

with the work of gifted students. They are complexly written, overlong, and could have done with more stringent editing. Focus is also a problem as it is sometimes perhaps assumed that the grand design is automatically obvious. This is perhaps most evident in the paper on board evaluation processes, where it is not until the end of the paper that evaluation processes are properly explained and the overall logic of the paper finally emerges. The papers can be heavy going, but there are rewards, too, for the patient reader. The review of the issues is wide ranging, frequently interesting, and covers a large body of literature from a diversity of disciplines. The bibliographies alone are an extremely valuable resource. The editors are to be congratulated in sharing so much knowledge on an issue that is undertaught and researched.

PETER ROSA
 GEORGE DAVID CHAIR OF
 ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND FAMILY BUSINESS,
 CENTRE FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP
 RESEARCH
 UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

Sudden Death: A Fire Drill for Building Strength and Flexibility in Families, by Bonnie M. Brown. TDI Press, 2003. 46 pp., \$19.95, paperback. ISBN: 0-9727985-2-8

Unexpected Wealth: A Fire Drill for Building Strength and Flexibility in Families, by Bonnie M. Brown. TDI Press, 2003. 70 pp., \$19.95, paperback. ISBN: 0-9727985-3-6.

These two volumes are part of a series of four "Fire Drills"—guided exercises designed to assist fam-

ilies in dealing with two taboo issues, death and money; specifically, sudden death and unexpected wealth. The desired outcome of these workbooks is to develop a plan for handling unplanned events. As contradictory as that may seem, Brown's *Fire Drills* cover a wide range of potential outcomes so families can develop a highly detailed contingency plan. These books are not meant for everyone, and Brown provides a list of questions early in each book to assess the need to continue. Brown also uses many examples, some personal, to set the stage and illustrate her main points.

Both *Fire Drills* are designed to "build strength and flexibility" through contingency planning. These are two characteristics supported by much family science theory and research, most notably that of David Olson's Circumplex model (Olson & Gorall, 2003). *Strength* corresponds with Olson's idea of *cohesion*, or "the emotional bonding that family members have toward one another" (Olson & Gorall, 2003, p. 516). A stressful event, such as an unexpected death or receiving a large financial windfall, will test the strength of those bonds, and families at the extremes of disengagement or over-connection will often experience additional problems. It is often the families who are at these extremes who avoid discussing these issues and are less likely to embrace the *Fire Drill* mentality to begin with.

A frequent and often emotionally volatile issue in family businesses is succession and *Sudden Death* provides an opportunity to plan for a type of succession often not considered. Brown also accounts for the unique emotional context of families; dealing with such a catastrophic loss may be more painful. Brown helps the reader separate the emotional responses from the cognitive, directing the reader through a SWOT analysis to assess

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resources and challenges both within the family and in the larger context. Brown devotes a significant section to anger as a secondary emotion and the possible need for additional counseling.

Brown also balances practical issues such as wills, insurance, and so forth, with emotional ones, such as grief and the legacy of the deceased. Some of the more pertinent issues could apply to a larger population than just family businesses; indeed, Brown remarks: "This Fire Drill is for any of you who have a partner, spouse, significant other, sibling or child who might die unexpectedly" (p. 4). Much of the contingency plan, however, is related to business issues. The appendix that is devoted to the collection information about the reader would be helpful for anyone, as it allows space for individuals to compile all important financial information, including contact information for trusted advisors, in one location. The last appendix, related to goal setting, is identical in each book. The case example and questions lead readers through constructing life goals and planning changes that are specific and measurable. The importance of involving other family members in goal setting is also stressed. Brown constantly encourages readers to be proactive, even in managing change that they cannot plan or see. She provides avenues for an honest assessment of individual and family resources to be discussed by the family.

