

# The Art of Office War

Everyone is talking office politics. The world is full of people who think they are going to get ahead by putting their head down and doing their work. Many believe it's a myth that good work makes a good career. Really, good office politics makes a good career.

WHAT problems are you grappling with? Is a co-worker making you want to tear your hair out? Did the Boss call you into the office and then pull the rug? Lost in the maze of office politics? Aussie writer Simon Drake has recently written *The Art of Office War* which can help you find your way with loads of useful tips.

## Liezl Maclean

### What is the main theme of the book?

I am a serial temp and have worked for investment banks, management consultants, PR, branding agencies and in Government and I felt that how and why people behave at work was not adequately explained.

Employee protocol is written by people who are over educated and smart enough to avoid the hard work the rest of us have to do, and so I looked at the average office worker and the world they have to work in; not the abstracts, but the reality: The office is where you make or break it, it's a competitive environment and the stakes are high, but conflict is sugar-coated in politeness. Also, while writing about the reality of the office environment, it gave me a chance to use humour to get some points across. We all need a laugh!

### You took quite a different route in getting your book out there. Tell us more about it?

Writers have to be business minded and technologically savvy to get noticed, so I took the pro-active step of utilising the internet and new printing technologies to self-publish, and using tactics similar to that of un-signed bands pushing themselves on the internet, by offering

free downloads and harvesting a following. I made sales and realised I had a niche market. In 2007 I visited the New York Book Expo and felt that I should try the US market. I found the US refreshing after discovering the limits of the UK market, and the Americans are more approachable when it comes to new ideas. I set about to get an agent in the US and after months of trying I signed up with an agency in California, and then months later a Polish Publisher came across my website and expressed interest in my book, "The Art of Office War". I sent a copy over and they offered a translation deal.

So, after chasing deals in markets all over the world, my first book deal is for a translation in Poland, to be released in winter 2008. Being translated is quite interesting, because it reflects the quality of the content and the message.

### What has been the most rewarding aspect since completing *The Art of Office War*?

Rewards come in steps. Completing the manuscript was a rewarding experience because it's the culmination of years of research and dedication. Making my first 100 sales was rewarding, and landing a publishing deal really puts the icing on the cake! The rewards have to keep coming in, small and large, because it's a sign of progress.

### When and why did you begin writing?

When I was 14 I began writing and I don't know why, so it has to be because I was born creative and the side effect of that is creative output. However, I got my first 'writing' break in a weird way. When I was nineteen my cousins, my brother

and I were doing some crazy skateboard stunts and I fractured my ankle. For the rest of that summer my leg was in a cast and with nothing else to do I wrote a film script and submitted it to Film Queensland for a grant to re-edit it. I got the grant. I was amazed. Earning money for your talent changes your perspective on it.

### Three of your biggest influences?

Number one is my dad, for instilling in me a work ethic and practical mentality that has helped turn my chaotic creativity into a prolific and strategic minded writer. Number two is the French writer Michel Houellebecq and number three is a shared lot for historical figures; i.e. Captain Cook, Ned Kelly, Napoleon.

### What book are you reading now and how do you choose what you read?

What I read and why I read are based on practical reasons. I'm reading Don DeLillo's *White Noise* because it ties in with a radio play I'm writing, and I'm reading *Instructions for British Servicemen in Germany - 1944* because it's a gift from a mate and I'm going to move to Frankfurt in a few months.

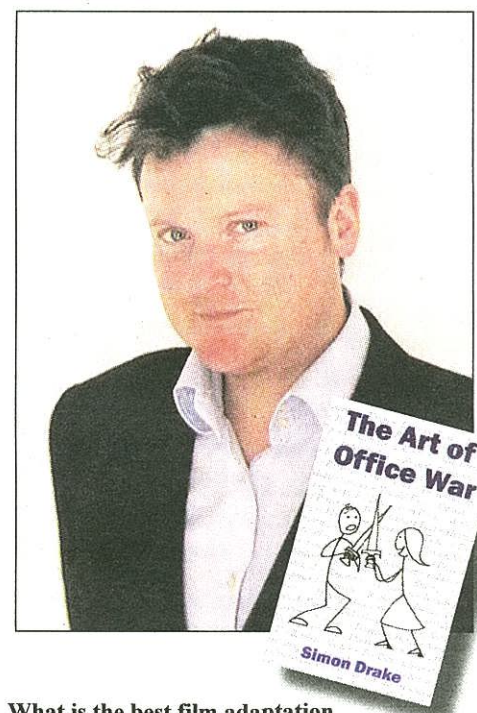
The last time I read for fun was Ian Fleming's *Quantum of Solace* and a swagger of other vintage Bond titles, and also because I was editing an action manuscript and Fleming's style is unbeatable. Living in London and reading Bond's London escapades is good for a 'chortle' or two.

