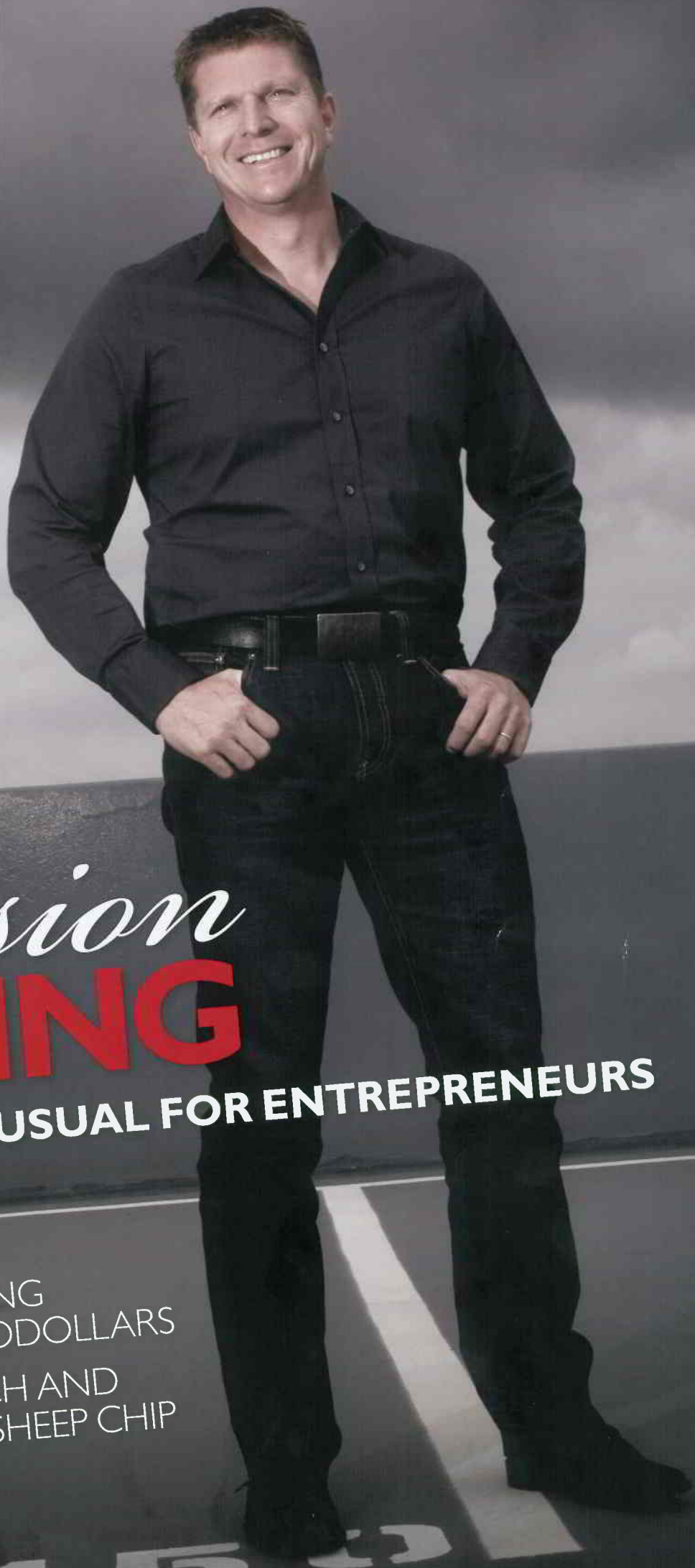


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# THE *write* STUFF

Ray White CEO Carey Smith has self-published a volume about his leadership experiences. Should business figures publish autobiographical handbooks?  
By **Gill South**

**WALK INTO** a local company and chances are the owner's office won't have a bookcase lined with memoirs from local business heroes, because, frankly, they don't exist. There might be the odd bestseller – *Good to Great* by Jim Collins, *Straight from the Gut* by legendary former GE chief executive Jack Welch, or *Business Stripped Bare* by Richard Branson – but they are invariably written by some bright spark offshore.

