

Management for Professionals

Argang Ghadiri
Andreas Habermacher
Theo Peters

Neuroleadership

A Journey Through the Brain
for Business Leaders

 Springer

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Neuroleadership

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for Business Leaders

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Preface

The brain is a massive network of connections and the journey to this book also started in the electronic web of connections and interactions—the Internet. Each of us had developed a passion for neuroscience and its impact in business in different locations. Professor Theo Peters and Argang Ghadiri had worked together on the German version of this book and they first interacted with Andy Habermacher on an online neuroleadership forum. They had been deeply impressed with the papers and writings of Andy. Andy had separately developed his passion after being introduced to neuroscience by Dr. Srinivasan Pillay during a course in New York focused on executive coaching. This online interaction led to some personal discussion on how we could collaborate closer and in what form. From this sprung forth the concept of this book. This shows more than anything the power of the network and of networks in general, whether they be social, electronic or in the brain itself.

This book is grounded in the German version and yet it is also different. We have worked through it and turned it into an enriched English version – some concepts have been added to, some more depth has been added. What you read here is the result of a strong collaboration. It is the fruit of our efforts and it has blossomed into what we feel is something that can give you value and powerful insights into the brain and leadership. More than anything else we hope that these concepts will not stay in the book but will be taken and implemented concretely in the workplace.

In our collaboration we have also had to practice what we preach over the following pages and our collaboration has proven to be engaging, exciting, challenging and fun all at the same time. We have worked hard but enjoyed it immensely. We have discussed ideas and also thrown out ideas but all understanding the final goal we wanted to achieve. We have positively criticised and given each other compliments where and when necessary. In short it has been hard work but very much fun at the same time.

Indeed, any book a major product and requires commitment and hard work. A book also is, in some respects, the product of the people who have helped to develop us, the authors. It is the synthesis of ideas and thoughts and the knowledge we have collected over the years, and many, many people have been involved in this process. There have been people who have helped us directly and indirectly—we have drawn from other authors, researchers, academics and scientists. We have discussed amongst ourselves, with colleagues, on online forums and through our formal work. Many of the ideas can be traced to individuals but much cannot be.

And this is why we would in general like to thank all the people who we have interacted with over the years and whose input has helped us to develop our own ideas. The number of people is too large to mention specific names here. We also believe the wealth of this knowledge lies in the mix and not the quantity—it is the right mix of ingredients in the kitchen that create a wonderful, tasty dish and not just the individual ingredients.

Importantly though, this would not have been possible without the help of our publisher, and our specific thanks therefore go to Springer, and especially Barbara Fess, who so quickly realised that this was a book they wanted to publish. We reached a formal agreement very quickly and this made the publishing process painless.

We now only need to express our wish that you enjoy the book and are able to draw out some of the knowledge to enrich your life and your experience of being a leader. We hope this book proves as useful to you as it has already proven to be to each of us.

Argang Ghadiri
Andy Habermacher
Theo Peters

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Introduction

Though the field of neuroleadership is yet to break into mainstream business theory, it is not new. The term itself was coined in 2006 by David Rock and there has been an ever-increasing flow of books on the brain in many contexts including leadership, marketing and management. You may therefore ask why write another book on the brain and leadership. The answer to this is simple and highlights the approach we have taken here. There is no book that takes the uninitiated through the whole journey of neuroleadership. This book describes the background of the neurosciences, outlines the technology, explains the brain, introduces protagonists and defines how it can be applied to business.

This book will therefore give you all the basic background information you will need to become a neuroleader. As we keep noting, there is a mass of information in the market and our goal is not to go into the specific details but to provide you with enough information to get a much clearer idea of the brain and how it functions, specifically in application to business.

Our work has also asked us to question time and time again what neuroleadership is and what the brain is and how this influences our thinking and actions. This led us to the work of Klaus Grawe where we found a fundamental description of the neuroscientific basis of human beings and their interactions with the environment. If we look into the brain we must go to its base functioning—the functioning that defines us as human beings—and then work upwards and outwards. We realised that many books had focused on the outer layers, so to speak, but none had gone to the fundamental level of human interactions—the basic needs and desires that drive each of us. This is what is the second big difference in this book. We go into the basic needs of human beings and from this develop and look at organisational and personnel development and various leadership concepts. The third big difference is very few books have given clear organisational and leadership applications, methodologies that can be applied across broad levels of the workforce but have focused on, interesting all the same, some specific interactions and manifestations of the brain in the workplace. We aim here to give a concrete methodology that you can implement in the workplace.

To summarise, this book then aims to

- Give a complete overview of neuroleadership, from neuroscience, basic functioning of the brain, human basic needs and applications in the workplace

- Highlight the importance of human basic needs in the workplace for daily interactions and motivational goals
- Give a model that can be applied in the workplace and a tool for leaders to implement to be able to make the workplace more brain friendly and hence tap into the full potential of their workers

We start the journey in Chap. 1 by first looking at the definition of neuroleadership and the development of “neuro” business terms. Here we also take an historical view of the concept of man from homo economicus to the brain-directed man. This gives us concepts on which much of the economic theory is based—all models rely on a model of the human interacting within it and this model will influence the characteristics of the model.

We then move in Chap. 2 into the brain itself. We look at the development, the chemical interactions, the regional functions and some of the history and interesting insights from neuroscience. We touch on the technology so that we can understand what this actually does and how brain activity is measured, but we also look at emotions and the functional and physical representations of emotional activity.

Chapter 3 now moves onto the key protagonists in the field of neuroscience in business contexts. This helps to give us an understanding of where we stand in the literature and some of the key influential figures that have helped to form the concept of neuroleadership so far.

Chapter 4 moves into what we can consider the heart of the book. Here we look into the work of Klaus Grawe and our basic human needs. We will take you through the neuroscientific basis of the basic needs, and these are grounded in all human personality—indeed they are the result of over 100 years of work into human personality and psychology and therapy. The basic needs are important, not just because of their representation in human beings, but because these will be directly linked to our motivational drives: our urges, our drives, our impetus to fulfil or protect our basic needs or the imbalance of these. This is the manifestation of brain biology and its interactions and the subsequent representation into human social contexts.

In Chap. 5 we take these neuroscientifically based basic needs and transpose them onto organisational and personnel development tools and leadership concepts. This is where we take a fundamental look at business science and combine this with neuroscientific insights, looking at whether these tools through the spectacles of neuroscience and the basic needs will give us the answers to their effectiveness. Their effectiveness, because each tool will target and activate different regions and needs in the brain and hence have different impacts on different people and groups of people. The reasons lie in the neural representation of these tools and the neural impact on the workspace which will depend directly on a person’s basic needs, their fulfilment and their own personal motivational goals which we discuss in Chap. 4. We aim in this chapter to highlight some standard tools and concepts but do not aim to create a new “neuro” technique. We also only focus on a selection of tools, for the sake of simplicity and to demonstrate the thought process.

From this analysis of tools and concepts in organisational development and leadership we then move to a model for the concrete implementation of this in