



**SUMMER READS**

**PODCASTS**

**AND MORE**

Members from Criticaleye's global Community reveal the books and podcasts they will be enjoying during their summer breaks in 2023



Summer provides an opportunity for senior executives to recharge and take some much needed rest and relaxation. We asked a selection of Members from Criticaleye's global Community what books and podcasts they are planning to get stuck into during their long-awaited breaks in the sunshine.

Their recommendations range from podcasts centred on leadership in a constricted macro environment to fiction from perennials such as John Le Carré and Agatha Christie. And then there's Taylor Swift's The Eras Tour ...

Here are their picks in full:

**Devyani Vaishampayan**  
 Non-executive Director  
 Saietta Group and Board  
 Mentor, Criticaleye



**Book:**

*The House of Doors* by Tan Twan Eng

*The House of Doors* is a masterful novel of public morality and private truth, set a century ago in British-controlled Malaysia, giving a fascinating insight into colonial life. It also provides a lens into the Chinese freedom movement through the charismatic revolutionary Dr Sun Yat Sen.

From a humanist perspective, I think the themes the book brings up are still very relevant today as it covers relationships, shame, patriotic optimism and women taking a secondary role to men's ambitions. Most of all, it was a hugely interesting read and was extremely well written – I could not put it down.

“During lockdown, I stumbled across a bookshop that specialises in first edition Agatha Christie novels and it became a ritual to read one monthly”

Rachel Barton

**Podcast:**

[Harvard Business Review IdeasCast – Episode 901, Why You \(and Your Company\) Need to Experiment with ChatGPT Now](#)

As an AI entrepreneur, I have been bemused by how Board members have failed to understand the significant opportunity AI can bring to all types of businesses. I think while ChatGPT is finally bringing about a realisation around the disruptive power of AI, it is still being trivialised.

This podcast could be the first step for senior leaders towards understanding the rapid changes Generative AI is bringing to business models and productivity. It pragmatically outlines the implications of ChatGPT in the workplace ... in a simple and practical manner.

**Want to read:**

*Various works of the novelist, Milan Kundera*

There is a whole of list books I want to read but haven't yet got round to. I want to re-read some of Milan Kundera's work. He writes about the philosophy of life and makes you realise that 'being funny is a serious business'.

**Rachel Barton**  
 Senior Managing Director  
 Strategy Europe Lead  
 Accenture



**Books:**

*Anything Agatha Christie*

I always like to have both a fiction and non-fiction book on the go and I am a big fan of detective novels – perhaps it's the problem solver in me. During lockdown, I stumbled across a bookshop that specialises in first edition Agatha Christie novels and it became a ritual to read one monthly. Three years on and I've kept up the habit – although she wrote 75 novels, so I'm only halfway through. I'd highly recommend *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* and *A Caribbean Mystery*.

**Podcast:**

[Meet the Leader: A World Economic Forum Podcast](#)

I recently enjoyed a presentation by David Rubenstein – co-founder of The Carlyle Group – entitled *Everything you Need to Know about the World in 45 Minutes*. This whistle-stop tour of the world's geopolitical climate was featured in the World Economic Forum's *Meet the Leader* podcast. >



The WEF's podcast talks about aspects of leadership, particularly focusing on leaders rising to the occasion in the face of challenges. Ultimately, leadership is when somebody gets others to follow them towards a goal that creates a better outcome for humanity – something I like to remember when faced with adversity.

**Currently Reading:** *The 100 Year Life*  
by Lynda Gratton and Andrew J. Scott

I am currently reading *The 100 Year Life* – a fascinating analysis of life and work in an age of longevity. Looking back to 1914, life expectancy has dramatically increased, profoundly impacting the way we live. I find it inspiring to think I might have a couple more careers in me; the linear path of education, work and retirement is being disrupted, creating more opportunities to learn and grow. I feel this puts everyday challenges into perspective.



**Books:**

*Silverview* by John Le Carré;  
*The Climate Book* by Greta Thunberg

I think for a holiday you need something that provides a bit of fantasy and release, so on my recent travels I read *Silverview* by John Le Carré. He is a sophisticated author. Published posthumously, it's a great romp of a read about loss and self-examination within the context of the spy novel genre.

