts, entitled *Manager’s guides to understanding contracts*. These six professional guides are very different kinds of book to *Lie, cheat and steal your way to the top*. “Oh yes,” he jokes. “They were thrillers. Harry Potter watch out.”

Running a legal consultancy with clients from different time zones and authoring both serious books and tongue-in-cheek manuals means the author of the *Lazy Executive’s Guide* could never be accused of being lazy himself. And that’s not to mention carving out time with his four children, who are all under the age of seven. Thank goodness Adoranti doesn’t need much sleep.

So what’s next for the corporate lawyer turned comic writer? It’s quite simple. There’s a sequel to *Lie, cheat and steal your way to the top*, called *Pillage, plunder and exploit: being a corporate CEO made easy*. It’s the survival manual for all those readers who followed Adoranti’s last set of rules and managed to bluff their way to the top. Now, the trick lies in staying there.

The Lazy Executive’s Guide. How to Lie, Cheat and Steal Your Way to the Top by Frank Adoranti is published by Capstone. www.lazyexecutive.com

*** Elen Lewis is the author of *Great Ikea, a brand for all the people* published by Cyan Books in 2005, listed in the top five business books of the year by *The Times* newspaper. Her next book is *Great Brand Stories: eBay, the brand that taught millions of strangers to trust one another*, also published by Cyan Books.**