One aspect of *Sudden Death* that seemed confusing at times was the intended audience—some questions are directed toward the reader as survivor, others are directed toward the reader as the deceased (i.e., the reader who will be the deceased). The appendices related to funeral plan-

ning and setting goals are written for survivors; a set of questions related to one's desired legacy seem to gear the reader toward anticipating his or her own death. Another assumption is that by having a contingency plan for sudden death, families will be able to "move through shock, grief, and anger more quickly and effectively" (*Sudden Death*, p. 6). Although it may be helpful to plan for a worst-case scenario such as this, there is always an element of an emotional reaction that cannot be anticipated.

True to Brown's earlier work in her seminars and software, she specifically addresses the three big taboo issues of money, power, and love, and she does so fairly comprehensively. She asks the reader to consider issues that may be neglected, such as control and forgiveness. The difficulty with trying to develop such a comprehensive plan is that some of these outcomes may not be predictable. Brown asks readers to describe the effect of the loss on one's sleeping and eating habits. It is often difficult to predict how one will handle such a catastrophic loss; a more helpful approach may be to ask clients to reflect on how they have experienced past losses (even on a smaller scale) or take a more educational approach, such as the one used in critical incident stress debriefing (CISD) (Mitchell & Everly, 1997). Although CISD is most often used in a group format and for emergency services or disaster workers, it normalizes traumatic stress reactions, such as changes in eating or sleeping, by describing a wide range of "typical" responses.

In *Unexpected Wealth*, Brown addresses readers who have received a financial windfall of any sort, but it seems most directed toward those who have received an inheritance from their families. The

exercises in this book mainly deal with issues of stewardship, both within the family and in the community. Rather than an emphasis on emotional issues as in *Sudden Death*, this volume devotes a lot of space to identifying areas where more knowledge is needed. Specifically, Brown articulates four areas of capital that are associated with wealth—human, financial, social, and intellectual.

When discussing financial capital, or money, Brown asks readers to articulate the messages and memories from their families of origin. Acknowledging that unexpected wealth may cause a seismic shift in lifestyle and relationships, Brown has readers articulate a “vision of wealth” based on their personal values and beliefs. She also asks readers to anticipate the effects of unexpected wealth on one’s relationships, spiritual beliefs, and mental and physical health.

Unexpected wealth also adds to one’s human capital; that is, people responsible for managing the business and/or holdings. Social capital refers to changes in one’s community involvement and philanthropic activities. Intellectual capital refers to the knowledge base and decision-making strategies of the individual and family. Brown has readers assess their current knowledge base and information needs in each of these four areas.

The role of the extended family is stronger in this volume than in *Sudden Death*. Brown also discusses sibling relationships and blended families, and the potential for conflict related to issues of entitlement and fairness. Once again, Brown uses detailed case examples to illustrate her point. She also recognizes the family as a potential resource, possessing additional knowledge and skills.

A strength of this book is that Brown discusses wealth, power, and influence within the context of gender and age. Another strength is its comprehensiveness—Brown runs the gamut of topics to consider. She addresses the obvious issues, such as potential changes in lifestyle, charitable giving, and work habits, and also the less obvious issues such as the potential for substance abuse, kidnapping, and blackmail. The tone of this volume is more positive overall, openly acknowledging our society’s “love/hate” relationship with wealthy families, and encouraging the reader to practice responsible stewardship in all four areas of capital.

As with *Sudden Death*, the appendices provide space to compile important information related to advisors, finances, and goal setting. Brown sees the questions asked as falling into three categories: need for more information, need for corrective action, and the need for conversation. Then, devise an action plan for each.

Brown’s primary assumption underlying both these books, and the *Fire Drill* premise overall, is that by thinking about the unthinkable (or highly unlikely), individuals and families can strengthen their emotional reserves. This is true to an extent, and it is beneficial to be cognizant of one’s strengths and weaknesses before a major change happens. Although going through a *Fire Drill* may help family members respond less emotionally to a catastrophic event, there will always be an emotional reaction. It is important to allow the emotional reaction (especially in situations involving death) as well as implementing the contingency plan. In conclusion, the strength of these books is not in the written plan itself, but in that they are tools to open dialogue in families around emotionally charged subjects.