



Leading Clarity

The Breakthrough Strategy to Unleash People, Profit and Performance

THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

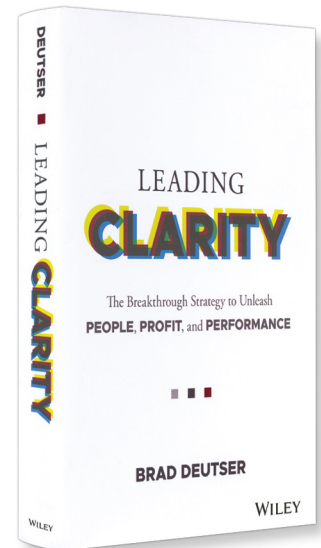
Today's business environment is more complex than at any time in history, with greater ambiguity, chaos and uncertainty. Too often, individuals and organizations become bogged down with competing priorities and the constant press of daily demands. This tangled mass of noise effectively handicaps every facet of business.

Leading Clarity offers a bold proposal that changes the trajectory of your business and leadership. Author Brad Deutser shares the secrets of his proven blueprint for creating clarity, the key measure of unprecedented success and a vital factor in productivity, engagement and performance. He takes you beyond understanding the strengths and weaknesses of individuals and teams and guides you through a dynamic process that unveils what is most critical and enduring about your business.

Clarity is the dynamic force that aligns and connects the most critical business principles. *Leading Clarity* moves you beyond preconceived limitations and sets new direction, expectation and pathways for success.

IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- To lead teams and individuals with clear direction and purpose.
- To value inside-the-box thinking and innovation.
- To identify the impact drivers that keep your employees happier, more engaged and performing at their peak.
- To address common misalignments and masqueraders of clarity.
- To infuse positivity into your organization's DNA.



by Brad Deutser

CONTENTS

Think Inside the Box

Page 2

The Six Sides of Clarity

Page 3

Misalignment Will Derail You

Page 4

Performance by Design

Page 5

The Energy of Alignment

Page 6

Masqueraders of Clarity

Page 7

Clarity as Process, aka Magic

Page 8

THE COMPLETE SUMMARY: LEADING CLARITY

by Brad Deutser

The author: Brad Deutser is a thought-provoking counselor and trusted confidant to leaders in diverse industries around the world. As a business advisor, culture authority, creative strategist and executive coach to CEOs, board chairs and top corporate management for high-profile organizations, Brad leverages his unique perspective and pedigree to drive organizational performance. As president and CEO of Deutser, he is the visionary behind this innovative consulting firm focused on helping organizations and their leaders achieve clarity to drive business performance.

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The Clarity Conundrum

With all the business tools and approaches that are routinely deployed, there is one outlier that is consistently misunderstood, misapplied and vastly underrated. While it may be harder to measure than those most often relied on to create stability, it has been shown to improve performance, profitability and, ultimately, the viability of a company.

What is this mystery function? Clarity. Clarity operates on the truth that everything is connected. We are never going to “have” clarity. It isn’t ours to own. Clarity isn’t an arrival point, a vista or a destination.

Clarity is the foundational fabric that weaves together dreams, goals, initiatives, concerns, challenges and triumphs. Clarity is all about people. People make organizations. It is how we hang tough when called upon to do so and bring forward something wonderful when the weave works. Clarity can’t be simply communicated. It needs structure and has to be constructed.

Instead of *finding* clarity, real value occurs when you, and ultimately your organization, are *in* clarity, which is a state that has both a form and methodology that can be relied on and can facilitate quick, and sometimes effortless, recalibration when faced with challenge. Being in clarity opens a way of creating personal capital that allows you to be steady in any storm.

Considered as a destination, clarity can be lost or obscured the moment the landscape changes or environmental factors dim your view. In clarity, we can see all factors, recognize them for what they are and what they can become, and create connections that can be

relied on to establish or re-establish equilibrium and an environment for growth.

What starts happening when clarity is actively pursued? It gives leaders a tool with which to more effectively lead. It gives everybody a place to unite, creating employees who are better-performing and more engaged, happier and increasingly committed rather than merely compliant. It gives the external constituents of a business, including customers, vendors and partners, something more defined, authentic and aligned with which to connect. Clarity delivers an organization that is fully functioning on all cylinders. Clarity delivers results. ●

Think Inside the Box

The concept of “thinking outside the box” has been the go-to, we’re-all-about-it superstar for decades. Proponents say thinking outside the box fires up creativity and that it can result in inventive solutions to an organization’s most nagging problems.

