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**"Learn all you can from this book, and implement
that learning in your workplace!"**

—Marshall Goldsmith, Thinkers50 #1 Leadership Thinker in the World

POWER
your
TRIBES

*create resilient teams
in turbulent times*

CHRISTINE COMAFORD

**NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF
SMARTTRIBES AND RULES FOR RENEGADES**

Dear Reader,

In a world where change is the new constant, resilience is paramount for the success of your team, your organization, and your bottom line. Our ability to adapt and pivot has never been more important. And our ability to help our teams to do so as well is essential.

How do we help our teams to see change as an opportunity and eagerly jump on board?

You are about to find out.

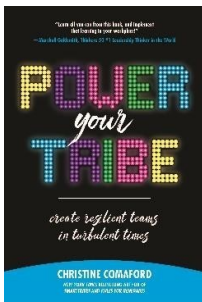
Over my three decades of building business and helping to cultivate leaders and their teams, I have found that certain specific neuroscience techniques enable one to cultivate the emotional agility that will empower them to succeed at speeds most companies struggle to achieve. These techniques are easy to learn, gentle, beneficial and tremendously helpful in all human interactions.

This excerpt of Power Your Tribe will get you started on embracing the fact that change is the new constant, tapping into all of your inherent brilliance and making change something your team will learn to love! Please feel free to share it with your colleagues, team, strategic partners, friends, loved ones, and human beings in general.

Everyone deserves the opportunity to change how they interact with human beings and experience more rich and rewarding relationships. Power Your Tribe will take you and keep you at the heights of emotional agility and success.

Thanks for the opportunity to be of service to you,

Christine Comaford
SmartTribes Institute, LLC



To order Power Your Tribe,
please visit
www.PowerYourTribe.com

To book Christine for your next corporate event, or to inquire about executive coaching and leadership/team development services, please call 415-969-7563 or e-mail Ops@SmartTribesInstitute.com

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Preface

A Fortune 500 consumer products organization was facing a crisis—5,000 people in their Latin America sales and marketing division were in Critter State (fight, flight, freeze). With unstable and plunging currencies, unpredictable dictators, and supply chains that disappeared overnight, Latin America was the worst-performing region. Change was a constant, crisis was the result, and no one knew when the next disaster would strike. Executive leadership reached out to us, asking our help to get their 5,000 struggling people into their Smart State (where they could more easily navigate change and reduce stress).

We started with 50 leaders, teaching them our proven and easy neuroscience-based tools in an intensive day-long session. With greater emotional agility, they experienced rapid progress and told their colleagues. Then we worked with the next batch of 50, and so on, until the top 200 leaders and executors were on board. People stopped seeing themselves as victims and started seeing themselves as outcome creators; their only question was, “What outcome do we want to create today?”

The empowerment spread outward, downward, and upward, across the organization. And 2.5 years later, Latin America was the top performer—delivering over 50 percent of the growth annually to the entire corporation. Our client’s executives knew their people had the power within themselves to triumph. They simply needed some new tools.

A U.S.-based healthcare provider faced a different type of change challenge: the extreme stress that comes with exponential growth. They had nearly doubled the size of their organization from \$13 billion to over \$20 billion from their acquisition of a key competitor. The finance team had a tremendous task before them: how to integrate both companies, streamline financial operations, reduce redundancies, navigate politics, and side-step sacred cows, all while honoring the “nice” culture our client was famous for. The finance leaders were overworked, their teams were super stressed, and the work was just beginning.

We started with a year-long program to boost leadership and deeply empower the finance leaders to “move the decision making down” that had historically been held closely in the C- suite. As the leaders embraced our neuroscience-based tools, they cultivated and elevated their teams, stopped giving orders (and started asking questions), and transformed the change experience from fear and uncertainty into empowerment and ownership. In six-months the team was emotionally agile, self-directed, and firing on all cylinders.

A market-leading food organization was in a bind. A fake news story on social media had spread like wildfire and revenues of one of their top brands had plunged 27 percent. It was crucial to stop the slide, stabilize, and then start to rebuild.

We were brought in to train a few dozen leaders in optimal teaming, rapidly engaging and enrolling large and diverse groups to come together, focus on outcomes, tell themselves and each other new stories about their situation, and get momentum going. Then we shifted our focus to the marketing team, supporting an initiative to reinvent how the organization marketed

to consumers. We started the day with an intense emotion-shifting exercise. Fifteen minutes into it, half the team had shifted from victimhood/disaster thinking to empowerment/possibility thinking. Fifteen more minutes, and the other half were on board. Now it was time to teach them how to bring our tools to their teams.

The result: the brand is safe and growing, and the leaders are stepping into new levels of accountability, meaning, and fulfillment—and bringing their teams forward with them. If a disaster ever strikes again, they'll navigate it gracefully and swiftly.

These very different companies have three things in common. First, they all face the challenges of constant, relentless, unpredictable change. And they're only going to see more of that in today's super-fast, information-overload, immediate-response world.

Second, they have the driving need to shift their panicking teams to a more resourceful state where they are *emotionally agile*—and to mobilize these teams quickly and efficiently toward a clear outcome. Knowing what you need to do and how to get to where you want is not sufficient. People must be trained, equipped, and capable of taking the necessary action to shift their *emotional* state in order to get there—and that includes you as the leader.

Third, when these companies used the SmartTribes tools to become more emotionally agile, they began to succeed at speeds most companies struggle to achieve.¹ Constant, relentless change was now an opportunity to *grow*, not just “go.”

In other words, all these companies needed to get people on board to create necessary change. It wasn't a choice. It was a necessity. All needed new tools because the ones that worked in the past were no longer effective. They needed a new way to *power their tribes*.

Power Your Tribe is the next evolution and extension of our *New York Times*–bestselling book *SmartTribes*.² Though it is worth your time to read *SmartTribes* at some stage, you don't need to read it to benefit from this book.

If you *have* read *SmartTribes*, *Power Your Tribe* reinforces the core principles you are familiar with and provides new tools. As the business environment has changed significantly in recent years—making it even clearer that relentless change is now the norm—we at SmartTribes Institute (STI) are continually discovering, pioneering, and implementing new frames of operation and behavior. We do this to support our clients who are faced with—and will continue to be faced with—change.

Where *SmartTribes* explained how teams become brilliant together, *Power Your Tribe* shows how teams use emotional agility to *stay* brilliant together—no matter how turbulent the times and no matter what external changes you face.

¹To access our complimentary growth assessment and leadership assessment tools, visit SmartTribesInstitute.com.

²Christine Comaford, *SmartTribes: How Teams Become Brilliant Together* (Portfolio/Penguin, 2013).

Where Change Occurs

Change appears in many forms, including:

- External threats, where people feel victimized by constant change from both external forces and senior leadership's response to those forces
- Exciting and often significant external and/or internal opportunities for growth
- Internal changes in structure/administration/leadership/policies
- Overwhelm due to pace of change and/or growth
- Resistance to change due to uncertainty about what it means/what may result

It is important to understand that change occurs on many levels, including environment, behavior, capability, belief, identity, and core, which you'll learn more about in Chapter 1. Changes in any of these areas are tremendously threatening to our reptilian/mammalian brain, which exists to ensure we survive. Because our reptilian/mammalian brain thinks change just might kill us, it can subconsciously keep us from making the change we know we need—as you'll see in Chapter 2.

