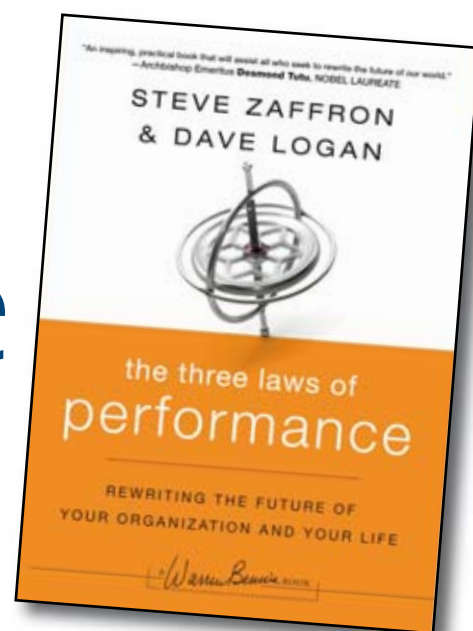


The Three Laws of Performance

The Three Laws of Performance:
rewriting the future of your organization and your life
by Steve Zaffron & Dave Logan, 2009, Warren Bennis books

Review by Dr Nick Pope



A book that comes with the endorsement "An inspiring, practical book [...] that will assist all who seek to rewrite the future of our world" from Nobel Laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu is going to be difficult to review. Certainly I expected to be impressed – and so had offered to write this review. What I actually experienced was far beyond that.

My attention is captured by "The Three Laws" narrative on the Lonmin platinum mine in South Africa. The new (white) CEO has called a meeting of 300 representatives from the management, workforce and surrounding shanty-towns community, and is taking the first steps in creating a new future for the failing company and impoverished community. He takes an incredibly bold step and puts himself at risk by encouraging the airing of grievances to initiate the process of "completing on the past". A black worker challenges him to show his commitment by spending a night in the worker's hostel. He immediately agrees. The meeting continues and sets in motion the transformational process that shifts how he and the white management are seen by the workforce, and vice versa. Later he spends a night in the dormitory in the shanty town, and awakes next morning to find himself guarded by an African warrior!

I am touched and inspired by these actions, and marvel at the result, ultimately transforming the business' performance, the 300,000 strong community's health and wellbeing, and creating racial harmony.

Steve Zaffron and Dave Logan take us on a journey through personal and corporate transformation, explaining the theory and approaches, and showing that the seemingly impossible can be achieved. Vividly presented cases (for example Reebok, New Zealand Steel

& Polus Group of Japan) make this real, and we are invited to go on our own journey through carefully constructed practical exercises.

So how are such remarkable results achieved? The fundamental core of the approach is that how the world occurs to each of us is different. This "Occurring World" is the world seen through a personal filter composed of our past experiences, decisions, opinions, resentments etc. The same situation occurs differently to two individuals, hence the idea of an absolute reality is an illusion. This filter constrains our ability to see what is possible and creates a "default future" into which we live our lives. A Lonmin worker, talking about how things used to be, says: "I was angry all the time. I knew the future would be a constant fight". This could so easily be a current comment from within many organisations where 'I can't make a difference', or 'no one listens to me or cares' are also prevalent!

By clearing out the past, and so removing this filter, our view is no longer constrained and the occurring world shifts. New possibilities can now be seen, and a new future can be created for ourselves, and co-authored with others. Such Transformation is distinct from Change, which strives to alter or fix something, and paradoxically often serves to reinforce and maintain that which one is attempting to change.

The book's first three chapters elaborate on The Three Laws, 'How people perform correlates to how situations occur to them', 'How a situation occurs arises in language' and 'Future based language transforms how situations occur to people', demonstrating how these enable such amazing results.

The next two chapters then deal with new paradigms in leadership and organizations,

based within the three laws, and in the final chapters we are invited to explore ourselves, given the opportunity to shift (Transform) how we occur to ourselves and others, and so be further empowered in all areas of life, including leadership.

My invitation to you the reader, is to not only read this book, but do so with the powerful intention to take on the exercises and fully benefit from what is available. In undertaking this work, I have created a much closer relationship with my family, friends, colleagues & customers, and in fact humanity. Whilst reading Steve's account of coaching in Japan, I realised that all my life I've looked for my decisions to be validated by a higher authority. I have now 'completed' this in my past, and declared that I am the Shogun of my own life. I step boldly into that future and invite you to join me.

"Be the change you want to see in the world"

Mahatma Gandhi.

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