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Creating WE

Change I-Thinking to WE-Thinking
Build a Healthy, Thriving Organization

Judith E. Glaser

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Reviewed by Lydia Morris Brown

Introduction

According to Glaser, organizations lose their spirit, become mediocre, and die when they fall prey to what she calls the *self-serving I-centric* behaviors of control, blame, resignation, attachment to the past, overconfidence, deference to authority, and negative self-talk. However, when leaders strive to trigger the innate “Vital Partnering Instincts” of learning, growth, and nourishment, they are able to transform toxic organizational cultures and relationships into healthy “WE-centric” environments. **Creating WE** provides a framework for understanding these key organizational management and leadership competencies, as well as a step-by-step manual of best practices, exercises, and tools for developing, applying, and sustaining them. It offers individuals, in any role, a compelling and practical approach to creating and maintaining healthy organizations in which the focus is no longer on “*my* success” but on “*our* success.”

PART I: THE DNA OF WE

Glaser maintains that every individual wants to do well, to contribute, and to be included on winning teams. And though this instinctive desire is built into the DNA of the human being, many organizations are unwelcoming environments, filled with the toxicity of politics, power and control arrogance, and competing egos. “Don’t go there,” “You can’t do this,” “You don’t know that,” and “You must save face/blame/protect” are the invisible markers of this my-turf-your-turf territoriality. Cycles of relationship-eroding behaviors ensue, draining energy away from the productivity, health, and high performance of individuals, teams, and organizations. In the end, there must be a balance between personal independence and

the collective good—between what **I** need and what **WE** need.

This can be accomplished, says the author, by looking at the hard-wired “Vital Instincts” of human beings, where there is no I—only WE, and understanding the impact these instincts have on behavior. This need to belong, and

“Feelings of worth can flourish only in an atmosphere where individual differences are appreciated, mistakes are tolerated, communication is open, and rules are flexible.”

--Virginia Sater, Linguist and Anthropologist

to enter into shared-sense-of-community partnerships is so essential to human health that people need to learn how to tap their Vital Instincts in a conscious, positive way, so that they can create WE in their organizational lives. Three simple “Vital Principles”—learning, growing, and nourishing—hold the power to help people access their “Vital Partnering Instincts” so they can restore and maintain health in their relationships and in their organizations.

When the body is healthy, its immune system learns about new threats and creates “flags” that emerge from cells to alert the system. These flags provide information about where and how to restore health and also marshal the internal resources with which to do so. However, when cancer forms inside a body, *normal* cells lose the capacity to learn about the new danger and are unable to pass this information along.

When viewed within the context of the organization, this process suggests that people can also learn how to make any challenge to the enterprise’s health and success completely visible to one another. Everyone can become alert to anything that challenges the health of the culture, the organization, the team, and one-on-one relationships, whether it arises from within, from the competition, and/or from customer feedback. All can view any challenge as an opportunity to learn. They can also listen in new ways to others so that everyone adds to the collective ability of the organization to respond quickly and proactively.

When cancer grows, cells lose their sensitivity to one another and spread rampantly anywhere they can, invading the body and developing into tumors that block the normal functions of the organs and systems. Thus, the principle of growing is about each cell being sensitive to the need of every other cell to express itself and develop within the

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Judith E. Glaser is founder, CEO, and president of Benchmark Communications, Inc, a consultancy that works with CEO teams on such change initiatives as raising an organization’s cultural IQ, developing the brand from the inside out, and creating strong leaders. As “organizational anthropologist,” executive coach, facilitator, and organizational designer, she helps leaders create “We-Centric Workplaces” that support the growth and development of people, partnerships, and businesses. Her clients span 21 different industries worldwide, including pharmaceuticals, fashion, retail, consumer goods, finance, technology, communications, consulting, entertainment, and manufacturing.

Glaser is a sought-after bestselling author and keynote speaker, who has been quoted in the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, *Crain’s*, *Newsday*, the *Star Ledger*, *Harvard Management Review*, *AMA World*, and other journals. Her other books include *Random House Book of Business Terms*, *Ultimate Power*, and *Discovering the Power of WE*.

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context of what the entire organism requires to sustain its health.

In organizational terms, the principle of growing involves the creation of a feedback-rich culture that enables individuals to establish healthy relationships with their colleagues so that nobody “grows” all over anybody else. Instead of an environment rife with territoriality and competition, people foster a robust environment that nurtures respect, understanding, and mutual support. And, everyone courageously gives and receives feedback, even difficult feedback.

