

"A rare treat - valuable and very funny too!"

*- Dave Sumner-Smith; former Programme
Director b2businesshub*

"Absolutely full of business truth"

*- Stefan Topfer; CEO WinWeb & Editor
of The Small Business Blog*

FREEDOM FROM BOSSES FOREVER

Taking Control of Your Own Destiny by
Going It Alone



TONY ROBINSON OBE
with Soculitherz

**FREEDOM from
BOSSES FOREVER**

**How to take control of your
own destiny by going it alone**

By Tony Robinson OBE
(with **Soculitherz**—pronounced
So-cool-it-hurts)

If you choose to drink, eat, make love or cut your toenails whilst reading this book, please do this responsibly. Remember the value of your home can go up as well as down. Any personal details that you provide to Government may remain in the public domain.

This small, popular and highly acclaimed book on enterprise has an interesting history. This is an updated version of 'Stripping for Freedom' which was first published in June 2009 with a second edition published in January 2010 as softback and eBook. In late 2013 'Stripping for Freedom' was completely revised and improved as a brand new eBook entitled 'Freedom from Bosses Forever'.

The high sales and critical acclaim for 'Freedom from Bosses Forever' created the demand for the publishing of this softback version. The book has been Start Your Business Magazine's Editor's Book Choice of the Month and nominated for Small Business Book of the Year - 2014 in the 'Start Up' category.



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ISBN 978-1-8491449-3-3

Published by: BAB, The Business Advisory Bureau Limited, Publications August 2014

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Most of the characters in this book and the co-author, Soculitherz, are fictitious. Any resemblance to real persons, living or dead is purely co-incidental.

This book is dedicated to my best friend, business partner and editor of all my work since 1986, Clare Francis. It is written in awe of the late Miles Kington and PG Wodehouse who have given me a lifetime of laughter.

Other books by Tony Robinson OBE with Soculitherz are

'Buzzing with the Entrepreneurs' Jan 2004 ISBN 0 9512488 39

'Stripping for Freedom' Jan 2010 ISBN 978 0 9512488 43

Allegedly, other books by Leonora Soculitherz are

'The Edible Desire' (1995);

'Bong in the Orange Grove' (1997);

Over Strung and Under Nourished (2002)

What they've said about this book:

For your interest, here are some reader reviews of the original version of this book which was entitled 'Stripping for Freedom'.

2014 reader reviews of the eBook version of 'Freedom from Bosses Forever' can be found on Amazon and this book has a 5 star customer rating. Book critics' reviews can be found on the 'Freedom from Bosses Forever' Facebook page and at <http://TonyRobinsonOBE.com>

'I've discovered a rare treat. A business book that's valuable and very funny too.'

By Dave Sumner-Smith who is former editor/programme director of b2b business hub, Home Business Network and Telegraph Business Club

When is the last time you read a business book that made you laugh out loud? Every month there seems to be scores of new books about different aspects of business. But many of them seem to cover the same old ground. Very few focus on the special issues relating to running a business from home. And very, very few have ever made me laugh.

'Stripping for Freedom' is an exception to the rule. Written by the Canadian 'writer, broadcaster and celebrity' Leonora Soculitherz (no, I hadn't heard of her either), the book revolves around the basic principle that your business should be based on offering whatever you have got that is wanted by people with money. Even if that means you end up as a lap dancer (though doing that at home is unlikely to generate much revenue, I suspect!).

Written in a fun, bold style that you will either love or hate, it is peppered with 'Leonorisms' ("Leave your old company style behind you. You are now your own brand, so dress to impress") and other advice. When talking about 'Dealing with Regulations', for example, she advises that you should "be generally aware of the regulations around your own enterprise, but don't fall into the trap of trying to comply with it all. Comply only when you have to. Get this wrong and you'll find you're legal but bust, because you had no time or money left to start and run your business."

'Can I sue for emotional stress?!'

By Eva Davies who is Owner/Director, The Electric Zone Online retailer selling luxury electronics, intelligent gadgets and contemporary furniture

OK Tony I am most displeased with you and Clare – you shouldn't have written such a funny book.

Picture the scene – we are taking a family holiday in Brighton and I have found a good deal at The Grand Hotel (swanky or what)

One afternoon it is raining so I decide to have tea and a nice read in the lounge. I stupidly took Stripping for Freedom with me and firstly had raised eyebrows from the waiter. Secondly and worst – I started laughing aloud so hard that it came out as a snort – v. embarrassing – other guests lowered their copies of the Telegraph and Wisden to look disapprovingly at me!

Seriously it is so funny, Tony.

Do hope I get to meet you in the flesh in the future. Do you venture south – Londoners are quite friendly once you get over the language barrier

Have got to go and cut down my thick tights now – thank Leonora for the tip – us good Indian girls don't like to waste money!

'The funniest hard-hitting business book, that is absolutely full of business truth'

By Stefan Topfer who is Chairman and CEO WinWeb Global entrepreneur, cloud software and apps and Editor of The Small Business Blog

“Soculitherz has written books before, but this one is, in my opinion, the best she has ever written for anyone who wants to take control of their own destiny by going it alone. At the same time this is the funniest hard-hitting business book, that is absolutely full of business truth, I have ever read – some have called this book “whacky” and I can agree with that to some extent. Why else would I now deny to sitting her in winter at my home desk with my fleece on – heck, I even would deny owning a fleece.

Confused? Fasten your seat belt and read the book and find out why Zsa Zsa Gabor, “...wanted a man who only has to be kind and understanding. Is that too much to ask of a multi-millionaire?” Find out why this book is not only for women and why it is so relevant for you and your entrepreneurial endeavours.

Leonora, with the help of her “underwhelming” helper Tony Robinson, cuts through the chase, tells it how it is and then delivers the distilled business truth in a fashion that entertains as much as it is relevant.

“Stripping” for freedom paints a picture of brutally honest business acumen and asks you how much you really want it – and by getting you to strip your ambitions bare in the process of reading, this book leaves you in no doubt on who has to make it happen – You!

If you plan to read one book this holiday season, make it “Stripping for Freedom” – you will be mightily entertained with humorous insights, exposed yet practical business knowledge whilst being delighted and amused with the double meaning of words. I guess as you can tell, I loved this book,... just don't tell her about the fleece – you must promise!”

'Well worth absorbing'

By Gail Purvies a writer who edits Compute Scotland in which this review appeared. Gail was also a friend from school days of the late Miles Kington, the brilliant humorous writer.

Able assisted by Tony Robinson (who despite this, emerges as the fall guy) and judiciously edited by Clare Francis, author Leonora Soculitherz, takes her own ultra fashionably, chatty, confidential route through “Stripping for Freedom” or “taking control of your own destiny by going it alone” as an entrepreneur.

For lazy readers with an urge to get at the key issues, nothing is easier than page flicking for Leonorisms or ‘truths’ helpfully printed in easily seen bold lettering. The first one is core to the whole book. “Think of a lap dancer: what have you got to offer that people with money to spend, want?”

Closely followed by “in a recession, don't just fish in the private sector pool for your customers because the public sector fish are fatter and easier to catch (especially between January to the end of March when they have got to get rid of all that's remaining of their budgets and allowances).

