Introduction

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TONY WALL

The three jewels in the crown of sustainable performance

Do you ever find yourself wondering why things happen? Do you ever wonder how we seem to be witnessing a number of occurrences that are unusual in our lifetime? How did that corporate giant collapse? How did that bank become so weak and so quickly come to depend on the government and the taxpayer? How could 'rate fixing' happen within that bank, given such high levels of regulation? How could the behaviour of a relatively small group of people lead to such a global economic crisis? How can the behaviours of a relatively few news reporters create the collapse of a giant newspaper? What happened for that newspaper to allow the listening in to those personal voice messages? What has happened in the supply chain to allow the alleged inclusion of horse meat in beef burgers in a large chain store?

These are complex questions, but *perhaps* they are indicators of what can happen when we, as a human race, constantly strive for personal gain over all else. That is not to say that striving for personal gain is wrong – nor is it saying that all those who strive for personal gain create such catastrophic consequences. Indeed, all of the authors of this book devote their lives to helping professionals improve themselves. But *perhaps* when the personal gain overpowers and outweighs the wider gain of stakeholders, this creates an environment for such catastrophe to become possible – perhaps more possible. In the examples referred to above, the banking, news and retail industries, organizational performance was not only negatively affected but, in some cases, organizations were killed off.

Thinking and acting beyond profit to think of people and the planet, remains a hot topic. So too, as part of this debate, does sustainable organizational performance. For example, the Chartered Institute for Personnel and Development (CIPD) reported the outcomes of an action research project in 2011, which identified the key drivers for sustainable organizational

performance (CIPD, 2011). Within the research eight themes were high-lighted. Interestingly, five of them can be directly linked to leadership.

First, the research identified that leaders at all levels need a future-oriented vision to help inform decision making, and use appropriate styles to help others achieve. Let's emphasize two points here – leaders are at *all levels*, and *help others* achieve. Second, the research identified that a shared purpose must be created and maintained; where purpose is the 'golden thread' that runs throughout an organization, like a collective but flexible glue holding direction together. A leader has a key role in weaving this thread or making the glue. A key way of doing this was through the third driver of sustainable performance: engaging others. Enabling others at different levels through-out the organization to be involved and inform decision making was a key factor in sustainable organizational performance. Again, this was about facilitating others rather than directing and instructing. Yet this was done with alignment of values and purpose, whereby there was an awareness and facilitation of the consistency and fit between the values, behaviours or pur-poses of the different stakeholders.

There appears to be nothing surprising or shocking here – there isn't. These are the messages coming from leadership theory and practice for many years, particularly creating shared purpose and aligning values and purpose. Yet there are indicators of subtle difference here, perhaps most significant in the enabling and engagement of others for their achievement (rather than the leader's gain). The fifth driver of sustainable performance sheds more light on this subtly different form of leadership: the ability to balance short- and long-term outcomes. This is the ability to be aware of the shorter-term effects on other people, communities, shareholders, the planet – and the longer-term effects. This balancing is a sensitive juggling act that is part of what might be called 'transpersonal leadership' – thinking and acting beyond the leader's own personal gain, and paying attention to those around them now and in the future (discussed in more depth in Chapters 2 and 5). A type of leadership that is emotionally aware and connected to those around them. A type of leadership that is still absent in today's organ-izations and corporations – indeed, some high profile cases were alluded to at the start of this introduction.

So this type of leadership is a jewel in the crown of sustainable perform-ance, and can be seen to link to five of the eight themes of the CIPD's re-search into the drivers of sustainable organizational performance, but there are other important drivers. The next two drivers relate to talent develop-ment. The sixth driver of organizational performance was capacity building, or equipping people with the skills and knowledge they need today *and* in

the future. But the research highlighted that it wasn't just about having the skills for tomorrow, but also having an agility, or readiness for change – the seventh driver. Together, these position talent development as a continually forming strategic resource that not only enables people to do their job today, to potentially do a job tomorrow, but be ready for the change of what else might need to be done. It is dynamic, not static. So talent development is another jewel in the crown for sustainable development.

