



The Leading Brain
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Introduction: The Science of Leadership

Leadership has long been treated as an art, a fuzzy philosophy based more on fads than on facts. That accounts for the endless stream of “game-changing” management books that seem to come and go almost as rapidly as Paris fashions. It also explains why today’s leadership guru, so much in demand, is often tomorrow’s forgotten footnote.

But effective leadership isn’t an art. It’s a science. It shouldn’t be dependent on buzzwords or slogans. It should be based on a bedrock foundation of our understanding of the brain. The ways we act, react, and interact are all products of distinct cognitive processes. What motivates us, what bores us, how we respond to threats and rewards, both as individuals and groups, are dependent on the elaborate and seemingly miraculous neuronal networks that operate just behind our foreheads and above our ears.

Until recently, the brain was sort of a black box. Much of what went on inside it was a mystery. But thanks to breakthroughs in neuroscience, such as functional magnetic resonance imaging, or fMRI, we no longer need to merely speculate on the behavior of our brains. We can actually watch them in action. What we've learned from rigorous scientific studies it has the potential to radically change the way we lead and succeed.

Suddenly, news about neuroscience is booming. What's been known and discussed at the laboratory level for years is finally making its way into bestselling books. Nearly everyone it seems is curious to learn more about how our brains work and what that knowledge can do to improve life both at home and at work.

It hasn't always been that way. Just a few years ago, when one of us was working at one of the big traditional management consultancies, nobody there seemed the least bit interested to hear about neuroscience. This lack of enthusiasm worked both ways. When we asked some leading brain researchers to look for business applications for their findings, most of them seemed either unwilling or unable to search for any links. As a result, when we first started to integrate these exciting discoveries into business seminars and coaching sessions, we were among just a handful of consultants who were making this crucial connection. After presenting our brain-based business approach to companies all over the world, the response we received from senior executives was almost uniformly enthusiastic.

Given the audience, this was surprising and extremely rewarding. After all, senior executives can be a pretty tough crowd. They are often understandably skeptical about coaching and leadership development because they perceive these fields as too "soft." Our science-based approach really filled a gap. It has been amazing and highly gratifying to witness the positive transformation of individuals and organizations since we started applying the knowledge from cutting-edge research and establishing what in retrospect seems like a natural bridge between neuroscience and business. Clients who have attended our seminars have described them as "highly applicable" and even "life changing."

One question we got asked over and over again at the end of our seminars was whether we could recommend a business-world-compatible book that elaborated on the neuroscience topics we discussed in our presentations. At the time we were unable to recommend such a book. But now we can.

In its nine chapters, *The Leading Brain* takes you on a journey that starts with using brain science to consistently achieve individual peak performance and concludes by helping you apply these findings to create high-performing teams.

Part 1, "**Reaching Your Peak**," explains not only how to achieve optimal performance, but also how to sustain it.

Chapter 1, "**Find Your Sweet Spot**," provides the ingredients for the neurochemical cocktail that produces peak performance and explains why that recipe will often be different from one executive to the next.

Chapter 2, “**Regulate Your Emotions,**” explores the X factor that can make or break that performance, depending on how you use it.

And Chapter 3, “**Sharpen Your Focus,**” offers a brain-based solution for a growing problem, effectively maintaining and sustaining your attention in a world awash in information.

Part 2, “**Changing Your Brain,**” explodes the myth that our mental processes are largely locked in and hard-wired.

Chapter 4, “**Manage Habits,**” tells you how to do just that. By learning the neuroscience of how habits operate, you’ll gain an upper hand on adopting good routines and eliminating bad ones.

Chapter 5, “**Unleash Your Unconscious,**” takes things a tantalizing step further, by showing you how to tap into the impressive strength and efficiency of a part of your brain that, by definition, you are unaware of.

And Chapter 6, “**Foster Learning,**” introduces the exciting concept of neuroplasticity, which shows how you can keep rewiring your brain and improving your abilities throughout your entire life.

Part 3, “**Building Dream Teams,**” combines and expands the brain-based insights from the previous chapters into a group context.

Chapter 7, “**Thrive on Diversity**” redefines what diversity means, maps out the brain chemicals that make people different, and offers ways to assemble the best combinations of coworkers.

Chapter 8 “**Cultivate Trust,**” focuses in on one of the most important and yet largely underappreciated aspects of effective teams and outlines the crucial levers that can either draw people together or drive them apart. And finally in

Chapter 9, “**Develop the Team of the Future,**” we show you how to do just that. We explore the science behind finding and training top talent and provide the factors that can enable teams to achieve a remarkable level of energy, productivity, and satisfaction.

During the time that we’ve spent researching and writing this book as well as the hours and hours of training that we’ve done with senior executives throughout the world, we have grown even stronger in our original conviction that brain science can have a dramatic effect on the way

in which we do business. We firmly believe that neuroscientific research results will change the way we lead, communicate, and interact in companies.

The insights in this book aren't simply based on science, but have been successfully applied in a remarkable variety of business environments and have led to increased satisfaction and performance. We can see a new era of leadership emerging that will fundamentally transform the ways we deal with each other and take communication in companies to an exciting new level.

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Friederike Fabritius & Hans W. Hagemann, Ph.D.

About the authors:

Friederike Fabritius is the leading Neuroleadership expert at the Munich Leadership Group. As an executive coach and leadership specialist, she has extensive expertise working with top executives from multinational corporations such as Bayer, Audi, Montblanc, EY, and thyssenkrupp. Clients have raved about her seminars and coaching sessions, often describing them as “highly applicable” and even “life-changing.” Friederike is also a sought-after keynote speaker and has addressed large audiences at corporate events hosted by large multinational corporations, such as EY and Audi.

A neuropsychologist by education, Friederike focuses on developing new methods and practices for leadership development based on solid scientific findings. She is also an expert in designing learning systems that draw on the brain's inherent capabilities to acquire and retain new information effectively. Friederike herself has used these methods to learn six languages that she now speaks fluently.

Friederike started her career at the Max Planck Institute for Brain Research, and then continued as a management consultant at McKinsey before joining the Munich Leadership Group in 2010, where she has since supported many clients in reaching their full potential and delivering peak performance at critical moments.

Hans W. Hagemann, Ph.D., is managing partner and co-founder of the global management consultancy Munich Leadership Group (MLG), specializing in brain-based leadership. Hans is the leading expert for peak performance of individuals, teams, and organizations. Top executives and task forces from Fortune 500 companies in more than 40 countries seek his advice. Hans counts Allianz Global Investors, Bayer, EY, Expedia, SAP, Siemens, and thyssenkrupp among his clients.

Psychologist and economist by education, Hans discovered the enormous potential of the neurosciences for leadership and innovation. When Friederike joined MLG, they started merging the latest research results with his wealth of experience. Hans and his team transform academic insights into pragmatic new tools and techniques that result in the strongest drivers for entrepreneurship and innovation in companies.

Hans is also active in the Silicon Valley, collaborating with leading companies and universities on groundbreaking new practices of entrepreneurship in the digital age. He is a co-founder of the German Silicon Valley Innovators (GSVI), an initiative based in Palo Alto that makes first-hand Silicon Valley entrepreneurial practice accessible for innovative leaders from all businesses.