

Primal Leadership

By Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis, and Annie McKee

Reviewed by Carol Horner

Primal Leadership is one of the very best leadership books I have ever encountered, not only in theory but in application. As the title indicates, it is about where leadership begins. That is, emotional intelligence.

Goleman hones his theory of emotional intelligence in this book and outlines, in four main areas, the skills and attributes that leaders need in order to be what he refers to as “resonating.” Resonating leaders are those that are “in synch” with their followers emotionally. He states, “the more resonate people are with each other, the less static are their interactions.” He goes further to say that resonating is the “glue that holds people together in a team, and that commits people to an organization.” A leader’s level of emotional intelligence corresponds to his or her ability to be resonating and therefore the ability of the group to meet its goals.

A great aspect of this book is the authors’ use of research, case study and good stories. This helps bridge the gap between theory and application. A significant amount of this book is dedicated to helping leaders realize how to develop and advance their own emotional intelligence, and clearly indicates the ongoing nature of that process. Richard Boyatzis offers his “Self-Directed Learning Model” as a tool for development. I have found that, as a facilitator of leadership development in others, this model is very effective in my work.

Lastly, part three of this book focuses on building emotionally intelligent organizations. The content in this section is incredibly valuable in my work with teams. Emotions are contagious and it’s been my experience that the connections between people have more to do with success than any technology or business process.

Don’t let the word “emotion” fool you. *Primal Leadership* is a book about getting—and more importantly, sustaining—bottom-line business results.

