

Bi-Cameral Thinking: Resources for Corporate Success in *Think Like a Leader*

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In line with the other noted works, viz. *The Right Brain Manager* and *NLP: The New Art and Science of Getting What You Want*, Dr. Harry Alder – a British nationalist, businessman and experienced management trainer – continues the trend by fashioning an illuminated study in his latest work, *Think Like a Leader*. In this motivational work, Dr. Alder unpacks a list of effective leadership qualities that can be emulated by today's youth, the aspiring corporate and business executives, and it encourages them to capitalize on their inherent management aptitude and to attain career visibility and job fulfillment. *Think Like a Leader* is divided into eight segments, generating drafts for productive management and leadership tenets in a fairly new angle. What stands as a hallmark is the fact that the book is copiously marked with comments, anecdotes and illustrations based on Dr. Alder's interviews with 150 top leaders who head companies enlisted in the Top 200 of *The Times* 1000 listing. The research is based upon and gleaned from these interviews paves way for a very sound and representative study that instructs the readers in what distinguishes a corporate leader, and how creative leadership traits can be acquired, honed and imbibed. Alder's work is an account of how 150 top British and International business people reveal the secrets of their creative thought processes.

The author shows how aspiring leaders can copy these patterns to improve their management skills. He also explains how top executives make decisions and expose their blueprints for success. *Think Like A Leader* is an insight into how our top leaders think. Instead of offering yet another theory or model of leadership, it looks at what top executives actually do when generating ideas and making critical decisions, both inside and outside the office.

The premise espoused in the book that belongs to the genre of motivational self-help writing is ‘Leaders are made, not born’, and concurrently, the raw material that goes into making of leaders, is actually fundamental and ubiquitously conferred upon ordinary men and women. However, it is what an individual does with his most rudimentary faculties that decide one’s magnitude of success in management arena. While demystifying the aura surrounding effective leaders, the book strives to capture that seemingly elusive element and proffers succinct, yet remarkably applicable practices that can go a long way for a wannabe leader.

Heading multi-billion pound companies, as *Think Like a Leader* elucidates, is not merely a matter of genes or a numinous mystique, but rather about the aspirant’s attitude. The author steers clear of prescriptive techniques or ‘master theory’ to be observed for a quick accession on corporate-ladder, and in this lays the uniqueness of Dr. Alder’s exercise. As against a ‘neat model’, he proposes a broader sense in the efficacy of neuro-physiological factors –a cumulative amalgamation of creative thinking, intuitiveness, creative problem solving, artistic envisioning, using sense memory, understanding significance of evolving with ever-changing times, adopting a leader’s lifestyle – which are largely hinging on the subconscious human level. In his view, all human beings are endowed with basic human ‘brain hardware’, and whilst pedagogical syllabi-oriented management approaches thrust on logical, cerebral and analytical abilities of human conscious, a

true leader evolves out of ‘gut-feeling’, instinct and free-flowing intuitive thinking. In a perspicuous manner, Dr. Alder throws light on ‘less-tangible’ characteristics rather than hierarchal formulas and stringent structures for laying bare the core underpinnings of leadership ingredients. What then emerges is an interesting flux of ‘holistic approach’ that the book upholds by considering the CEOs or Chairmen as ‘total’ individuals, outside the stultifying confines of corporate world. Thus, according to the supporting instances (such as the likes of Keith Oates, Deputy Chairman & MD, Marks & Spencer) provided in the book, the successful leaders have standard abilities, but they employ the same in special ways, thereby lending them an edge over others. Instead of handling out a mere portfolio of technical skills for successful leadership, *Think Like a Leader* delves upon the creative edge underlying it, usually coterminous of a leader’s ‘charisma’ – the way a leader thinks, the core values, beliefs, intent, attitude and insights behind the very nature of his beliefs.

The most resonating idea postulated by Dr. Alder, in *Think Like a Leader*, is the recognition of a key managerial process of ‘bicameral’ thinking – a synthesized manner of thinking, non-compartmentalizing into rigidities, a fluidity of thoughts and ideas. This bi-cameral thinking exhorted by Dr. Alder crucially informs the readers of balancing the ‘left’ side of the brain (logical, rational, prudence, professionalism, reasoning, accuracy, scientific, verbal, academic etc.) with the ‘right’ side (intuition, imagination, envisioning, dreaming, feeling, sixth sense, creative, perceptiveness, inspiration, ‘eureka moment’, ‘feel of situation, hunch, subjective judgment) for attaining astute business leadership acumen. The text, resplendent with examples from the author’s interviews with noted business leaders, methodically thrusts on precedence of intuitive creativity and lateral thinking as key factors towards honing leadership behavioral techniques.