For a Scottish biased website, it's a pleasure to see good work being recognised. Leonora points out “The Highlands and Islands of Scotland recognise the importance of providing consistently high levels of free training and support to start up and existing micro enterprise owners to ensure they have the same chance of success as in any other career.’

On essential effective networking the highlight is ‘choose productive networks from which you can learn, gain a profile and be given and give referrals.’

But this idle approach will lose the humour, and some interesting and reflective stories, well worth absorbing. Take the chapter on Scarborough. Why Scarborough? Well it’s hats off to Scarborough, which with a population of 50,000 first won ‘The Most Enterprising Place in Yorkshire,’ then ‘The Most Enterprising place in Britain,’ to be ultimately crowned in Prague as, ‘The Most Enterprising Town in Europe.’ That Scarborough chapter has lots to teach any budding business owner.

The best Leonorism is of course the last, and concerns the daily topping up of the three pots. But you’ve got 183 pages to strip through first, by which time you should have worked out the three pot issue.

‘Laughing Out Loud’

By Julie Stanford who is a designer, radio presenter and President of Brighton & Hove Chamber of Commerce. Julie developed, owns and publishes through Cobweb, the Essential Business Guide - the top UK reference guide for small business owners.

I’m really enjoying reading ‘Stripping for Freedom’ (indeed my snort of laughter woke up a few sleeping travellers on a Brighton to Victoria train when I read the part about looking good being simply a matter of how well you tuck in your bits!)

‘An Essential Read’

By Dr Robert Murray who was formerly Enterprise Coordinator at Nottingham Trent University

Being retired, I read this book just for its humour. It certainly succeeded in that respect as the jokes and situations were to my liking. However, the important messages came across and I have spent the weeks since I read Leonora’s thesis, telling my friends that the country is simply doing the wrong things.

Why do we spend tens of thousands of pounds to create one job in the big, high tech, industries when a few hundred would give the small entrepreneur the time to become established? Why don’t we support small business and encourage the ideas that come from people of all ages?

Fantastic advice in the book and it does mean freedom to liberate people to accomplish a successful business that is their dream.

We need Leonora in a position of power to save us from the professional, blinkered politicians, particularly those who are in power from their titles rather than from the ballot box.

‘Light style, serious message’

By George Derbyshire OBE who was Chief Executive of the National Federation of Enterprise Agencies

Books about entrepreneurship come in different styles, but usually all end up as lists. This one is different. Persevere: amidst the anecdotes and the quirky humour there is lots of serious guidance for new entrepreneurs. And some questions which ought to make one or two people in Whitehall shuffle on their seats in embarrassment. Why does nearly all the government money go to the usual suspects?

‘Entertaining and informative’

By Anthony Haynes who is a Literary Agent, Publisher and Co-Owner of Higher & Professional

The framework of this book is a narrative told by a Canadian author (and style guru) exploring entrepreneurship (and the lack of support for micro-enterprises) in the UK. The structure makes the book both entertaining (I particularly liked the portrait of Jools, the businesswoman who ruins everyone’s train journey by yelling into her mobile throughout the journey) and informative: there’s good, down to earth,

advice for people running, or intending to run, their own (genuinely) small businesses. And there are some good jokes too.

‘Fancy a Leonorism...?’

By Nat Hardwick who is a Musician, IT Consultant and Director of the UK Sector Skills Body for Small Firms and Business Support – SFEDI Group

What a thoroughly enjoyable read...! By turns satirical, thought-provoking and darkly comic. Many a laugh-out-loud moment... Leonora takes us on a whistle stop tour de force of our own entrepreneurial culture and holds up a (wildly fashionable) mirror... but don't be surprised if you don't like all that you see!

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Tony Robinson OBE & Soculitherz both write for

The Small Business Blog <http://sme-blog.com>

& recommend for great business cloud software & apps <http://WinWeb.com>

Pinterest Soculitherz - Men's Fashion Faux Pas <http://pinterest.com/tonyrobinsonobe/men-s-fashion-faux-pas-by-leonora-soculitherz/>

Cover Design by LoveYourCovers.com

Formatted by Writers Block Author Services

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS of Freedom from Bosses Forever

A Final Piece of Fun?

FREEDOM from
BOSSES FOREVER

PROLOGUE by Tony Robinson OBE

This book is for anyone thinking of starting their own business. It is also for anyone that is interested in enterprise, whether their own or another's enterprise. Most of all it's perfect for anyone wanting to read a funny book on business, particularly those yearning to escape the corporate cubicle and be free from bosses forever.

The book was first published as 'Stripping for Freedom' by Leonora Soculitherz with me as co-author. I have updated it and removed any rude bits. I have added in many valuable, free to use, web links to help anyone succeed as their own boss.

Soculitherz (pronounced So-cool-it-hurts) has asked me to make it clear that she wants no part of 'Freedom from Bosses Forever', that this is a totally unauthorized publication and that I am an imbecile.

Since collaborating with me to write 'Stripping for Freedom', Canadian fashionista and investigative journalist, Ms Leonora Soculitherz is now known by the single name 'Soculitherz'. Many, equally famous, celebrities are known by single names, such as; Madonna, Cher, Beyonce, Rihanna and Batman.

It is not known whether Soculitherz will ever return to the UK to see me again or indeed to write another book on enterprise. I have had an e-mail from her which stated 'You are pathetic and I'm very unhappy about you massacring my book.'

My latest erotic thriller, '50 Sheds du Lait' is about a fit French, billionaire, dairy farmer investigating the disappearance of big supermarket bosses. He's hooked on gorgonzola and addicted to early morning visits to the 'Beyond the Pail Room' with a trainee yoghurt maker.

Anyway, writing the 'ooh la la' first meeting of the stylish lady chief of police with the farmer, with the fabulous six pack, reminds me how unfortunate I've been to ever meet you - my hapless, hopeless and sadly dressed excuse for an agent.'

I think Soculitherz is interested in other things. So, ladies and gentlemen, I proudly present 'Freedom from Bosses Forever', formerly 'Stripping for Freedom'. It begins with Soculitherz explaining where she got the idea for the title of the original book.

Introduction

Handbags, Gladrags and K

One of the perils of being accessible as a writer, broadcaster and celebrity is that everyone thinks they have the right to interrupt me in mid flow (of writing this book). Other celebrities, particularly, seem to think they have the right to seek my advice at any time. I'd better deal with them before I continue this introduction.

So, Delia from Norwich, never use bagged lettuce as it's washed in a chlorine solution twenty times more concentrated than in your swimming pool. Also, however exciting the team win is, never ever jump in the bath with seventeen footballers – again.

Kate from Croydon, you're wonderful but I still need to give you a layering master class and, No, you're not too old now to have a freebie Paddington Chloe handbag, but although oversized, slouchy shapes are still good in handbags, (they make you look even thinner), they remain most uncool in boyfriends.

As for Fay in the West Country, I'm sorry to say I haven't got a definitive feminist reaction to your views yet. I've sent texts to my girlfriends to poll them on whether a) they think it is right to fake orgasms for the man's benefit and b) sex can also be great without an orgasm.

