The business fable genre is gaining popularity with busy executives as it offers fast-to-read bite-sized lessons, writes PARVATHI NAYAR.

When some of today’s top CEOs were asked on a recent Monday morning what they were reading, their responses were unlikely to make the morning news.

“Once upon a lack of time” that Andy O’Brien, CEO of Trinity Systems, has to deal with — not in real life, or even in a novel, but in the business world. The Five Transitions of a CEO by Leonard, dedicated as a leadership fable.

Currently, business fables are a popular trend among business books. Dealing with such soft skills, personal obstacles or specific business problems, the business stories are likely to be presented within the form of fables or stories with a moral. They are simply written, often short and catchy, and very accessible, after all, anyone loves a good story.

“Recent research proves that people remember things much better when said in a narrative format,” says author Katherine O’Hara, a McKinsey consultant and contributor to The Bard & Co. It’s the book on the relevance of Shakespeare in modern business. Business books generally tend to hide behind a lot of jargon, while business fables introduce storytelling format in the business genre.

Parnassus feels the business book market in the last 10 years “is oversaturated with books about faddish ideas or even real existence”, their immense success shows that there is a real need for them.

One concern is the way that our society is in constant need for them, whatever their position is in the complex strategy to conquer the global market. But while it’s easy to dismiss the whole genre of books as frothy, their immense success shows that there is a real need for them.

The Bard & Co. is the first, and he knew what he was doing, and he was right for business books as they are more approachable. The author needs to have a strong platform and back the ideas with a dynamic website, coaching programmes and author tours to reinforce the message from the books. These books do not work well as standalone titles. There also seems to be an emerging mind of cross-over trend in terms of the business and leisure books, and even real existence.

One of only two CEO fables that were featured in the Financial Times was Charlie Ferris’ The Bard & Co. It’s a guide to Shakespeare and his plays, as he translates them into business lessons, and is great in reminding us that Shakespeare really does hold a mirror up to society, and that his ideas are applicable to our business lives.

So business fables may seem like an unlikely choice for busy executives, but as long as they are written in a dynamic way and are easy to read, they can be very effective in teaching important lessons. The key is finding the right business fable that resonates with the reader and helps them grow as professionals.