Really Radical Inclusion:
More Purposeful Communities of Results

In *Radical Inclusion: What the Post-9/11 World Should Have Taught Us About Leadership*, Martin Dempsey and Ori Brafman challenge leaders to empower everyone within their organizations to help understand problems and propose ways to achieve desired outcomes. (p. 123)

In *The Purpose Economy: How Your Desire for Impact, Personal Growth, and Community Is Changing the World*, Aaron Hurst argues the emerging economy is driven by our desire to have more purpose in our lives. The value of organizations, he suggests, increasingly lies in "establishing purpose for employees and customers – through serving needs greater than their own, enabling personal growth, and building community." (p. 21) As a sign of the future, he observes Millennials seek professional opportunities aligned with their personal values and desire to serve others. (p. 47)

Insightfully, Dempsey and Brafman assert, "Concentrated power is making our world more dangerous: as countries concentrate control, their communities and citizens become more divided and insular." (p. 130) That point is particularly pertinent to political polarization. As government grows and politicians (and judges) become increasingly powerful, polarization is inevitable. As more and more people are forced to accept more and more with which they disagree, how could any other result be expected – except perhaps through brainwashing?

With respect to disagreements, as Dempsey and Brafman point out, the accuracy of factual information can be evaluated. However, "narratives aren't as concerned with who is right and who is wrong; they're focused on who's more *interesting*." (p. 22) Humans are exquisite detectors of differences, which are

what make things interesting, and we are also experts at sifting evidence to find support for our preconceived biases. Indeed, the authors say, "The more technology connects us, the further we grow apart and the more we highlight our differences and ignore our similarities." (p. 169)

They further note, "Facts depend on expert validation to persist, while narratives simply need to be retold… *A narrative battle is won by drowning out the countermessage*." (p. 23) Indeed, stories are powerful means of engaging emotions and that seems to be the purpose of political discourse. As Hurst cautions, however, narratives "build myths about purpose that actually make it harder for us to focus on what matters." (p. 93)

Since Daniel Kahneman and others have demonstrated that we fear losses more than we value gains, increasingly counterproductive polarization may be the logical result of dueling narratives. (See Prospect Theory.) We may simply be emotionally incapable of considering the possibility that the views of our opponents may be somewhat more correct than our own, particularly if they insist upon imposing their will on us through brute political force.

Toward a more productive course of action, Hurst notes, "Organizations and individuals are seeing the gap in what the government can accomplish and trying to step in to fill it." He cites John Gardner's 1964 book, *Self-Renewal*, as having "Eloquently laid out the case that our institutions are beginning to cave under their own weight. For the first time in history," Hurst says, "our nation had become dependent on huge government, large companies, and other institutions whose success, scale, and decades of rigidity-forming policies were preventing them from adapting." (p. 60)

Unfortunately, if they are insulated from market forces, large, bureaucratic organizations – which may be deemed "too big to fail" – may persist far longer than their value justifies, at great cost to society. Indeed, Gardner's book was published more than 50 years ago, but borne on political power, many large institutions have grown even larger. However, to achieve more desirable outcomes, rather than attempting to increase their dominion still further, Dempsey and Brafman suggest organizational leaders should relinquish control, "embrace the changing nature of power" and "allow control to flow out of [their] hands ..." (p. 130)

"Relinquishing control," they explain, "is about partnering with like-minded individuals, teams, and organizations to solve problems in ways that will endure." (p. 142) They believe sustainable solutions result from inclusion, which leaders should leverage to engage allies and partners. To achieve longer-term solutions at sustainable levels of effort, not only is consensus needed within internal organizational teams but also with like-minded external partners. (p. 131)

Supporting that thrust, Hurst believes technology is now enabling a return to "personal scale". (p. 44) As a logical extension of the notion that information technology and air transportation have made the world a global village, Hurst suggests we have also been drawn into "a tighter accountability and feedback loop." (p. 59) Moreover, during the past decade, he argues technology has evolved beyond merely giving us an online presence to enabling us to find purpose. (p. 41)

With respect to accountability and feedback, Dempsey and Brafman assert, "Everyone benefits when there is a common vocabulary about what's expected of them." (p. 150) While their focus is on organizational objectives, Hurst makes a related point about us as individuals: "We have language to talk

about everything, from our education to our skills to our strengths to our titles, but we don't have a shared way to talk about who we are and what matters to us personally." (p. 101)

Fortunately, that is the essence of the Strategy Markup Language (StratML) standard (ISO 17469-1), which is an internationally standardized vocabulary for the elements that most clearly distinguish not only the organizations we form but also each of us as individual human beings. Those elements include the personal values we cherish as well as the longer-term goals and near-term objectives we pursue in support of our values.