However, from their limited response to date, I think we must assume that food, clothes, shoes and a good night's sleep are the issues currently closer to their hearts. One said that for a man 'who could listen', it might be worth the pretence in a), but most thought that such a man will never exist. Another said that 'men who hate women can be great lovers', so work all that stuff out.

Also, in one case 'giving up Twix chocolate bars would be tougher than giving up sex with any man', which I suppose could answer a) and b). I did try to get a male view and sent a text to my Canadian soul mate and leading life coach, Rock Heathcliff, and below is our repartee:

Me: a fave UK author & feminist says it's OK for wmn 2 fake orgasm 2 keep the relationship sweet – do u agree?

Rock: Don't get it!!

Me: Reason u don't get it is cos the rabbit does it better.

Rock: Wot??

Me: Forget it.'

Anyway, back to the flow. I've been asked countless times whether I know anything about stripping from personal experience, as per my alluring title for this book. The answer is 'something'.

Before I arrived in England to write this book I learned a little about stripping for a living from my new friend K (short for Kylie). Using my publisher's paltry advance, I asked K to spend a week with me in Malta to tell me about her life and the people she meets.

K was recommended to me by my very best English friend Michaela, (Mickey), whom you'll meet later in the book. I'd asked Mickey if she knew anyone who was successful as a stripper or table dancer. It had to be someone who worked at one of the top London clubs where the cream of the UK's financial sector spent their time relaxing or entertaining clients after a hard day spent gambling away the UK economy.

K seems a bit like the Natalie Portman character in the film 'Closer'. She claims she is all powerful in front of drunken businessmen at what she calls a 'classy' table side dancing club. I've been there since and the furnishings are a bit like the clientele – arrogant (perhaps a good new brand name for interior furnishings?), thick, rich and mostly in the dark.

K has a body to die for. Literally, for there is anguish on many of the punters' faces as they consider whether it is worth breaching the 'no touching' rule and dying from a five gorilla mauling as they are ejected.

Every move is monitored on camera, so it appears a safe environment for the seductive, sensuous and certainly sickeningly slim K. (Did you know that two thirds of the CCTV cameras manufactured worldwide end up in the UK and the UK government is revered as being the best at devising ways of collecting data on all of its citizens? Comforting for K.)

Fortunately for the heavily protected K she only has to say 'thank you' for the bundles of notes that are thrust her way, for her voice is not her greatest asset. Whilst she wants to sound sultry like Norah Jones, I'm afraid that it comes out like Cyndi Lauper on speed. Does that sound a bit catty?

K is independent and, in her own way, an entrepreneur. She takes controlled risks in doing something in a special way that will make her money. Her body is her freedom. K wasn't very forthcoming about what goes on in the private rooms – the 'champagne rooms' – where the big money is. Here, Cristal-sodden, testosterone fuelled traders, accountants and lawyers, hyped up by their big wins or big losses in the City, will exchange £thousands in return for K's personal attention.

All K would say on the subject of the private dances, or even whether she'd meet a client outside the club, was 'we have power, we have protection, we can do numb and dumb... and thinking of the money certainly helps'.

After uni. and a post grad. Comms. course, K joined a large PR agency in London, where she met Mickey. Within eighteen months she was sick of the corporate lifestyle and the free meals and drinks, which were also making her fat. K worked out the fastest way of making great money in order to do with it what she wanted to please herself.

K *strips* for freedom, but anyone without a job, stuck in a boring job or just sickened by the rat race or public institutions can also choose, (not literally), to do this. My book will show you how and why you should too.

Through my interviews I identify many valuable and unassailable truths. These truths are called Leonorisms and give you guidance. **Leonorisms** appear in bold. There are really lots of them throughout this book. The first one, related to K, which you can consider, dear reader, is:

1. Think of a lap dancer: what have you got to offer that people with money to spend, want?'

In order to learn about K, I persuaded her to leave winter in London for a week and head for the sun in Malta. What a disaster! The idea of topping up the tans for a week was a good one, but I hadn't realized how focused K is on remaining absolutely blemish free. I guess if you're willing to go to the torture chamber regularly for a Brazilian or Hollywood, then you're unlikely to be someone who allows environmental hazards like sun and insects to mess with the way you want to look.

The holiday started badly as the chlorinated water from our evening swim in the hotel pool led to an unfortunate streaking of K's massively costly, fake St Tropez tan.

K is obsessive about her body. That extends to working out every day for between 2 and 4 hours, yet she does everything outside covered up from head to toe. For example, at 7 a.m. she'd be power walking along Sliema promenade to St Julian and back, along with hundreds of others.

No-one would be able to pick her out and no-one would guess sex, age, ethnicity or angst as she is swathed in track suit, hoodie over baseball hat, sunglasses and earphones. She looked ready for an uprising in Athens, but these are the lengths to which she will go to remain blemish free.

I spend my life ensuring I always look naturally gorgeous, but with nothing like the tenacity of K. Nevertheless, her reluctance to expose her skin to the elements does seem a tad crazy for someone who wouldn't think twice about risking all under the surgeon's knife, to enhance her looks. Injections from knitting needle sized hypodermics is also par for her silken course. Botox is a six monthly routine and she was one of the first to have a Macrolane injection to get bigger breasts. This, too, will require a top up in a year or so.

Any type of body invasion from nature itself is not on K's agenda. Water sports are clearly out. Equally, she reckons that walking outside with skin exposed during the day, carries a 40% chance of a graze, cut or bruise, and in the evening there is the unacceptable 60% chance of an insect bite. K even looked distinctly uncomfortable at breakfast at the Park Hotel. I guessed that she was wondering if the silver hair, age spots or the many ailments being exhibited by the residents, could be passed on through the self service spoons for the baked beans and scrambled eggs.

Every biting bug in the region must have passed the word that K's skin was a 'not to be missed' delicacy and the opportunity for a gourmet feast for all Maltese flying insects. After a while I was convinced that an advance scouting party of wasps was sent to establish the exact venue for the banquet. Once they got a whiff of 'K's No7', they would hover above her, buzzing loudly. Within minutes, bugs of all manner and classes, well dressed for dinner, would join the scouts looking to nibble away merrily.

The bugs were only one of many hazards to the body beautiful. To K, the only way to be exposed to the sun is for each body part to receive exactly the same amount of exposure. Tanning herself is therefore a very precise, very time consuming and very boring business. I was interested though that the book she was reading, given to her by one of her regular clients from the City, was one of mine – 'Bong in the Orange Grove'. At least the woman has taste; but frankly, by the end of the week I'd happily have left her turning on a roasting spit.

Don't get me wrong: I admire loads about K. It's just that her obsession with 'blemish free', seemed to be getting in the way of our opportunity to enjoy the historic sights of Malta. I also got fed up with always trying to remain 'front on' when next to her and never walking in front of her either, so that the subject of comparative bum sizes would never come up.

There are two Leonorisms K said to me over the course of the week, which I need to pass on to you if you're thinking of going it alone:

"My work is something that I know many other women find repulsive.

