Developing Leaders for Positive Organizing

A 21st Century Repertoire for Leading in Extraordinary Times
This book provides much needed insights into areas such as forgiveness, courage and energy that have often been neglected by leadership scholars. The real gems are the series of cases that invite you to look at leadership in a broader, but above all human perspective.

— Professor Kevin Money,
Professor of Reputation and Responsible Leadership,
Director of the John Madejski Centre for Reputation,
Henley Business School, University of Reading

This book should be considered by anyone in top and middle management for their list of must reads. As early adopters of positive psychology in an organizational setting, our firm has experienced first hand the benefits of incorporating its teachings and strategies into the day-to-day operations and into our culture. Positive psychology has become the latest technique to increase productivity and the bottom line by engaging people in a fun and enjoyable manner. This book provides insights into how it’s done right.

— Meda Royall, Founder | CEO,
Your Law Firm Pty Ltd,
Victoria, Australia

This is a comprehensive and important collection of works that highlights key considerations for leading in the new complex global era. It acts as a reminder to practitioners and researchers alike of the important aspects of leadership.

— Dr. Gareth Edwards,
Associate Professor of Leadership Development,
Bristol Business School,
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Dr. Vogel’s research focuses on engaging leadership, mobilizing and maintaining energy in organizations, creating leadership and followership capacity, as well as CEO decision-making and identity.
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A 21st Century Repertoire for Leading in Extraordinary Times

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## Contents

List of Contributors xiii  
Introduction xvii  

### Section I Emergent Mindset

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The Emergent Nature of Positive (and Negative) Organizing: Why Mindset Matters</td>
<td>Rob Koonce</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Brunello Cucinelli: An Inspired Leader Who Helps Employees to Have It All</td>
<td>Marcello Russo</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Fostering an Emergent Mindset in Leaders: The Role of Caring in Leadership Development</td>
<td>Jessica Nicholson and Elizabeth C. Kurucz</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Building Positive Collective Mindsets with the “What-We-Are-Best-at” Group Intervention</td>
<td>Marsha M. Huber, Shirine L. Mafi and Wei Wang</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Section II Courage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Courage</td>
<td>Arthur Schwartz</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Authors</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>It Takes Courage: Lessons Learned from Starbucks’ #RaceTogether Campaign Case Study</td>
<td>Courtney L. McCluney, Laura Morgan Roberts and Lynn Perry Wooten</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Section III Forgiveness</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Forgiveness</td>
<td>Steven L. Smith</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Leadership in Multicultural Environments: A Courageous Case of Forgiveness for South Africa</td>
<td>Rica Viljoen and Adri Drotskie</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Forgiveness: On the Journey to Reconciliation</td>
<td>Linda Pallone</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Fostering Forgiveness in a Conflict-Affected Country</td>
<td>Susan Ryan</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Section IV Mental Fitness</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Leading with Mental Fitness</td>
<td>Paula Robinson</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Mental Health in the Workplace: A Case Study for Collective Responsibility</td>
<td>Jacqueline H. Stephenson</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 14  Developing Restful Awareness: Lessons in Energizing Individuals and Teams from the Micro-practices of a Yoga Class
Anne Messervy 233

CHAPTER 15  Mental Fitness at Knox Grammar School
Steve Zolezzi 243

CHAPTER 16  The Introduction of Well-Being into the Curriculum of an Executive MBA Program: The Sydney Business School as a Reflective Case Study
Lee E. J. Styger and Lauren Richardson 263

Section V  Positive Energy

CHAPTER 17  Experiencing Human Energy as a Catalyst for Developing Leadership Capacity
Bernd Vogel 275

CHAPTER 18  Ella’s Kitchen: Strategic Positive Leadership with Purpose and Value-driven Collective Energy
Amal Ahmadi and Bernd Vogel 307

CHAPTER 19  Transforming Negative Energy into Positive Energy through Intercultural Communication Exercises
Daniel Velasco 321

CHAPTER 20  Igniting Leadership: Ritual and Interaction within the AI Summit
Janis Bragan Balda, Mary Saunders Bulan and William Desmarais 341