Carey Smith, CEO of real estate agency Ray White New Zealand, is an exception. Never mind that he arrived here 12 years ago to take over the real estate franchise group, which now spans 125 offices responsible for around \$5 billion in sales annually, we'll claim him as one of our own. Smith, who turns 44 this year, has just published his own tome of wisdom, called *Deliver: 36 Real Life Stories on Leadership*. Rather than take the traditional route of book publishing by approaching a company like Allen & Unwin or Penguin, he paid for it himself through Zenith Publishing Group's online self-publishing service PublishMe, so that he could have more control over the book.

He wasn't tempted to have the book ghostwritten, although he's not a natural writer. "It takes away a lot of the raw energy," says Smith, whose writing until now has consisted of a letter each year in which he takes stock of the year gone and lists his goals for the year ahead. Evidently the book was one of those projected goals. It was written on weekends with his partner, and his initial plan was to send out copies to clients and friends. "It was more of a personality rather than a management book," he says.

Smith took advice from an author who told him there

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were two types of people who could read *Deliver* – and he needed to decide which audience he was writing for. There were people who read books regularly, and there were people who read the newspaper from cover to cover but didn't read books a lot. He decided on the latter. They were like him.

He took advice from high-profile friends, like Trade Me's Sam Morgan and former Fairfax Media CEO Joan Withers, who encouraged him to put more of himself into the book and to go into more depth. Morgan describes Smith as a thoughtful leader who "makes the time to continually reflect and improve".

Smith hasn't used his work as an author to settle any disputes. Rather, the book reflects his leadership, and the leadership of Ray White New Zealand. "It could potentially have a positive effect," says Smith, who has been with Ray White here and in Australia for 20 years since joining the group as a real estate cadet when he was just 17. His first job was as a junior auctioneer with the Ray White Group in Sydney.

Head office in Australia has been supportive and Brian White, chairman of Ray White International, has written a complimentary review on Smith's website. "I would not have written the book if there had been any risk," says Smith, who took care to check with staff who were associated with the stories he used.

He sank a lot of money into his personal project, but the advantage of being CEO of a major company meant he had both an extensive network and a PR company at his fingertips. The launch party for the book saw many

of the great and the good attend. If press for the bookshop chain Papadence from which he will benefit, to PublishMe.

Jane Beals, managing director of Smith's position as CEO of a large company with opportunities to reach out beyond. "He's made the networks; he's in a possibilities and to achieve what he's got experience, has something to tell people about it."

His website, [www.careysmith.co](http://www.careysmith.co), covers the book and his career. His hope of the books directly from there at bookstores in New Zealand and Australia covered the launch fairly extensively invited to speak at conferences on the something he enjoys and is happy to spread the word on good value.

"People have said it's good time people have said it's nice to pick up

Beals believes more entrepreneurs will take advantage of today's more publishing so they can have own. Going through the main channel known but rare if you are not, with significant worldwide business. It has taken away the mystique of

And it is relatively affordable. At the size of the book – each A5 cost the author \$5 or \$5.50 if it is PublishMe also has the capacity thanks to a print-on-demand digital authors can order smaller print runs the market and change things," says

The company has just published a *Recession in Your Business*, adviser Tony Beavan. The owner of the years and current director of Beavan started writing a week before a digital version ready by March. It because he based his book on the events.

It won't be *War and Peace*, but and will undoubtedly have some local firms. Beavan, an entrepreneur through several economic cycles, has learned is happy to share them. "Mine" 'shut up and pay attention', and it," says Beavan.

There are all sorts of reasons. Lynne Strode-Penney recently visited had lived overseas for a number of years re-establish herself here. Her books and art, and some of the copies of original paintings in them.

Of course, you have to have a book about your experiences – have something to contribute. R

PHOTOGRAPHY: JASON DORDAY



of the great and the good attend. His PR company does press for the bookshop chain PaperPlus, a nice coincidence from which he will benefit, and it introduced him to PublishMe.

Jane Beals, managing director of PublishMe, says Smith's position as CEO of a large company provides him with opportunities to reach out beyond his organisation. "He's made the networks; he's in a position to use all the possibilities and to achieve what he wants to achieve. He's got experience, has something to say and wants to tell people about it."