But for all the positive promotion it’s received over the years, that philosophy may be putting too much emphasis on the wrong side of the box. You have a much better chance of success if you understand the parameters you’re working *within* as an organization, and then see if you can stretch the box to meet your goals and vision.

Taking into account real-world limitations — such as budget constraints, industry regulations, looming deadlines — can actually help to spark creativity by keeping it focused rather than using an open-ended, anything-goes approach that doesn’t reliably result in ideas that can be implemented from a practical standpoint.



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SUMMARY: LEADING CLARITY

The construct of each box is unique. Companies across the world devise strategies to create an original and appropriate box for their industry, markets, products, services and realities. While the challenges for each company are unique, the components and framework are consistent.

The four sides of the box are direction, operations, people and engagement. These four components are the critical factors that contribute to and directly affect performance and culture. Each side also has three dimensions that bring color and definition to the side.

Side one: Direction. Direction affects every aspect of the company and its ability to connect with and move its people to a shared vision of where the company is going. The three dimensions for direction are vision and values, strategy and leadership.

A strong and well-defined vision creates a momentum that compels others to follow and actively promote it through their work. Values set the standards of what is important to your company. Your strategy tells the plan of where your company is headed — it is your definition of change. Finally, it is up to the leadership to establish a purposeful culture and empower a consistently productive working environment.

Side two: Operations. This is the company's ability to respond to external changes as well as employees' ability to respond to organizational changes. The first dimension is adaptability. In a purposeful organization, the box creates an optimal environment in which adaptability is part of the way the company operates, not an individual struggle.

The second dimension is performance management. Operating in clarity means having clear data metrics in place that measure those behaviors, actions and outcomes that are an integral part of key initiatives. The third dimension is systems and processes, which exist to streamline work.

Side three: People. The people of a company are what motivate growth and sustain the parameters of the box that you define. Without their investment in the vision and their understanding of the pathways in place to reach optimal performance, your strategy will inevitably fall short of its expected outcomes. The first dimension for people is coaching and development. The onus is on the leadership to recognize the talents, sometimes hidden in an employee, and help to elevate them to a new level of performance with focused coaching and development.

The second dimension is talent management, a critical factor in clarity as teams and individuals grapple with increasing demands placed on them, including the pace with which we work, technology updates and demands, and general uncertainty. The third dimension is team

capabilities. When collaboration and co-creation are valued, hired for and expected, it releases the need to be the smartest person in the room. Teams add to clarity by providing sounding-boards for ideas and possibilities.

Side four: Engagement. Engagement focuses on having engaged employees but also examines the extent to which an organization engages with other stakeholders, both internal (including board members and volunteers) or external (including clients or customers). The first dimension here is employee clarity and fit. In addition to the requisite skillset, employees should be hired, evaluated and trained based on shared values and core competencies.

The second dimension is customer focus. Companies and customers enter into an exchange of expectations and delivery of goods and services. As with internal culture, these expectations can be clear and purposeful, or they develop unintentionally as either an informal or even a more formal social contract. The third dimension is communication effectiveness. In clarity, communication evokes a connection, a response, and establishes transparency and authenticity as its goal. With this style of communicating, everyone involved wants to interact with it and contribute to it.

The reality is that when everyone is holding onto the same box, they come alive, encourage responsible creativity and drive real innovation. ●

The Six Sides of Clarity

The organizational box is actually a cube with four sides but also a top and a bottom. The fifth and sixth sides of the box add dimension to our box and keep the tasks of the four sides both contained and connected.

The bottom of the box, which is the fifth side, starts with **identity**. Organizational identity is the enduring essence of an organization, the unique product of its history. Identity is not something that can be copied from others, and it serves as the anchor that grounds an organization and acts as the filter through which it screens its actions. Four key elements make up identity:

Characteristics are what is central, enduring and distinct about the organization. An organization's characteristics answer the question, "Who are we?"