2. Friends, family or professional advisers may not approve, but don't let them get in the way. If you want it, go and get it" and;

3. Few are willing to pay the price in terms of hard work and lost friends in order to achieve their aims".

K is only one of the many experts, in many different locations, including London, Madrid, New York, Toronto and Scarborough whom I've used to help me explain how anyone and everyone can escape the rat race and go it alone by stripping for freedom. I've ensured that you won't have heard of most of these experts. However, K is the only one who always succeeds with the skinny jeans day-into-evening solution. So what?

Chapter One

Chunky Businesses

It is very vulgar to talk about one's own business. Only stockbrokers do that, and then merely at dinner parties

Oscar Wilde

The Importance of Being Earnest, Act 3 (1895)

Call me Leonora, not Leo, Lee, Lenny or any man's name. There are very few true celebrities around today. Regrettably, just five minutes on a reality TV show or being married to a sportsman can jerk you up the party invitation lists and into star studded events. This inevitably leads to these nouveau 'celebs.' being photographed in flagrante, which keeps them in the media gaze for a while longer than they deserve.

True celebrity is knowing what to wear, what to wear under it (i.e. spanx knickers – slim cognito mid thigh shaper), who to be with, when and where to arrive, what not to eat and drink, when to botox, what to speak against, what to support, how much to give to whom and when and, most of all, how to preserve your brand and name when everyone wants to shorten, familiarise or generally mess with it. So it is Gwyneth, Victoria, Nicole, Jennifer and Leonora – in full!

As a Canadian I may for just a millisecond put up with being called American, but I will not tolerate what I call 'chumminess'. Only my friends and family and perhaps my celebrity stalker, who e-mails me the sweetest things, are allowed to tease me about the lengths I'll go to enhance my public persona. If highlights, extensions, affairs or even icing my nipples;

4. Makes me stand out from the crowd, then it is not only my business, it is only me doing business.

5. I succeed because of who I have made myself into. You can succeed in the way you want too.

Through over eighty **Leonorisms** in this book I will show you how you can be free from bosses forever by going it alone in business of your own. So, leave the rat race behind. Never again be subject to the torture and degradation of performance appraisals, away days, corporate training, helicopter visioning, bonding and brainstorming.

Never again have to pretend to smile or encourage your boss through one cringe-worthy speech after another at company events like birthdays, someone starting, leaving, dying or bringing in their new baby. No one really cares about these 'events' and no one really cares about you in your cubicle in big organisation hell. So, read on if you really want to control your own destiny by going it alone.

My story is already well known, but certainly when my spineless, unfaithful, cellist husband Gerard patronised me in public and on television I could have receded from view forever or, as I did, stuck a bow for posterity and my notoriety. No pain – no gain. His pain and my gain. I have the 'going it alone' T shirt.

I'd just been on vacation to the Shuswap, spending a week on a houseboat, when my publisher called and invited me to lunch at the Four Seasons Hotel in Toronto. Here he suggested to me that I should return to the recession ravished UK (the rest of the world is so happy about the US-UK special relationship, especially the financial sectors) to write a follow up to my 2004 best seller, *Buzzing with the Entrepreneurs*?

I sort of jumped at the chance. Only ‘sort of’, because although I felt eminently qualified for the assignment, it meant leaving Canada again and relearning the funny ways and expressions of the English. It would mean goodbye to gas, sidewalks, traffic circles, fries and Leonard Cohen and hello to petrol, pavements, roundabouts, chips and Will Young.

There were four good reasons to be interested. Firstly, I’m always interested in trends that make money and make you famous and I’m sure that helping people become self employed, many of whom now have no viable alternative, coupled with solving a major UK political mystery, will do just that.

Secondly, I am more popular in the UK than in Canada – Dame Edna probably has the same problem in Australia – because of my weekly column.

Thirdly, I’m the best interviewer in the UK after ‘Parky’, and therefore the writer most likely to capture the real essence of entrepreneurship, the special juices needed for self employment.

Fourthly, I consider myself an entrepreneur – someone who has successfully ‘stripped for freedom’ – so I can separate the useful from the useless, the wheat from the chavs and the meat from the bullshit.

In short then, there is no better saviour to come to the bankrupt UK and set free those sad, manacled employees incarcerated in their ‘open office’ cubicles. I, Leonora Soculitherz, hear their screams for help, understand the despair in their corporate gibberish, and I must and will show them how to go it alone.

Of course, everything I have found out from the UK will work in other nations too. For example, the US desperately needs the Soculitherz treatment. It has a new and inspirational President, sure, but it’s likely that many of their economic problems will only be solved by the next generation of entrepreneurs. Time and life march inexorably on and the decision to ‘go it alone’ now may be very right wherever you are in the world.

For example, co-pilots Sully (Sullenberg) and Skiles, the three cabin crew and the traffic controller who between them safely landed Flight 1549 and all its passengers in the Hudson river, had 177 years between them of loyal, corporate aviation experience, but sadly felt that it counted for zip with their employers.

It was understandable that every leading US politician waxed lyrical about their heroism and the US Senate safety committee formally recognised that experienced personnel were the most important safety factor on Flight 1549. It was enlightening though that the crew took their one big worldwide TV opportunity to make sure we knew they weren’t over impressed with the glory.

They made it clear that before the bird strike made them heroes and heroines, they’d taken 40% pay cuts, lost most of their pensions, taken second jobs, were working 7 days a week and didn’t know a single person who wanted their jobs. So much for expecting Corporate America to look after their valued employees.

Brothers and sisters, it’s time to do it for ourselves. The more of us who do it and are vocal about it, the more chance we have of getting our respective Governments to redistribute to us some of the finance, support and opportunities that currently go to the Corporates and institutions.

6. ‘Stripping for freedom’ means divesting yourself of everyone and everything that will get in the way of you controlling your own entrepreneurial destiny.

I have bared my body, my soul, my intellect and my charisma. The economic litmus test is that everything I supply my public, they buy in buckets-full. Reader, I don’t want to prejudice your early conclusions from this authoritative work, but

7. I believe a supportive environment and family help a great deal in giving people the ‘bottle’ (as you English call it) to go it alone.

I lived my early years in Hull, close to Ottawa, in Canada, and our house was called 'The Parsonage'. It was up a steep road, separated from the other houses, and it overlooked a grim churchyard.

In truth, it was a greyish place, surrounded by bleak, undulating moorland, with just eight bare rooms and a stone staircase. Yet I remember how we three sisters, with our genius older brother, created light, colour, beauty and a fantasy world out of sand, water, blu-tack, paper clips and sweet wrappers. We weren't allowed glue because of my brother Grayson's tendency to sniff it.

The four of us would each take a side of the sand pit, with me directly opposite Grayson. The sandpit would represent far off and foreign lands populated by little colourful people whom we'd make out of the paperclips, blu-tack and sweet wrappers. Looking back, this is probably where I first gained my eye for fashion.

I would be Queen Antonia The Reasonable. Grayson would be King George, The Junior. Together we ruled the kingdom of Gundoil, where all the Gundoilers did as we said. My sisters were the Grand Protectors of the Funny Foreign Lands and they had to avoid provoking Gundoil into attacking and annexing their lands.