Besides establishing author's credibility and unique style, the evidence in form of author's interviews with stalwart British managers, chairmen and chief executives serves yet another purpose – it makes the book engaging and interesting to read. These examples drawn from personal and professional lives of top businessmen comprise the very bedrock of Dr. Adler's enterprise since he weaves a strategic pattern (although not a tight-knit model) by locating common themes in experiences of diverse individuals, which in turn help elucidate and illustrate his views. For instance,

- While maintaining the pertinence of employing one's subconscious and intuitive abilities as against the rational analysis for creating a big vision, Dr. Alder informs readers of Derek Williams, MD Coca-Cola Schweppes Beverages as a proponent of dreaming big, Sir Keith Bright (former chairman of Brent Walker) with his logistics-defying belief in his dream of expanding in the Far East markets, Roger Burnell, MD of Britannia Airways, with his 'ability to see ahead'.
- Again, while commenting on importance of healthy leisure time, exemplification comes from Paul Lester, MD Graseby plc, Sipko Huismans (Chairman of Courtaulds), Bob Nice (managing director at Ratcliff Tail Lifts) and Bob Lawson (CE of Electrocomponents) who find thought provoking ideas from simple pastimes such as grass-cutting or gardening. Inspiration for innovative ideas seems to come from hobbies such as sailing for Sir Anthony Gill, chairman of Lucas, trout fishing for Sir John Hoskyns, Burtons or even welcome relaxation of developing photographs for Lord Young of Cable and Wireless.
- Innovative problem solving gets illustrated through instances of Mark Warland of Irvin (G B) resolving a sticky labels problem through automation and Bob Hawley CE of Nuclear Electric addressing operational

problems through creative common sense, and David Lyon, CE of Bowater, imaginatively providing solution regarding transit damage.

Moreover, one can observe that this substantiation facilitates the readers to identify and even relate with the workability of the management precepts evoked in the study, consequently placing this work in realm non-clichéd ones.

In the brain thought process, Dr. Alder's research-based book brings in a new dimension of training oneself into thinking creatively by employing the instinct – allowing images, auditory senses, day dreams, natural visualizing, subjective experiences, 'kinesthetic' feeling skills – faculties conferred on common men by birth. By enabling subconscious raw material to fuel one's inherent behavior, a possibility of rupturing conventional textbook conditioning of thinking in numbers, reasoning and formal logic is foregrounded in the book. Also proposed for greater leadership success is genuinely attempting to harness this insightful thinking and translating into fresh ideas for reaching business and personal goals, selecting right people, communicating effectively, taking sound and bold decisions, envisioning success, and believing in self. A natural receptiveness against fancy gadgets, a habit of intuitive thinking rather than exhaustive data-based logic is celebrated in the book. Getting inundated by details and number-crunching should be superseded by free flowing of ideas and thoughts. The stimulations as well as solutions to business impediments come from deeper resources 'within', and not external world. Lateral thinking assumes precedence over linear thought process, decision-making becomes more of an art than science, openness to explore ideas subsumes 'macho' left-brain tyranny and balanced choreography of intuitive and logical, right and left brain comes to be an intrinsic part of a successful corporate business leader.

Another interesting feature of the book that can be noted is the ‘Tips for Tomorrow’s Leaders’ section that follows each of the chapters. What is noteworthy about this section is that it entails compendious tips for improving and practicing natural thinking abilities. It offers, without being overtly didactic, a careful and simple implementation exercises that can be followed easily by readers. These tips are instructive and summarized effectively:

- learning to recognize instincts, giving and receiving ideas even in most negative situation, adjusting lifestyle to incorporate more creativity
- discarding prejudices and welcoming even wildest ideas, respecting first impressions, dreaming up own novel ideas, deciding on the basis of feelings
- refraining from giving into unnecessary deadlines, changing the normative systems if necessary, ‘sleeping’ on a problem if stuck, allowing ‘flashes of brilliance’ and trusting them
- bringing about self-awareness and knowing one’s own inner instinct, developing personal space and conducive environment for fomenting creativity, learning to rely on inbuilt natural abilities, giving fairness to people, prioritizing work and leisure as per personal choice
- being smart and productive instead of being workaholic, using travel time for qualitative envisioning, getting to know one’s own way of thinking and cultivating places catalytic for thoughts, staying in touch with staff and their ideas
- putting oneself in other’s shoes and gleaning insights from the same, extending one’s leisure interests and imagination, listening with courteousness and opening up to unconscious cues
- staying qualitatively informed, building rapport by trusting and sharing, acknowledging staff’s contribution and investing in human resource, communicating

positively and being open to suggestions, treating teams as source of future leadership.

Thus, one can infer that *Think Like a Leader* emerges informative and unique in its trail-blazing deliberate departure from water-tight and blinkered theoretical models of leadership. Instead of typically propounding hypothetical formulae, the book offers insightful glimpses into the symbiotic behaviors of multiple corporate leaders. It carefully formulates research based, easily applicable precepts for reaching higher echelons of corporate organizations. Since *Think Like a Leader* laudably touches upon most basic and natural aspects of human behavior as fountainhead of corporate growth, aspiring young executives will find the book particularly relevant, instructive as in “Remember –there is nothing special about leaders, except that they think like leaders” (p-207, 1998) and stimulating.

Though Alder’s key statement “Being a Leader is a state of mind which manifests itself in action,” is an inspirational one, it essentializes a ‘leader’ and privileges the British model of the same. It could be a problem to consider a ‘leader’ as a monolithic construct autonomous of the trajectories of self such as race, gender, sexuality, nationality and caste. Further, it has an average 3.71 online rating which might not inspire the book hunters of the present time. In Alder’s work, three assumptions are powerful: everyone is a potential leader; thinking makes a leader and natural thinking abilities could be enhanced. These assumptions operate within the binaries of mind and body and they become unstable once the mind-body duality which informs Alder’s work is interrogated. Notwithstanding these limitations, *Think Like a Leader*, should be of interest for management students, communication experts, soft skills trainers and leadership trainees. It is written in free-flowing conversational tone and persuasive style. Significantly, Alder implies in the work that leadership skills can be cultivated with a mindset of self-awareness. Since the book underscores an

individual's potential to become a leader, it can be placed within the domain of Soft Skills and immensely handy for Management Students.

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