

How Personal Strengths Connect to Organizational Identity and Strategy

By Jim Nicholson

How do companies achieve their full potential? Why do so many find it difficult to do so? These are the two main issues addressed in *Uncommon Sense: One CEO's Tale of Getting in Sync*, a new book written by Andy Kanefield (founder and CEO) and Mark Powers (consultant) of Clayton-based Dialect Inc.

In *Uncommon Sense*, Kanefield and Powers utilize the company's consulting model, which is based on recent findings from neuroscience, to explain 6 key elements of an organization's identity. When in sync, these elements improve performance and enhance growth. *Uncommon Sense* tells the fictional story of "Jack," a bank CEO, who is charged by his Board with creating a growth plan to meet his projected post-acquisition synergies. Jack assumes that he has charted a path that others understand, while in reality that is far from the truth. In describing Jack's challenges, the book provides guidance for real CEOs of real companies attempt-

ing to achieve their full potential. The book explains that cognitive differences provide natural barriers to both alignment and translation of strategy.

"The genesis of the book," Kanefield explains, "was the need to take the principles of Dialect and make them more concrete. We know that it is difficult to maintain focus and energy in the midst of constant change." Much of the problem (and a great deal of the

solution) results from our understanding about the nature of personal and organizational strengths. "We have these ideas of the perfect leader—whether you're considered a visionary like Steve Jobs or a great builder of culture like Herb Kelleher at Southwest. But the more you learn about our inherent wiring, the more you can see how to lead from your strengths and how to gain alignment by connecting to your employees' strengths. We hope that this book sheds light on how this might be done."

"We want to remind people that because we are wired differently," explains Kanefield, "we interpret our company's identity and its strategy in different ways. Readers of the book will see people they know in its cast of characters. In seeing how the characters in the book respond to a business challenge, they'll recognize strengths they've already witnessed in their own co-workers and those strengths," Kanefield stresses, "will allow them to confirm what they already intuitively know about the problems they face daily in the workforce. This understanding by the readers can help them bridge gaps between departments and people. It can also shed light on gaps in the company strategy and its identity."

According to Kanefield, there are different ways to use the book. It can be viewed as a workbook; it can also be an informal assessment to illustrate whether or not your com-



Andy Kanefield
founder & CEO, Dialect Inc.

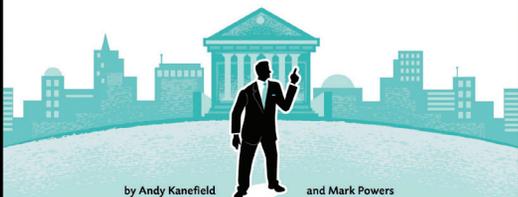
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pany is in sync. You can also use the book to assess how your leadership style affects your organizational identity. Finally, you can use the principles to make your strategy and identity come alive. Regardless of how one uses the book, the goal is for readers to see how personal strengths connect to organizational identity and strategy. "We want leaders to take the concepts (illustrated in the book), translate them to their unique contexts, and use these ideas to enhance performance," states Kanefield.

"Finally, a book that connects how people are wired to how organizations are designed." – Dan Pink, author of "A Whole New Mind"

un common sense

One CEO's Tale of Getting in Sync



by Andy Kanefield

and Mark Powers

"And our model is flexible enough to work with any organization," Kanefield emphasizes. "We've successfully worked with senior teams to promote greater alignment in a variety of industries including consumer product goods, logistics, retail food, and non-profits. And our client size ranges from fewer than 100 employees to more than 150,000 with revenue ranging from less than \$1 billion to more than \$50 billion."

A quote from *New York Times* best-selling author Dan Pink on the front cover of the book aptly illustrates the unique niche this book holds: "Finally, a book that connects how people are wired to how organizations are designed." *Uncommon Sense* ultimately is uncommonly sensible. ■