One of the greatest challenges that comes with change is the feeling of isolation, fear, uncertainty, and doubt. When we're unsure of how to move forward and unclear about what the change means, we often withdraw and isolate ourselves to make sense of what is happening. But we are tribal beings. We need to be together. We need to know we're safe, we belong, and we matter.

So, the key to successful change is understanding and navigating the *emotional* undercurrent of change *together*. Where other approaches deal with the surface issues involved in change, in this book we'll dive deeply into the emotional undertow that often accompanies growth and change, so you can learn how to remove emotional resistance to get where you need to be.

This is not to be confused with *removing* your emotions, ignoring them, or setting them aside. This book is about learning how to *use* emotions to win. You will learn first how to shift your own emotional state, and then how to shift the emotional state of others—and pursue the outcomes you want together. Because while we can't control external events, we can absolutely control our *internal* events—how we respond to all that is happening outside of us (and even inside of us).

Change and Growth Require Emotional Agility

What if I told you that a bird doesn't need its wings to fly from A to B? Or that it doesn't need to flap its wings to fly? You'd think I was being preposterous.

Wings for a bird are like emotions for human beings. Life is an emotional experience. Work is an emotional experience. Human beings *navigate* with their emotions. Emotions are the wings that get us from A to B. Without them, we can't fly. The greatest highs, lows, triumphs, and fears all come from emotional experience. Emotions are a large part of how we experience the world, each other, and ourselves. And *emotional agility* is how well we use our wings to fly.

Daniel Goleman's groundbreaking book *Emotional Intelligence* changed the way we think about human interaction—and made it OK to acknowledge that humans are emotional beings, even at work.³ The concept of Emotional Intelligence (EQ) is crucial for us all to understand because the lack of it causes the majority of human conflicts, including terminations, divorces, and even wars.

But as most of us realize, it's not enough to simply *know* that emotional intelligence is important. While EQ informs us about the quality of our wings, *Power Your Tribe* will teach you *how* to use those wings to great effect. In a sense, this book picks up where *Emotional Intelligence* leaves off—it reveals how to change your behavior at the subconscious level to increase your EQ.

But how *do* we shift our emotional state to achieve the outcomes we want, especially when we're overwhelmed by constant change? We certainly know it's not as simple as telling ourselves, "OK, let's look at this in a positive light." Nor is it useful to tell someone, "Stop feeling overwhelmed. It's not helping anybody!"

There are *steps* to changing our emotional state. The first thing we need to know is that it's not what happens to us that matters. It's the meaning we attach to what happens that matters. And the meaning we attach is based on what we tell ourselves about what happened. If what we tell ourselves is positive, we'll have good feelings. If what we tell ourselves is negative, we'll have bad feelings. If it feels good, we'll call it a good experience. If it feels bad, we'll call it a bad experience.

However, the meaning we make about what happens to us often operates well outside our conscious awareness. It not only governs how we behave, it can limit our capabilities—which is why it's essential to understand the meaning we are making so we can change it if need be. According to Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP), the human organism will always move toward the best *kinesthetic feeling*, which is the feeling or emotion we associate with a given experience (i.e., the meaning we give it). In neuro-linguistic shorthand, it's known as the "best K." If there isn't a "best K," it will move toward the *least bad* K. And since we'll keep experiencing what we're experiencing until we're done with it, it's key to be present in what is truly happening—and to clarify the meaning, find out what the Ks are, fully appreciate them, cease resisting, and create a vision for what we want next.

Let me give you an example. Suppose you're a sales director, and a big client—one that accounts for 30 percent of your topline revenue—stops working with you. Now you need to either replace that client or let go of some staff, maybe delay mission-critical initiatives, and explain the loss to the board. It feels bad, so it *is* bad. And you, as the sales director, may want to avoid feeling bad at all costs, whether that be via denial, avoidance, freezing up, or resolving to take your anger and frustration out on your team, all of which will likely create an environment of blame instead of collaboration.

³ Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence* (Random House, 2012)

However, avoiding bad feelings comes at a cost, too. An opportunity cost. A more emotionally agile sales director might still feel bad about losing a big client. It would be strange if they didn't. But the more emotionally agile sales director will also have another feeling available to them—the feeling of inspiration that comes with the challenge. Thus, that sales director will behave differently. They will consider it an opportunity to speak to the lost client and clarify with specificity *why* that client left. Rather than using the negative feelings as a sign of failure, they'll relate to those feelings as feedback and an impetus for growth. They might redirect their attention to incorporating the feedback from the lost client and mobilize the team to plug the holes in the company's main service offering, so the rest of the client base won't suffer the same consequences.

This agile maneuver can result in increased penetration per client and increased topline revenue per client account. The difference that made the difference? The *meaning* that the sales director made, and the *feelings* that were available to them as a result.

So if we want to inspire a new behavior in someone to achieve better results, then we need to create a better K around what we want a person (or ourselves) to do versus the pattern they (or we) keep repeating, which currently has the best K (or least bad K). As leaders, it's our job to add more options to the menu of possible behaviors—both for others and for ourselves. This is one of the key tools you'll be learning in thisbook.

Experience *can* be changed. We do this by changing what we tell ourselves about our experiences (the meaning we make), which changes how we feel and changes how we classify the experience. And yes, at times, we will help others change what they tell themselves. Because another job of leaders is to help expand the identities of their people: to help them see how much choice and power they truly have.

Emotional agility is, in essence, about choosing how you want to feel, and helping others choose how they feel, too. If emotions are the muscle, emotional agility is the flexibility, strength, and adaptability of the muscle. With the right tools and the right training, this form of agility can be built into the *muscle memory* of your organization. And the more emotionally agile your organization becomes, the less it needs to “think” about becoming more agile. What would that mean for your organization?

Your Playbook for Change

Power Your Tribe is based on the STI methodology we have created over the past 30-plus years of helping leaders get the results they want, from startups through Fortune 10 multinational organizations. Our blend of mapping diverse neuroscience research to practical tools and techniques have generated the many results our clients raveabout.

