

Brainforming* Leadership

As organizational leaders try to understand the needs and roles in their spheres of responsibility, deep transformation through new learning seems apparent. This article, the first of a four part series, addresses the contexts and the foundation to be considered, the human brain. Toward a deeper view and imperative the series will include: 1) baseline information on the brain; 2) synaptic leadership; and 3) operational bricoluers. Current leadership models are imploding-strangling themselves and the organizations that use them. Because they assume knowledge will expand as it has in the past, they are ill prepared to handle the explosive expansion of information that has already begun. The current knowledge base is growing far faster than the human population available to know and manage it. Electronic storage and communications ensure that exponentially more information will be published, indexed and accessed by the next generation of successful organizations. How then can an old-model enterprise glean relevant information that fuels success from the glut of superfluous data that suffocates achievement? The answer can be found in the only current model that has successfully navigated the perilous territory of information overload. With all the organizational insight and paradigms already in place, it is easy to overlook the underlying structure that has made all human development possible. It senses, sifts and stores data faster than any super computer, network or hard drive ever built. It organizes and applies relevant data in milliseconds. It reacts to new challenges and environments automatically, and it does all this without a hierarchical command structure. The elegant processes of the human brain are unmatched by any organizational framework, and its physical structures automatically extend their capabilities to support recurring needs or situations. Absent defect or deterioration, the human brain is the preeminent model for information management and application. Success in the next generation will come when organizations transform themselves to



BrainForming* must be the first priority of leaders of the next generation. If the brain is the ultimate organizational model, what can BrainForming* leaders do to reflect brain processes throughout their enterprise? What lessons of efficiency and excellence naturally enhance the practice of organizational leadership? The first answer may be the most difficult to apply. The brain is decentralized. Unlike organizational leadership models, which make information flow dependent on organizational approval, the brain distributes information on an as-needed basis. This implies that BrainForming* leaders will support and streamline information flow within the organization. They must empower working teams and individuals to reach out to each other and form new pathways, just as the neurons in the brain form new axons and dendrites to locate, retrieve and apply necessary information. BrainFormers* will also pay careful attention to the latest developments and insight from neurological science and learning theorists. These discoveries are redefining excellence as a tight link between learning and application, by individuals and the teams they form. Because it is becoming impossible for one manager to remain aware of all pertinent information, excellent managers must learn to "Manage the Unknowable" (Stacy, 1992). To do so successfully, leaders must support conditions that clarify learning and application while actively reducing interference. Daniel Goleman's work in Emotional Intelligence, affirms that the Reticular Activating System (RAS), our brain's first filter for emotional stimuli, has priority over brain processes. Because the higher cognitive functions of the brain are not as

mirror the power and sophistication of the human brain. This process, called

primitive, and not as attuned to immediate stimuli, they are deferred whenever external conditions trigger an "alert" from the RAS. This means that perceived threats, sensory distractions and emotional instability can paralyze the brains at work in an organization, degrading mental functioning across the enterprise. BrainForming* leaders will anticipate, recognize and prevent these distractions, to keep the organization operating at peak performance. A working knowledge of ongoing brain research is imperative as the foundation of successful transformational models. Neuronal networks continually seek connections, transformational leadership will have to consciously seek relationships that mirror creativity and innovation. This is the natural process of the brain. The result will be organizations that energize the human need for making meaning and developing individual and organizational identity. Developing intellectual capacity will be at the center of learning organizations; BrainForming* in operation to meet the challenges already in front of us.

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