

Making Everything Easier!™

The Leadership Brain

FOR
DUMMIES®

Learn to:

- Assess your strengths and weaknesses as a leader
- Understand your brain and harness its power to lead
- Make meetings matter by using brain-compatible techniques
- Utilize brain science to train employees effectively

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The Leadership Brain For Dummies®

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by Marilee Sprenger



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About the Author

Marilee Sprenger is an international presenter and trainer. She is an adjunct professor at Aurora University and a member of the American Academy of Neurology, the Learning and the Brain Society, and the Cognitive Neuroscience Society.

Marilee has applied brain research in classrooms, staffrooms, and boardrooms. She has been both an educator and a business leader and believes that understanding the brain is helpful on a personal and professional level.

Marilee has authored six books on the brain and has published numerous articles online and in journals.

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this book to the memory of my father, Lee Broms, who was the first to model true leadership to me. I miss you, Dad.

Author's Acknowledgments

When I first started doing trainings and presentations in this area 17 years ago, there were many skeptics. But the wealth of knowledge about the brain keeps growing, and more people are interested as they want to live longer and more productive lives.

I want to thank the many neuroscientists who work to help us understand the brain, and the translators who help all of us understand the research and its applications.

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Introduction

Becoming a leader can take a lifetime, or just as long as it takes you to read this book. *The Leadership Brain For Dummies* is designed to equip you with everything you need to become the leader you want to be.

Although you can find many books on leadership and many books on the brain, no book has connected the subjects like this one. Neuroscience offers you an opportunity to maximize your brain and the brains of those you depend on to shape your future.

In this book you get the *how* and the *why*. You find out how to be a great leader, great listener, great decision-maker, and great at handling yourself and others. But that information is only part of the picture. Understanding *why* you should do these things by using specific strategies that are compatible with how the brain works is the rest of the story. Knowing *why* makes you more likely to use these strategies again and again.

Although business fads come and go, the brain is here to stay. Apply the best from neuroscience to your organization to create a climate and a culture in which everyone is happy — you, your employees, and your customers or clients.

About This Book

Leadership is an art and a science. This book shows you where the two meet and complement each other. It's meant to engage your brain without taxing it. I want you

to think about who you work for and who you work with to consider what you may do to make your experience and theirs a better one. With that purpose in mind, I have put together lists, stories, and tips to help you lead your own brain as well as the brains of others. The book you hold in your hands is not typical, and it's certainly not a textbook. You can jump around however you like, not worrying that you've missed critical information from an earlier chapter. I define new terms wherever they show up or direct you to their definitions so that you're never at a loss for information. If an example or explanation from a previous chapter may support your understanding of a topic, I let you know how to find it.

This book is designed to be personalized by you — read it as questions arise or leadership challenges present themselves to you. Turn to any topic that interests you at any time that you want to find out about it. I've worked hard to make sure that you are always be at home within these pages.

Conventions Used in This Book

I use the following conventions throughout the text to make things consistent and easy to understand:

All Web addresses appear in monofont.

New terms appear in *italic* and are closely followed by an easy-to-understand definition.

Bold highlights the action parts of numbered steps and key words in bullet lists.

When this book was printed, some Web addresses may have needed to break across two lines of text. If that happened, no extra characters like hyphens indicate the break. So, when using one of these Web addresses, just type in exactly what you see in this book, as though the line break doesn't exist.

The brain is a funny thing, and leadership should be fun. For these reasons, I have added humor where I think it is appropriate. Leaders should add humor to their leadership style because the brain responds to humor and it actually allows the brain to use some of its higher levels in order to “get the joke.”

Foolish Assumptions

The brain makes many assumptions. Mine is no different. I assume that you have picked up this book for one of two reasons: like me, you're enthralled with research on the brain and want to know how it relates to everything, or you're intently looking for new information about leadership — a fresh approach that motivates and inspires you. Either way, I assume that you will find information and strategies that you can apply right away.

I also assume that you would like to know what's going on inside the heads of other people in your life — at work and at home. Finally, you're a little worried about your own brain, and you want to know what to do to keep your business brain in business!

What You're Not to Read

The beauty of *The Leadership Brain For Dummies* is that you don't have to read the whole book to come away with quite a bit of easily applicable information. You can skip the shaded boxes of text called sidebars, which contain stories or examples that relate to information in the chapter. Sidebars help you connect more with some of the ideas in the chapter, but they don't contain new ideas and so are skippable.

How This Book Is Organized

The Leadership Brain For Dummies is organized into five parts. The following sections give you a description of each part.

Part I: Leadership Is All in Your Head

Part I links leadership and the brain by giving you an overall feel for the connections between the way the brain runs and the way your organization runs. It covers some brain basics, such as how the brain makes connections and changes, how it's structured, and what it needs to learn and be productive. The fact that leaders are made and not born is a tribute to the brain's ability to learn and change.

This part also describes a great leader who uses knowledge about the brain to share a vision and mission, and to motivate others. And it describes a not-so-good

leader. Although negativity is not the point here, the brain needs examples to avoid as much as those to emulate, and so I give you both.

Part II: Tapping Into the Brain of a Leader

Part II shows you how to develop leadership traits. Discovering your intelligence strengths through self-knowledge and a written assessment helps you determine the style of leadership that feels right and put employees into the right positions. You find out about emotional intelligence and becoming an emotionally intelligent leader. As you assess yourself in relationship to your self-awareness, social awareness, and handling relationships, you see the importance of empathizing with your employees and all of your organization's stakeholders.

Additionally, you find out how the brain makes decisions in this part of the book. Can you think your way to the top? Good decision-making skills combine both cognitive and emotional intelligences.

Part III: Working with the Brains You Have

Rather than shaking up an organization by firing employees, a leader is better off first taking a close look at the current staff. Retraining often is a better option than rehiring, and this part of the books shows you how to find and foster the skills employees have to offer.

Understanding some major differences between the sexes and among different generations helps you get employees into the positions where they're most likely to thrive and offer them the most optimal working conditions to ensure that they do.

This part of the book also deals with the importance of teams, filling you in on how they develop and how they grow. Creating goals that appeal to the whole brain makes a difference in how your teams approach those goals and whether they reach them.

Part IV: Training and Developing Brains

In this part, I examine the importance of training and the consequences of not training, and I give you brain-compatible training techniques to increase learning and memory.

I explain what the brain needs to be ready to learn and ready to work, and I show you how to make your training dollars count by ensuring that the information sticks in employees' brains.

Finally, I show you how to conduct meetings that make a difference. Communicating with a diverse workforce means differentiating some of your meeting and communication strategies.

Part V: The Part of Tens