

Relationship Capital – True Success Through Coaching and Managing Relationships in Business and Life

by Carlos Raimundo

(2002) Pearson Education Australia Pty Ltd.

Reviewed by Judith McMorland

Many years ago I was asked to help a senior executive in a very demanding position review his leadership over the past five years, and help plan his way forward. We explored, in action, with the actual people concerned, the impact of his work on his relationships with family (wife, son, daughter), and chosen and trusted colleagues and subordinates. As the story unfolded, so too did the tragedy of relationships lost - of the sacrifice of family to work obligations. His young adult son wept when he said, 'Dad, you were never there for us!' - unleashing, not only in this father, but in the other older men in the room, who were also stalwarts of their own businesses and organisations, tears of longing and deep grief over what might have been, and touching for the women present the losses they had known. The outcome of this review was that the executive chose to step down from his position early, rather than take on another gruelling term of office.

This incident has remained poignant in my memory, the more so because over the past ten years I have been involved with management education and training and see how little attention is paid within the educational institution to investing in relationship building. 'Transformational learning' and 'transformational change' are buzz words in the management lexicon, but they are seldom attached to personal relationship maturity. The simple, but profound action of exploring what roles and relationships we create is not one that managers or business people willingly embrace. Even for people whose work requires sound relationships with clients and consumers, experiential learning in relationship building seems to be problematic. 'Not role plays!' people cry.

Recently, I have had the opportunity to introduce psychodramatic methods to two classes of postgraduate students in the Business School in the University of

Auckland. While initially sceptical, as the sessions progressed many students have seen for themselves the potential of learning about relationships 'from the inside', that life is lived through everyday interactions and these need to promote personal as well as corporate wellbeing. They are moved by the power of personal learning that can come from rehearsal and exploration, mirroring and modelling and the opportunity to have a second go. This is the issue that Dr Carlos Raimundo addresses in his book providing practical techniques for enhancing relationships at home and work. This is not a text book - it is designed so people can take their own steps to greater wellbeing, but it is well grounded in personal development theory (from a range of disciplines) and supported by Carlos' own website www.playofflife.com

Carlos uses the story of consultancy and coaching work in one organisation, TML, as the framework on which to hang the steps of his Strategic Relationship Management Model. He traces his work from the initial engagement with the CEO, Rolf, and directors in the senior management team, through to the organisational surveys, workshops and action planning approaches he designed to bring wellbeing to a dysfunctional corporate culture. Rolf's wife, Inge, is also a key character in the story: it is she who learned to confront Rolf (through a workshop on living with busy partners) that changes needed to be made if their marriage and family were to survive. Inge learnt that though she still loved Rolf, she no longer liked what he had become, he was no longer her 'beloved'. They had lost sight of the vision of life they wanted to share.

Changes had been attempted in the organisation over many years, but none were successful. "The corporate culture (Rolf)

was living in, even though he didn't like it, was not restrictive enough to awaken his determination to do something about it. He was not aware that he was dying within himself and that the same was happening to his relationship and the company" (p51).

The story that unfolds is one many business people can identify with. The scenarios given are familiar: the marketing manager who does not trust her staff fully and is on the verge of burnout; the section heads who have lost the confidence of their staff because of poor communication; the CEO who is defeated in the face of external pressure from Head Office. Carlos uses the breadth of his experience as psychodramatist, psychotherapist and business consultant to bring together hard-nosed good business sense and practical, efficient use of action methods to addresses these issues, through the technology he calls the Play of Life® and a range of other organisation development tools. The Play of Life takes the disciplines of action methods from the psychodrama stage, to the table-top. Using small figurines, individuals are invited to explore situations as they are, and as they want them to be. In Rolf's case he recognised his desire to change from being a *defeated mule* to *creative, insightful guide*, and the platforms (stages) on which these specific roles were enacted.

The book as a whole calls attention to the need to invest in relationships with as much concern as one watches the stock market or attends to superannuation plans, advocating the use of a relationship coach to enhance good business practice. Relationships take time to build, and when successful, provide abundant returns. The irony is that though businesses think seeking financial advice is smart, seeking emotional advice is seen as a sign of weakness. As Carlos says, many people lavish much more planning

and attention 'on the wedding than on the marriage,' because it is easier to focus on the concrete things of life, than on the spaces between people, the relational dimension through which life is lived.

Having enjoyed Carlos' workshops on a number of occasions at ANZPA conferences, I found this book helpful in integrating psychodramatic methods into my practice as an organisational development consultant. At one level, there is nothing 'new' in this book, the strength lies in the integration of methods used, and their groundedness in good organisational development and business practice. Carlos shows how psychodramatic methods can be transferred into an organisational setting, and made available to members of organisations for their own use. He demonstrates and explains the power of appropriate warm up for meetings, the diagnostic strength of sociometry in providing information about relationship reciprocity or vulnerability in groups; and the educative impact of role analysis (role cascades) so individuals can map, and make choices about, their interactions with others. All these techniques are clearly and simply brought together into the Strategic Relationship Management Model that he has developed.

I appreciate the way in which Carlos has shared workshop formats and demonstrated his own practice of coaching and consulting. Provision of simple techniques and tools, even check lists and questionnaire formats, makes this book accessible to any manager or human resources professional wanting to support relationship building in their organisation. The theoretical base of the book is sound, implicit rather than explicit, but gives enough information for people wanting

greater depth to follow up on concepts and ideas. This is a book that I can comfortably recommend to postgraduate (Dip.Bus.; MBA and MCom) students alike. It has value for psychodrama trainees in showing clear applications of the method – and Carlos' love affair with life - enacting what I believe Moreno was indeed advocating. The book also provides resources for personal development and can support work that supervisors or coaches do with individuals.

What I gain from the book, in particular, is a strong reminder of the importance of positive thinking and languaging, of helping members of groups to identify and hold on to the values and strengths of their lives – 'the creative force for survival' (what Carlos calls the Pillars of Life). Carlos' spiritual conviction in the essential goodness of life and the realms of possibility available to each of us underpin his method. Overall, I enjoyed the book immensely. The challenge I take from it is that I need to articulate for myself the model(s) that form my own practice – and recognise which of the platforms, and which pillars of life, I draw on. These are valuable challenges that take me forward and sharpen my appreciation of the need to invest seriously in relationship building, building capital (treasure) that 'neither moth nor rust corrupts and where thieves cannot break through and steal' (adapting Matt 6.19). If these are neglected, as Rolf and Inge and the rest of TML staff found out, they wither and die. This is 'living for something', not 'against' it. In this book, Carlos shows how this can be done, and how the essential health of our relationships, at home and in the work place, does indeed determine our business success and quality of life.