The final jewel in the crown is perhaps not as obvious as leadership and talent development. According to the research, it was important to assess and evaluate where we are up to, where we are going, and how far we are in reaching our goals. This was at different levels, and in different areas – to learn, to inform decisions, like a learning organization. Assessment, the eighth driver of sustainable performance, is therefore a strategic activity that helps inform what happens next – the crux of the sustainability of an organization. This book is not a general book about the three jewels, but drills deep in to the jewels to look at the specific practice of using assessments for the development of leadership talents. Our collective experience tells us that doing so is an effective and efficient way to develop leadership behaviours, to expand both leadership talent and the wider talent pool through these leadership talents. And in doing so, we are polishing the three leadership jewels of leadership, talent and assessment.

We also know that these jewels do need to be deep cleaned; in a recent survey (CIPD, 2013), 41 per cent of HR professionals were kept awake at night thinking about their organization's future leadership capability, and 27 per cent were kept awake thinking about whether they had the right talent. We know from our consulting experience that many contemporary organizations continue to create a management elite (rather than multi-level leaders), cut back training and development and cut many forms of assessment. Within difficult economic times, there are keen budgeters who want to cut rather than invest, to balance the books. Balancing the books is a traditional management strategy to focus on profit at the expense of wider performance, not to mention people or the planet. Some research even suggests that less than half of organizations deploy talent management, and there is little awareness of some of the emerging models from neuroscience, cognitive research and behavioural science (CIPD, 2012). The CIPD's research gives us glimpses, or reminders of the glimpses we've had for some time, into a different form of leadership, one we refer to in this book as 'transpersonal' leadership, or leading beyond one's own personal gain (ego), and acting with others' stakes in heart and mind.

The importance of the transpersonal also featured in an earlier CIPD report, pressing for a next generation of HR (CIPD, 2010). In this thought piece, there were three key ideas. First, we need to future-proof our organizations towards sustainable performance – drawing on the eight drivers discussed above, specifically through future-fit leaders (what we call transpersonal leaders here). Second, we need to create an environment to enable an insight-driven HR, whereby business, organizational and contextual savvies, in a supportive culture, nourish new insights to be generated. The transpersonal leader, as presented through this book, understands insight, learns to trust it, and uses it to inform his or her decision making. And finally, we need the next-generation HR leaders, who act as partners and provocateurs in insight generation and decision making. Many of the chapters and tools in this book use the power of the incisive and open question to move understanding or thinking to a new place without direct instruction.

Indeed, leadership assessment for talent development is not presented as an approach to leadership or talent development. It is presented as a strong, high-value, high-impact part of the strategy jigsaw. It can form a talent management strategy (if there is an explicit one), or directly align and feed in to the corporate strategy. This is where it can make most impact for an organization, whether the talent management strategy adopted is an exclusive approach (say just for leaders) or an inclusive approach (for everyone). Leadership assessment can and is being used for selecting talent, for example through assessment centres, or for managing talent, say through successful planning. Yet the key premise of this book is that there is a huge amount of additional value potential in another area – developing talent. When used carefully in ways to develop talent (through assessment), major strides in performance can be achieved and sustained, because the developmental actions are credible, evidenced and owned. Yet there are subtle strategies to enable this, sometimes counter-intuitive, which enters the realms of coaching, mentoring, experiential and action learning facilitation. This book aims to offer practical strategies, tried and tested in practice, with explanations linking to neuroscience, cognitive research and behavioural science.

A bird's eye view of the book

The main thrust of the book starts in Chapter 2, which argues the case for why the 21st century needs transpersonal leaders with emotional intelligence. The chapter discusses how business environments are unstable from a multitude of movements in technology, politics, economics and the environment

– and how within such change, it is essential to become a transpersonal leader who thinks and acts beyond his or her own gain. Emotional intelligence has a core role as the connecting force or resonance between people, scientifically supported by neuroscience research.

