The Neuroscience of Leadership

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NeuroLeadership.Org NeuroLeadership.Com

Research domains with many scientists

• Interpersonal Neurobiology
• Insight and Creativity
• Mindfulness & Self-awareness
• Social cognitive Neuroscience
• Decision Making
• Emotional Regulation
• Attention
• Perception
• Cognition
• Memory
• Movement
• Emotion
• Language

Mind

Brain

Neuroanatomy
Neurophysiology
Neurobiology
Neuroimaging

What is NeuroLeadership?

The neuroscience of:

• Making decisions & solving problems
• Staying cool under pressure
• Collaborating with others
• Facilitating change

NeuroLeadership Institute

Annual summit
Journal
Certificate, Post-Graduate & Masters Degrees

Informing coaching, leadership development, change management, learning.

What isn’t budging much

- Coaching to improve performance
- Fostering creativity
- Driving change
- Growing talent

What brain research does

- Confirm our hunches

What brain research does

- Make us rethink assumptions

What brain research does

- Deeper human skills development, with more people, at more senior levels.
The need to adapt

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Importance</th>
<th>Individual</th>
<th>Line manager</th>
<th>Manager of managers</th>
<th>Executive</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self &amp; social awareness</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Technical skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Capacity for self &amp; social awareness</td>
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The leader’s world

- Massive volumes of data to process
- High need for insightful thinking
- Deep importance of social connection

What the brain needs

1. Moderate stress
2. Good sleep
3. Positive affect

The reality

Too much to do → Being seen by others

Deal with uncertainty

Payne (2011)
Impact of a threat response

- Increase motor functioning
- Reduce field of view
- Reduce working memory
- Result in fewer insights
- Increase pessimism

Circuits for goals v people

Being goal-focused switches off the circuits for thinking in terms of people.

Spunt & Lieberman (in press)

We’re poor at mentalizing

The “false consensus” effect.
Hard to consider the mind of others who don’t know what you do.
We assume people similar to us think like us.
High cognitive load makes this much worse.

Self = Social

The circuits for thinking about self are activated in a similar way when thinking about others.

Lieberman & Pfeifer (2005)
**How brain research helps**

- Adaptive behavior
- Integrated brain
- Self-regulation capacity
- Language for mental experience
- Willingness to change
- Brain research

**What we know**

- Areas of high certainty
- Areas with some research
- Areas with no research

**Four surprises**

1. The rational is overrated
2. We’ve got emotions backward
3. Social issues are primary
4. Attention changes the brain

**Resources**

**Books:**
- Quiet Leadership - David Rock (Collins, 2006)
- Coaching with the Brain in Mind - Rock & Page (Wiley, July 2009)
- Your Brain at Work - David Rock (Harper Business, October 2009)

**Other resources:**
- www.NeuroLeadership.org - summit, graduate certificate, journal
- NeuroLeadership.com - brain-based coaching programs
- DavidRock.net - blog, interviews, audio, articles, research

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References


