

Integral Leadership Review

Volume X, No. 5
October 2010

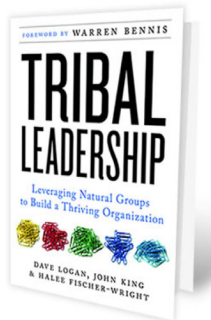


Book Review

Tribal Leadership: Leveraging Natural Groups to Build a Thriving Organization

Kerry Dugan

Dave Logan, John King and Halee Fischer-Wright,
Tribal Leadership: Leveraging Natural Groups to Build a Thriving Organization. New York: Harper/Business, 2008.



The authors, David Logan, John King, and Hallie Fischer-Wright, have outlined the transmutation of tenacity, from survival to ambition to aspiration. Tribal leadership is explored as a process engaged by compounding cultural capital.



You can run a company, but you can't hide it, from itself. The ramifications of management are revealed in the unmanageable distributions of power that are non-transferable to the boardroom. Internal reputation, what we tell ourselves and coworkers about our cultures, is a resource TL taps. We either ignore the gravities of tribes, getting waylaid in their inertias and regressions, or wield what leverage we do have for their potential momentums.

Throughout the book agency and communion, as enacted by a cultures' members, are traced through lived trajectories that reach greater and greater qualities of efficacy. What works is continually re-scaled as a persons' tribal participations morph in response to increasingly rich recognized contexts, acting on awareness of the not necessarily necessary limitations of current modes of being who they are, in the world, together. For every leverage, an exacting fulcrum. For each traction, an appropriate point of contact.

A targeted myth busting, in service of evolving corporate life, is tailored to address the status quo with the good news of the demise of business as usual. The myths the authors treat aren't some inherited stories but the personal developmental filters that veil our view of what's actually

happening. The blindspots show up in how our espoused purposes fall out of synch with our systemic embeddedness, or are contradicted by our behaviors, and they all call for a concord of nested mission(s). The authors accomplish this by making room for interiors, by seeing the relevance of the invisible, those intangible ubiquitous realms of meaning: cultures.

Through TL, politics of the workplace grow transparencies that count, tallied on multiple bottom lines, and building implicit cultural-profit into the value added for the occupants of enterprise. It redefines risk and competition, and attends to the shelf lives of common habits that are the stock of trade. Although these cited trends of emergent excellence are illustrated with examples given after the fact, and will land like seed on soils of various fertilities, the authors exhibit that same profound trust in potentials observed in the leaders they profile.

The book is an invitation to impersonal excellence via convivial transformations that begin, and keep beginning, with each of us. TL swings a double-edged sword, discernment and decisiveness, without excuse or tolerating stagnant mediocrities. Even Machiavelli is redeemed, recontextualized for pertinence among the pomo mists of iffy interests and iffier ultimate commitments. Advocating sometimes challenging shake ups, the tribal leadership process starts with settling into honest observance, even obedience (from the Latin, *obediens*: listening) from which the tremors of deep progress can become ready to rumble.

In TL we toe the finish line, daily renewing how each already wins. The primacy of values is bold affirmation, alchemical and catalytic, galvanizing the best in each, for each, for all. Beyond being merely a program to adopt, the sets of serial insights apply, I believe, by being derived from how we work. On the clock and off, what makes us tick is taken into account.

Based on rigorous observations (in the social science vein) the work traces patterns and dynamics as evidently pervasive as they are intractably under-recognized. A tapestry of pragmatic inference weaves by way of the warp of method and the woof of rigor, any strand of which a reader might take and run with. The breadth of the work, comprised of intricate and nuanced detail, draws provisional conclusions that amount to a global view of the most local interpersonal occurrences. Attending to the shaping of systemic features, which invariably return the favor, the candid transparencies encouraged by the TL case studies reveal that design elements express the tetra-arising of pro-active cultures (one of several retro-obvious observations). Through the authors' mapping the bands in a spectrum from isolation to integration, in the personal, interpersonal and systemic, along with offering keys to spotting the triggers of advancement, we're offered a multifaceted examination of the state of business culture(s) with actionable strategic, and meta-strategic, recommendations. They've called out the found contours of shift craft, echoing with fidelity changes witnessed.

The journey through owning the five general stages of tribes can be simply seen, in analogy, as the opening of the hand. Stage One, as empty and irresourceful as a clenched fist. Stage two, a pessimistic thumbs-down to self, a pointing to the dawn of hope reflected in others. Stage Three, a drawn gun of competitiveness, thumbs-up to self, a hubris flaunting competence, 'flipping-the-bird' to the enemy du jour, still unable to uncurl implicit self-referencing from the framing of its activities. Stage Four, relaxing the ring finger, opening to mutuality, trust and communal pride...Stage Five, ready for a virtuosity of give and take, fully receptive, able to hold, and give, the most—the hand

unsheathed from itself, un-hobbled, the re-humanizing potential of the opposing thumb bringing tools alive with adept precision. Performance capacity is shown to be a measure of the availability of the whole ‘hand’.

As the hand opens, as tribal leadership awakens, the authors found that we are reorganized with increasing dynamism, connecting across role boundaries, partnering stale polarities into fresh co-operations. Frustrating separations, entrenched specialization and chronic compartmentalization are ushered from inevitable to obsolete. Just as the fist is no unity but a con-fusion (a resistance to the valence of cooperation) the open hand, discerned in its myriad versilities, frees the cantilevered miracle to get things done beyond the reach of its lone grasp, touch and gesture.