Purpose is why an organization exists. It is the glue that binds people together in common cause, answering the questions, "Why do we do what we do? What needs do we fill? What impact do we have?"

Values are the beliefs and motives that leaders and employees hold in common.

SUMMARY: LEADING CLARITY

Traditions are the beliefs, behaviors and activities that have been passed down within the organization that set it apart from others and help foster a sense of shared identity.

The sixth side, or top of the box, is **environment**. This side encourages us to ask three broad questions to get a sense of how our characteristics, purpose and values align with the outside world. When we define our organizational identity, we must then ask, “What are our stakeholders saying, what are our stakeholders doing and how are our stakeholders feeling?” These three elements make up the external yin to our internal yang.

What people say, how they act and what they are really feeling is not always clear or completely in alignment with our internal culture. In contract negotiations, we may be dealing with someone on the other side of the table who says they care about relationships and hold values like integrity in the highest esteem. But when the going gets tough, will they live their espoused values? Will they follow through on their commitments if their business hits a hard patch? Can you trust what people are saying without a proper accounting of their recent actions and the nature of what is going on around their business?

Whether it is a startup, a nonprofit, a 100-year-old thriving business or publicly traded company, there is immense value in going back to identity and understanding the environmental factors that will ultimately shape your future. You may not be able to control the factors around you, but you can and must be aware, react, prepare for them and anticipate what will happen next. ●

Misalignment Will Derail You

Misalignment is the weak link in your structure that stresses the whole of your organization and creates a workplace ripe for chaos, disagreement and dissension. Misalignment keeps organizations from actualizing their purpose because the flow is off, and additional effort and resources are required simply to get things back on track, much less move them forward.

If you commit to the process and state of being in clarity, you’ll have a much better shot at recognizing misalignments before they spread and send energy and resources in directions that are off plan or even completely outside your box.

Common misalignments include vision vs. execution; status quo vs. moving forward; communication vs. intention; founder vs. leader; front of house vs. back of house; values vs. strategy; people vs. profit; present vs.

future; systems vs. silos; boards vs. leadership; franchisee vs. franchiser; and responsibility vs. personal profit.

Communication vs. Intentions

For example, let’s look at communication vs. intentions. When the people on the front lines are left to interpret the words and intent of the leadership, it creates gaps in understanding and action, causing misalignment.

An international company with offices in the United States, South America, Egypt, Australia and the United Kingdom faced a challenging situation after the company republished its core values across the world to all employees. Before this republication, their values were pushed only in the United States. They thought it would be a good idea to “share this in the spirit of transparency and communication.”

But they weren’t looking at the dynamics of the full box. They had missed the people component of cultural differences, and this action led to great disparity of understanding and misalignment across the globe — causing employees in South America to literally define one value as an unpleasant bodily function, in Australia to reject it because it was offensive, while in the United States, it had been a call to rally because of the spirit it represented.

The fundamental definition of the values was not what was in question; rather, the choice of words and open interpretation they allowed. The leaders initially missed the opportunity to listen and understand across the globe how that one value could be adjusted to unite across cultures rather than to divide and be left open for interpretation.

Boards vs. Leadership

Increasingly, CEOs are spending time simply managing up to their boards and fulfilling requests for their bosses. Some boards struggle with understanding their role in defining a vision and the CEO’s role in setting the strategy to achieve it. Other boards overstep their bounds and get into the operational arena of the institution, most times to leverage their immense professional talent, although other times to undermine the CEO. Some boards create misalignment with the leader simply because they, as a board, do not agree on some issue, and factions need to create the misalignment to ensure that progress from the CEO is halted.

The reality is that all businesses, in every state of success, experience some form of misalignment at some time in their existence. The key is to recognize the signs and to quickly get to the root of impediments and the misalignments that take the company and their people off track. Being in clarity demands not only an active

SUMMARY: LEADING CLARITY

view of the misalignment but a determined leader willing to do what he or she needs to break through the clutter and chaos misalignments create. ●

Performance by Design

Performance by design is about connecting where you are *now* with where you want and need to be. There's already a space where you can be better than your currently known best, and the true secret is *you already know it*.

In clarity, there is a deep comprehension of what needs to come together and connect in order to draw forth the necessary energy, ideas and resources. Design serves as your bridge from where you are to where you want to be, and gives you a touch and glimpse of the potential to get you there.