The fantasy was played out in silence, so that no-one could hear our plans or suspect our duplicity. We did this by tiny writing, often in heroic verse, on the sweet wrappers and making them into little aeroplanes which we flew across the sandpit to our partner in crime. We did think about publishing the contents of all these sweet wrappers to show off our brilliance to the world, but unfortunately Grayson had a nasty streak. When he took a dislike to anything he didn't understand in the game, he would just throw a bucket of water over everything. Eventually, we three sisters got fed up with rebuilding our worlds and anyway, we were getting really fat from eating all the sweets.

I didn't get my creativity and self belief from an 'unleash the creative tiger within' corporate training course involving climbing on and holding hands with my work colleagues so that my boss can climb to the top of the pyramid. No, I gave full rein to my creativity from an early age and I encourage all British parents to do the same for their children.

I digress. My Canadian publisher recognised the time was right for me to build on my earlier UK book called 'Buzzing with the Entrepreneurs'. He saw I had a role to play in solving an enduring political and economic mystery. He saw the need for me to provide genuine help to enable people to leave the rat race behind. He saw that my profile in the UK has never been higher. This was all pretty observant, since normally all he could see was my cleavage.

His exact briefing to me was "meet as many self employed folk and entrepreneurs as you can and report their practical success secrets, thus developing 'go it alone' guidance for all those who are considering leaving, or have left their jobs. Explain how they will need to strip for freedom. While you're at it, try and solve the big mystery that is baffling most of us about the UK. This is; 'Why are government ministers, senior civil servants, government advisers, failed bank chiefs and other major corporate and public sector CEOs getting very very rich whilst everything they touch is going bust?'

As he said these words my mobile played 'Je ne regrette rien'. At the other end was my fifth and hottest reason for going back to the UK, none other than the global phenomenon, motivational guru Ant Cracie, who was doing one of his firewalking tours in the UK;

'Hi Anty Panty. What's up?'

'Are you coming over to the UK soon?'

'Looks like it. In about three weeks time. To do a book on going it alone in the UK recession – what do you think?'

‘Cool babe. I’ll be in the UK for another six weeks so we can hook up.’

‘What’re you doing now?’

‘In the bath singing ‘Mercy’ by Duffy, one of my all time fave songs.’

‘Don’t know it Ant, you must let me hear it sometime.’

‘Sure babe... well, I have a bath most nights.’

Look I was ringing because I just did a big gig for the Tochen network at the Crucible in Sheffield and you’ll never guess what I found out?’

‘Go on.’

‘Your book *‘Bong in the Orange Grove’* is one of the texts they quote from to train their members.’

‘Nice – but who are the Tochen network?’

‘Big in the UK, US, Japan and China. Founded by HR Tochen, in the late 1980s, you know... he also relaunched the christocratic movement. Anyway, they love you. When you’re over I can get you to speak to them – big bucks’. See ya babe.

‘Au revoir Anty.’

Even without Ant’s endorsement you’ll have realised by now I was going to take on this assignment. This was despite my knowledge of a major downside which I have not yet revealed to you.

This major downside was that my guide and mentor for this assignment would again be one Tony Robinson. This is not the famous ‘Baldrick’ actor and television presenter who digs up your ancestors, but a sorry looking substitute who is very proud to have been awarded an OBE for services to small firms and training. I’m sure that the Queen must have got the invitations to the Chelsea Flower Show and New Year’s Honours list mixed up between the two Tony Robinsons.

I knew why I’d been assigned the talentless one of the two: my publisher could and will be paying him peanuts. He’ll have accepted this offer with alacrity and gross obsequiousness, as he’s lucky to get any work and is clearly always broke. No-one would dress that badly by design. How do you work with someone who says his greatest achievement is to have been with 600,000 others watching Hendrix, the Who, Free, Leonard Cohen, John B Sebastian, Taste, Joni Mitchell and others over 5 days at the Isle of Wight in 1970? It’s as though his life is a freeze frame.

My publisher unsuccessfully tried to reassure me that the badly bearded one was still regarded as an expert on all things to do with self employment and he teased me into believing that TR had a few leads which might help in the second part of my assignment.

As my ‘Buzzing’ readers will know, I am just totally underwhelmed when Tony Robinson is ever in my presence. I have learned, however, that if he is going to be around, then I am best to bring an interpreter with me and wear waterproofs.

Understanding his pronunciation is a nightmare: it’s not a great start when he introduces himself as ‘Turnie Robbins’.

8. My advice is never to work with someone who can’t pronounce their own name.

All similarly written words sound the same. For example, you have to guess whether ‘her’ is her, hare or hair and ‘fur’ is fur, fare or fair. A recurring phrase he used to use, which took me six months before I

guessed the correct meaning, was 'kurching ancheesy girls'. This, I finally twigged, meant 'coaching and achieving goals'.

His co-ordination is even worse than his diction. You'll remember that my first introduction to him at a BAB/Entrepreneurs UK Awards' ceremony, saw him trip over his briefcase and throw his glass of wine over me. After wiping myself down I was exposed for over an hour to his unique ability to mispronounce most of the English language, whilst, from time to time, throwing more wine or canapés over me. This is because he gesticulates to make each incomprehensible point, forgetting that he has both hands full of refreshments.

Any room he's in where networking is going on resembles a battlefield. Some of the effect is caused by the sorry state of furnishings and clothes as a result of the flying foodstuffs, but many women in the room will also look distinctly the worse for wear, due, not to drink but to TR's lack of co-ordination.

TR has never got the hang of the two cheek/kiss greeting with the opposite sex. In the best of cases this just leads to the woman sporting an ugly red rash from his beard for an hour or so, but in the worst of cases it leads to a cracked head, black eye or broken nose.

Anyway, enough of TR. You'll meet him soon, as I intend to travel by train directly from Manchester airport to Scarborough, where he lives, to sort out who does what on my assignment.

I'm writing this on the Air Malta plane to Manchester. Interestingly it is an all male cabin crew. Cool – I wonder if they've got a woman pilot? One of the things I did before leaving Canada for Malta was to contact a few of the entrepreneurs to whom I'd spoken previously when I did 'Buzzing' in '04. I wanted to find out just what effect the recession was having on small and home business owners in the UK. Top of my contacts list were Ethel and Ernie Brigstock in Brighton, who co-own a small chain of fish and chip café shops on the south coast.

When I last spoke to them, both their 'Cod is Cool' establishments were doing well and this was in no small part due to the image and brand Ethel and Ernie had created. Back in the day, the Brigstocks recognised that to fulfil their expansion plans they'd need to shape up; not just in a business sense, but personally too.

Between them, in just six months, they lost a whopping sixty-eight pounds, using the Flatkin food combining diet. This allowed them and their staff to wear their new, corporate, French-style uniforms with pride. It was Ethel – then 49 and a petite and newly slimline 180 lbs – who was credited with coming up with the 'Cod is Cool' restaurant concept.