I also enjoyed *The Climate Book* by Greta Thunberg. It references 100 individuals

“ I ... enjoyed *The Climate Book* by Greta Thunberg. It references 100 individuals working in the field, bringing a variety of different outlooks to such a complex subject ”

Charlie Wagstaff

working in the field, bringing a variety of different outlooks to such a complex subject. Having a wide range of perspectives makes it more bite-sized, allowing you to get under the skin of a specific area that particularly interests or resonates with you. It brings a very interesting perspective to environmentalism – an issue that is very important to tap in to.

**Podcasts:**

[BBC Global News Podcast](#);  
[National Trust Podcast](#)

I listen to a lot of podcasts. I like the BBC's *Global News Podcast*. It's always very topical and takes me

outside the UK perspective. Another I love is the *National Trust Podcast*. It's about history and the work they do, but it also goes into depth about a variety of topics. There are talks about everything from birdlife and wildlife to the incredible work they're doing on National Trust houses. The intel they can draw from something seemingly insignificant is amazing.

**Want to read:**

*The Eagle's Way: Nature's New Frontier in a Northern Landscape* by Jim Crumley

A book I've been recommended is *The Eagle's Way*. It's about some of the rewilding projects going on across the west coast of Scotland, focused on the rehabilitation of eagles in the area. This has been a great success story. I was recently in the area visiting my father, so I'm very interested in some of the rewilding projects that are being undertaken.



**Books:**

*Empire of Pain* by Patrick Radden Keefe;  
*Chip War* by Chris Miller;  
*Bad Blood: Secrets and Lies in a Silicon Valley Startup* by John Carreyrou

*Empire of Pain* is about the opioid crisis in the US and the Sackler [family] dynasty, outlining how the crisis stemmed from problems of corporate governance and sycophantic Board members. It's a really good read and there is certainly lots to learn about this topic. >



*Chip War* is a really well written book that explains the history of the last 50 to 100 years. It demonstrates how chip manufacturing came with political influence and economic power that heavily influenced the geopolitical and geoeconomic sides of history.

*Bad Blood* is such a jaw-dropping read with lots of WTF moments. It is the story of Elizabeth Holmes, who got \$9 billion of investment for her bio-tech startup Theranos based on lies. She got Silicon Valley investors to brush aside concerns about investment simply due to the fear of missing out, so it is an extraordinary story.

**Podcast:** [The Rest is Politics](#)

This podcast is hosted by two ex-politicians who discuss current affairs and what's behind the news. One is ex-Conservative, Rory Stewart, and the other is ex-Labour, Alastair Campbell. They discuss world news while disagreeing agreeably, which I like given the rise of populism and the polarisation of society – I think we have lost the art of debating. They try to find a middle ground through logical and intellectual discussion, which is really motivating and restores my faith in humankind.

**Want to read:** *Mother of Invention: How Good Ideas get Ignored in an Economy Built for Men* by Katrine Marçal

This book is about the women behind some of the major inventions throughout history. I heard the author on the radio and she was really interesting. As a feminist, I think I will enjoy it.

“ I was amazed at the ideas the book expounds. It is so relevant in the current era of ESG, showing companies the route to move beyond CSR ”

Chin Seng Lee

**Chin Seng Lee**  
Executive Development,  
Singapore Management  
University and Board  
Mentor, Criticaleye



**Book:**  
*Completing Capitalism: Heal Business to Heal the World*  
by Bruno Roche and Jay Jakub

I was gifted this book by the co-author, Bruno Roche – lead of Mars Inc’s think tank – but I have only recently had the time to read it cover to cover. I was

amazed at the ideas the book expounds. It is so relevant in the current era of ESG, showing companies the route to move beyond CSR.

**Podcast:** [Think Fast, Talk Smart](#)

I highly recommend this podcast to business leaders who are keen to engage their audience, especially when you want to communicate emotions as well as ideas – be it analysts’ meetings, employees’ town hall meetings or corporate strategy communications. I personally benefit from this podcast when I’m crafting my own mentoring sessions.

I found a recent episode – *Brains Love Stories – How Leveraging Neuroscience Can Capture People’s Emotions* – particularly riveting. In this episode, the Dean of Stanford Graduate Business School talks about the importance of crafting the right message and sharing it in the right way.

**Looking forward to:**  
[Taylor Swift’s The Eras Tour](#)

While it’s not a book or a podcast, I’m looking forward to Taylor Swift’s ‘The Eras Tour’ in Singapore. I doubt I will get the tickets: it is reported that three million people are jostling for 330,000 spaces. I am new to Taylor Swift’s music, so I am curious. What is it about her songs that draws millions of young people to her? She is a strong communicator, so I enjoy listening to some of her interviews too. ■

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