For example, let's consider the power of symbols. There is nothing more intentional than symbols in our lives and our work. These symbols help us to identify with companies, people and groups. A critical part of branding, they give us a quick cue that we've found one of our own, something that by design fits with a part of our identity, needs and wants. They help to form, communicate and protect culture on the inside of the box and communicate, inspire and make a deep connection in the environment outside our box, extending our reach to our stakeholders.

Think of the tied yellow ribbon hoping to bring someone home, for example. Sports organizations have also understood performance by design for many decades, knowing that their symbols, colors and team spirit are inseparable, and fans fill the stadiums excited to share a common experience, which has been methodically crafted.

Positivity

The power of the mind for convincing people that they can achieve at higher levels than they ever imagined is core to our success. Defining the expectation and then living up to it is at the heart of purposeful design.

For example, a high-end retail company has been successful by remaining true to their core product. They experienced double-digit growth year after year by focusing on what they did best. Then the market changed.

Imports (not American-made) became the industry norm. The economy turned and a slew of competitors entered the market. Their core product no longer enjoyed the same success they had previously experienced. They literally watched their industry change around them — secondary products, with much greater margin than their core products, were afterthoughts to them.

Then, a leadership change occurred, accompanied by a mandate of immediate growth and increased returns to their parent company. The area for immediate impact was obvious — this underperforming segment. Before changing the display or bringing in extra product, the new CEO designed his effort around his team that sold the product. He convinced the organization that this segment was important. He positively included it in every message, in every report and in every personal interaction with salespeople.

More than anything, he convinced the entire workforce that this was important and that they could be successful. He was right. After three months, performance in that area alone increased by more than 180 percent, proving that if you design to believe, you can achieve. By altering the expectations in the workforce and incentivizing them to buy into and believe in the new approach, the rest will follow as their actions realign.

Design is the medium that helps to define the soul of an organization, directing the interactions that take place there, the way people perform and the impression that gets left behind. Whether you are creating a customer experience, building and outfitting an office space or creating the iconic symbol that you will become known by, the design process is inextricably linked to everything that your company will be. ●

Impact Drivers

What makes a positive culture? Leaders in touch with their people and people aligned with the organizational expectations.

The Deutser Company's work and research have identified 11 levers that together will shift the organization toward positivity and drive performance. Let's look at a few of these levers and discuss their importance.

Lever: Organizational audit. Compliant companies are conducting annual surveys to assess organizational awareness, understanding and engagement. However, more and more, leaders believe conducting the survey is enough — rarely sharing the results back to their employees in a meaningful way. Employees invest the time but are not sure their voice is heard.

To be committed and create impact,

- Standardize a survey establishing a benchmark.
- Communicate responses with actions.
- Set up third-party administration and evaluation to encourage acceptance by the workforce.

SUMMARY: LEADING CLARITY

- Address gaps and share the expectations to ensure accountability.

Lever: Behavioral alignment. Compliant companies often weight knowledge, skills and abilities over behaviors in their hiring and development processes. Some companies unintentionally allow competing models across the organization and do not link behaviors and values.

To be committed and create impact,

- Set clear expectations — identify levels and behaviors.
- Align behaviors with values.
- Understand important traditions.
- Educate and engage employees around your values and behaviors: what they mean and what successful actions look like.
- Integrate values and behaviors into how you hire, evaluate and develop your people.

Lever: Organizational communication. Compliant companies place great effort into communications. They have newsletters, videos and other web-based tools. They focus on delivering the message du jour, rarely linking it to organizational strategies and priorities or taking into account the manner in which it is received by employees. They value communicating over engaging. They focus on different messages to different audiences, often with an obsession on the external customer.

To be committed and create impact,

- Develop an organizational communication platform with all constituencies identified.
- Align communications with strategy and culture, not just operations.
- Create internal focus first.
- Promote face-to-face communication when possible.

Lever: Customer experience modeling. Compliant companies focus on the customer experience with a variety of tools. Many place a heavy emphasis on one or two key touchpoints at the expense of all others. There is a lack of focus on the totality that a touchpoint on a customer, internal or external, will have with the organization. This produces an inconsistent understanding of the customer, an uneven narrative and an unfulfilled experience.