In this book, you're going to learn how to build emotional agility through a process called the

Resilience Cycle, which follows the change progression we see most commonly:

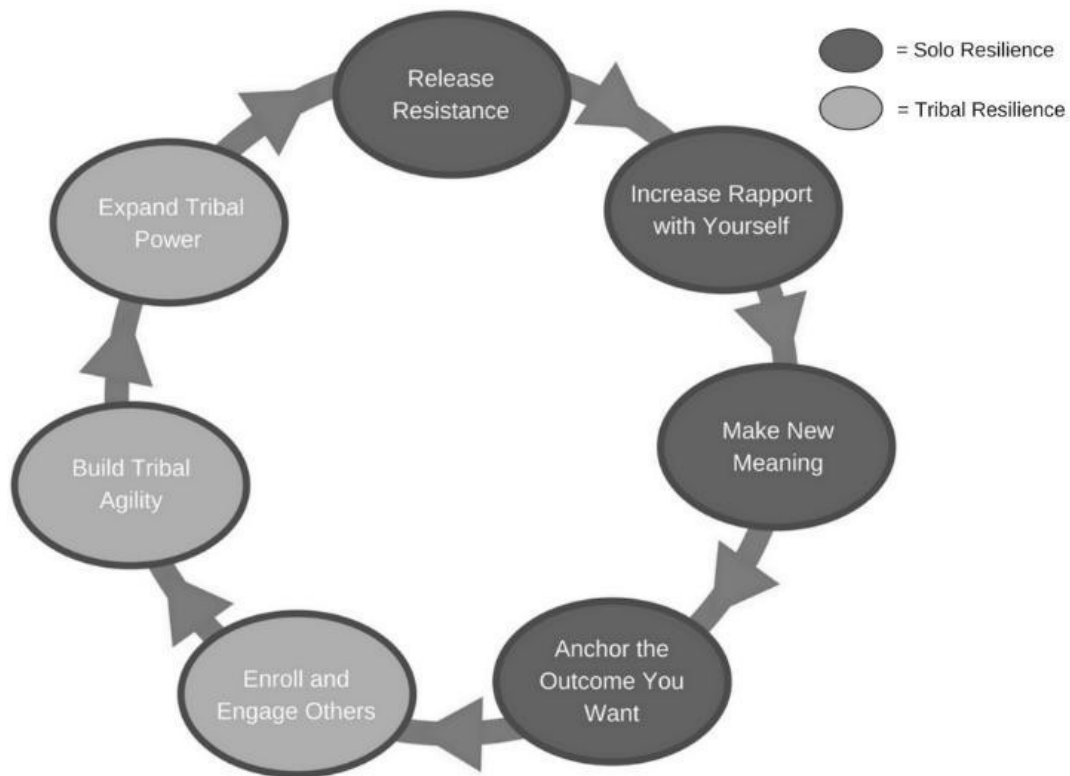


Figure 0.1. Resilience Cycle

We generally start out either *resisting* change or feeling annoyed/frustrated by it. Here most of us stay stuck, refusing to see change for what it is—an opportunity to acknowledge that what worked before doesn't any longer, or that the conditions in our life are now new.

Once we are able to move through resistance, we can stay present to what's happening by *increasing rapport with ourselves*. As a result, we can *create new meaning, expand our identity*, and ultimately have more choice. Then, with new choices open to us, we can *anchor the outcome* we want, *enroll and engage* our tribe in pursuing that outcome, and keep everyone *agile and powerful* as new changes arise.

Note: you may pop into the process at any point in the cycle. For example, if you're not resisting anything but need to make new meaning, start there.

And because just understanding the process isn't enough, to help you and your team move through each stage in the Resilience Cycle, you'll also receive a set of super powerful and effective tools that are easy to learn and use. Together, the process and tools are your change playbook. It'll help you implement change in your organization from the simplest to the most complex, from local to global, and from narrow to broad.

Emotional Agility + Tools = POWER.

In Part I: What Happens Inside When Change Happens Outside, you'll learn some foundational principles of how we experience the world—how we decide whether what is happening is “good” or “bad,” how stimulus from outside events causes us to assign meaning to our experience, and how your emotions even affect your cells.

Essentially, a business is made of people: employees, key stakeholders, and its owners. Adjusting the way people in a business behave and perform adjusts the way the business behaves and performs in the market. Therefore, if we want to change our business performance in change scenarios, we must first understand how *people* perform in change scenarios, so we know what needs to be adjusted (if necessary) to align with the business's performance objectives.

Based on this foundation, in Part II: The Power Your Tribe Playbook, you'll build emotional agility in yourself and those you lead in the change situations you face right now. You'll learn the tools and the process to release resistance, be fully present, make new meaning, anchor the outcome you want, and enroll and engage others in achieving that outcome—all while building a resilient tribe that has predictable revenue, passionate teams, and profitable growth. You'll also learn how to raise the bar and help your team redefine their personal best.

Finally, in Part III: The Power Your Tribe Playbook Case Studies, we will walk you through some client case studies that show you how to apply a specific mix of tools in a variety of contexts, such as leadership abusing power, competitive crush, merger and acquisition stress, and family business and board dysfunction.

At the end of the book you'll also find the Appendix, which includes a diagnostic chart you may use in any scenario that summarizes all the tools you now have in your toolbox, so you know when to use them and how.

This book is designed in a problem-promise-result format, so it's easy to see how our tools will help you accomplish your goals.

Change is the new constant. Use it to power your tribe.

Part I

What Happens Inside When Change Happens Outside

1. How Human Beings Experience the World

We decide whether an experience is “good” or “bad,” and the meaning we assign to our experience creates and reinforces our identity, beliefs, capabilities, and behavior.

“I need your help, Christine,” said the Chief Revenue Officer. “Our sales and marketing people are overwhelmed by constantly changing legislation, the new markets we’re trying to penetrate are not opening up, we’re missing revenue projections, and the board is increasing the pressure. Everyone is discouraged and knows they need to shift their attitude, but they can’t seem to do it. Healthcare is a tough enough business without all this internal turmoil!”

Have you ever been in this situation? External and internal factors are pressuring you, and there’s no sign of relief. You’ve got to get everyone on board pronto, but all your efforts haven’t worked. In the midst of it all, you’re doing your best to have a “better attitude” about the whole scenario. In this organization’s case, while the initial instinct was to throw more bodies, tools, or money at the problem, it was *not* what they needed. And it wasn’t as simple as just telling themselves to feel better.

For organizations in similar circumstances, the real issue has nothing to do with what happened or what needs to be done. It’s what it *means* that matters. The meaning determines how it feels. And if shifting their attitude doesn’t feel good, they won’t do it. They will stay stuck.

In a “perfect storm” scenario like this, we need to have tools to shift our state, which we’ll cover in Part II. But before we can use the tools, we must understand how we experience and create our experiences in the world. We must start with our emotions.

Consider this for a moment: if I delivered a big chunk of marble to your doorstep, how would you feel? If you viewed it as an obstruction, you’d probably feel annoyed. But if you were a sculptor, you might celebrate—you’d have some new material to work with!

*In this chapter, you’ll learn about what I call the Critter State and the Smart State, and you’ll see how shifting to the Smart State can help you and your teams view any situation the way a sculptor would. From the Smart State, teams can see new openings, new solutions, and new approaches. They can also reframe existing perceived problems and challenges as opportunities to work with, rather than seeing them as obstructions working *against* them. Everything has its uses, even challenges and perceived limitations.*

As you deepen your understanding of what it means to be human and explore how you experience and generate experience in the world, you’ll become more able to honor and respect both your experiences and the experiences of others with less judgment. Because you’ll come to fully understand that everyone is truly doing the best they can with the tools they currently have. And that experience *can* be adjusted to be made better.

As my mentor Carl Bucheit says, human beings will always reach for the best feeling available on their menu. The sales and marketing teams didn't lack power. They lacked choices on their menu. In other words, to feel more powerful, we don't need to turn off our emotions or ignore them. We just need to add better feelings to our menu. It's all about choice.

