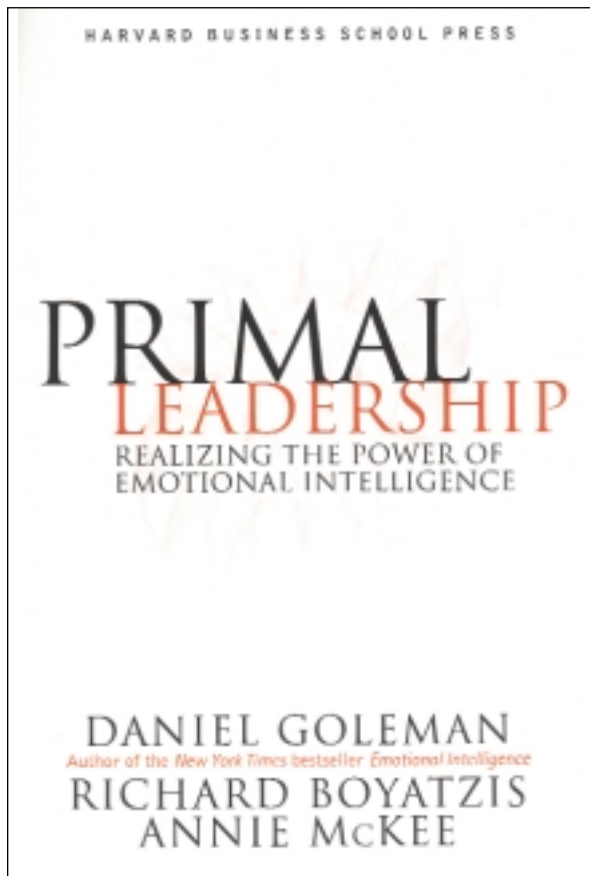


# BOOKS



## Primal Leadership

By Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis,  
and Annie McKee

Reviewed by Deanne Bryce

What an odd pairing of words: *primal leadership*. Does a breast-beating, chanting tribal leader come to mind? Ordinarily, as a professional focused on improving workplace performance, you probably don't encourage your leaders to act in primitive ways.

Surely Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis, and Annie McKee had that image in mind when they selected the title for their new book, *Primal Leadership: Realizing the Power of Emotional Intelligence*, because they waste no time explaining: "Leaders have always played a primordial emotional role. No doubt humankind's original leaders—whether

tribal chieftain or shamaness—earned their place in large part because their leadership was emotionally compelling."

The first chapter explains more about how leaders tap into our emotions. "Great leaders," the authors say, "move us. They ignite our passion and inspire the best in us. When we try to explain why they're so effective, we speak of strategy, vision, or powerful ideas. But the reality is much more primal: Great leadership works through our emotions."

If you believe that leaders who create a positive emotional climate enjoy sustained business performance, you'll find supportive evidence here. The authors

# ON THE NIGHT STAND

By Michael F. Cassidy



My nightstand's a mess, so I usually wander over to my dusty bookshelves when I'm in need of inspiration in my consultancy work. Instead of the

usual work classics, what nabs my attention for this piece are other "classics."

As a general introduction to the world of consulting, I recommend Joseph Conrad's novella *The Heart of Darkness*. Within that brief work, you'll find a journey reminiscent of several consulting trips I've taken. But if tongue-in-cheek isn't your style, Michael I. Harrison and Arie Shalom's *Organizational Diagnosis and Assessment* provides a comprehensive review of useful models—though some past students of mine have threatened to bludgeon me with it.

For insight into the lives and personalities of clients, particularly those at a senior level, Joseph Campbell's *Hero With a Thousand Faces* is particularly apt for its description of the ever-mercurial senior executive personality. Tom Wolfe's *The Bonfire of the Vanities*, however, might provide a more accurate picture. So as not to be completely flippant, I'd also recommend Robert E. Quinn's work on the competing values approach, *Beyond Rational Management*.

To assist consultants in their quest for self-understanding, Albert Camus's *The Stranger* is essential for the existential question, "What am I doing here?" When all else fails, William Peter Blatty's *The Exorcist*, though not a technical manual, may provide some practical tips.