To be committed and create impact,

- Identify all touchpoints for customer experiences.
- Develop a plan for each touchpoint before, during and after the experience.

- Identify “100 little things” that can transform a customer experience.
- Develop a purposeful experience plan targeting a minimum number of changes each quarter.

When the right levers are pulled with the right force, the fusion of information and engagement creates a chain reaction that catalyzes all dimensions of performance. ●

The Energy of Alignment

Alignment is all about a different level of engagement and energy. It isn't about right and wrong; it isn't about only one way to do things. Alignment becomes the power source in an environment in which we are clear about what we're doing and why, what our role is in the shape of what's to come, and even clear about what our reward will be for bringing more than “good enough” to the table.

Alignment occurs when people are acknowledged for putting themselves out there and yet clear about what the boundaries are.

Alignment generates energy that propels us to do our part, which brings us into constant awareness that our part is essential to the overall process and the whole of success.

Alignment creates energy that others want to share in. People want to belong to a dream, plan or initiative that is bigger than their individual experience. In clarity, we can see where the connections need to be made and design for them accordingly.

Alignment also supercharges creativity. A startup that had increased the number of its employees by more than a thousand people in its first year took a very purposeful, proactive approach to creating a fully aligned organization with natural energetic pathways to support work being conducted across the United States.

Their intentionality was clear from the first day of operations, when they went through strategic and culture-defining exercises, even though at that time the organization consisted of only three passionate professionals. It was their intention to create the expectations and encourage alignment with each future acquisition and hire.

On its one-year anniversary, in an attempt to take all the words — the vision, the values, the behaviors — they had put together to define the company and bring it to life, the leaders rolled out a boots-on-the-ground tour. They gathered people in town hall formats and reiterated what made their company so different. The words were powerful and inspiring.

SUMMARY: LEADING CLARITY

But, more so, it was the leader standing out in the open, with no notes, simply being himself and telling the story of where they were going together. He was genuine in his delivery and perfect with his words, authenticity and appeal. People were inspired and they believed. At the end of the presentation, the leader said, “They don’t call this the boots-on-the-ground tour for nothing” — before he pointed to the corner of the room, which was stacked with boxes of new branded boots for every employee.

The creativity of the delivery and the positivity that his words and actions injected were lasting and meaningful. It was also measurable, as their results hit every goal they set. Most important, they established that they cared about one thing — doing things the right way for the employees.

What matters most about alignment is that it changes the flow of things. You begin to see that your efforts are both bringing intended results as well as attracting other positives, resources and assets you hadn’t imagined. It creates an ease within the effort, not one that suggests you sit back but, rather, one that propels you forward because you can feel the surge of energy that surrounds your efforts and even your solutions. ●

Masqueraders of Clarity

There is a category of energy wasters that masquerade as something or someone who will bring value and forward motion, but in reality, are tricksters. In their best light, they waste your time. In the revealing light of clarity, they can be found to cloud thinking and often put teams and organizations on an imposter’s path that leads to somewhere else, taking them away from their core and creating the fractured energy of something that is not what it seems.

The waste of time, energy and money that is invested and often exhausted on these masqueraders can be significant. Understanding and being able to recognize them is fundamental to operating and leading in clarity. Let’s consider a few:

Suck-ups and people pleasers. Suck-ups are yes people and, as such, oppose clarity. When generous, they are telling you 50 percent of the truth and withholding the other 50 percent to serve their own purpose and to use strategically when it will best enhance their position. They masquerade as leaders, often found on the ladder to top positions or as a staff member whom the leader relies heavily on and, as such, has the leader’s ear, attention and time. Where the masquerade begins is when their own ambition or self-protectionism taints the flow of data and information up the chain of

leadership. They are often manipulating information and data — and always manipulating access.

Past performance. History, while it can be an indicator, does not dictate or ensure future performance. Yet, all too often, organizations are stymied by the constant reliance on the past; for example, “This always works”; “Why change what’s working?”; “I’ve always done it this way.” The reliance on and connection to the past disallows our energy to be in the present or to morph into a necessary future state. It makes us derivative instead of original, meek instead of bold, and can trick us to be like the frog in a pot of boiling water that doesn’t notice that the temperature is rising.