Finally, healthy cells, needing energy-producing nutrients from outside the body, engage with one another to make this happen. In contrast, cancer cells create their own vascular system, which supplies them with the oxygen and nutrients that allow them to grow at a rapid rate. They,

“Creating We is first about learning to transform ourselves, and through this process, we come to see our company and culture in a new way. When we become WE-centric leaders ... we become catalytic forces in transforming organizational disease into organizational health.”

thus, become self-sustaining and encapsulated from the rest of the system, drawing nutrients from it for their own sustenance.

Because organizations need fresh ideas to grow their businesses, best practices for improving operations, and the positive feedback/encouragement that inspire high levels of performance, they cannot allow attachment to past successes and old patterns rob them of these nutrients. The principle of nourishing requires an outward focus on the “nutrients” of the customer, the marketplace, and the influences that inspire new ways of thinking. Colleagues must be engaged with each other, and focused on creating the future together, as they collaborate synergistically to grow on both the personal and the organizational levels.

Glaser maintains that these principles of learning, growing, and nourishing demonstrate that, while it is essential for each cell to express itself uniquely, it can only protect itself from harm by not harming the organism in which it resides. Likewise, though individual expression is valuable, if it breaks the bonds of the community, loyalty, and mutual concern, which are vital at all levels of human interaction, organizational toxicity is encouraged.

PART II: CREATING WE—A METHODOLOGY

Glaser’s methodology for creating WE within the organization consists of three major entry points into “*a creative process*”: (1) “Believing WE,” (2) “Learning WE,” and (3) “Being WE.” *Believing WE*, which is about changing organizational attitudes/beliefs, and the way one is supposed to behave, entails the challenges of authority, territoriality, and self-interest. Glaser notes that the Vital Instincts that help people maintain health in themselves and in their organizations are often undercut by erroneous and conflicting beliefs about authority, leadership, dominance, power, and winning. This notion of hierarchical chain-of-command confuses power with force and leadership with dominance, and it is a major contributor to organizational dysfunction.

Organizational transformation, which is really about cultural change, must begin with an inside-out revolution of the people involved, starting with the organization’s leaders, who must begin to think, see, feel, and act in new ways.

They must eschew the “power-over” approach and, instead, believe in “power-with,” which is inclusive, develops partnerships, appreciates others, encourages risk-taking, instills hope, encourages sharing, and commits to a higher purpose.

Leaders must become aware of how they influence others and how others perceive them relative to their daily actions. When this awareness exists, a three-dimensional experience of leadership emerges—the leader’s view of self, the view that others have of the leader, and the person the leader becomes from the synthesis of these two perspectives. When individuals work to close any perceptual gaps, they trigger new growth in their leadership approach and in their own identity.

Key to becoming this kind of WE-centric leader is the ability to accept feedback and to experiment with it in order to realize one’s full leadership potential. WE-centric leadership is about “co-creating”—about building collaboration, via mutual partnerships. It is a shared investment in creating the future—a WE-affirming style of leadership that brings colleagues together to create the culture they need to succeed.

Leaders must focus on making beliefs transparent, sharing their thoughts and concerns so that everyone can

focus collectively on the challenges of the enterprise, and on pleasing the customer, rather than just on pleasing the boss. This is true leadership in that it encourages “fellowship” rather than “followership” and triggers the Vital Instinct of Partnering. Because the leader is sending the message that everyone shares the responsibility of learning and understanding what is best for the health of the organization and the interests of the customer, everyone learns when to send signals when threats, or opportunities arise.

Internal competition (and the territoriality that accompanies it), although prevalent in organizational life, keeps many individuals and enterprises from achieving their full potential. It is a we/they attitude that erodes trust in one-on-one working relationships, within teams, across divisions, and even with customers. And, it occurs because people fail to understand the impact of their intentions.

They fail to understand that when they are engaged in conversation, they are doing more than sharing information and exchanging ideas, they are also confirming their beliefs, biases, assumptions, and the universal fear of being excluded, rejected, and judged unfairly; of losing power and feeling stupid; and of looking bad in front of others. They go into a self-protective mode in which they pit their fear-confirming interpretations against the fear-confirming interpretations of others, destroying the three nutrients of learning, growing, and nourishing.