Section VI  Human Values

CHAPTER 21  Navigating the Terrain of Positive Organizing: An Engagement with Values
Ken Otter 357
CHAPTER 22 Putting Values to Work at KKT: Nourishment for a Positive Leadership Culture
Ken Otter, Tone S. Ringstad and Sigbjørn Smeland 373

CHAPTER 23 Words for Worlds: Developing Leaders through Values and Narrative Processes at the University of Alberta
Victor Shewchuk, Christine Cavanaugh Simmons and Marcy Strong 389

CHAPTER 24 “This Above All: To Thine Own Self Be True”
Emma Watton and Scott Lichtenstein 403

Index 417
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Introduction

As revealed in the most recent global survey of human capital trends conducted by Deloitte University, leadership is rated as the greatest priority across all organizational levels, geographies, and functional areas in every industry. Research also suggests that the focus of leadership is rapidly shifting with future development being less about individual leaders at the top of organizations and increasingly about helping collective leadership throughout organizations to flourish. Although our natural tendency is to perceive individual failures and ongoing challenges through a negative lens, helping leadership to flourish in this new environment requires creating the conditions through which positive organizing can thrive. Extraordinary times require more than simple recipes for success.

Developing Leaders for Positive Organizing responds to this challenge by offering scholarly and practical insights on such thought-provoking topics as emergent mindset, courage, forgiveness, mental fitness, positive energy, and human values. The six key topics further represented by 18 supporting case studies provide an opportunity to further explore and reflect on a set of positive conditions that help expand the individual, relational, and collective repertoire of leadership in organizations. Developing Leaders for Positive Organizing is further represented by diverse regions of the world to include Australia, Canada, Italy, New Zealand, Norway, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States, and the West Indies.

The key topics and case studies in Developing Leaders for Positive Organizing also provide a unique platform through which practical determination and intellectual engagement ignite each other, not only for practitioners and scholars, but also for students and executives who are confronted with ongoing challenges associated with organizational development and change, human resources management and development, and organizational virtuousness. Research shows that investing in human capital
can lead to positive returns. *Developing Leaders for Positive Organizing* shares ideas and practices through which the what, where, how, and why of those positive returns can be achieved.

Rob Koonce  
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*Associate Editors*
What if our only language for describing the world were dance?… The child might discover a world of endless movement, not discrete “forms” but continuous “forming.” The child might never ask if it were possible to separate the dancers from the dance.

Gergen (2009, p. 30)

The volatile and ambiguous world in which we now live is a complex system of increasingly interconnected parts. The world continues to change how we operate, but it has not necessarily changed how we think about, nor reimagine, the pivotal roles that each of us play as individuals within and between the relational and collective contexts of the organizational systems of which we are a part. The lenses through which we persistently view the world stem from our perceptions, which in turn, color our realities as individuals in relationships with others as active (and passive) participants of larger collectives. From these interactions, we consciously and unconsciously come to know the world through social messages.
that relentlessly bombard our thoughts (e.g., through formal and informal communications, the news media, marketing practices).

Using hierarchy, silos, and other social platforms, these messages sometimes lead to dualistic thinking through which we attach a preconceived level of significance or insignificance on a daily basis to who we are and what, where, and how we come to represent the organizations of which we are a part — “I am the boss” and “you are a subordinate”; his team versus her team; our department versus their department; the significance of what we are doing versus the insignificance of what they are doing; the superiority of our company versus the inferiority of their company, … the list goes on.

Appreciating our independencies, dependencies, and interdependencies is sometimes admittedly easier said than done, but who we are, what we represent, and how we come to define ourselves as individuals also serves to define what we contribute individually and relationally to the essential functions that we serve as part of teams, departments, and other formal and informal structures and systems within organizational collectives. Who we are individually, relationally, and collectively also extends to the organizational purposes that we set out to achieve as we work toward daily organizational tasks, goals, strategies, and a myriad of other intra-agency and inter-agency interdependencies. This individual and relational prerogative is no more relevant than to leaders who enable (or disable) followers as they set out to achieve organizational goals and initiatives on behalf of the teams, departments, and other operations of which they are a part. How leaders and followers think of self and others also plays a major role in how they perceive the relational and collective tasks that they set out to achieve. This chapter seeks to help us better understand the role of mindset in helping (or hindering) leaders and those being led to deal with, and respond to, the inherent complexities associated with human connections in the context of organizational life.