Policy. Policy is often code for “this is what we least like to deal with, so here’s our policy on it.” Plain and simple, policies exist as a perceived protection — for a company, its employees or an individual. Predictably, they serve as basic, average rules instead of commonsense guidelines. They are engineered to strip people from making individual decisions, thereby providing perceived protection for the employer. Clarity allows space and structure for something other than a narrowly prescribed code of behavior, and encourages openness and dialogue when there is a difference of opinion or insight into guidelines.

Politics. By its very nature, politics is one of the great and most destructive masqueraders. Politics is rarely, if ever, about doing what is right for the whole of a company or organization. Politics is about serving someone’s or something’s best self-interest. Politics masquerades as leadership, but in fact, it is only survival of the weak-minded elected or appointed official. This can occur in organizations in which the CEO is caught between board members pushing for change and those holding on for the status quo, or worse, when CEOs acquiesce to a board’s shortsighted directive against the long-term best interest, solely for survival.

The clarity comes when the politics are pierced and doing right prevails, even when that means taking the ultimate professional risk and doing what is right over the objection of a senior leader demanding some other solution.

These masqueraders are a form of survival mechanism that are used far too often, sometimes accidentally and other times intentionally. But all the same, they end up degrading the interactions in the in-between and redirecting the outcome that best serves neither the organization nor the leader. ●

Clarity as Process, aka Magic

In the traditional use of the word, alchemy is a biochemical process through which something is

SUMMARY: LEADING CLARITY

transformed. In clarity, this transformation occurs as the energy created by each component begins to travel through and permeate the organization. As alignment takes place, the energy lifts the known, manages the unknown and becomes that magical something where the expected and unexpected meet and fully form something much larger and more glorious than the original sum of the individual parts could promise.

The energy behind that alchemy begins when people become clear on who they are, what they do and how they do it.

Operating in clarity creates an environment in which people become the heart of everything. When they become the heart and soul of everything, lives are changed — both those who work for the organization and those who are touched by its work and outreach.

This was especially true when the Deutser Company was hired by a financially strapped healthcare system that played a major role in a mid-sized market. This system, which was acquired by a larger institution, was given an abrupt 90 days to turn their business around. And by business, they meant everything. Deutser was basically brought in to save the day.

The Deutser team knew that one thing could quickly unite all, and that was the deep caring of what could happen to these patients. It seems obvious that healthcare is about the patient. Unfortunately, this is not always the case — there are times where it is about something or someone different.

But in this case the research was clear. And so was the directive. Put the patient in the center — not with words but with real, meaningful and measurable expectations.

The Deutser team started its effort with two letters: CE — clinical excellence. There was so much negativity swirling around the health system, and rumor and innuendo ruled the narrative. The Deutser team held true to the belief that simplicity is power. They needed to bring that concept together in a way that people could see it, feel it and understand it. And they could remember it and put it into their daily actions.

The strategy focused on the people. The culture exercise focused on the people. The outreach and education focused on the people. The financial conversations always went back to the people. The biggest shift was the care and concern focused on the people. Everyone rallied around the idea that if the system failed, then they would all fail.

The vision was clear. The expectation was clear. The expected behavior was clear. So too, was the changing identity becoming clear. Every aspect of their box

was clear. But the one thing that was missing was the collective belief in and positivity that the future could be different from the past.

The initiative most remembered for bringing the system, and more importantly, the people, together in clarity was an interactive event and whole-system planning exercise. More than 7,000 people inside and outside the system were figuratively transported to the future. People were formally invited to a Disney-like experience in which every detail was considered. It was about transporting the minds, hearts, souls and bodies of each person connected, regardless of how, around the new vision and strategy. It became a push-and-pull experience inside the organization and outside the organization. And, as the expectations changed, so did the results.

A community of physicians, caregivers, administrators, board members, community leaders and supporters, media allies, and even some competitors as well as philanthropists alike were transported by possibility and aligned through clinical excellence.

Magic is the convergence of all the strategies discussed above. And, when magic does happen, we are able to achieve a measure of impact that is beyond our wildest expectations.

Life is a never-ending road. There will be places to speed up and slow down, places to turn right and left, as well as opportunities to explore new paths. But most important, you have to first get on the road and always lead with clarity. ●

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