You'll also come to see that you're not alone—we're all in this together. And it's time for us all to have more tools. It's time for us to have more choices. It's time for us to feel more powerful— not in having power over others, but in having power over our own experience and emotional state.

Here are some signs that there are opportunities for you to deepen the connection, choice, and appreciation of your experience. This chapter will help if you are experiencing the following:

- Internal conflict, where part of you wants to do or be something yet doesn't, or part of you doesn't want to do or be something yet does
- Resistance to an internal or external experience, behavior, belief, person, idea, or situation
- Being stuck in a repetitive pattern that you no longer want
- Reacting from fear and negative meaning making rather than responding from choice and positive meaning making
- Desiring something better, but you are somehow not able to get it

To quote the late great Wayne Dyer, “Change the way you look at things, and the things you look at change.”⁴ This is the good news. Not only can you learn emotional regulation and optimize the performance of your prefrontal cortex, you can also define the experience you want and create it. That's how powerful you are.

Our journey together in this chapter will help you understand the following:

1. How we decide whether what is happening to us is good or bad
2. How stimulus from outside events causes us to assign meaning to our experience
3. How this meaning reinforces our beliefs and identity
4. How our behaviors then match and further reinforce them

The Logical Levels of Change

According to anthropologist Gregory Bateson, humans experience change at certain levels.⁵ At STI, we see these levels as concentric circles where change can occur outside in, inside out, or both simultaneously. Figure 1.1 shows how they work:

⁴ Wayne Dyer, “Success Secrets,” Wayne's Blog, *Dr. Wayne W. Dyer*

www.drwaynedyer.com/blog/success-secrets/

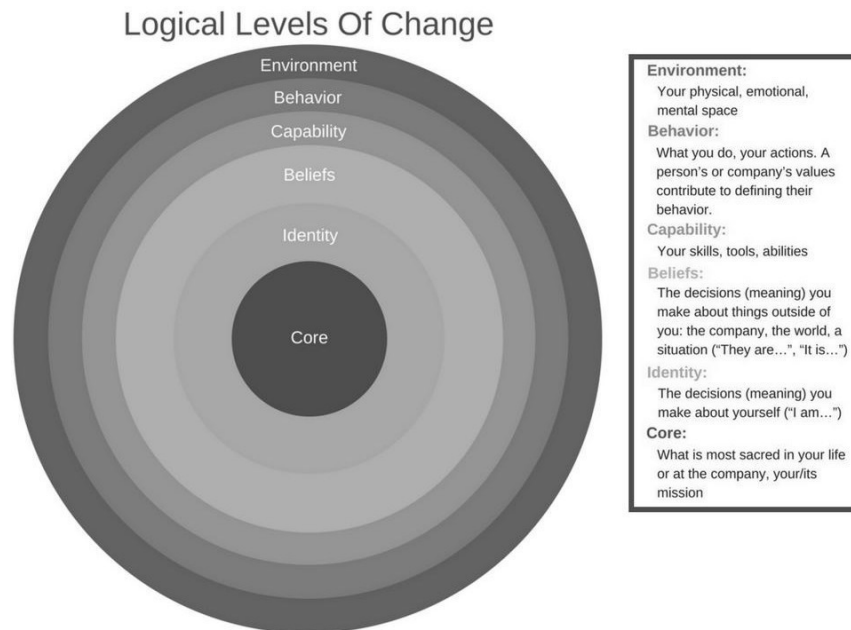


Figure 1.1. Logical Levels of Change

(Figure adapted and modified from initial work by Gregory Bateson and Robert Dilts)

When we are challenged by external change, many Logical Levels of Change are affected. I'll give you an example. Let's say leadership decided to relocate a team, overnight, to a new business market that spoke a foreign language. If that team were told they had to continue to grow the business *and* sustain its core mission, everyone would initially panic. It would be a big shock to the system.

This external change of moving to a new business market demands that the team do the following:

- Adapt to a new *environment*, or adjust it to suit their needs. For example, they would be breathing in new air, eating new food perhaps, and living in new quarters. They might have to adjust to working in a new office environment (such as high-rise accommodations), or living farther away from the office than they used to.
- *Behave* differently. They might have to wake up at a different time, and use different modes of transportation to get to work.
- Develop new *capabilities*. They may need to learn a new language or learn how to work with a translator in order to effectively communicate with new customers and the new community.
- Expand their *beliefs* to include their colleagues and customers in this new world as collaborative, receptive, and welcoming.
- Expand their *identity* to include that they could work in this environment successfully.

All of these would support their *core* because they wouldn't be making the change if it didn't honor their mission or purpose (or the change would be short-lived!)

As we navigate these levels of change, it's essential that we also manage our mind. So let's consider what's happening in our brains as these changes are occurring.

Managing Your Mind: The Critter State and the Smart State

First of all, your brain has three essential parts: the reptilian brain, the mammalian brain, and the prefrontal

⁵Key texts by Gregory Bateson are *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (Paladin Books, 1973) and *Mind and Nature: A*

Necessary Unity (Bantam Books, 1980). To learn more about Bateson, see his biography at <http://www.interculturalstudies.org/Bateson/biography.html> or https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gregory_Bateson.

Cortex. We find the “triune brain” system proposed by neuroscientist Paul D. MacLean (1913-2007) to be a simple and effective model for the very complex human brain. MacLean found from his work that the human brain is really three brains in one (hence “triune brain”). He also coined the term *limbic system*.

The reptilian brain, or protoreptilian brain (includes the brain stem, mid-brain, basal ganglia): It’s the oldest and most primitive part of the brain, and it governs basic life-support systems such as breathing feeding, sexuality, dominance, aggression, temperature regulation, and balance. It acts out of instinct, and it is primarily a stimulus-response machine with survival as its goal. It does not understand quality of life; it understands dead and not dead. The reptilian brain is also where sensory information (sight, sound, touch, smell, taste) enters our brain.

The mammalian brain, or paleo-mammalian brain (includes the amygdala, hippocampus, hypothalamus and other structures in the limbic system): The second part governs emotion, motivational systems, learning, short-term memory, and the body’s response to danger (that is, how we respond to external stimuli, instincts, past experiences). The key player here is the *limbic system*- that is, the emotional center of the brain that determines our fight/flight/freeze/faint response. The mammalian brain’s primary focus is also survival, though it is additionally the seat of more sophisticated emotions of separation distress, social emotions, maternal nurturance, anger, frustration, happiness, and love.

The neocortex cortex, or neo-mammalian brain. This part of the brain is the newest and most evolved part of the brain. The prefrontal cortex within the neocortex enables us to plan, innovate, solve complex problems, think abstract thoughts, and have visionary ideas. It allows us to measure the quality of our experience, compare it to an abstract ideal, and yearn for change. It also allows us to have a number of advanced behaviors, including social connection, tool making, language, envisioning possible futures, and higher-level consciousness. It helps us to determine the *meaning* of the sensory information we’ve taken in via the reptilian brain.