TL is where identity and span meet. The path of stage progression shows a successive embrace of broadening interest, rich reciprocity and purposive mutuality. A veritable manual on common ground-ing, Tribal Leadership is a book about what it takes to be on the same page.

As data the book draws on may indicate, stabilizing resilient higher performance comes with fluidity of adjustment, a focused flexibility of adaptation. Contingent on ‘the (Stage Four) epiphany’ (a personally inner shift that reconfigures co-enactments of relationships) ‘triading’ (a synergistic art of socially recombinant initiative) is where the rugs of insular private turfs are pulled out, and folks learn to fly, flocking (tribing), flexing the wings of words kept.

TL is hard about the soft. Assessing the weights of interiors as revealed in behaviors, namely the use of words, it follows, to the source, those critical intangibles that can make or break the quality of corporate success. The vision thing has gotten concrete. Logan, King and Fischer-Wright put us on the spot, and history stands as a dress rehearsal in light of this revolution in performance. Their modeling an effort commensurate with the current height of stakes compassionately drafts us to the front lines of waging sustainability, tribe by culture/tribe. It’s a little like molecules becoming aware of cells, tissues, organs, and self-selecting to drop cancerous incentives from their formative motivations.

Where a tactic or strategy is noted as ‘ironic’, ‘paradoxical’, or ‘counter-intuitive’, the issue has passed from standard rationality, good old biz think, to an aspect normally associated with spirituality. Those instances of diction exemplify the ethic of ‘Amplitude’, a word the authors use to reference our range of cognitive literacy, our scope of identification(s), whereby we speak to people, according with their dominant cultural stage, on their own terms.

Packaged in executive parlance, methodological pluralism goes incognito, a trojan horse, with the façade of knowledge, harboring a guild of what can become wisdom. Acutely playing to working biases of the era’s trends, such as objectivism, the book is distinguished from the bandwagons of popular reinforcement publications by elucidating darn near universal propensities. Breaking from the herd the authors were better positioned to reflect on movements of the herd. It took a trans-tribal vantage to grok how cultures co-respond, and a ready humility tempers the thrill at the enormity of implications, data driven and case confirmed, that punctuate the careful strides taken in the project.

With the upper reaches of tribal leadership aligning well with Robert Kegan’s keynote address of the 2010 Integral Theory Conference (in which he touched on the territories beyond the self-authorship

of tribal stages Three and Four) much of Tribal Leadership reads like a playbook for how spirituality is executing an ultimate end run. That the stone rejected by the builders (while building post European Enlightenment capitalism) is becoming the cornerstone. “Innocent wonderment” no less, is the tag-line for the known leading edge of corporate culture.

An espousal/modeling congruence pervades the text. Form and function cohere in the books balance of content with context. A very american book in its internal logic and derivations, on several levels medium and message co-reflect. For instance: it’s tribe written. We the readers are privy to the voice of a chorus. Such a multiple rapport seems designed to affect an experience native to Stage Four, triadic network relating. We’re given a book that foresees the reader, anticipating our own process of processing the material, in the formulation of the material itself. Beyond practicing what’s preached, here we have a case of artifact as intentional cultural force. The quality of influence that fed the books creation feels matched by the influence that’s already flowing from the assimilation of the insights therein. While true of any artifact to some degree, this one directly addresses the mechanisms, or ‘terministic screens’, by which influence gets acknowledged as relevant. Such a rhetorical sophistication has crafted an object capable of being subject-active, and done so through empirical grounding. More than portraying an approach to leadership, it conveys the approach of leadership.

We may notice a neat resonance between the methods the authors employed (the subject of Appendix B) and their findings. Likewise, with readership a pivotal *raison d’être* for the project, the fruitions of the research contain seeds of the behaviors promoted in so specific an on-going study. It is a study of the impact of communication, communicated. Started in the previous century and kept within three hundred pages, the book doesn’t end with the snapshot and pulse-taking of world business that it began as, but survives the constraints of the medium by engaging the developmental imagination and initiative of its audience.

Provided the results of tracking intuitively established traits, we the readers already participate in a principle of the book: that once the process becomes explicit, once the patterns of TL are acknowledged, we naturally locate ourselves in the process and orient toward unique applications. As passages come to us like the ghosts in Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol* we tour the past, present and future of our whereabouts in the continuum of leadership. Not only can we get there from here, we can only get there from precisely where we are.

About the Author

Kerry C. Dugan, originally from New England, began in a setting where music, art, literature, spirituality, altruism, civic contribution and environmental conservation were valued as pillars of the persons interfacing with society. Early on, extracurricular engagements took precedence over compulsory education, suggesting an unconventional path of attuning to unique roles in response to current history. Grounded in motivations that rely on intuition as pragmatism, synchronicity as rationale, he went on to residence in a Zen monastery for his twenties, serving the homeless for his thirties, and today works with Habitat for Humanity, sitting for the seventh year on a local FEMA board. Based in Santa Fe, NM, he and his wife Arun enjoy the simple life, and plan an active retirement on the land they own in Thailand.

Integral Leadership Review

<http://www.integralleadershipreview.com>