When I interviewed her she said: "We've always led by example in this sector, often punching above our weight. We were the first café-shops to copy the idea of putting fish and chip bags on a circular conveyor belt, in the style of 'Yo Sushi!' restaurants. Our café-shops look swish and welcoming in their new, modern, red, orange and blue colours, but what's the point of them looking good if we look like buckets of lard?"

I was impressed and remember even trying the Flatkin diet, but it was easier for them as they had the high quantities of potatoes needed for it and I didn't. They were clearly trend setters though. Any fish and chip shop proprietors who can create an establishment that gets the English to buy a bottle of wine with their fish and chips rather than the usual cup of tea, (with bread and butter) have to be very special entrepreneurs.

Anyway, when I rang them it was Ernie who answered the phone. After exchanging pleasantries I asked him: 'how is the UK recession affecting your business?'

E: It's tough. We're still getting the visitors, especially in Brighton, because of the conference trade, but they're just not spending as much. I think the hotels and the B&Bs will just about be OK for the season as the exchange rate is so bad for Brits going abroad, but cafés, restaurants and pubs will struggle.

L: So you wouldn't advise people to go it alone in their own business at the moment?

E: Not saying that. Just saying it's a tough business environment, which means you've got to be even smarter to survive and thrive.

L: So what are you doing?

E: Well, we've had to completely re-brand, – not the food type, interiors or the basic image – what we're known for. Even the name of the cafés has had to change. We've had to attract a new type of customer all over again.

L: Sounds expensive Ernie. I thought a brand was for life?

E: Bugger that, Leonora, 'scuse my French. It was expensive, but we felt that we needed to go in the opposite direction from the rest of the fish and chip shop sector in order to attract the clientele who have the money to spend and are willing to spend it with us, even though our prices would be the highest.

L: Is it working? I can't begin to guess what you've done?

E: It was simple really. There's been a big media outcry over here over the organised abuse of expense allowances that MPs, MEPs, civil servants and others get. As you know, we always did really well out of local councillors and their guests at our 'Cod is Cool' shops. Ethel said one day 'We could be the answer to their problems. We're licensed, so they can have good wine and no-one will criticise them for spending their allowances on traditional fish and chips. We just need a reason why they should come to us rather than anyone else.

L: And?

E: And that's when I read about some of these super chefs who appear on the telly banging on about not eating cod and other fish we sell because it was overfished. 'Unsustainable', that's the word, meaning you can't plant a fish like you can a tree once you've killed it.

L: So?

E: So, we now only sell fish, (still in our patent beery batter), which isn't overfished such as dab, flounder, megrim sole, grey mullet, gurnard and pollack – mainly pollack. There's no-one else doing it and we can charge higher prices. In fact, we've renamed our cafés 'Sustainably the Best' with the slogan 'We're the Dog's Pollack'. A bit long, but it gets the message across. Now the councillors, MEPs, MPs, civil servants and their guests come along with a clear conscience to our unique but traditional seaside eating experience, to be relieved of their onerous expense allowances. Brilliant eh?

I had to admit it was brilliant. In fact, before we touch down at Manchester airport I'll leave all you potential strippers for freedom with a Leonorism that springs to mind from this chat with Ernie Brigstock.

9. In a recession don't just fish in the private sector pool for your customers, because the public sector fish are fatter and easier to catch (especially at the end of their budget year when they have to get rid of all that's left).

Chapter Two

Who Moved My Fleece?

Clothes make the man. Naked people have little or no influence in society.

Mark Twain

More Maxims of Mark Twain ed. Mark Johnson (1927)

I'll deal right now with those of you who are curious about what Oakley shades I wear (and generally just what not to wear anywhere). They're Oakley Razrwire (that is spelt correctly, as is Bluetooth – which they have) in pewter/ black, of course. Oh and stay clear of frosted lipstick, black leather, anything tight, acid colours, pale leggings, girly frills and animal prints. Ankle boots can still be cool, but with leggings means pigs' trotters. OK?

Arriving at Manchester airport, you can't help but be struck by the lack of attention to clothes and body image in England. It looks like fleece city. This is good news for me, because reading my weekly column about what's hot and what's not in style and people, (and in my younger days about the dating scene too), must seem like another world to most Brits.

Thankfully for me, my readership figures indicate that my world must interest them. It gives me a mission in life too and if anyone is capable of changing the British style culture it is me, Leonora Soculitherz.

I sometimes think I must be part of the same UK phenomenon as the massive industry producing fitness DVDs that top all the retail charts. Millions of Brits must sit in their armchairs, in their fleeces, snacking on Cheerios, cheese on toast or BLTs watching these DVDs, with no intention of doing any of the exercises.

Perhaps I should bring out an exercise DVD based on getting fit through exercises related to watching the DVD from your armchair. It could include tensing abdomen and arm muscles as you remove your fleece, stretching between snack mouthfuls, using the remote as a dumbbell, rolling your head, winking (winking – Anty!) and so on.

Anyway, the point here, dear reader, is that I absolutely will not allow you to use this book in the same way as the constantly seated and fleeced use fitness DVDs. I will use all my skills as an investigative journalist to uncover words of wisdom from entrepreneurs that will enable you to go it alone successfully. At the very least, I command you to put my tips into practice.

I'm now writing this in the allegedly first class carriage of the allegedly trans-pennine express between Manchester airport and Scarborough. I use the word 'allegedly', as this train does neither 'first class' (just room enough to swing the proverbial cat) nor 'express'. Neither does it have a Wi-Fi internet connection, which frustratingly means that by the time I get to Scarborough, Stephen Fry will already be 200 tweets in the day ahead of me on Twitter.

I notice that your Government is just advertising for a Director to join the Civil Service, responsible for promoting Government on web/social networking sites. (Nom de Dieu! is every senior job in your Civil Service above £120k salary?). I'd have thought that instead of advertising, they could have a tweet out between Jonathan Ross and Stephen Fry.

Why isn't it really first class? The Northern train guards feel so sorry for the exorbitant prices paid by economy class passengers, with or without concessions, that when we get to Manchester Piccadilly, they let the world and his dog and screaming kids with tomato ketchup slavering down their chins from their Burger King Whoppa Deal, into the first class area. It's no good me complaining, as I can't understand a word of what they say in response to my complaint.

Anyway, when the rabble arrives I'll be safely secured in a corner seat, with a barricade made out of my cases. This will protect me and my laptop from said kids lobbing empty drink cartons back over their heads at me, said mums falling off their wedges onto me, and businessmen squirting milk over me as they struggle to open those little plastic tubs for their coffee.

Before I get to Scarborough I'll use the next two chapters to update you on everything I've learned in readiness for my latest little sojourn and assignment in the UK. There are two, interlinked but unique features of this book that will enhance your reading experience.

Firstly, in this chapter, I'll explain why most of the tips I give you will come from interviews with entrepreneurs of whom, I promise you, you will not have heard. This is despite the fact that I'm known and admired by many of the UK's leading and celebrity entrepreneurs and currently in a steamy relationship with the hunkiest of all American entrepreneurs, Ant Cracie.

From my knowledge of them, I'll describe to you some of the limitations of following the counsel of these celebrity entrepreneurs. Fear not: I will still provide you with Leonorisms from this knowledge, which will help you to go it alone.

