

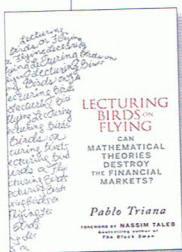
on task. Generally speaking, they say, leaders of clever people must be both humble and tough. “The leader sets the tone and adds some sort of discipline, structure, or sense of process to the organization.” It’s clearly a challenging role, but an essential one. (Harvard Business Press, \$27.95)

The subtitle of Pablo Triana’s book,

Lecturing Birds on Flying, sums up its premise: “Can Mathematical Theories Destroy the Financial Markets?” It’s clear early on he believes the answer is yes. He

questions whether mathematical formulas can predict human behavior, which is what drives markets; he references studies that show common-sense approaches to money managing fare better than complex

theoretical tools; and he lists the many market meltdowns that financial models failed to anticipate. But it’s not just that these formulas are wrong, he says—they’re harmful. They lull investors into a sense of security that encourages them to take greater risks. Not unexpectedly, Triana takes aim at business schools, where financial theories are born and propagated, but he relies on the observations of plenty of b-school heavyweights to underscore his points. Nassim Nicholas Taleb, author of *The Black Swan*, writes in his introduction, “We learn from crisis to crisis that modern financial theory has the empirical and scientific validity of astrology (without the aesthetics).” Triana’s book will ruffle a lot of feathers, but it also will make many readers think. (Wiley, \$29.95)



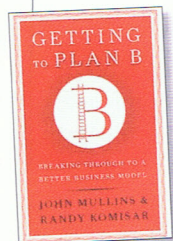
Job-seekers with a passion for environmentalism may like

Green Careers, a forthright guide to the sustainability-oriented jobs of the future. Authors Jim Cassio and Alice Rush divide the book into occupational categories, from engineering to healthcare, and then assess what kinds of green jobs are available, what education and experience they require, and how much they pay. The authors also interview dozens of individuals currently working in green fields. In the section on “Green Business and Enterprising,” Cassio and Rush describe possible jobs such as environmental accountant, green consultant, and eco-friendly CEO, and they offer an interview with Hunter Lovins of Natural Capitalism. Lovins advocates these steps: “Find what you really care about and live a life that shows it. Study everything. ... Learn how to work with people and how to communicate. But before that, learn to think.” Great advice for anyone looking for a job in any field. (New Society Publishers, \$19.95)

When Kishore Biyani opened his Big Bazaar

food outlets in India, the orderly aisles were modeled after Wal-Mart stores. But shoppers strolled through and never paused to buy. So he scrambled the layout, added noise, and replicated the chaos of a traditional Indian bazaar. Customers loved the new design. It turns out that entrepreneurs almost always have to scrap or refine their initial business plans to find one that works. It’s this task of *Getting to Plan B* that John Mullins and Randy Komisar want to explore. They break the process down into four steps: learning from analogs that are similar to a new business idea; considering “antilogos” that are the opposite of current models; making leaps of faith based on beliefs about the market; and tracking success with a “dashboard” that measures which hypotheses are holding true and which ones need to be

re-examined. Mullins, who hails from London Business School, and Komisar, who has ties to Stanford, are clear about their key theme: “It is necessary to constantly iterate to



find a path that will work.” The only real mistake in their minds is sticking with Plan A, when Plan B, C, D, or Z would be better. (Harvard Business Press, \$29.95)

In turbulent financial times, the role of a company’s board of directors is even more essential and more difficult than ever.

In *Owning Up*, consultant Ram Charan provides a thoughtful, well-reasoned blueprint for structuring, fine-tuning, and deploying a board. His underlying theme is one of being prepared—to handle the next big crisis, to name the next CEO, to sift through complex information. The book is divided into 14 chapters posing 14 essential questions: Is our board composition right? How can our board determine CEO compensation? How prepared are we to work with activist shareholders? Readers won’t come away believing the answers are simple, but they will feel as if they truly understand what action is necessary and how it can be accomplished. (Jossey-Bass, \$29.95) 