If we combine the limbic system in the mammalian brain with the survival mechanism in the reptilian brain, we have the powerful combo pack we’ll call the *critter brain*, as my mentor Carl Buchheit of NLP Marin terms it.⁶ Once our critter brain has equated a particular phenomenon with safety or survival, it will do so as long as we are not dead because, again, it doesn’t care about quality of life—it only cares about survival.

For example, if you watch a herd of antelope being chased by a cheetah, you’ll see that their strategies for escape aren’t incredibly elaborate. They all react the same: it’s everyone for themselves; run, run, run! And no matter how much they know they are at the top of a cheetah’s “to eat” list, they don’t update their approach to avoiding death the next time a cheetah is on the hunt.

For the purpose of simplicity, we’ll distill this to two states. The first is the *Critter State*, in which we don’t have access to all parts of our brain and thus are reactive, in fight/flight/freeze mode – that is, we are running safety programs (Figure 1.2). The second is the *Smart State*, in which we have easy access to all of our resources and can respond from choice (Figure 1.3).

⁶Find out more about Carl Buchheit’s transformative Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) techniques at

<http://nlpmarin.com/>.

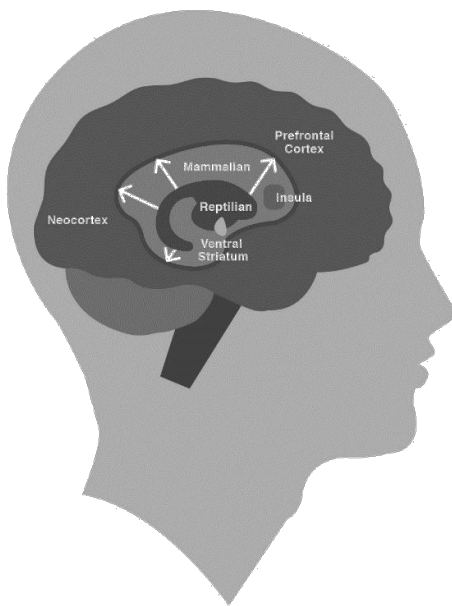


Figure 1.2. Critter State

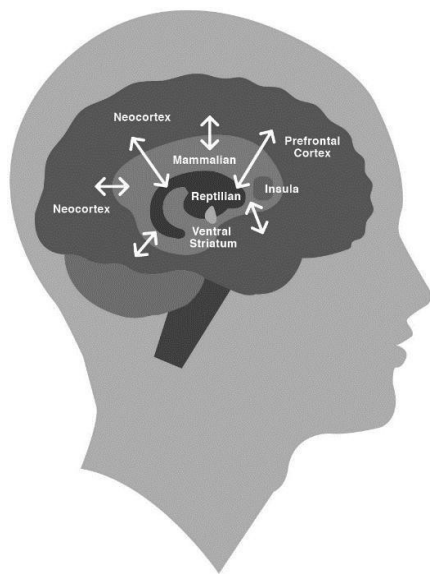


Figure 1.3. Smart State

Just like the antelope, when a business is facing a threat, its people often go into Critter State. Communication stops, and teamwork goes down the drain. People may get aggressive or territorial, or they may behave in an “Everyone has to fend for themselves” manner. They retreat to what is familiar, rather than pause to assess the situation and make decisions from a more resourceful state.

What kinds of threats put us in Critter State? Well, change itself, for one. Our brains just don’t like change very much. It’s scary to the most primal parts that are hardwired to ensure that we are safe and we survive, which means the critter brain will want to keep things basically the same whenever possible because “same” equals “safe.”

Unfortunately, our behaviors in Critter State tend to create an environment where there is no or very low trust (often due to poor communication, constantly changing directives, high uncertainty, and/or excessive workloads), which exacerbates our Critter State. So we aren’t creative, we aren’t looking to innovate, and we aren’t seeking opportunity. We’re all about survival.

In contrast, when we’re in the Smart State, all three parts of our brain are firing on all cylinders. We have flexibility, power, choice, balance. If we receive an angry e-mail from someone, we say, “Sounds like he’s having a hard day,” instead of reacting with fight/flight/freeze.

Change and growth depend on making sure the Smart State—not the Critter State—is driving management decisions and behavior. There’s already enough fear when things are changing, so it’s essential to continuously help people see that they are safe, they belong, and they matter, so they can shift into the Smart State.

More on this soon, but first let’s look at how we create the experiences that lead to either the Critter State or Smart State—and how it affects the workplace.

How You Create Experiences

Every moment we are bombarded with sensory information. Visual, auditory, kinesthetic, olfactory, and gustatory information is constantly coming our way via our five senses. The way we interpret this sensory input contributes to how we structure our experience of the world. The senses that most dominate our behavior are visual, auditory, and kinesthetic, so we’ll focus on those three.

What we call “thinking” is actually a series of pictures, sounds, and feelings that go by at light speed in our brains. The process by which this happens is illustrated and summarized in Figure 1.4.

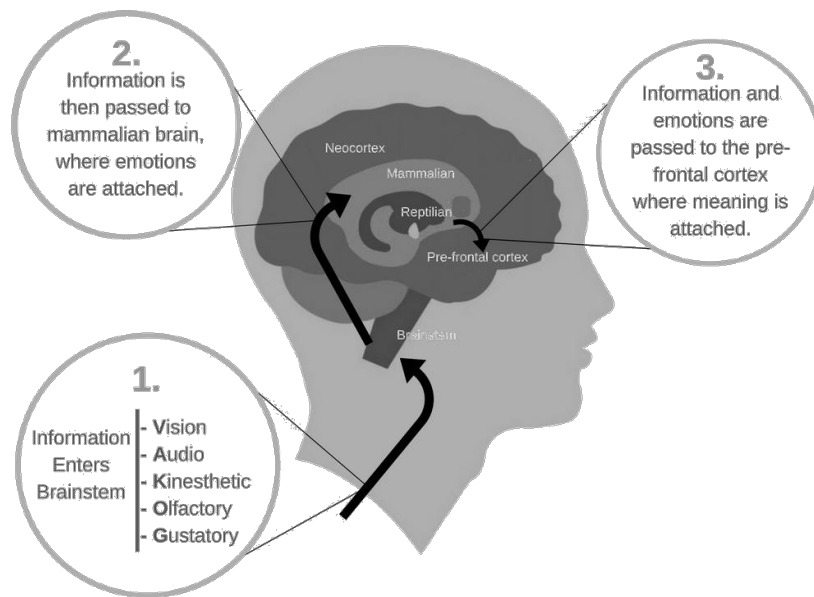


Figure 1.4. How Humans Experience the World and Make Meaning

As we interact with the world around us, we internally store images, sounds, feelings, smells, and tastes that craft our experience.

Think of your favorite place in your home. Chances are good you just called up a picture. We'll call these visuals, or Vs, in neuro-shorthand. Sometimes our brain distorts stored pictures (Vs) to give them different meanings. Maybe we don't want the intensity of a full-color picture so we store it in black and white, or maybe our brain wants to prevent us from repeating a dangerous experience so we store it in overpowering color.