Secondly, in the next chapter, I'll explain why my publisher and other influential Brits feel that whilst I successfully solved the management gurus' murders, which I recorded in "Buzzing with the Entrepreneurs" in 2004, this was the beginning, not the end of the much bigger story.

Regular readers will remember that the UK press wittily called it a hunt for a 'cereal killer', because the perpetrators frequently disrupted and ruined leadership and management gurus' speeches at breakfast seminars. Although I eventually uncovered the 'cereal killer', many of my correspondents suspect that it is likely that I only uncovered the tip of a much bigger, malevolent political, economic and criminal iceberg. I'll let you know what I've found out to date.

You've bought this book, probably at a knock down price (my publisher has no scruples), in order to learn from people who have got the T shirt about how to go it alone successfully. You'll be in good company. Let's take the UK as an example. One in seven of the adult workforce is starting or running their own enterprise. Out of the 4.5 million business owner run enterprises with fewer than 10 employees, over half are home based and over 3 million have no employees.

Despite a recession, the number of self employed and proportion of all small enterprises in the UK run by their owner (currently 98% of all UK businesses) will continue to increase. There are a million more self employed and micro enterprise owners than there were last time the UK was in recession. Most earn less than £20k a year and work more than a 50 hour week. At least 40% of those starting their own enterprise see no better alternative for earning their living.

Small and home business owners are the new working class, but unfortunately these 6 million individuals have no single point of representation to UK government ministers and are therefore easily ignored. Yet very many countries, such as Canada (mine), New Zealand, Thailand, even Malta where I've just been, and closer to your home the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, recognise the importance of providing consistently high levels of free training and support to start up and existing micro enterprise owners, to ensure they have the same chance of success as in any other career.

So why does Leonora Soculitherz want you, as a general rule, to learn from entrepreneurs who are neither on the telly, speaking in stadia, nor advising Government? The answer is in the word 'authentic'; Leonora says:

10. "Go for what is 'real and now', not for what is 'reality and then'".

Let me explain. Sometimes I think that despite my huge intellect and striking looks my main role is just as a cataloguer of information. People information is often the most spellbinding. In a restaurant I'm never at my table, always everyone else's. I get information about your society from just watching.

Some of the information I bring you I've digested, filtered and polished from my fellow hacks in the media, but probably the very best information I'll provide you comes from my own interviews. I'm sure that living outside your country helps give me an objectivity about what's happening inside it and what information will help to release you from your 'commute to cubicle' work life in the UK.

For example, I read the other day that your Brit, ex Prime Minister, Tony Blair, regards himself as a small business owner now and "he's loving it". Should Leonora, therefore, interview him on your behalf for this book?

Tony Blair has over 20 staff, including some tall, slim, well suited, young men and probably a £30 million turnover. Both the staff and earnings appeared to be almost immediate acquisitions on leaving office.

He got a £5 million advance for his memoirs while drawing a £1.9 million salary as part time adviser to investment bank JP Morgan Chase and £1.5 million salary for advising Zurich Financial services. In addition he receives a healthy pension from his nearly 10 years in office and, of course, an allowance to run a private office. Of course more very big money comes from the top tier speaking circuit on which both he and his wife feature.

Most recently he has formed Tony Blair Associates, which is a commercial partnership 'to provide... strategic advice on both a commercial and pro-bono basis, on political trends and government reform'. Looking at the UK that he and Gordon Brown have created between them, it's rather a surprise that showing others how to create something similar is so lucrative! Should the Brits be proud or peeved that he is one of the world's highest paid consultants?

Dear reader, I know that seeing your ex-Prime Minister as a small business owner will have you crying tears of joy into your lunch box at the next big Institute of Directors' conference at the Albert Hall. He will be charming, entertaining, motivating and doubtless inspirational. However, and here you have to trust Leonora, he will be of absolutely no use to you earning your beans as a self employed person in the real world.

You also need to be careful – not as careful perhaps as with Mr Blair – in taking the advice of the many entrepreneur celebrities made by your reality television. The celeb. entrepreneurs in Dragons' Den for example, are certainly true entrepreneurs and worthy of great respect, but they're not necessarily as useful to you now as they would have been on their way up, before telly, before recognition, before being smoothed down and swallowing the corporate management and leadership dictionary.

Lord 'Suralan' Sugar is an interesting one. He does the equivalent 'hire and fire' role as Donald Trump in the UK version of 'The Apprentice'. TV makes him out to be a bully, yet he seems to have a very loyal and longstanding team. Those who have worked for him or contracted to him, including TR, regard him as practical, knowledgeable, funny and fair. Certainly the skills and know how he says are needed by you as a potential entrepreneur are absolutely spot on, as is his healthy scepticism on the value of most consultants.

Seems to me that he shouldn't just be Lord Alan, Enterprise Tsar, but he should be the Prime Minister. He could appoint a cabinet full of entrepreneurs. All the cabinet would then have the advantage of

knowing the value of a pound (£). This helps when spending taxpayers' money. Your current political leaders do not live in the real world.

So they're good, but the people you won't have heard of whom I'll interview for you in this book, are better for you. Advice from well known entrepreneurs who now advise government officials carry exactly the same 'health warning'. It's amazing how quickly entrepreneurs can change their approach as they get used to the company of senior civil servants and government ministers. Is it planned?

They get to enjoy the hospitality, the history, the formality, the protocol, the jargon, the acronyms and the company. They then learn how to work with, rather than against, existing government policy and programmes and are eventually used to frame new policy and programmes in the areas Government wants them to.

So, don't necessarily believe that entrepreneurs who are wealthy, well connected, speak well, are in the public eye and have public and government approval are always your best guides to how to become self employed. There's a Leonorism in all this:

11. Most successful entrepreneurs do a lot of work for free, in order to get themselves into networks that contain money and influence.

Another group from whom it is wise to be cautious of taking advice is that of the personal and business development gurus. This is despite the fact that I almost lick the page of every book they write and like nothing better than a bit of rumpy in the sack with one of the most famous of them. Why then?

The seldom broadcast fact is that: 'the essence of what works in running a successful enterprise hasn't changed for hundreds of years', but there's no money in this fact for the gurus. They only make money from new models, paradigms, processes and techniques, no matter how bizarre, on the back of which they can peddle their books and speaking engagements.

To make my point, let's take one 'hot', current global theory to create high performance teams through bonding – 'Hugging in the workplace'. Charlie Footy and Bo Ajar, in their two separate books, 'Who Stole my Crackers?' and 'Paradigm Lost', both came to the same conclusion about what the ultimate management and leadership technique to build more effective teams is. The technique, fully validated by research into species in harsh environments, is hugging. It has sparked a worldwide academic leadership movement and a race to bring out the best learning media to ensure the ultimate workplace hug.

Encouragement of hugging at work has been shown to improve profitability, but what immediately irked owners of small businesses in the UK was the Government's eagerness to impose hugging regulations on all businesses with more than 5 employees, in order to improve UK productivity. Hence, within six months of the publication of Footy and Ajar's findings, legislation had been tabled making it a statutory condition for all employees (anyone employed for more than 16 hours a week – sole traders and partnerships not exempt) to receive entitlement to a 'hug a day from a co-worker of their choice'.