When people perceive the world through a lens of fear, their egos lead them to imagine others are out to get them, and they react accordingly, incorporating defensive behavior patterns into their daily routines: They create “old-boy networks” and exclude and reject others first, criticize and blame, avoid taking risks and making mistakes, intimidate others to get power, either avoid speaking up or speak too much, and/or try to save face. These hard-wired response patterns often lead to negatively spiraling self-talk, adversarial interpretations of reality, and fault-finding conversations. Or, they lead to overambitious expectations, unrealistic aspirations, and overconfidence—all of which prevent individuals from accessing the strength and insight they need to change.

Leaders can turn their organizations away from this negative internal conflict toward a more positive, inspiring,

interdependent, catalytic, expressive, and inclusive WE-centric workplace by engaging in the behaviors that specifically tap into the Vital Principles of Growing. To do so, they must begin to create environments that focus on interconnectedness and inclusion. They must engage in humanizing behavior so as to grow environments that honor the uniqueness and diversity of people, support open communication and feedback, and respect the value of each

“When colleagues work in concert, they learn from each other and are more apt to develop the higher-level skills and wisdom needed to meet the organization’s performance goals. When we connect, we learn how to turn breakdowns into breakthroughs—we become high-performing.”

individual. Leaders must optimize, creating environments that are very dynamic and that provide greater opportunities for people to strive for, and reach, the impossible dream. They must create interacting environments that foster the learning and sharing of knowledge and wisdom. They must be catalysts who encourage innovation, creativity, collaboration, and the building of wisdom. Leaders must allow open expression, support leadership development, and encourage risk-taking. And, they must be synchronizing forces, creating environments in which mission and purpose drive the work and honor the need for people to achieve and celebrate in concert with others.

I-centricity views leadership as authority, territoriality as inevitable, and self-interest as the universal driver of success. Blaming, instead of partnering, becomes the prevailing attitude, coupled with a we/they-us/them language that says, “We are doing our job and they are not.” When this kind of fear, power, and control dominate the organizational terrain (and as Glaser notes, it happens among peers, between bosses and direct reports, and even with customers), it is in everyone’s best interest to create WE by working together to establish mutual accountability and shared responsibility.

This is a time for what Glaser calls *courageous conversations*. People must move out of their “Comfort Zones,” where they feel safe to protect themselves and withhold, or blame others, and talk in ways that make them feel vulnerable and potentially open for attack. They must address their greatest fear—the adversarial beliefs they *imagine* are in each other’s minds. In other words, they must begin the “Vital Journey” of rewiring, revision, and

rebirth, which enables everyone, at every level to embrace the challenge of personal and organizational growth.

Vital Journeys are an opportunity for leaders to rewire their mindsets from self-interest to one of mutual interest. Exploring the pattern of one's mind (i.e., belief systems) and behavior in a safe environment enables people to

“Health comes from creating environments that disallow deceptive behaviors and allow us to look in the mirror and see what we are all about, and then do something about it.”

make serious choices about how they will participate in the future.

When colleagues are in the midst of struggling through a crisis together, they connect in ways that do not usually occur during times of “business as usual.” People also feel more alive when they are challenged to succeed, growing more confident and taking more risks as a result. Thus, Vital Journeys provide a revised, more direct line of sight to an organization's challenges, opportunities, and customers. And, as the power and influence of Territorial Instincts lessen, the power and influence of Vital Instincts begin to grow stronger, and everyone has the opportunity to begin seeing internal and external reality the same way.

Finally, through designed interventions, an executive team can learn how to co-create the future by facing challenges together in ways they have never before experienced. And, through a highly targeted process, everyone can become a contributor, irrespective of hierarchy and position.

Vital Journeys focus on significant business issues and challenges so that team members can begin to learn what they need to do in order to win and gain a sense of common ownership for the future. These Journeys are not change management programs, or one-time events, but life-changing experiences that recalibrate and reconnect human beings in conscious and unconscious ways. Once raised to consciousness, the territorial instincts are usurped by a new cultural consciousness that disallows a game-winning mentality and/or control by force of intimidation. Thus, the power of fear is prevented from invading human interactions and the possibility of “co-creating outrageous futures” is ignited.

