



Thoughts from Linda:

Wired To Connect
*The Brain Science of Teams and
a New Model for Creating
Collaboration and Inclusion*

Dr. Britt Andreatta
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This book for January is also written by a consultant, Dr. Britt Andreatta. Just like Katzenbach and Smith, she has extensive experience in the field of learning, business coaching, and leadership at several institutions, such as LinkedIn and 7th Mind, Inc. Her insights are complemented with something not possible in the '90s—the field of neuroscience and our current learnings from that discipline.

Her contributions to the field include several other books: *Wired to Grow and Wired to Resist*, numerous podcasts, TedX speaker videos, along with numerous articles and other informational pieces, which can be found on her website. She has received many awards for her work and is a noted keynote speaker today.

This book offers clear insights based on current neuroscience about human interactions related to teams. She provides a synthesis of recent data making the business case for teams and applying the science of teams to drive and accelerate the performance of our organizations. She offers 14 specific case studies and a series of new models that are helpful 'builds' on much of the previous work of Katzenbach and Smith, Lencioni, Straus, and others in the field.

The book is organized into six chapters: *The Power of Teams Today, The Brain Science of Groups+ Teams, The Brain Science of Safety+ Belonging, The Brain Science of Inclusion + Trust, A New Model: The Four Gates to Peak Team Performance and Strategies for Executives, Team Leaders+ Team Members*. The References and Resources section provides a vast trove of good articles and sources for further exploration. She also provides a path for good andragogy by offering an opportunity for reflection at critical learning junctures along the way. There is a free pdf to enhance the learning, and her recommendation for partnering with another learner is true to this title as we know that social learning boosts long-term retention.

Our work at DNA Consulting is in the field of collaboration, leadership, and team coaching, so we love her comment, "Teams are perhaps the single most important entity in today's workplace. When we get them right, we leverage so many powerful aspects of human biology that can propel both individuals and organizations forward. But getting it wrong can cripple an organization's ability to compete or succeed...collaboration is where the real juicy stuff lives. It's also the place of greatest struggle."

She offers several key frameworks that move the conversation and insight into teams forward, including her distinctions among Coordination (a low level of collaboration,) Cooperation (a mid-level), and then Collaboration itself, which she defines as "the mutual engagement of a group of two or more in a co-creative essential to the whole."

Quoting Zane Harris of the NeuroPower Group, she notes that it is possible to accelerate teams to a state of high-performance dramatically: "Teams naturally reach high performance in three to five years. But get this right and you can fast track it to as little as six months. Understanding how the brain works literally accelerates everything." The this in this sentence refers to the application of brain science to groups and teams.

There is a lot to take in and learn here. In her chapter on brain science, she relates the latest in medical science about brain waves that are being used to measure how we connect with others. By looking at electrical pulses, light absorption, and the burn of glucose along with brain waves, it is now possible to identify not only which areas of the brain are activated but to observe how neural 'synchrony' actually works.

She shares research from UCLA, Princeton, Yale, Harvard, and numerous other institutions to illustrate how powerful this phenomenon of synchrony is. You will learn how Infralow, Delta, Theta, Alpha, Beta, and Gamma brain waves can be visualized on screens or paper, allowing researchers to overlay several people's signals to analyze similarities and differences. Some of the predictive research and activity has allowed a research group at UCLA to predict, with 80% accuracy, who would become friends in real life based on their neural synchrony.

The relevance is significant for teams. With our brains designed for this neural synchrony, using effective tools to activate the process yields clearer, effective, and connected relationships. When we say about a person-- "she gets it" -- we're referring to some deeper level of mutual understanding that is one of the results of this activation. As Andretta notes, "neural synchrony can...be a driver of team performance, contributing to faster and better communication, comprehension and, ultimately, quality of work." She builds on this promise, including identifying significant barriers in her third section of the book, with suggestions for workarounds and work-throughs.

She probes the field of mirror neurons and the profound implications for the workplace. She notes the power of these as people come together to form teams, learn about one another, and work to understand not just each other's logic and thought processes but feelings and underlying intentions. While scientists are not entirely sure how this process happens, they know that the phenomenon exists and fosters a connection between humans. Noting the power gained by simple observation of each other, she suggests putting experienced 'pros' with 'rookies' in the organization at every opportunity, including on teams, to up-level the entire group. This is a strategy of mirror neurons in action.

We know much about the need for empathy among team members. She explains that "studies have shown that empathy is a core component of creating an environment that is safe for taking risks and making mistakes, something that is a key differentiator for the highest performing teams." She goes on to help us better understand such aspects of brain work as 'self-other merging,' how to get to the 'sense of we,' the 'rhythm of a team,' and a phenomenon that can lead to accelerated change called 'neurodynamic reorganizations.'

The book is one that you can read from start to finish or just randomly, based on your area of interest, although I recommend front to end. It is full of helpful information, statistics, and relevant quotes. I especially like her treatment of the power of purpose and its relationship to trust. Intuitively, we have found the power of purpose to be a strong factor in unifying teams and organizations. At DNA Consulting, we are driven by a strong sense of purpose. Work is a pleasure and a cause.

So, it is great to see the science of our brains reinforcing our own experience! Quoting Dr. Paul Zak, "Joy on the job comes from doing purpose-driven work with a trusted team. Experiments show that having a sense of higher purpose stimulates oxytocin production, as does trust. Trust and purpose mutually reinforce each other, providing a mechanism for extended oxytocin release, which produces happiness."

It is educational to read this book and extremely useful. It would be a great idea to have teams read and discuss this book in their formative period (or at any time!) as it provides research-based advice and practical wisdom for us all—at work, with our families, and in relationships of all types.