Additionally, when we have or recall an experience, our brains hear sounds, which can be tones or words either outside ourselves (existing in the environment) or inside ourselves (talking to ourselves, hearing an old soundtrack). Think of the last time you made a mistake and internally said, "I can't believe I did that! Sheesh!" That's an internal soundtrack. Think of the sound of a phone ringing. That's an external soundtrack. We'll call these sounds auditory input, or As, in neuro-shorthand.

Our visual and auditory experiences lead to feelings, or kinesthetic responses, or Ks, in neuro- shorthand. Maybe your shoulders are tight, or you feel a knot in your stomach. These physiological feelings are now translated into emotions you can name, such as fear, excitement, joy, or anger.

From these Vs, As, and their generated Ks, our prefrontal cortex makes meaning about the world, other people, situations, and ourselves. The meaning we make about these experiences formulate our beliefs.

Before we discuss beliefs, we must understand that the brain is a “meaning-making machine” that deletes, distorts, and generalizes information. Every second, overwhelming amounts of information come our way, and we filter that information to make sense of it by *deleting* a lot of what we deem not relevant or useful, so only some of it gets through. Otherwise we would experience information overload!

The brain also *distorts* information. For example, how often do you hear someone respond to the question “How are you?” with “Nothing is wrong with me!” The question was distorted to be the assertion that “Something is wrong with you.” However, distortion also has its uses. It is what allows us to be creative. For example, a musician can listen to a song and create a new version of it as his or her unique expression.

Beliefs are *generalizations* about experiences, based on the meaning our prefrontal cortex has generated. For example, the brain generalizes that a chair is a chair, and objects that resemble a chair-like structure are appropriate for sitting. This is useful. That way, we don’t have to figure out whether or not we can sit on a particular object every time we walk into an office.

Another example is when we see someone point a finger at another and assume that the person doing the pointing is rude. “Everyone who points their finger like that is a rude person!” is a generalization and a belief.

Our beliefs about the world, others, situations, and ourselves drive our *behavior*. Beliefs about ourselves lie at a deeper level and are called *identity*. So in a stressful situation, when a person believes “I can do this, and our team will get through this,” these beliefs reinforce his or her identity and his or her team’s identity as being solid and capable. As a result, the person with the “solid and capable” identity has the behavior of handling things and moving forward, while others may be panicking. Their behavior matches their identity.

So, here’s how Vs, As, and Ks work together to create a new experience based on what you’ve already stored. Let’s say you walk into a conference room you’ve never been in before to do a high-stakes presentation, and the phone on the table rings. Your brain probably already has “conference room pictures” stored, so you instantly associate that ring tone with a stored picture of another conference room from a different time and place, one in which you totally rocked a presentation and your boss called you afterward to congratulate you on a job well done.

That external trigger (hearing the telephone in the conference room) ignited a whole series of stored internal Vs and As that now lead to a whopping great positive K and the belief “My boss appreciates me!” You’ve never been in this room before, and you were a little nervous, but all you know now is that you feel great and you really like that phone.

The sound of the telephone in that setting is an “*anchor*” that invokes the experience of confidence and creates positive meaning for you. Here’s how it worked in your brain:

Vs (image of phone in conference room) + As (ring tone) = Ks (confidence)

This sequence then leads to this:

Beliefs (“My boss appreciates me!”) -> identity (“I am valued”) -> capability (confident and competent in business scenarios)

And you know what happens next: this person’s behavior will match his or her beliefs, identity, and capability—in other words, the meaning he or she associates with these sensory experiences.

By the way, what makes this really interesting is that we can anchor those reference experiences to something new (a space, a sound, or a touch) to create the meaning we would like to create. That is to say, we can adjust the equation variables of V, A, and K to create a new set of beliefs. The tool that helps us achieve this is called *Anchoring*, and we’ll cover it in detail in Chapter 6.

Why You Do What You Do

Every day, all day, we are having experiences, creating meaning and forming new or reinforcing old beliefs, and forging a new identity or reinforcing our current one.

Let’s create an experience right now. Close your eyes and recall a positive memory, a time when you had a positive experience. Do this now, and then answer the following questions about your positive memory when the experience is super clear:

- What did you see?
- What did you hear outside or inside yourself (maybe you heard yourself saying, “This is awesome!”)?
- What did you feel?
- What did you decide (believe) about the situation and others and the world?
- What did you decide about yourself (your identity)?

For example, perhaps you recalled a recent team meeting:

- In it, you *saw* (Vs) everyone gathered around the table, excited, alert, ready to roll.
- You *heard* (As) people offering suggestions, brainstorming, making commitments. Inside you heard yourself say, “This is great—I love meetings like this. We’re accomplishing things. We’re all in sync.”
- You *felt* (Ks) powerful, optimistic, positive.

- You *believed* these were the right people in the right roles.
- Your *identity* that you are successful, you are a good leader, and you are adding value was reinforced.

The problem arises when we believe in a way that *doesn't* create the best possible outcome. For the next week, please start to notice what associations you have with places and people. What feelings (Ks) do you get from certain sounds (As) and certain visuals (Vs)? What meaning do you make from the experience of the resulting positive or negative feeling (K+ or K-), and what does that cause you to do?

The problem arises when we believe in a way that *doesn't* create the best possible outcome. For the next week, please start to notice what associations you have with places and people. What feelings (Ks) do you get from certain sounds (As) and certain visuals (Vs)? What meaning do you make from the experience of the resulting positive or negative feeling (K+ or K-), and what does that cause you to do?

In Part II, you're going to learn how to deactivate your own and your team members' fear triggers and instead assign appropriate meaning, so you can help shift people from the Critter State to the Smart State. You're going to learn exactly what to do to create a team that acts as a team, helping each other outperform the competition—an emotionally agile team that is resilient in the face of constant change.

Now that you understand how you create experiences, there's just one more foundational concept to cover before we can leap into action: the three things all humans crave. We'll cover those in the next chapter.

Summary

1. Human beings have three parts to their brain: the reptilian, the mammalian, and the prefrontal cortex. We generally occupy one of two states, depending on which parts of our brain are "lit up": The Critter State (fight/flight/freeze) or the Smart State (connection, ease, choice).
2. We can learn to move from the Critter State to the Smart State, so that we can be more resourceful in response to a turbulent internal or external environment. To do so, we must adjust the way the different parts of our brain process information.
3. Information from the external environment is stored as Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic, Olfactory, and Gustatory (VAKOG) data in our brains. Our prefrontal cortex assigns meaning to the information, primarily by generating beliefs.
4. If the feeling assigned to the information (person, place, thing, or activity) is bad, then the meaning we make of that information will be "it is bad." Similarly, if the feeling assigned to the information feels good, then the meaning we make of the information will be "it is good."
5. Human beings will reach only for the best available feeling on their menu. If we want to change behavior, we must add *new* and *better* feelings to the menu, *not* remove bad ones.

Twitter Takeaways

- We must understand how we create our experiences in the world, and that starts with understanding our emotions.
- Feeling more powerful is not about turning off our emotions or ignoring them. It's about making choices. It's about making better emotions available.
- It's time for us to feel more powerful—not in having power over others, but in having power over our own experience and emotional state.
- Change and growth depends on making sure that the Smart State—not the Critter State—is driving management decisions and behavior.
- If we want to change behavior, we must add new and better feelings to the menu, not remove bad ones.