When leaders focus on creating the future with others, rather than on blaming others for the past, they are

honoring the Vital Principle of Nourishing. And, when this occurs, a mutual-accountability mindset holds sway, enabling everyone to reach out to learn about the customer, the marketplace, and about what it will take to sustain his or her leadership role in the industry.

Although it is impossible to create a WE-centric organization without a deep belief that Being WE is both important and achievable, Glaser maintains that individuals also need to learn and hone a set of essential skills that enable them to act upon their beliefs continuously. *Learning WE*—the acquisition of new skills, the adoption of new habits of mind and behavior and the unlearning of old skills and habits—involves: understanding the culture, embracing the possibilities, opening the space, shaping conversations, and transforming the culture.

Glaser defines culture as consisting “of the agreements we make with each other about how we relate to each other, how we communicate, how we behave. Culture creates do's and taboos. To be accepted, you need to agree to these often unspoken principles. As a result, there are those who are in and those who are out.” When people are asked to give up too much in order to retain their membership, the organizational space sometimes becomes too small for the human spirit to thrive, and the health of the enterprise as a whole is threatened.

At these times, Vital Leadership is needed as a means of shifting I-centric fear-based thinking to WE-centric engagement. Glaser notes that it is one thing to change individuals and another to change the resistance that builds up in teams and the entire organization. Thus, success again depends upon the Vital Journey of developing new belief systems, shifting the focus to *shared* challenges, and co-creating culture. In addition, both leaders and employees must break what Glaser calls the *Code of Silence*. It is a toxic situation, which exists when people are afraid to speak up, or are unsure of how to express their frustrations. So, they resort to finger pointing, making others the cause of their distress, and/or telling a third party about their anger rather than the person with whom they are at issue. Overcoming these challenges, so as to create a WE-centric environment requires the creation of a neutral space—a place where the drive for discovery and innovation has replaced territorialism and subgroup divisions and people

are allowed to nourish each other as equals in the context of change.

Creating a WE-centric environment also requires that everyone realize the power of speaking up. Learning how to develop a cultural norm that encourages risk-taking, “pushing back,” and holding different points of view is critical in creating a culture in which employees feel empowered to shape the desired collective future. This enables all individuals, at every level, to step into their own unique leadership roles and learn how to own what happens every day through dialogue, conversation, and building their commitment to action. And, in doing so, they challenge what they know and challenge each other to think in new ways so as to expand their ability to arrive at new insights about the future.

In a discovery phase that sets the stage for the interactive dynamics necessary for breakthrough, management must also have the courage to ask tough questions and to really listen without judgment so that any frustration, pent-up anger, and/or resentment can be uncovered. Moreover, management must build the requisite skills for handling conflict and complex power struggles.

People need to learn to open themselves up to the kind of change that requires energy, focus, and commitment. And, they must learn how to reframe, or shift their mindsets from fear-based thinking to thinking that embraces the future. Glaser maintains that this change in thinking will transform pessimism into optimism and erode habits that may be holding individuals back from the new habit patterns that will catapult them into a culture of WE. She defines change as “an opportunity to discover new possibilities for the future—opportunities that open up and expand our lives and minds in new and exciting ways.” And, she believes that when people find excitement inside ambiguity and change, expand their Comfort Zones, and embrace what they love, they can make this shift.

When individuals are willing to step out of the crowd and be the lone voice that challenges ineffective cultural norms, they usually find that others are willing to help with the challenge. It is a process in which they: must develop the courage to push back on what they feel is unclear so they can see their goals with clarity; must be resilient enough to learn from experimentation and be honest in their assessments of what works and what fails; must develop the optimism to

focus on key challenges, so as to create new opportunities; must be expansive and talk out their approach in order to discover the things that could catch them unawares; must develop the personal power to proactively seek the things they need to challenge and improve; and must risk new thinking.

Glaser maintains that though it is human nature for people to collaborate, the instinct for each to protect what is his or hers alone is stronger than the instinct to act as a team. Individuals fear that someone else will get more, or that, if they open up, they will be left powerless. Thus, the ability to work interdependently requires that individuals have enough deep trust to open up to others and create the

“Everything happens through conversations. A seemingly simple act such as talking with a colleague—a small momentary exchange of words in a hallway—has the ability to alter someone’s life permanently.”

emotional space for others to open up to them. Without this trust, there can be no WE.

