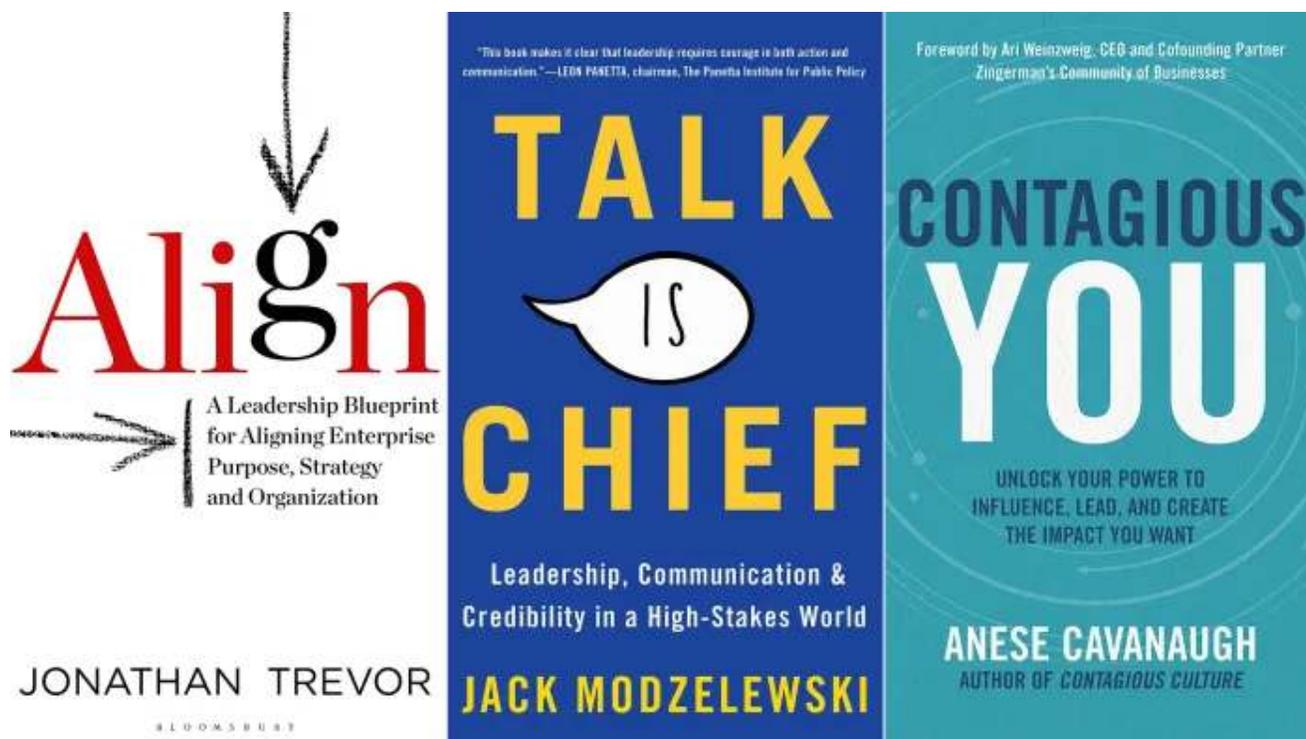


Business books**FT business books of the month: November edition**

The CEO communication essentials and how to maximise influence — this month's top titles



Isabel Berwick, Lucille Brobbey, Janina Conboye, Andrew Hill YESTERDAY

ALIGN: A LEADERSHIP BLUEPRINT FOR ALIGNING ENTERPRISE PURPOSE, STRATEGY AND ORGANISATION, BY JONATHAN TREVOR

Nuance is the enemy of business books. As a confused manager, it is infinitely more tempting to accept a prepared template for leadership and try to stuff your business into it. But Jonathan Trevor, a former consultant and now associate professor at Oxford's Saïd Business School, rightly points out that a one-size-fits-all approach to strategic alignment is bound to fail. Each business is different and its challenges will fall somewhere between the two options usually offered to leaders — “bureaucracy” and “post-bureaucracy” (which includes the modishly unhierarchical “network organisation”). As the business and its context develops, so the alignment will change.

Still, recognising the attractiveness of a method, Trevor offers readers a trademarked strategic alignment framework, against which they can assess their specific challenges and choices, from stability to agility, autonomy to connectivity. In a world swamped with companies' declarations of purpose — increasingly synonymous with positive corporate responsibility — the book makes clear that when it comes to alignment, purpose is

fundamentally what the business does and why it matters for its stakeholders. From this flow strategy, organisational capability, architecture and management systems all of which should ideally, be in alignment.

