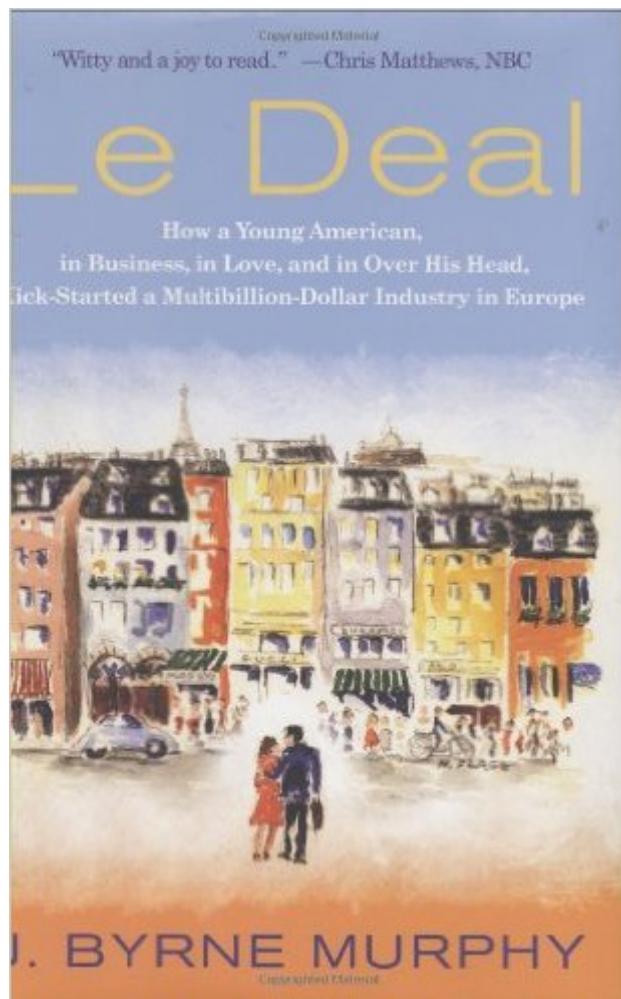


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Le Deal: How A Young American, In Business, In Love, And In Over His Head, Kick-Started A Multibillion Dollar Industry In Europe



Synopsis

High-Fashion AdventureLe Deal is an adventure story involving raw entrepreneurship, high-level politics, and a young American family in foreign lands. It is the true story of Byrne Murphy, a businessman who abruptly moves to Paris with his wife and baby daughter in a quest to reignite his career and his fortunes. He quickly finds himself up against strange and powerful forces for which he is ill prepared. Just days after landing in France, Byrne reads that the newly installed prime minister has declared a moratorium on all new retail development, apparently snuffing out Byrne's proposed new venture---discount fashion malls---before it's even started. He and his company will engage in a mano a mano struggle with the prime minister (which reaches all the way to France's Supreme Court); encounter a ruthless political ambush in Germany by the soon-to-be chancellor, Gerhard Schroeder; and face a threatening (Is this the Mafia?) would-be partner in Italy. Counterbalanced against these are a series of mostly charming encounters with nearly all members of the British Royal Family, capped off by a tour with Her Royal Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, which nearly ended in a royal embarrassment of epic proportions. Byrne and his wife, Pamela, experience the joys and risks of living and growing their family in foreign lands. From proposals for dalliances to a harrowing experience with a local and dangerous disease during pregnancy, they are reminded time and again that surprises can be ever present in foreign cultures. Over eight years the company (McArthurGlen Europe) grew from nothing to generating approximately a billion dollars in sales from 11 centers across Europe. Those efforts created nearly 8,000 jobs, opened 1,500 stores featuring 500 brands, attracted nearly 40 million shopping visits per year, and spawned an array of competitors. In short, an industry. Along the way, the author learns what he, and Americans in general, do and do not know about life beyond our borders. The book ends with a message about the need for twenty-first-century Americans who work in international affairs to truly take context into account; to realize, in our quest to accomplish more in less time, that investing the time to understand the nuances of foreign cultures with which one may be working is a key to prospering in this multicultural, polyglot, interconnected, globalized world.

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Customer Reviews

In LE DEAL, real-estate developer Bynre Murphy relates his struggle to extend an American retail innovation -- outlet malls offering iconic apparel brands at deep discounts -- to a skeptical and change-averse Old World. Murphy's saga is set in motion by the savings and loan crisis that devastated the US commercial real-estate market in 1992. His small but successful Washington, DC-based development company was wiped out, and Murphy and his boss find themselves clinging to the only asset their company retains -- licensing rights to open McArthur Glen retail outlet centers in Europe. As Murphy explains to a long succession of French mayors, councilmen, administrators, and permit-granters, McArthur Glen has a stellar track record in the US, and its concept will be "win-win-win" in France: French shoppers will get 40-60% discounts on sought-after brands like Versace, Nike, Gucci, and Calvin Klein; the brands will be able to monetize their end-of-season inventory instead of writing it off; and the downtown merchants and restaurants will benefit from shoppers visiting from afar who need a place to refuel and buy what they couldn't find at the outlet. It's a no-brainer, right? Umm... non. As the presentations, setbacks, hearings, and appeals drag on for months, Murphy begins to understand the true nature of what he and McArthur Glen are up against as they try to gain a foothold in France. Any new business concept is viewed first and foremost as a threat to the established commercial order, and only vaguely and secondarily as an opportunity. As the author explains, in France it's all about job preservation, not job creation.

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