



Leveraging the inner voice of human evolution



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New book explores how today’s leaders can use the multiple ‘voices’ of leadership developed by our ancestors.

As humans evolved from primitive hunter-gatherers to modern civilization, the capacity to respond to leadership has become wired into our brains. As intelligence increased, and with new abilities to communicate with more and more people at a time, new leadership approaches developed. Associate Fellow at Saïd Business School, University of Oxford and social anthropologist Graeme Findlay traces this development in his new book *Evolve: How exceptional leaders leverage the inner voice of human evolution*, showing how today's leaders can use the multiple ‘voices’ of leadership, each of which represents a different stage of leadership evolution.

Leadership has an evolutionary basis. ‘We have been amazingly successful as a species since learning to cooperate in larger and larger groups,’ says Findlay. ‘Evolution has rewarded the traits that have us cooperate better, and where there is cooperation, there is leadership.’

Findlay establishes a ‘meta-model,’ or structure of knowledge, that identifies the four distinct outer voices of leadership that are needed for groups of ever-increasing size. As group size increases, so does the requirement for a higher outer voice. The meta-model enables leaders to form powerful new insights that can improve their effectiveness.

Heartfelt voice: The ability to create an environment where people feel safe, to discuss difficult issues and stand for each other’s success, where there are deep relationships and a shared purpose.

Command voice: The ability to deliver reliably, to ask for things once and get the required outcome, to speak and get action, and to turn ambiguity into action.

Prosocial voice: The ability to create a positive social environment and sense of community behind business objectives, and an environment where formal and informal communication channels transmit positive messages, where successes are celebrated and shared, where teams interact positively with other teams.

Futurising voice: The ability to create the case for change that causes a community to take coordinated action in service of big goals.

These outer voices have a hierarchy. The lower voices act as building blocks for the higher voices. For example, a command voice demands that a heartfelt voice is established; a prosocial voice can be built only on the foundation of a command voice and a heartfelt voice.

Findlay explores the concept of an ‘inner voice’ that can subconsciously work to undercut effectiveness. Most people experience the phenomenon of silently talking to themselves, and the nature of this inner voice is significant. The inner voices all line up with an associated outer voice. Understanding the impact of the inner voice on the outer voice is crucial to being able to influence an intended audience.

Supported by academic research and practical applications, *Evolve* shows how leaders can expand their influence through the development of self-awareness and an understanding of the psychology of the leader-follower interaction. This understanding is then further expanded by application of the meta-model through case studies, including a radical re-interpretation of the leadership capabilities used by Martin Luther King to energise the civil rights movement.

Findlay provides knowledge that readers can put into action in the workplace. To allow for quick access to the key concepts, he concludes chapters with Takeaways and Leadership Development Actions. Takeaways summarise the content of the chapter, while Leadership Development Actions are steps to take to enhance leadership skills.

For current and aspiring leaders, *Evolve* shows how to harness the cognitive abilities as they’ve developed through the ages to influence ever-larger groups of individuals in ever-more complex environments.

Evolve: How exceptional leaders leverage the inner voice of human evolution

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