Furthermore, a government steering group was formed to oversee pilot and pathfinder projects to give all business owners £1000 each to help with the development of their 'hug friendly policies'.

Now, I know that one of TR's big Yorkshire friends, Sydney Bird, MD and owner of Britain's largest manufacturer of Pontefract cakes and all things liquorice, was one of the first small business 'experts' to be appointed to the government steering group to roll out the legislation and stimulate demand for hug-friendly policies.

Sydney is one of the world's great worriers; the kind who goes back to check locks and lights in his house at least four times before leaving, who tries on several outfits before choosing the same blazer and slacks he always wears and arrives at events at least two hours early so as not to be late. I rang Sydney from the train to ask him firstly, whether he agreed with the research findings?

“I’ve been ready and waiting for your call Leonora. Yes, there is a lot of research to show happy workers are more productive, but I’m one worker who isn’t really very happy about hugging. Nor am I that happy about Government regulating and intervening in this area. Is it really a market failure if we’re not hugging enough in the workplace?”

I also have severe doubts about whether hugging legislation can be enforced. I know this might be a gender-specific thing, but I think it’s a good idea to ask permission before you do multiple hugging. I’m a product of a Yorkshire family where the words ‘can I give you a big hug?’, (or worse, ‘a big kiss?’) were statements of terrifying intent from usually rather large, heavily powdered and perfumed aunts. The thought of such close, but unrefusable encounters inspires intense fright and flight reactions in me and in millions of other Northern menfolk.

My reservations about workplace hugging are not only influenced by my experiences with suffocating relatives. I am in the lowest ten percentile of the population for spatial awareness and physical co-ordination. A bit like my mate Tony Robbo, I notice that my awkwardness now goes before me and women in particular don’t like me getting too close to them. When I enter a room women just smile weakly and wave at me from behind a table, pillar, plant or bystander.

I’m a great supporter of team building as an important part of business life, although again, when I regularly participate with Robbo in such activities as walking over hot coals (at your friend Ant Cracie’s events), free fall parachute jumping, white water rafting and even go-kart racing, I’m usually asked to do it miles away from my colleagues. This is because I have a habit of causing injury to others in many unlikely ways, which rather defeats the ‘bonding’ aspect of the activity.

I admit that when participating in or watching sport, my team mates, friends and family can get a hug of delight from me after an exciting incident. However, I have my doubts that this shared spontaneity, with others you know well, is the same thing as the day-to-day hugging of work colleagues.

What is now being proposed by the occupational psychologists and to be legislated for by Government could create massive absenteeism in small businesses, as the thought of hugging the usual suspects day after day will lead to severe stress and depression in some. In fact, in the government’s promotional film on the value of ‘hugging circles’, despite their company’s business results supposedly having rocketed, most of the men filmed looked scared stiff to me.

Certainly hugging could prove a very dodgy activity, even if you’ve never had aunts like mine. It is a behaviour that will encourage your work colleagues who like the ‘touchy feely’ stuff for either ‘warm fuzzy’, sexual or barmy reasons. We all know the risks with the sexual lot and predators are not gender specific. However, I venture to suggest that there will be most grief from the barmy lot.

There is always a work colleague, someone at best eccentric, at worst about to spontaneously combust, who wants to ‘release’ or ‘share’ something with you. I prefer them to keep it to themselves, but if you give them any encouragement – like a hug – I can guarantee they’ll be ‘releasing’ and ‘sharing’ all over you.

You’ll find that colleagues, partners, friends, relatives and all manner of pets, vegetation and food groups have conspired to make their life unbearable. This leaves you, the ‘hugger’, as the only person the ‘huggee’ can trust. As such, your new role in life must be to soothe their troubled brow, calm their stormy waters and attend pilates and synchronised swimming classes with them every Tuesday and Thursday night.

Indeed, there will come a time in this relationship when you will find yourself looking after their four cats, two snakes and the parrot that likes to be spoken to in piratical, eighteenth century English whilst both parties wear eye patches. This is all so the ‘huggee’ can go away for a much needed break, yet still persecute you with a regular helping of bizarre postcards and text messages. It is unlikely in this fraught, depressed, exfoliated and depilated state that you’ll even get placed at the synchronised swimming championship.

So, is all this potential angst worth it for the sake of a hug at work? No thanks. I'm just going to take my turn at making the coffee, buying biscuits and helping others get their work done. Admittedly it's a low key way of gaining team harmony, happiness and increased productivity, but it does neatly sidestep the parrot!"

Gosh, like his mate 'Robbo', he can bang on! But he does make exceedingly good Pontefract cakes and I needed you to see what a top entrepreneur adviser to Government sounds like on a new policy and programme intended to benefit business. Barking!

This is why, from this point onwards, I will ensure that you will only gain advice and tips on going it alone from small business owners who 'have the T shirt' but of whom no-one has ever heard.

I promised you some Leonorisms from this chapter and I always deliver.

12. All successful entrepreneurs whom I've met work bloody hard and are very focused. They've all had to make sacrifices to succeed.

Only those who have inherited wealth or previously worked in government jobs can be said to have 'got rich quick'. From talking to the entrepreneurs before they go native, these are five essential abilities which you must acquire:

13. Winning business through sales and marketing.

Whatever the product or service you are thinking of offering, you must continually practice selling it to prospective customers. You might need to change the product or service offer if you find it too difficult to sell. Selling and looking after customers are your most vital skills – no customers = no business. Don't let the experts lull you into believing things like 'planning is the most important skill'. It isn't; but 'winning and keeping customers' through your own effort

14. Dealing with regulations.

This means be generally aware of the regulations around your own enterprise, but don't fall into the trap of trying to comply with it all. Comply only when you have to (loads of free websites to help). Get this wrong and you'll find that you're legal but bust, because you had no time or money left to start and run your business.

15. Managing cash flow and obtaining finance.

Beg, steal or borrow. Despite what Government says, the self employed and real small business owners don't like borrowing from banks or angels. It's like having another boss and that's just what you wanted to get away from. We do borrow from family, from credit cards (we know we shouldn't, but we do) and we do make deals with other business owners, customers, suppliers and friends to get money in advance. Forget all that balance sheet/ 'Finance for non financial managers' stuff: you can always get a cheap bookkeeper. As the business owner, you have to understand and do pricing, get the right margin, minimise costs, maximise sales revenue and estimate/ manage your cashflow. You cannot outsource or delegate any of these money matters.

16. Making deals to make margins (profit).

You are now a win/win deal-making machine and should spend 50% of your time on this. You need to get very good at it. In order to make deals, you have to find people and opportunities through technology and through personal networking.

17. Beating the competition.

Forget the recession and the doom and gloom. Instead look at someone or some enterprise that is succeeding, right now, in a similar market (customers you want) to the one in which you want to trade. Break down what they're doing, put these in priority order for success ('must dos' rather than 'nice to dos') and beat them bit by bit.

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