In Chapters 3 and 4, we report some unique but powerful research using a contemporary leadership assessment tool to identify needs (discussed in more detail in Chapter 5). Unlike much research in leadership talent development, this is based on real, authentic leadership development work with organizations. The research highlights some very interesting core findings that will be of interest to all responsible for talent development – even if it is simply to help better target investment in talent development activity.

From the research, Chapter 3 analyses recurring leadership development needs across a variety of organizations and leadership levels. The most common development needs include empathy, developing others and conflict management. Similarly, in Chapter 4, common leadership blind spots and hidden strengths are analysed. The most common blind spots were capabilities to be a change catalyst, emotional self-awareness and accurate self-assessment, whereas the most common hidden strengths were emotional self-control, building bonds and organizational awareness. Both sets are important to acknowledge and deal with to maximize the talent development within any organization.

Chapter 5 presents leadership development as a journey, which passes through particular stages and steps; from a rational, ego-based as-usual leadership, to a type of leadership that is radically ethical, authentic leadership – essentially led by the interests of others rather than personal gain. Using these ideas, the chapter explains how assessment can help develop transpersonal leadership journeys, and presents two key leadership assessment tools and processes to do this. The outcome of using these leadership assessment tools is the identification of development needs – which form the starting point of the following talent development methods, ranging from giving feedback through to team interventions.

Once needs have been identified, delivering that communication in a way that stimulates motivated development with a forward focus, rather than creating stunted and resentful action on previous performance, is the focus of Chapter 6. Feeding back/forward for talent development is an important skill for all leaders and HR practitioners, as it can provide such immediate but long-lasting effects. Strategies and tactics for delivering messages using neuroscience are shared, with a working example. The case study provides another example of how feedback can be given in team contexts. Feeding forward is essential to the success of using leadership assessment for talent development.

Delivering messages for development is often done through one-to-one coaching, and so is particularly relevant to Chapter 7, coaching for talent development. Yet coaching is much more purposely about helping the individual develop awareness, and identifying and overcoming blockages to talent development. Such awareness and blockages might be beliefs or particular interpretations of the behaviours of others, in relation to the leadership assessments undertaken. Coaching has a powerful role in positively moving people forward.

Another way of positively developing long-lasting behavioural change is through real workplace projects. Chapter 8 explains how to design workplace projects for talent development. Here, helping individuals design a project to specifically address their development needs creates a high level of ownership, but also adds a level of authenticity to the learning that cannot be replicated through training. Thorough workplace projects that require individuals to investigate how to undertake them, and how to reflect on their experience, can also be rewarded through university credits – adding a higher level of credibility and performance.

For the talent development of senior leaders, Chapter 9 discusses director peer groups (DPGs). After a leadership assessment, or as part of one, DPGs can be used for highly relevant, deep impact learning using action learning processes. Here, executives share a real-life issue with peers that is constructively explored and challenged, leading to action points/plans. Over time, the outcomes of these plans are also shared for an ongoing cycle of collaborative sharing, constructive challenge, and essentially experiential learning alongside strategic problem solving.

Chapter 10 shares another way of developing talents with teams or whole organizations: leadership storytelling. The power of stories works through the architecture of the brain to create a connection (limbic resonance) to stimulate developmental thoughts or actions – often metaphorically rather than via a direct communication. A key message from neuroscience, introduced in Chapter 2, is that allowing people to make their own decisions can have a longer lasting impact on learning and engagement.

Whichever talent development strategies are chosen to supplement leadership assessments, it is important to know the fruits of that investment. In contemporary organizations, expenditure is closely monitored and, for many, budgets are reducing. Being more strategic about where to place talent development or indeed leadership assessment is the focus of Chapter 11. This chapter is about improving results through measuring the 'return on investment' of the decisions you make on leadership talent development. A key advantage of the type of leadership assessments discussed in this book

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