### Do you have any advice for other writers?

Know your market, and pre-empt their behaviour because these days the big questions are "where are the eye-balls" and "what will take-off next?"

What are people looking at and absorbing and why? And for a writer, it's no longer a case of having a book (or two) in you, it could be a blog, a YouTube rant, or maybe you should just try and get on Big Brother, strip down and let yourself go.

Writing is in a period of evolution, mirroring society, it's hard to keep up, trying to is half the fun, and people usually find their way.



### What is the best film adaptation you've seen of a book?

That's a tough question, because I was trained in the science of film scripts, and most great novels don't fit the formulaic principles of a film script. However, some films are true to the book, and I think *The Thin Red Line* is the best I've seen (and read). *Cold Mountain* is pretty good too. But something like *Fight Club*, the book and the movie, are different and equally enjoyable.

### What fictional character would you most like to be?

There are so many fictional characters that I would like to be, and a few that I probably am. My favourite character is the Man with No Name (also referred to as "Blondie" by the Bad), played by Clint Eastwood in *The Good, The Bad and The Ugly*.

For more information visit [www.theartofficewar.com](http://www.theartofficewar.com)

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## BOY FROM OZ

Darren Gray



THE WHITE Bear Theatre in Kennington will present Louis Nowra's play *Cosi* from 29 July-24 August. Set in 1971 the plot involves an inexperienced young uni student who is sent into a lunatic asylum to direct a group of inmates in a play. It is decided that the group will perform *Così Fan Tutte* by Mozart however none of the cast can sing, dance, act or speak Italian. *Cosi* features a range of unbalanced individuals including a pyromaniac, a compulsive liar and a junkie. The play will be directed by Adam Spreadbury-Maher who trained in opera and drama at the Australian National University and whose production of *Beautiful Thing* by Jonathan Harvey won him an award from the Australian Critics Circle. The play will star Mark Little (Joe Mangel from *Neighbours*) and David Price who has appeared in television classics including *The Sullivans* and *Bellbird*. Booking details can be found at [www.whitebeartheatre.co.uk](http://www.whitebeartheatre.co.uk)



The Australian actress Casey

Hill will be playing Helena in William Shakespeare's romantic comedy *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Pentameters Theatre in Hampstead until the 23 August. The plot follows four young lovers, a group of amateur thespians and a tribe of fairies who inhabit a nearby forest. *Hermia* is not a happy girl. Her father has arranged for her to marry a man called *Demetrius* however she is in love with another. Ironically her best friend *Helena* has fallen for *Demetrius* however poor *Hermia's* father gives her only three choices- she either marries the man he has chosen, joins the local convent or dies. As for *Casey* she toured Belgium with a *Marvin Gaye* Tribute show and appeared as a nasty secretary in the video clip for *Natalie Imbruglia's* hit *Counting Down The Days*. Booking details for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* can be found at [www.pentameters.co.uk](http://www.pentameters.co.uk)

I am very sorry to report that John West has died from heart failure at the age of 84. I had the privilege of meeting John on many occasions as like me he would be at the opening night of almost every theatre show in Sydney. John joined ABC Radio in 1942 and was a wireless star for over 50 years hosting such long running programmes as *The Showman* and the nostalgia fest that was *Sentimental Journey*. He had been suffering from dementia and had also been diagnosed with a brain tumour and is a great loss to the entertainment industry.

Darren Gray is a theatrical agent with offices in Australia and the UK. He specialises in representing Aussie actors, producers, directors and writers whilst they are working here in the old country. Darren writes exclusively for the Australian Times every week, giving us the latest Oz showbiz news from both sides of the globe.