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Does your office play the Hunger Games?

Nigel Bowen

It's a world in which everybody is out for themselves and nobody hesitates to knife another in the back. A world where the paranoid prosper while the weak fall by the wayside. A world of shifting alliances, schadenfreude and savage reversals of fortune.

The Hunger Games? No, the modern workplace.

Popular science fiction isn't so much about imagining future worlds as commenting on the existing one, so it's no surprise that the Hunger Games has struck such a chord with audiences around the world.

A perfect storm of globalisation, technological advances and winner-takes-all economic policies, has created workplaces that

bear more than a passing resemblance to the gladiatorial arena dreamt up by author Suzanne Collins while watching reality TV (Donald Trump's *The Apprentice*, possibly?).

Given dog-eat-dog Darwinism reigns, what career tips can be gleaned from *The Hunger Games*?

The competition never ends

In *Catching Fire*, the latest *Hunger Games* installment, the protagonists find themselves back in the arena fighting for their lives, highlighting the reality that there's no point where you've 'made it' and can take it easy.

With never-ending pressure to beat out others to get into the best course/ internship/ entry-level position/ springboard managerial position/ senior executive role, the striving never ceases. And if you do lose your appetite for the battle, there's always someone hungrier around who'll unhesitatingly use your carcass to leverage themselves onto higher ground.

There are no rules

While there may be some sort of feel-good HR manual detailing the official Marquess of Queensbury rules for achieving career advancement, workplace survival always comes down to outperforming competitors, cultivating useful relationships and making sure your flank is protected at all times.

You don't have to play the game

As bleak as *The Hunger Games* is, it does carry with it the uplifting message that nobody has the power to force you to do anything that violates your moral code. You can always refuse to cross a certain line and, hopefully, still live to fight another day.

Like they say in the movie: "May the odds be ever in your favour!"

What tips do you have for surviving the modern workplace – ideally with your integrity intact?

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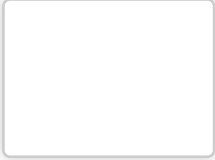
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