Agents and Agency

The socially co-constructed and emergent process through which people in their respective roles establish and come to relate as agents within organizational systems may serve to promote or hinder individual (e.g., as self, other), relational (e.g., in leader-follower dyads, or small formal or informal groups), and collective
(e.g., as members of teams, departments, and organizations) progress (Koonce, 2016; Weinstein & DeHaan, 2014).\(^1\) Research fully demonstrates that organizational systems are also built and sustained on the quality of life-giving connections (Dutton, 2003; Dutton & Heaphy, 2003; Frost, 2007; Stephens, Heaphy, & Dutton, 2012) and mutually defined social experiences (Ragins, 2016; Ragins, Ehrhardt, Lyness, Murpy, & Capman, 2015) within those systems.

As defined by Hazy, Goldstein, and Lichtenstein (2007), agents represent “semi-autonomous entities that can interact with other agents and change their behavior.” The authors characterize agents by such diverse concepts as “traits, individuals, procedures or routines, decision making units, systems, [and] firms” (p. 5). At the center of agentic interactions is a biological self which shapes, and is shaped by, its sociocultural environment through a dynamic, iterative, and emergent interactive process of organizing (Bandura, 2001; Koonce, 2016; Markus & Kitayama, 2010). Within the individual, relational, and collective contexts of organizing, leading and following are not always positive, but they are always relational (Follett, 2013b; Stephens & Carmeli, 2015).

As those who lead and those being led organize by attempting to optimally balance the positive and negative in an organization\(^2\) with being results centered, internally directed, other-focused, and externally open (Quinn, 2004), they enable an organization by nourishing its courage (Chaleff, 2009; Worline, 2011); culture (Chaleff, 2015; Quinn, 2015; Schein, 2011); flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, 1997); performance (Cameron, 2008; Cameron & Lavine, 2006); positive emotions (Fredrickson & Kurtz, 2011; Vacharkulksemsuk & Fredrickson, 2013); positive energy (Bruch & Vogel, 2011; Spreitzer, Lam, & Quinn, 2012); principles (Csikszentmihalyi, 2003; Schein, 2011); productivity (Amabile & Kramer, 2011; Quinn, 2004); prosocial motivation (Frazier & Tupper, 2016); and values (Cameron, 2011) to name a few.

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\(^2\)See also Pawelski’s (2016b) notion of “fractal flourishing” to refer to “the positive” in terms of sustainable preference.
Organizing

In *The Social Psychology of Organizing*, Weick (1979) defines *organizing* as “a consensually validated grammar for reducing equivocality by means of sensible interlocked behaviors.” He continues, “To organize is to assemble ongoing interdependent actions into sensible sequences that generate sensible outcomes” (p. 3). Weick (2006) further adds that organizing is “the act of trying to hold things together by such means as text and conversation, justification, faith, mutual effort (heedful interrelating), transactive memory, resilience, vocabulary, and by seeing what we say in order to assign it to familiar categories” (p. 1731).

Weick (1979) fully embraces the word *organizing*, but openly rejects the word *organization* as a myth (p. 88). Weick is not alone. Carefully articulated, Follett (2013a) states:

> You may bring together all the parts of a machine, but you do not have the machine until they are properly related ... democracy does not mean merely all taking part ... democracy should mean organization, the relating of parts, co-functioning ... the definition of participation. (p. 212)³⁴

Barnard (1938) expresses similar reservations: “By definition, there can be no organization without persons ... it is not the persons, but the services or acts or action or influences of persons, which should be treated as constituting organizations” (p. 83).

Organizing is carried out by way of processes in which the behaviors of any given person are contingent upon the behaviors of two or more person(s). As patterns of behaviors are established, repeated, and become interlocked, organizational

³If only we fully appreciated the context of Follett’s prophetic words given the disgraceful state of affairs in U.S. politics to include parties and participants who too commonly become embroiled in a diabolical debate that should be defined by its anticipatory dialogue, instead of its ceaseless bickering, finger pointing, and political postering. U.S. politics and the citizenry that it purportedly represents must learn to think differently as we embrace our differences. This truth exists independent of the woes of any particular candidate or elected official. The media serves to palpably reinforce this negative deviance.

⁴See also Block (2009).