**Michael Cassidy** is a professor at the School of Business, Marymount University, in Arlington, Virginia; [mcassidy@marymount.edu](mailto:mcassidy@marymount.edu).

## BOOKS

describe the ability to drive emotions in a positive direction as "creating resonance" in an organization. Why resonance? Check out its etymology: The Latin word *resonare* means to resound. Resonance, the *Oxford English Dictionary* explains, refers to "the reinforcement or prolongation of sound by reflection" or, more specifically, "by synchronous vibration." The human analog of synchronous vibration occurs when two people are on the same wave-length emotionally—when they feel in sync. And true to the original meaning of resonance, that synchrony resounds, prolonging the positive emotional pitch.

The book highlights research that supports the link between resonance and positive business performance. In addition, the authors delve into brain science: What can it teach us about driving positive emotions in a group?

You can't simply read this book; you have to think actively because the information isn't neatly packaged for performance professionals. I, like many time-stressed readers, have an appetite for the "tell me what to do, why I should do it, and how I can get started" type of book. Instead, *Primal Leadership* presents ideas, gives real-world examples, quotes past research, and then moves casually on to the next idea.

Readers without prior knowledge of emotional intelligence needn't go back and read other books on EI to understand this one. The first chapter provides a good overview of the brain's design and how cognitive and emotional intelligence work together to create a capable leader.

The second chapter, "The Neuroanatomy of Leadership," reviews the work of the late Harvard University professor David McClelland—the first to publish work on competency models. His work eventually led to the awareness of the importance of emotional intelligence rather than the pure cognitive intelligence in effective leadership.

But if you consider yourself to be a student of emotional intelligence, you'll gain additional insight into how the brain works in regard to emotions. If you've read other works by Goleman, you're familiar with the EI competency model. This book provides an updated model, which has been streamlined after statistical analysis to four (instead of five) domains:

- self-awareness
- self-management
- social awareness
- relationship management.

Goleman's fifth domain, motivation, now fits into self-management.

The book also winnows the competencies from 25 to 18 and changes some competency names to align more with the desired feature. The competency "trustworthiness," for example, is now called "transparency."

Whatever your past experience has been with emotional intelligence, you'll require time to reflect and further investigate such breakthrough concepts as "open loop." The authors write, "The reason a leader's manner—not just what he does, but how he does it—matters so much lies in the design of the human brain: what scientists have begun to call the open-

"Great leaders ignite our passion.  
But the reality is much more primal: Great  
leadership works through our emotions."

loop nature of the limbic system, our emotional centers. A closed-loop system is self-regulating—for instance, our circulatory system. What’s happening in the circulatory system of others around us does not impact our own. An open-loop system depends largely on external sources to manage itself.”

The open-loop nature of the limbic system may come as no surprise for performance consultants; they’ve long known that it matters how an organization treats its people. Now, performance professionals have scientific proof to back up their justifications for low employee retention and falling sales figures. Because organizations are full of people who, through no fault of their own, are designed with open-loop limbic systems, both negative and positive emotions spread from one human to another much like a cold in a day-care facility. Performance professionals can use that knowledge to their advantage by supporting leaders in their attempts to create positive emotions.

Primal leadership? After understanding such concepts as resonance, open-loop structure, and the EI competency model, you’ll expand your view of what primal leadership means. Encouraging leaders to rely on a more basic or primal method, and tap into the positive emotions of the people who follow them, is sound advice worth understanding and promoting in your organization.

*Primal Leadership: Realizing the Power of Emotional Intelligence* by Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis, and Annie McKee. Boston: Harvard Business School Press, [www.hbsp.harvard.edu](http://www.hbsp.harvard.edu). 336 pp. US\$26.95

Circle 290 on reader service card.

Deanne Bryce, founder of LeaderStrength Systems, works with individuals and organizations to focus, build, and adapt their leadership strengths; [dbryce@leaderstrength.com](mailto:dbryce@leaderstrength.com).