Dempsey and Brafman observe that inclusion can be facilitated by "agreeing upon and monitoring a common set of metrics to measure progress." (p. 165) StratML Part 2, Performance Plans and Reports, specifies a vocabulary and schema for the documentation and sharing of such metrics. Lacking such measures, accountability is merely a rhetorical concept and progress (or lack thereof) is as good as anyone's perceptual biases. Leveraging performance plans in StratML format, value-added intermediaries can readily support the formation and tracking of performance partnerships, which can be established as easily as by cross-referencing shared objectives in each of the respective partners' own performance plans.

In hypercompetitive, information-supercharged environments, Dempsey and Brafman assert inclusion is the key advantage required for companies and countries to grow and sustain power. (p. 168) Part of the advantage, they suggest, comes from empowering marginalized communities to participate toward realization of common purposes, thereby capitalizing on underutilized resources. (p. 39)

"Real inclusion," they say, "isn't about letting just anyone in; it's about understanding the pillars of **participation, personalization, and purpose**." (p. 42) In their view, "Inclusion is about concentrating *what* (i.e., the directive, the goal) and distributing the *how*…" They believe it is the role of leaders to tell subordinates what to accomplish while relinquishing control to allow them to craft strategies to achieve the desired results. (p. 54)

Implicit in traditional efforts to mobilize groups is the assumption communities must be built around worthy causes after they have been identified by leaders. Indeed, Bruce [Tuckman famously argued](#) groups must evolve through four stages to become productive. Problems with that approach, say Dempsey and Brafman, include excessive consumption of time and the need to form another community, starting from scratch, for each new cause. (p. 54) To alleviate those problems, they suggest harnessing the power of pre-existing groups, by assigning them purposes aligned with organizational goals, and identifying the influencers whose impact can be tapped. (p. 55)

Dempsey and Brafman assert the only way to assure achievement of objectives is to "insist upon and enable the co-creation of context throughout the organization." While that may be challenging, technological advancement has created opportunities for leaders to co-create context and thereby dramatically improve performance. (p. 124) The authors envision "the world as an increasingly and inevitably collaborative space where common benefits accrue through common costs." (p. 129)

With respect to collaborative spaces, Hurst defines the concept of *action tanks* as a more productive enhancement to the practice of engagement in so-called "think tanks":

> An effort inside or between organizations to set goals, identify the largest barriers to achieving those goals, and take action to remove those barriers; a more action-oriented version of the think tank. (p. 274)

It may be appropriate to conceive of an isolation tank as a good place to engage in quiet reflection, unbiased research, and independent thought. However, a "tank" – either as an enclosed, rigid metal container or a heavy, mobile, military weapon – is a poor metaphor to describe action-oriented communities, i.e., communities of results (COR). A much better analogy is captured in the vision of the StratML standard:

> A worldwide **web** of intentions, stakeholders, and results.

To benefit from post-9/11 lessons in leadership and thus realize better results, Dempsey and Brafman conclude:

> In the era of digital echoes, post-truth, rapid change, intense scrutiny, and supercharged emotions, well-meaning men and women … must think differently – radically – about inclusion. (p. 170)

However, *really* radical inclusion will obviate the very notions not only of leadership, which depends upon willful subordination, but also organizations as we now know them, which are *exclusive* by definition. Instead, the revolutionary drivers will become the goals and objectives themselves, around which the required inputs, processes, and stakeholders will coalesce – in open, turbocharged, highly adaptable, continuously evolving, *cloud-computing, peer-based,* values-driven *networks* operating virtually at the speed of thought.

In short, productive *self-inclusion* in communities of results is the radical, purposeful future for which we should be aiming.