

SOUTHWESTERN ASSEMBLIES OF GOD UNIVERSITY  
HARRISON SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

REINVENTING LEADERSHIP: A BREAKTHROUGH APPROACH

LDR 5293-530

INSTRUCTOR:

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ASSIGNMENT: Textbook response paper: "Primal Leadership by Daniel Goleman, Richard

Boyatzis, and Annie McKee

(edited down for privacy)

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## **Insights Gleaned from the Primal Leadership Book**

The first insight gleaned from this book was the concept of mirroring. The authors explain that “when three strangers sit facing each other in silence for a minute or two, the one who is most emotionally expressive transmits his or her mood to the other two – without speaking a single word” (Goleman et al., 2013, p. 7). The authors go on to state that “people in groups at work inevitably “catch” feelings from one another” (Goleman et al., 2013, p. 7). It is a fascinating physiological occurrence, and it makes the case that emotions are contagious. From a leadership perspective, this helps understand that the leader’s feelings or moods can negatively or positively influence the circumstances.

The second insight that stood out is a consequence of the first one. Leaders possess the ability to walk into situations and bring resonance because they get to establish their group’s emotions. Look to the leader. What is his message? Is it positive or negative? Are his emotions creating resonance or dissonance? No matter how dire a circumstance, when the leader walks in the room, he can change the outcome for the better by expressing the right emotions.

The six leadership styles the book analyzes are the third insight gathered from this book. The authors divide these styles into two groups: visionary, coaching, affiliative, and democratic. The styles in this first group “create the kind of resonance that boosts performance (Goleman et al., 2013, p. 53). The second group is conformed of the pacesetter and commanding styles, which the authors caution to use sparingly.

The visionary style is the first in the resonance group. Vision propels people forward; this style is one of the most effective when implementing change in a group. In addition, the visionary style is highly positive. Coaching helps the leader equip his followers not just for the task at hand but also for the long term; this style creates more vital team members if applied

correctly. The affiliative style bonds people in teams; this style “creates harmony by connecting people to each other” (Goleman et al., 2013, p 55). Affiliative is particularly helpful during times of stress. Finally, the democratic style considers input from everyone in the group. Leaders who implement the democratic style appear to hear and understand their teammates, even if, in the end, their decisions do not reflect the concerns voiced; the vital part is the act of listening and taking others into account.

The pacesetting and commanding styles form the dissonance leadership style group. Pacesetting helps create exciting goals for a team. However, when leaders employ pacesetting in excess, it can demotivate a team. The classic signs of a pacesetting leader are: “exceptionally high standards of excellence, impatience with poor performance, an eagerness to roll up his sleeves to get the job done, and a readiness to take over for people when they get into difficulties.” (Goleman et al., 2013, p. 74). The last style is commanding. It focuses on giving clear directions; the problem is that it is also highly misused. Though effective in a company turnaround, it might not be a sustainable approach to leadership.

### **Emotional Intelligence in My Context**

Leaders who create dissonance make a significant negative impact on their followers. In my personal experience, I find that whenever I am led by somebody using the visionary, coaching, affiliative and democratic styles, I tend to perform better. When I know the leader cares for me, not just about the results I could deliver, it motivates me to accomplish more. However, I can become demoralized when someone leads me for too long using dissonant styles.

In my context, knowing and applying this information about emotional intelligence will help me become a better leader. I think most of us intuitively know these principles are true, but I had never seen them laid out as I did in this book. Reading this book has motivated me to

identify when I create dissonance in the people I lead by either pacesetting or leading by command. Moreover, I can improve by being more visionary, coaching, creating affiliative environments, and considering everyone's voice to make decisions.

One of my core values is excellence; I value excellence. I believe anything worth doing is worth doing right. Because of this, I tend to be that pacesetting leader, taking over when someone else does not perform to my standard. After reading this book, I can now identify my dissonant leadership style as pacesetting. As mentioned earlier, the problem with pacesetting is that it is often poorly executed. Pacesetting works remarkably with a team of highly motivated people, but only for short periods. So, in the future, if I were to employ the pacesetting style, I would use it sparingly, but I would couple it with a resonant style like the visionary to create excitement about the goals the team could achieve.