It sounds simple but, Trevor writes, it can “feel like chasing an elusive will-o’-the-wisp”. The enterprise value chain he describes is “only ever as strong as its weakest link”. From McDonald's to Huawei, *Align* offers examples of aligned and misaligned organisations, but, as he explains in his introductory invitation to apply the tools he provides, “the very best illustrative example . . . is your own enterprise”.

***TALK IS CHIEF: LEADERSHIP, COMMUNICATION AND CREDIBILITY IN A HIGH-STAKES WORLD,*
BY JACK MODZELEWSKI**

Jack Modzelewski has spent decades in the communications industry and argues in *Talk is Chief* that leadership communication today is a strategic management function that must be taken as seriously as fiscal, operational, value creation and deal making responsibilities.

He draws on the success of chief executives such as Alan Mulally, credited with a huge turnaround of carmaker Ford, and Jack Welch, who led General Electric from 1981 to 2001, to demonstrate that good communication is essential to good leadership. Any leader, he writes, should heed the communications advice they receive as their actions are always under scrutiny — be it from doubting investors, activist critics or journalists. “Leaders who wish to be taken seriously need to take seriously what they say.”

And there is nothing like a good crisis to test the mettle of a chief executive and how he or she communicates. Modzelewski believes that the objective of managing a crisis is not to win but to survive and fight another day. He offers his 10 “communication” commandments, which include getting to truth first, “owning” the crisis and demonstrating progress, and controlling the communications agenda as much as possible.

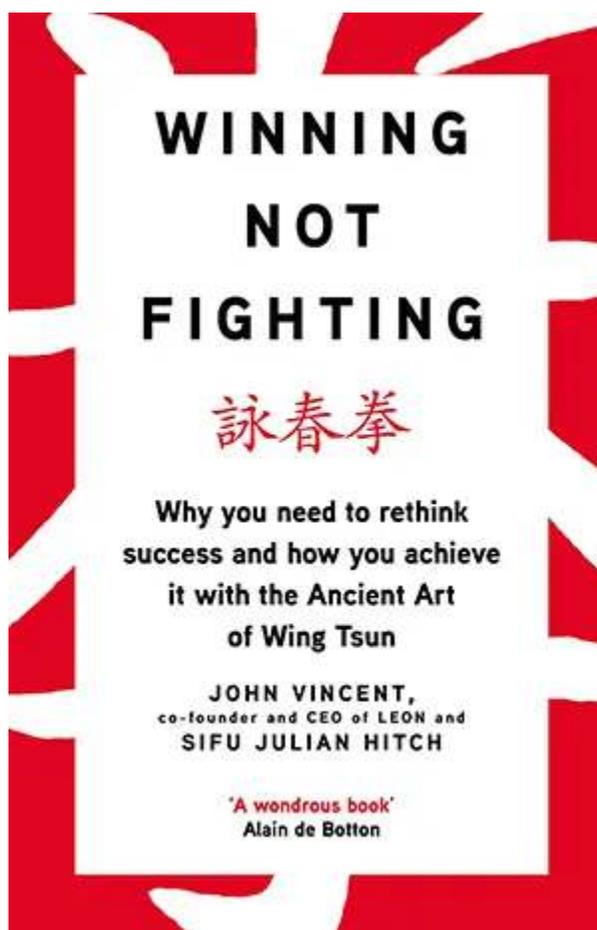
After all, Modzelewski argues, today businesses operate in a world when a business’s reputation can be here today, gone tomorrow.

***CONTAGIOUS YOU: UNLOCK YOUR POWER TO INFLUENCE, LEAD AND CREATE THE IMPACT YOU WANT,*
BY ANESE CAVANAUGH**

This book comes with a foreword by Ari Weinzweig, founder of [Zingerman’s](#), the Ann Arbor-based group of food companies famous for its imaginative and inclusive business ethos. He is endorsing Cavanaugh’s central idea, which is that each of us can bring “Intentional Energetic Presence Method” to our workplaces and lives. This is a complex way of saying that there are big benefits to being extremely positive and encouraging at work

Contagious You is a sequel to *Contagious Culture*, which helped teams to collaborate in new and more imaginative ways. *Contagious You* focuses on what each individual can do to bring positive energy to work. Rather than offloading culture change on to others, Cavanaugh advocates “claiming your contagiousness and own it — you are the sole owner of your superpower — NO ONE can take it away from you”. It sounds cheesy but there is a lot of useful information here about dealing with energy-sucking and disengaged types as well as bullying bosses.