With their influence over the power dynamics in their organizations, leaders hold the key: They can create a sense of community and inclusion so that people feel trusted, accepted, and valued, and, thus, willing to strive for a higher level of performance. They can accomplish this by becoming conscious of how well they use WE-centric language to pull people toward them rather than push them away, inspire people to greater heights, and fuel everyone’s “Leadership Journey.” With this awareness they can use conversation to turn positional power into mutual power, fear into opportunity, and territorial energy into positive, trusting, vital energy.

Conversations have the ability to trigger emotional reactions—anything can happen, simply because words are rarely neutral but carry loads of baggage (i.e., the projections of each individual’s inner reality). Thus, people must choose if they will converse from an I-centric perspective or from a WE-centric point of view. They can have “protecting” conversations that come across as negative or territorial or those that are perceived as collaborative—giving and exchanging information for growth opportunities and mutual benefit. They can have “candid” conversations that are critical of others, too frank, and sometimes aggressive. Or, they can provide honest feedback, delivered with sensitivity about how they feel about a situation, a challenge,

or a person. Individuals can have “curious” conversations in which they are experimenting within their Comfort Zones, with the goal of finding blame. Or, they can have curious conversations to break out of their Comfort Zone, ask questions from a state of wonder and appreciation, and open themselves up to the perspectives of others. Finally, people can have “partnering” conversations in which they pretend to agree to avoid being challenged. Or, they can

“We tell our stories all day long. We tell them to customers, to colleagues, and to our friends and family. But the person we tell our stories to most of all is ourself. ... All day long, [we] have the most incredible ability to self-talk.”

have conversations that inspire inclusion, engagement, and commitment by putting issues on the table in order to harvest insights, wisdom, and support.

Glaser notes that storytelling, each individual’s view of reality, comes naturally to human beings, like the words they use. In organizational life, storytelling shapes the way people view the world individually and collectively and can have positive or negative consequences for the health of the enterprise. Thus, learning how to shift from an I, to a WE, storytelling perspective is essential to organizational health and growth.

I-centric storytelling pollutes the reality of what is really occurring, creates paranoia and gossip, becomes a form of deadly self-sabotage for people who believe their own negative dramas, and causes a false reality in which workers learn to doubt their own judgment and the judgment of their colleagues. In contrast, transformational stories free people from the past and allow them to embrace the future. It is a letting go that releases energy so that new patterns of behavior can have a beneficial impact on relationships and transform the culture. Thus, leaders should think of themselves as Storytellers-in-Chief, with a special responsibility to tell the team’s WE story to the team, shifting the culture’s energy from judgment to growth, from fear to possibility, and from caution to courage.

Being WE is concerned with the ability to face stressful situations in real time and to express WE-consciousness through such “actions in the moment” as working in concert and sustaining WE. Glaser maintains that the true test of creating WE is contained in the actual practice of Being WE—of grappling with the many organizational challenges that undermine a leader’s best efforts to cope

with change. Moreover, this coping must be more than just getting everyone through change safely; it must also actually embrace and sustain change as a positive indicator of health and growth.

Because human beings need connection to feel safe, loved, validated, and healthy, they are healthier and more innovative when they create healthy environments that trigger Vital Partnering Instincts. And, these WE environments can only emerge when individuals learn to include, rather than exclude (i.e., value the contributions of others). The “old-boy network” mentality is healthy only when it embraces, appreciates and values every “boy” and every “girl.” It is a culture of inclusion that fosters what Glaser calls the *magic formula* for triggering Vital Partnering Instincts—learning, growing, and nourishing.

When these conditions are absent, territoriality, self-interest, and power-over behavior arise. But, when people work in concert, they create an environment for staying in a WE state of mind, because they actually stimulate the flow of hormones that enable the brain to attain higher levels of learning. In this state, all the skills acquired in Learning WE can be applied to encourage full engagement, inclusiveness, and mutuality. The result is more productivity, more energy, more innovation, and the achievement of higher goals than could have been attained otherwise.

In order for this to occur, however, leaders must understand the engagement process (or the behavior of engagement)—those things that enable employees to stay connected and passionate about co-creating, and those things that cause them to disengage. Glaser’s Arc of Engagement provides a framework for perceiving how people are *feeling* about what is happening in the organization, alerting leaders as to *what* they need to do, and *how* they need to reconnect.

