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Developing Relational Leadership: Resources for Developing Reflexive Organizational Practices. By Carsten Hornstrup, Jesper Loehr- Petersen, Joergen G. Madsen, Thomas Johansen, & Allan Vinther Jensen

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ment. In these cases a relational model is the only legitimate model. Though dwarfed by the numbers of managed organizations, the freely associated context is an essential social element that could benefit from the concepts put forth in this book. Nonetheless, the book is subject to contextual translation by the leader in the non-managed context who is looking for a relational model consistent with the free associated organization.

I give this book my highest recommendation for all who have a vision and commitment to leading people in a manner that honors their dignity, freedom, intelligence, creativity, and the need to hear and be heard. “If the contemporary organization is to thrive, it is essential that information, ideas, opinions, and values move freely across the borders that otherwise separates the organization from its context” (loc 347).

STANLEY PATTERSON, Ph.D., is the Executive Director of the Christian Leadership Center and is a professor in the Christian Ministry Department at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan.

DEVELOPING RELATIONAL LEADERSHIP: RESOURCES FOR DEVELOPING REFLEXIVE ORGANIZATIONAL PRACTICES

*By Carsten Hornstrup, Jesper Loehr-Petersen, Joergen G. Madsen, Thomas Johansen, & Allan Vinther Jensen
Chagrin Falls, Ohio: Taos Institute Publications (2012)
Kindle edition, 225 pages*

Reviewed by STANLEY E. PATTERSON

The Taos Institute is an organization dedicated to the development of

social constructionist theory and practices. The topic of relational leadership is one of the foci of the *Taos Tempo Series: Collaborative Practices for Changing Times*, and this book by Hornstrup et al. is one of six in this series. The book is presented in two general sections: theory that informs the practice of relational leadership and application of relational leadership in practice. Since most leaders do not emerge as leaders in the relational model, the constructionist implications would suggest that it is possible to become a relational leader. Though this rationale is not clearly articulated in the Preface, it is nonetheless implied in the use of the word “developing” in the title, as well as the content which addresses personal change. The “book represents a journey through systemic and constructionist theories and practice that constantly generates new ideas and inspiration” (loc 99).

The book opens with a listing of “tools” that serve the process of personal change. One of them, *autopoiesis*, “means self-creation (*auto* = self and *poiesis* = create), referring to the fact that the human realization process always takes place in a circularly closed nervous system” (loc 164). We determine meaning based upon what we know or have experienced, and thus we grow in a limited fashion as long as we focus on growing within our closed system. To optimize our growth and development, we interact to a greater or lesser degree with the external environment, and “through interaction with the external world, the autopoietic system is constantly being influenced and developed” (loc 172). We can maximize the impact of such exposure by intentionally engaging in dialogue that challenges our closed system understanding by constructing new meanings via conversations with

others and our environment in general. By this means “our identity is in constant motion and development due to the influence and information we choose to receive from the surrounding system—a lifelong social dialogical process” (loc 178).

The “leader’s task is to interact with the employees in order to create an interruption” (loc 380). This act creates the opportunity for both leader and employee to view new connections and possibilities, leading to new options and understanding that might not have happened without the interruption and dialogue. In addition, the leader must be open for challenges of personal understandings if individual and organizational growth are to be optimized. A radical development tool is thus introduced: “Through irreverence one can take part in creating new understandings and thereby also options” (loc 421). Irreverence is the act of a subordinate challenging the understanding of a superior, which would normally be seen as insubordinate behavior. But with the superior’s permission, a subordinate may challenge for the purpose of common understanding and the possibility of discovery of new options. This allows for both to “deconstruct the old stories and re- or co-construct new stories” to create new understandings:

In this sense, leadership is a question of coordinating understandings and actions via the language the leader uses and the questions the leader asks. . . . When we experience acceptance and respect, we are more open, more communicative and thus more likely to interact with our surroundings. (loc 501)

Such a relational setting requires mature identities and honest commitments to growth, but the possibilities are enormous in terms of building a mature corporate identity. The authors describe the corporate identi-

ty in three domains: production, aesthetics, and explanations. The production domain represents the goals and demands necessary to fulfill the mission. The aesthetic domain expresses the attitudes of those within the organization. The explanation domain, often overlooked, represents the ongoing reflective curiosity that seeks understanding through dialogue. It is in the context of the explanation domain that relational leadership has its greatest impact.

The practical tools for implementing relational leadership are addressed through the development of a relational coaching model that provides guidance for the person in the area of relational skills rather than the development of task competencies which are assumed to already exist. Relational coaching focuses not so much on general relational skills as upon understanding and maximizing the potential of relationships in the context of the work environment. This coaching investment is also connected to relational behavior relating to conflict that impacts the work environment and thus the mission of the organization. The concept here is to move away from managing conflict and toward dissolving conflict through intentional dialogue. The authors put it this way:

The idea of dissolving conflicts involves bringing the conflicting parties into the same room in order for them to examine their connections, differences, and similarities. This should create a more qualified examination and understanding of the different aspects of the case, which in turn should reduce the intensity of the conflict. (loc 1442)

“Teams” and “groups,” terms often used interchangeably, must be clearly distinguished as different structures in order for relational leadership to be implemented effectively. Teams require high levels of trust, work

closely and interdependently, share responsibility, and engage frequently in formal and informal communication (loc 1807). This model epitomizes relational leadership and should be distinguished from the less relational concept of a group.

The definition of relational leadership, given far into the book, might have served better as a guide to understanding if it had been stated earlier in the volume: “In this book, we understand relational leadership as a coordination of understandings, expectations, emotions, and actions in constant interaction and dialogue with the organization’s many internal and external stakeholders for the purpose of helping the organization achieve its goals” (loc 1061).

This book has immediate application possibilities to the free-associated organization—churches and volunteer models. Since it is written primarily for the managed organization, it will require some translation by the reader/leader, but the concepts are wholly compatible. I give this book a “thumbs up” of approval for the serious leader who is seeking a better understanding and a more effective model of leading in a period when authority-based approaches are becoming less effective and the expectations of those led demand a higher degree of relational competency.

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REBUILD: RESET YOUR LIFE. RENEW YOUR CHURCH. RESHAPE YOUR WORLD

*By Tommy “Urban D.” Kyllonen
Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press
(2015)
Paperback, 176 pages*

Reviewed by SHAWNA HENRY

Tommy “Urban D.” Kyllonen is a hip hop artist who is also the lead pastor of the Crossover Church in Tampa, Florida. The missional purpose of this church is urban ministry. Kyllonen led this church in a massive rebuilding campaign as they not only worked against tremendous odds to rebuild the facilities at their location, but also to rebuild the ministry and purpose required to meet the needs of the changing community in which the church was planted. *ReBuild* was birthed out of this experience with the goal to empower leaders that they too, with the help of an all-powerful God, might successfully rebuild ministries, churches, lives, and people.

ReBuild parallels the experience of Nehemiah’s rebuilding of ancient Jerusalem’s walls with the modern-day experience of the Crossover Church, which rebuilt their church building, goals, organizational structure, and mission. Kyllonen shows that with God-ordained tasks come not only joys but struggles and challenges. However, when leaders surrender their plans and dreams, God is bigger than all the challenges and will see the project to completion.

ReBuild offers a step-by-step approach to the massive undertaking of rebuilding. These steps are applicable to most any undertaking, whether the goal is to rebuild interpersonal relationships, churches, or missions. The steps range from confronting pain to dealing with