His website, [www.careysmith.com](http://www.careysmith.com), tells you all about the book and his career. His hope is that he will sell half of the books directly from there and the rest will sell in bookstores in New Zealand and Australia. The press has covered the launch fairly extensively, and he has been invited to speak at conferences on the strength of the book, something he enjoys and is happy to do, because he thinks it spreads the word on good values and ethics.

"People have said it's good timing," he says. "A lot of people have said it's nice to pick up a local book."

Beals believes more entrepreneurs and businesspeople will take advantage of today's more accessible routes into publishing so they can have ownership of the process. Going through the main channels is easy if you are well known but rare if you are not, while self-publishing is a significant worldwide business. The burgeoning industry has taken away the mystique of publishing, says Beals. And it is relatively affordable. At PublishMe, it depends on the size of the book – each A5 book of 100 pages will cost the author \$5 or \$5.50 if it is published in full colour. PublishMe also has the capacity to print digital books, thanks to a print-on-demand digital press. This means authors can order smaller print runs. "They can react to the market and change things," says Beals.

The company has just published the book *How to Avoid a Recession in Your Business*, produced by business adviser Tony Beavan. The owner of 18 businesses over the years and current director of Alto Business Advisers, Beavan started writing a week before Christmas and had a digital version ready by March. He did have a head start, because he based his book on the manuals he writes for clients.

It won't be *War and Peace*, but it's current and relevant, and will undoubtedly have some good tips for struggling local firms. Beavan, an entrepreneur who has seen several economic cycles, has learnt some hard lessons and is happy to share them. "Mine's got no story; it's more 'shut up and pay attention', and examples of how to do it," says Beavan.

There are all sorts of reasons to write a book. Artist Lynne Strobe-Penney recently wrote a book because she had lived overseas for a number of years and wanted to re-establish herself here. Her book talks about her travels and art, and some of the copies are limited editions with original paintings in them.

Of course, you have to have a certain ego to write a book about your experiences – you have to feel that you have something to contribute. Retail veteran Kevyn Male,

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the man behind Newmarket's popular The Three Bears fashion boutique from the 1960s to the 1990s, freely admits there was some ego involved in his publishing projects. But his book *10 Commandments for Successful Retailers*, published by Penguin in 1999, has some excellent pointers from a man who carved out an impressive reputation in the rag trade.

In this climate, there are three main components for success, says Male: "Financial stability, product development, and deliverance of superior customer service." Male wrote for his industry's trade magazine, *Apparel*, at one stage and that's when he was approached by Penguin.

The attitude in New Zealand is not to share your experience, he says. "By nature, I have always had a lot to say. I have always batted for the underdog." He has gone on to write a number of books unassociated with business.

Bob Wallace, national director of public relations company PPR Auckland, thinks the tall poppy syndrome prevents New Zealanders from writing about their experiences. He says a book by Graeme Hart about his life in business would sell like hot cakes and the same goes for Stephen Tindall, Ralph Norris, Theresa Gattung and Sam Morgan.

"I would say there's probably a book in each of them, but I guess they have to feel the need or be driven to do it. In many respects, entrepreneurs are people more oriented toward doing things. Writing a book takes an awful lot of focus. It's about setting time aside."

Yet the New Zealand business community would love to read about the climb to the top, says Wallace. Small business leaders on their way up are looking for good war stories and a bit of colour. New Zealanders like to hear tales from people who started out small so that they can relate to their situation and make relevant comparisons.

"If someone wants more profile, a book is a vehicle if they are passionate about getting a message across. But you've got to be careful about over-hyping, because once you get into publishing books you've got a lot to live up to. You've got to then be successful," he warns. It's a question, too, of balancing self-promotion and promotion of your ideas with the space you give to your company.

Do you wait until you have reached the top before you write your book? Joan Baker is a wealth coach and the author of eight books, including *Live the Dream* about running your own business. She says her writing has definitely helped her win business: "You get people saying, you are very easy to read, and you make sense." They think she's not going to be totally intimidating because her writing is very accessible. "It does lower all the barriers."

She hopes to see more local writers catering especially for the underserved SME market. "New Zealand is a very small market. One of the problems with most business literature is that it tends to be talking about organisations that have several thousand employees, so it's very difficult to make it feel relevant. It probably still is relevant but it does not strike much of a note with New Zealanders.

"Knowing that somebody else has trodden that path and it's been hard for them – I do think people really like that." §