Resistance resides at the far side of the Arc. Here, people believe their contributions are not appreciated and that they have no power; thus, they are often resentful or covertly adversarial, have no clear purpose, and assume no responsibility. To move out of this orientation, individuals must test their beliefs, share conflicts and feelings, open themselves to learning from others, trust themselves, and create goals. Helping others to move forward is a matter of asking questions that uncover their accomplishments,

helping them set goals, listening, and requesting their commitment to change.

Skepticism lies slightly beyond Resistance and is characterized by dissatisfaction and feelings of being distant from others and not fully understood. Those in this mindset believe no one is aware of their value and that their contributions will be rejected. Thus, to advance beyond this, they must support and express their appreciation for others, let others know what they have accomplished, accept feedback, and ask how they might contribute. In addition, helping others advance involves asking them exploratory questions so they can clarify their beliefs, listening receptively, transforming criticism into contribution, taking action, and authorizing the actions of others.

When individuals are at the Wait-and-See level of engagement, holding back from making commitments, colleagues pick up mixed signals, and trust and confidentiality issues arise. In this case, the seemingly uninterested team member must move to commit herself to winning common goals; test beliefs; challenge assumptions; ask questions; clarify misunderstandings; and ask for, and accept, feedback.

When individuals and teams are willing to step up to a new challenge—to test the water and move forward—they are showing they want to contribute and are willing to make the investment in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities competently. And, they can enhance the effectiveness of this level of engagement by committing to others who are willing to win, rallying others around common goals, testing beliefs, asking exploratory questions, and soliciting and accepting feedback. At the same time, they must raise the team's awareness of the value of everyone's contribution, discuss issues, and ask for commitments of time and energy.

Finally, at the far right of the Arc is Co-Creating—a condition in which colleagues are partnering and living in a state of mutual trust in order to innovate and pioneer together to make the future. Because high organic growth becomes a state of being, creative and risk-taking are aligned and leadership drives transformation. Mistakes are perceived as experience and a higher purpose gives everyone a strong sense of “we are in this together.”

Even when the ability to work in concert has been mastered, Being WE can never be taken for granted. Everyone must develop the mindset that enables innovative

adaptation to the changing dynamics of relationships and the workplace. Thus, the ultimate challenge of Being WE is *sustaining* WE—keeping an open mind and constantly pursuing and perfecting the ability to learn, grow, and nourish others.

Glaser asserts that for leaders to meet this challenge, they must make choices every day that shift the perceptions and direction of decisions away from any encroaching I-centric thinking and fear-based behaviors back toward positive, energetic, WE-centric ways. In this manner, they create a powerful ripple effective of positive, powerful energy for transforming relationships and the business.

These choices (i.e. “Leadershifts”) address seven critical pivot-point challenges: (1) Co-Creating—the challenge of setting the tone—choosing either to exclude or include; (2) Humanizing—the challenge of building positive relationships—choosing to judge others or appreciate them; (3) Optimizing—the challenge of transforming fear into hope—choosing to fear change or embrace change; (4) Interacting—the challenge of cross-divisional collaboration—choosing to withhold or to share; (5) Catalyzing—the challenge of reinvention—choosing to maintain the status quo or to innovate; (6) Expressing—the challenge of speaking up—choosing to dictate to others or to develop them; and (7) Synchronizing—the challenge of becoming a bigger WE—choosing to demand compliance or inspire commitment to a higher purpose and value.

Each choice has a big impact on the health of the individual, the team, and the entire organization.

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A subject index is provided.

Remarks

Glaser notes that a new generation of leaders is leaving behind the old command-and-control authority-based leadership, with its internal drive for power *over* others, and are opting, instead, to power *with* others. They are changing the way they communicate, and they are enabling collaboration to rise above conflict. In

their new understanding of how to create innovative and expansive possibilities, they are changing the way work gets done, turning fear into hope, and competition into collaboration.

Creating WE is a humanistic but practical manual about the growth and transformation of the individual—it is about what Glaser says we all intuitively know about human nature “that we can only grow and thrive when we have concern for others in the organization.” Essentially, what this comes down to is a call for teamwork at the level of human DNA—our primordial need as living, breathing organisms for learning, growing, and nourishing relationships between our minds (spirits) and body and between our bodies and our environment (the other living, breathing “organisms” that surround us.) Glaser seems to have joined forces with others who have awakened to what Marge Schiller (author of *Appreciative Leaders*) says is “the depth of interconnectedness in our world and in our lives.”