### **Developing Teams That Will Move My Organization to The Next Level**

Goleman et al. state that “groups begin to change when they first have fully grasped the reality of how they function, particularly when individuals in the group recognize that they are working in situations that are dissonant or uncomfortable” (2013, p. 172). Nevertheless, knowing there is a problem is not the same as fixing the problem. Awareness is just the first part of the equation. To change, organizations need emotionally intelligent leaders. Although “everyone in the group contributes to the overall level of emotional intelligence..., the leader holds special sway in this regard” (Goleman et al., 2013, p. 174).

Resonance plays a crucial role in team development. A leader who creates resonance brings out the best in everyone on their team. Alternatively, a leader who creates dissonance for prolonged periods breaks apart relationships, both in his leader-follower relationships and the relationships among his subordinates.

Another factor to consider when developing teams is that though the leader can impact feelings and moods, he alone cannot create a long-lasting impact. “Collective emotional intelligence is what sets top-performing teams apart from average teams” (Goleman et al., 2013, p. 177). A group can use the same tools and styles presented in the books to individuals but apply them to the collective to create emotional intelligence.

In my organization, we use a tool called the *four helpfuls*. We aim to look at every project and department’s performance through the lens of what is right (this is what we can optimize, what is wrong (what do we need to fix?), what is missing (this gives us room to add elements), and what is confused that we need to clarify. This exercise clears the air and alerts the rest of the team of what we need to accomplish. This tool helps us facilitate open dialogue where we talk about what is wrong in our projects and teams clearly and directly.

Our *four helpfuls* exercise exemplifies what Goleman et al. wrote about collective self-awareness, “in self-aware, self-managing teams, members themselves will step up to the plate to instill and reinforce resonant norms and to hold one another accountable for sticking to them” (Goleman et al., 2013, p 181). In this case, “the true work of the leader (is) to monitor the emotional tone of the team and to help its members recognize any underlying dissonance” (Goleman et al., 2013, p 183). In a self-aware team, it is the responsibility of everyone to self-manage the team (Goleman et al., 2013, p 181).

### **Promoting Vision That Will Move Your Organization to The Next Level**

Vision propels people toward a desired future. The authors note that the visionary style is the “most strongly positive” (Goleman et al., 2013, p. 55). In my organization, this is evident from how vision is communicated from top to bottom. For instance, a couple of years ago, we launched an expansion initiative. Our leadership team called it “*Unfinished.*” One of the ways

we communicated it was through a simple statement “Churches who let their memories become bigger than their dreams begin a slow, agonizing journey toward their deaths. We refuse to let that happen to us. We will keep dreaming!” Such a statement was so effective because it painted a picture that appealed to people’s emotions. As a result, we funded several expansion initiatives. So, as Goleman et al. affirm, “for a vision to be compelling, it needs to touch people’s hearts” (2013, p. 220).

### **Making Changes That Will Move Your Organization to The Next Level**

For real change to happen, it needs to start at the top. If the primary leader wants change to occur, it is his job to envision what must happen and then contend for the vision to get the organization there. Goleman et al. state that “true change occurs through a multifaceted process that penetrates the three pivotal levels of the organization: the individuals in the organization, the teams in which they work, and the organization’s culture” (2013, p. 234).

Change requires both intellect and emotions. Why? Because “change begins when emotionally intelligent leaders actively question the emotional reality and the cultural norms underlying the group’s daily activities and behavior” (Goleman et al., 2013, p. 195). Engaging change at the intellectual level is required but not sufficient. The leader needs to engage his emotions and empathize with the other people’s emotions in the group.

### **Reference list**

Goleman, D., Boyatzis, R., & McKee, A. (2013). *Primal Leadership: Unleashing The Power of Emotional Intelligence*. Harvard Business Review Press.