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The HUB

Boardroom Battlefield

By **Suhel Seth**



Striptease: The art of corporate warfare

Mukul Deva

Penguin

Rs 325

There are many reasons why you should read Mukul Deva's new book *Striptease: The Art of Corporate Warfare*. The fact that Deva once served in the Indian Army is perhaps one of them. Of course, several books liken war with the corporate world and frankly I was worried this would be another one of those war and balance sheet jobs.

But Deva imparts his lessons with surprising ease.

Some of those lessons can be worrying, especially when Deva embarks on a critical lesson by quoting an anonymous author who apparently said, "Amateurs built the Ark. Professionals built the Titanic." This left me a bit confused because it seemed to suggest the woes of the corporate world arise because there are more professionals than amateurs.

Such stumbles apart, the book is peppered with insights that the author has gleaned from his military past (he today wears corporate suits rather than battle fatigues) and perhaps the cornerstone of the book is the fact that battles are fought to be won, whereas corporate battles are only about leadership.

**Why is the book's title
Striptease? Obviously it's
about tactics, not strategy**

Deva's other corporate lessons are simple but important ones: a superior product is a winning one; companies shouldn't confuse between strategy and tactics. He also explains the similarities between motivating corporate warriors and those who occupy positions on our frontiers.

If you forgive Deva some logical fallacies, there is a lot you can pick up from this well-written but not so well thought-out book. His analysis (originally, Sun Tzu's) of strategy and tactics is something that everyone in business will benefit from. Especially in an age in which the distinction between strategic and tactical is almost always about time rather than approach. Strategy is always long-term; tactics is short-term.

Why the writer chose Striptease as the title of the book is anyone's guess. I would imagine it had more to do with tactics than strategy, because whilst the title may titillate, there is enough in the book to inspire thought. Which is why it is both refreshing and quite unputdownable.

And where the book really scores is that it could be read by an officer and a gentleman. That's if there are any gentlemen left in the corporate world