In Glaser’s view, this connectedness, which is critical to the health of the individual and, thus, by extension, the family, the workplace, the community, and society as a whole, is either strengthened beyond measure, or destroyed almost irreparably by “the words you use and the conversations you have with others.” Thus, **Creating WE** is a comprehensive how-to manual that provides a storehouse of very prescriptive “rituals” that enable individuals: to become astutely aware of the role language plays in shaping one’s own thoughts, feelings, and actions, as well as the thoughts, feelings, and actions of others; to move with, rather than against others; to speak from the *authentic I* and listen from the **WE**; to be willing to change faulty assumptions and beliefs; to discard the mindset of lack or inadequacy for one of abundance; and to create uplifting transformational experiences.

The idea of *ritual* is very important to this process, for as Loehr and Schwartz emphasized (in the highly acclaimed *The Power of Full Engagement*), “Just as negative habits and routines in our lives can be undermining and destructive, so positive ones can be uplifting and revitalizing.” Quoting Aristotle, they remind us “We are what we repeatedly do.” It’s about training *ourselves* to change ourselves and, by doing so, change our environment.

The idea of training the self is also *an* (maybe even *the*) essential element in this transformation. In his exegesis of

Viktor Frankl’s work, Alan Pattakos (in *Prisoners of Our Thoughts*) sees training of self as exercising the freedom to choose one’s attitude and response. In *The One Thing You Need to Know*, Marcus Buckingham views training the self as the responsibility the individual must take to make “the small but significant course corrections that allow you to sustain your highest and best contribution.” And, for Stephen Covey (*The 8th Habit*), it’s about “Finding your voice and inspiring others to find theirs.” In each case, the objective is the self-training that leads to healthy connectedness to others. It is a practice, says Glaser, that will lay the foundation for changing the fabric of business and society, if it is put into place in enough companies (and lives).

Reading Suggestions

Reading Time: 13-15 Hours, 363 Pages in Book

As Glaser notes, **Creating WE** is organized around the factors and conditions that threaten to destroy your organization’s healthy WE, and each chapter highlights one of these challenges, with a comprehensive approach that includes a variety of elements: There’s her synthesis (which we have summarized here) of the best thinking on organizational, team, and leadership development, within context of the particular challenge under discussion. Integrated into this synthesis is page after page of examples and stories, culled from the headlines and Glaser’s 20-year practice, and which illustrate the unique challenges and related opportunities. And, she provides a treasure trove of guidelines and tips, best practices, practical exercises/tools, and matrices that summarize the important issues you need to consider in creating WE. Subtitles such as “Try This!” “Vital Choices” and “Are You Up to the Challenge?” will alert you to these sections.

Taken together, these elements present an integrated framework and methodology that require you to read the book in its entirety and essentially in the order presented. The table of contents and Glaser’s summary of the book’s contents (“How This Book Is Organized,” pp. 24-30) may tempt you to skip to a particularly compelling challenge you may presently be experiencing, but try not to succumb. Doing so might rob you of the benefits of the neatly

balanced who-what-when-where-how-and-why of whole-system transformation.

We do, however, suggest that you begin each chapter with the section, “WE-aving It All Together,” which summarizes the chapter’s contents. There’s so much information to process, this will give you a useful outline and focus for your reading. You should probably also be prepared to make several passes through the book. We recommend, first, reading straight through, highlighting as you go (our reading estimate is based on this approach). Then, go back, reread (especially what you’ve highlighted), and do each exercise, etc. You might also want to keep a notebook/journal of your progress as you “try” Glaser’s guidelines and tips and “take up” the challenges she presents. In this way, you and your colleagues can share your insights and breakthroughs as each individual throughout your organization begins the Vital Journey to creating WE.

CONTENTS

PART 1: BELIEVING WE

Chapter 1: The Challenge of Authority

Chapter 2: The Challenge of Territoriality

Chapter 3: The Challenge of Self-Interest

PART 2: LEARNING WE

Chapter 4: Understanding the Culture

Chapter 5: Embracing the Possibilities

Chapter 6: Opening the Space

Chapter 7: Shaping the Conversation

Chapter 8: Transforming the Culture

PART 3: BEING WE

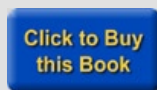
Chapter 9: Working in Concert

Chapter 10: Sustaining WE

Afterword: Standing at the Edge of a New Beginning.

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