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,
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Meet the Editors

Rob Koonce Lead editor and co-author of *Followership in Action: Cases and Commentaries* (2016, Emerald Group Publishing), Dr. Koonce is the founder of Can We Communicate and an affiliate faculty member at Creighton University where he applies 30 years of experience in business, education, law, and medicine to help students think more boldly about the world around them. As a scholar-practitioner, he continues to explore mindset as an emergent individual, relational, and collective construct for helping individuals and organizations to thrive in an increasingly interconnected world.

Paula Robinson Author of *Practising Positive Education, A Guide to Improving Well-Being Literacy in Schools* (2016, Positive Psychology Institute), Dr. Robinson is a registered, consulting psychologist, author, lecturer, speaker, and Managing Director of the Positive Psychology Institute in Sydney, Australia. Following a career as a senior executive, her doctoral research defined the concept and measurement of mental fitness, which she now applies in private practice, within school systems, and other public, private, and sustainable corporate well-being programs throughout the world.

Bernd Vogel Co-Author of *Fully Charged: How Great Leaders Boost Their Organization's Energy and Ignite High Performance* (2011, Harvard Business Review Press), Dr. Vogel is an Associate Professor of Leadership and Organizational Behaviour and Director of the Henley Centre for Engaging Leadership at the Henley Business School, University of Reading in the United Kingdom. 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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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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The Emergent Nature of Positive (and Negative) Organizing: Why Mindset Matters

Rob Koonce

> 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, 2015); 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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[1]For further reading, consider Aime, Humphrey, DeRue, and Paul (2014), Korschun (2015), Lord, Dinh, and Hoffman (2015).
[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)[3,4]

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

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[3]If 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.
[4]See also Block (2009).