As in many positive thinking and leadership books, the key here is a set of assessments to help readers develop awareness of their own positive and negative areas of energy before they can move on to the action plan. As Cavanaugh says in her introduction: “Check yourself before you wreck yourself.”



WINNING NOT FIGHTING: WHY YOU NEED TO RETHINK SUCCESS AND HOW YOU ACHIEVE IT WITH THE ANCIENT ART OF WING TSUN, BY JOHN VINCENT AND JULIAN HITCH

Business culture and Wing Tsun, a gentle Chinese martial art, appear incompatible. Yet the contrasting duo is not only intriguing but also, it seems, effective.

Many businesses approach success in a competitive way. However, in *Winning and Not*

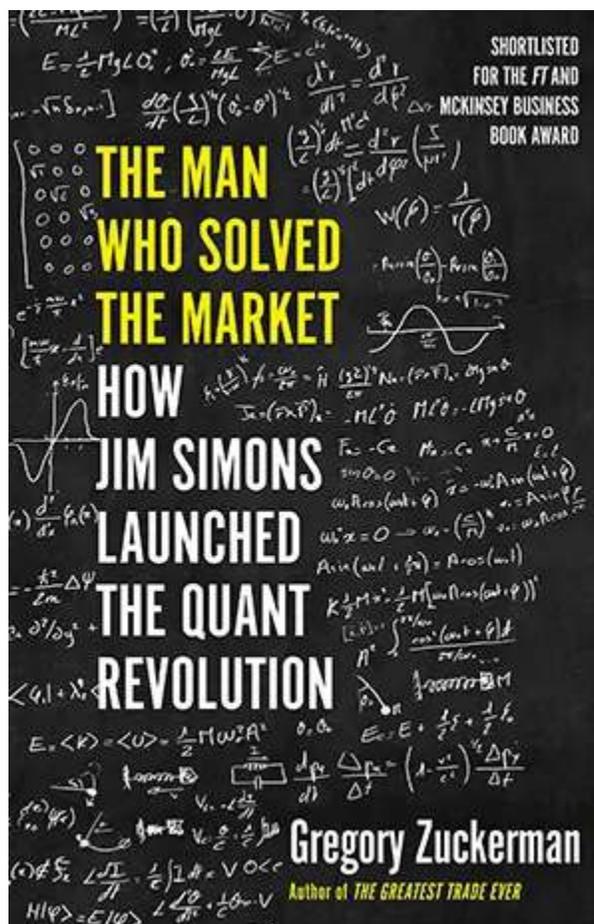
Fighting, John Vincent, the co-founder of food chain Leon, and Julian Hitch, a master of Wing Tsun, set out to change the way people think about and achieve success using Wing Tsun, which rejects the notion of fighting and involves the use of minimal force and causing little harm.

Businesses too often brew up a warlike culture, using language such as “beating” the competition or “fighting” to be the best. Vincent admits to previously adopting this approach. However, he says the use of aggressive language introduces a stress-filled environment.

Vincent and Hitch prompt readers to move towards methods that breed positivity, confidence and focus. You are taken through “four doors” that contain eight wisdoms. For example, the second door — *Chum Kiu* — advises the reader not to assert authority with force as it negatively impacts management and relationships. One of its wisdoms, or lessons, is *Wu Wei* — which translates as don’t force — and highlights the inefficiency of force as a defence.

Hitch states that blocking the strike of a stronger opponent is possible, but the likelihood of blocking every time is small and tiring, which leads to vulnerability; the opponent will eventually hit you. Hitch proposes that success comes with minimal movement. Use the opponent’s energy to “counter attack” their force. This results in the preservation of energy and decreases stress.

Similarly in business, ditch the idea that strong leadership is based on force and adopt a calm and collectivist approach. In grasping this concept, they suggest that we will understand the wisdom of *Wu Wei* and learn to maintain that winning streak.



THE MAN WHO SOLVED THE MARKET, BY GREGORY ZUCKERMAN

Gregory Zuckerman, a journalist for The Wall Street Journal, lifts the lid on one of the most fascinating characters in financial markets, Jim Simons, founder of Renaissance Technologies, a fabled yet secretive hedge fund.

In his review for [FT Weekend](#), the FT's global finance correspondent Robin Wigglesworth, writes that machines and algorithms have taken over swaths of markets, supplanting the grizzled traders of public perception, and no one has harnessed computer science and vast data sets to invest as successfully as Renaissance.

But for all Simons' undoubted brilliance, Wigglesworth adds that the book makes clear that Simons' skill was not inventing complex trading models and algorithms himself. It was his talent for spotting, nurturing and harnessing beautiful but often combustible minds.

Read the full review [here](#).

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