Resources

See this chapter's section on www.PowerYourTribe.com for the following:

- Chapter “*Quick Summary*” video
- Culture and sharing values examples
- *Create the Culture of Your Dreams* video
- *Leading from the Inside Out* kit
- *Your Awesome Brain and How It Works* video

Praise for Christine Comaford and SmartTribes Institute (STI)

“Christine is super-high bandwidth.” —Bill Gates

“Christine’s leadership tools are some of the most effective ones I have seen for quite some time. The neuroscience-based approach is very new and very powerful. It has made a big difference for our folks, particularly in the areas of fostering collaboration (by helping people better understand the needs and mood of their teammates) and increasing productivity (by helping our managers focus and tell apart the high value added activities from the low value added ones). These tools are easy to reapply to many different business situations and are especially useful in fast-changing business environments.” —Alberto Moriana, Head of Sales Latin America, Procter & Gamble

“We’ve really moved the needle in our first year with STI! From our initial work at our Sales & Marketing Intensive and from coaching thereafter together we’ve secured a needle-moving eight-digit account using two of the strategies I created with Christine and our team—this is a top three account for us; doubled our marketing message effectiveness and increased our profile and brand awareness in the marketplace significantly; doubled our response rate on outbound marketing communications; created a scalable sales and marketing foundation to support our projected growth; launched an omni-channel marketing approach that is delivering double-digit response rates; developed a content marketing strategy and social media presence that is engaging prospects and clients at new levels; just received the largest inbound lead in company history! Working with STI is efficient, effective, and high on ROI. STI brings a proven set of best practices to the table that streamlines the sales and marketing process and delivers results. If you want to take your sales and marketing to the next level, you’ll want them on your team.”
—Scott Patsiga, President, Telaid

“STI’s Building Brilliant Teams training is a key course in our Leadership Development program. Our leaders like the high interactivity, the hands-on labs, the practical brain-based tools that are easy to learn and immediately create high impact results. The case studies which help clarify STI’s key tools are popular, too. Our leaders especially like learning how to tie the neuroscience and emotional drivers of satisfaction and motivation to drive team performance and happiness. It’s called a ‘Great class! One of the best I’ve attended!’ by many. Thanks, STI, for helping us to invest in leadership growth. As a result our leaders are raising the bar on building brilliant teams.”
—Steve Degnan, Chief HR Officer, Nestle Purina PetCare North America

“Christine received the top rating at our Fortune Leadership Summit. Her program on building trust in tangible, measurable, specific ways by showing us how it is experienced in the brain was life-changing. Our audience of 650 business leaders were captivated by her message and engaged as we did labs together to apply Christine’s neuroscience-based tools. It’s been over a month and our participants keep raving about it! We can’t wait to work with Christine again.” —Verne Harnish, Chair, Fortune Magazine’s Leadership Summit and author of *Scaling Up*

“I’ve been in the sales and marketing world for decades, and I can be a bit skeptical of consultants. Christine changed all that. From the start she was generous with her time, ROI-focused, and profoundly accountable. The results have been amazing. In two workshops Christine’s potent neuroscience techniques have completely refreshed how our marketing leadership team approaches messaging, customer experience, optimizing our marketing process, and aligning with sales. Our team has called the experience nothing short of amazing—and we’re not known to gush. Thanks, STI!” —Steve Mann, CMO, LexisNexis

“The program we had recently with STI was one of the highest rated of the year! Christine did prework to learn what our members’ top business challenges were, then brought exactly what we needed to solve them. She made sure we understood how to use the tools, specifics on applying them to different scenarios, and she also was very generous with extra tools and extra time. The whole day was nonstop take-home value! Our members didn’t know it was possible to get this much value in a single program. We will definitely have Christine work with our CEOs again. Everyone gave overwhelmingly positive feedback!”
—Daniel Levin, CEO, Cain Millwork and Education Chair YPO Chicago

“Our sincerest thanks for your fantastic work at our summit. Your energy is amazing, your expertise beyond valuable, and the STI team is wonderful to work with! Our leaders found the day to be packed with practical tools they can immediately apply to help their teams rise to new levels of engagement, performance, and connection. In times of change and growth, your powerful yet easy brain-based tools are already making a difference for our tribe. We can’t wait to work together further.”
—Tim Herrod, Vice President, Procurement, Potash Corporation

“Thank you so much, Christine, for the brilliance, passion, and inspiration you’ve imprinted on each of our minds and hearts. Your program at our first GoPro Women’s Summit empowered everyone profoundly. We have received so much incredible feedback from our attendees! Now they have new tools to help them generate new insights and help others to do the same, to make new meaning about their experiences, to bring safety, belonging, mattering where it is needed so they can lead themselves, others, and the business with a fresh perspective. We can’t thank you enough for leading such an impactful session. Your brain-based tools are truly helping our tribe!”
—Laura Robblee, Senior Director, GoPro

“Our event with Christine was one of our best ever! The roomful of 100+ leaders was fully engaged for an entire day. I’ve never seen anything like it. Christine took the time to learn what would benefit our members most, and then designed a custom program that blew everyone’s minds. The tools were just what we needed to take our teams to the next level, to create deeply engaging company cultures, to market more effectively, and to close sales faster. We’re all high performers, and it’s rare that we hear something that fascinates us. Christine’s program had everyone diving in, learning new techniques, applying them to key business challenges, and buzzing about how they could share these tools with their teams. What a remarkable session! We’ll have Christine here again.”
—Scott Stevenson, President and CEO, Kleenmark and Education Chair YPO Wisconsin

“What is empowerment, really? We wanted to bring our amazing team to the next level, and STI is helping us to do just that. First, it had to start with me. Through coaching I’m learning to let go more, and have optimized my time to do more strategic (and fulfilling) work—and most important have more time with my family. I am no longer focused on how activities are getting accomplished down in the weeds, but am enjoying the benefits of having a strategic focus and determining the direction the organization is headed. The one-on-one attention that STI has given me and the key members of my executive management team are the reason we are becoming a more strategic and aligned organization. As a result, together we’re continuously surpassing revenue goals and getting increasingly comfortable with even loftier revenue targets; achieving new highs in production; diversifying our client base while getting closer to and more involved in our key clients business's; gaining visibility on the business and have a lot less stress; helping the team across the entire organization to perform at greater levels with deeper fulfillment; receiving a “Best Places to Work” award based on voting by our employees. Now I really know what empowerment is. Our people live it, and so do I.”

—Brandon Ewing, CEO, Server Technology, Inc.

“In today’s world of constant change, leaders need simple and powerful tools to support their teams. STI’s practical, evidence-based tools that you introduced to our sales and underwriting managers were met with appreciation and excitement. You delivered the workshop in a way that connected with our emotions and intellect. I'm confident that the tools will help us focus on critical objectives and keep our energy high. We found our time together to be of high value.”

—Dennis Lum, VP National Channel Strategy, Kaiser Permanente

“Our first year working with STI has been better than I ever imagined. It’s as if our whole team has risen to an entirely new level. It’s awesome and energizing! The results we’re getting as a result of our work with STI are tangible, too. Together we’ve created a compelling mission, vision, values, and company theme statements everyone loves; cultural rituals for engagement (high 5s, celebrations/rewards for modeling our values); performance motivation, measurement and growth process (self-evaluation, leader review, individual development plans, personal improvement process); accountability structures and tracking; three-year strategic plan with specific tactics, dependencies, and contingencies to ensure execution; three-year budget and staffing plan; five-year map to our next key inflection point. I knew our team was remarkable, but seeing them dive into greater depths of leadership, enrolling and engaging others, collaborating in new and powerful ways, embracing new skills and helping to cultivate and elevate others has been a profoundly fulfilling experience. Thanks, STI, for helping us step into our huge potential!” —Chris Whitney, CEO, Trans-Phos

“As a finance executive, it’s key to ensure you’re seen for the strategic value you bring. That’s one of the many reasons coaching with STI has been so transformative. I’ve significantly increased my ability to deliver strategic value across our organization by raising the bar as a leader. I’m now more present with others, listening more deeply, sharing my vision more clearly, enrolling and engaging people like never before. As a result, I’ve built more powerful connections and greater trust with senior executives, peers and team members—all of which is crucial as our business continues to grow, change, and evolve. My team is responding, too. We’re more cohesive, effective, energized, and on point than ever before. My relationships are richer and closer with more open communication. Together, we’re achieving more, influencing

more, and seeing conflicts and challenges as exciting adventures. I'm now someone who powerfully and quickly brings people together and delivers results that far exceed expectations. I'm now seen as a strategic asset, a trusted advisor, and a cultivator of talent and people in general. Thanks, STI!"

—Michael Trzupsek, GM Venture Integration Strategic Programs, Microsoft

"I've been to some of the top business growth programs in the country, and I've found STI's methodology to be among the most effective. The positive transformation our company has experienced with STI has been profound. Here are some of our results from Strategy Days, Trainings, and Executive Coaching with STI: We've powerfully aligned our geographically distributed leadership team with clear communication, needle movers, performance expectations, and proven processes to streamline results and save everyone time and energy. We've defined compelling values that everyone is rallying around, and associate engagement continues to climb. We've created Customer Journeys, Safety/Belonging/Mattering Triggers, Meta Program Profiles for our top five customer profiles. Now we know how to step into their shoes and connect more deeply with them and provide even greater service, communication, joy in working with us. We've raised the bar on our already high standards of performance, service, and behavior with programs our associates have created. The company's infrastructure is in place now and evolving to support our rapid growth. We're reaching new revenue and customer delight records, and have high visibility on our finances and operations overall. As a result it's now easier to recruit new associates, to onboard them, to bring them powerfully into our high-performing tribe. What a difference STI's proven processes make! Thanks, STI, for helping us reach new heights (and have fun in the process)!" —Abigail Kampmann, CEO, Principle Auto Group

"Wow—our team had several aha moments at our recent Sales and Marketing Intensive with Christine. Now we clearly see what we're not doing, what we can be doing, and how exactly to do it to get the increased results we want. Christine helped us fill in the gaps to streamline sales and marketing processes, identify the profiles (and surprising similarities) of our diverse prospects, launch powerful neuroscience-based messaging for a new service, further align our sales and marketing teams around common objectives, all while laying out a clear path. Our team is jazzed—it's as if the lights have been turned on bright and we can see farther and with greater detail. If you want to jumpstart your sales and marketing, and get better results with a lot less effort, bring STI in to help. Your team, like mine, will thank you, and you'll love the results." —John Gorski, CEO, NAMSA

"Christine's session at our chapter was our best so far! Everyone stayed well past the ending time, and the comments on tremendous take-home value continue to stream in. Her expertise in applied neuroscience is vast—she taught us techniques for optimizing sales, marketing, leadership, execution, and she explained them in easy to learn and powerful ways. Christine was generous with her time, working one-on-one with chapter members and even our forum to iron out key leadership challenges. It was a truly invigorating event!"

—Luke Williams, Managing Director, Oak Tree Development and Education Chair, YPO Connecticut

“When CEOs spend a full day learning about leadership, the expectations are sky high. And Smart Tribes Institute delivered! Christine’s session for the Silicon Valley Chapter was one of the strongest workshops we’ve had. Christine helped us understand the basics of the human brain. We learned about STI’s easy, potent tools to enroll, engage, align, and empower our teams in immediate and high- impact ways. As leaders, the labs we did during the workshop helped us address our real-world challenges and apply STI’s tools to them. Everyone is still buzzing about the program. We can’t wait to have her back!”

—Nancy Geenen, Silicon Valley Chapter Chair, Women President’s Organization

Power Your Tribe: Create Resilient Teams in Turbulent Times

McGraw-Hill
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New York, NY 10121

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Christine Comaford

Bill Gates calls her “super high bandwidth.”

Bill Clinton has thanked her for “fostering American entrepreneurship.”

For over 30 years Leadership and Culture Coach, Serial Entrepreneur, and New York Times bestselling author Christine Comaford has helped leaders navigate growth and change. Christine is sought after for providing proven strategies to shift executive behavior to create more positive outcomes, enroll and align teams in times of change, profoundly increase sales, product offerings, and company value. Her coaching, consulting and strategies have created hundreds of billions of dollars in new revenue and value for her clients. The potent neuroscience techniques she teaches are easy to learn and immediately applicable to help leaders see into their blind spots, expand their vision, and more effectively influence outcomes.

Here are some highlights:

- Christine was recently named one of the [Top 50 Human Behavior Experts to Follow in 2017](#) and one of the [Global Employee Engagement Influencers in 2017](#)
- As an Entrepreneur, she has built and sold 5 of her own businesses with an average 700% return on investment
- She has served as a board director or in-the-trenches advisor to 36 startups, and has invested in over 200 startups (including Google)
- She has consulted to the White House (Clinton and Bush), 700 of the Fortune 1000, and over 300 small and medium-sized businesses
- She has repeatedly identified and championed key trends and technologies years before market acceptance, due in part to her work as a software engineer in the early days of Microsoft, Apple and Adobe
- Christine is a leadership columnist for www.Forbes.com and she lectures at Harvard Business School

- She has appeared on Good Morning America, CNN, CNBC, MSNBC, FOX Business Network, PBS, CNET and Stanford Graduate School of Business has done two case studies on her unconventional rise to success as a woman with neither a high school diploma nor college degree
- Her two New York Times bestselling business books are *SmartTribes: How Teams Become Brilliant Together* and *Rules for Renegades*. Her newest book, *Power Your Tribe: Create Resilient Teams in Turbulent Times*, will be released January 2018.

Christine believes we can do well and do good, using business as a path for personal development, wealth creation, and philanthropy.

Connect with Christine:

Join our tribe for free webinars and resources:

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Twitter: @comaford

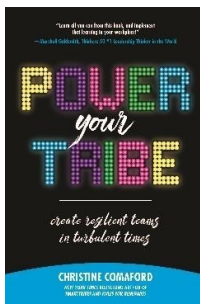
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