

BOOK REVIEWS

The Relational Workplace: How Relational Intelligence Grows Diverse, Equitable, and Inclusive Cultures of Connection by Saliha Bava and Mark Greene

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The Relational Workplace: *How Relational Intelligence Grows Diverse, Equitable, and Inclusive Cultures of Connection* by Saliha Bava and Mark Greene

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*"Only
Reaching,
Reading the gestures
That spread everywhere".
(Nora Bateson, 2016, p. 194)*

This book by Saliha Bava and Mark Greene is necessary and timely. It invites us to open new spaces for conversation in the family, social and business worlds, using simple language, friendly graphics and inspiring examples.

The Relational Workplace captivated me from the beginning. I was captivated — and confronted. It let me know that I can proudly be part of a “Global Majority”, and at the same time it reminded me that in my own country I am part of a privileged population which discriminates, judges, and restricts the participation of other sectors of society.

The spirit of this book is a clear but loving confrontation. It seeks to awaken the awareness (and I think, in many passages, this is achieved in different ways for different readers) towards the co-creation of organizations where liberty, diversity, inclusion and equality can be experienced and replicated.

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This is a book which inspires the creation of a healthy personal and social coexistence, even if the focus, language and the research it features are business-related. The language, and use of examples and metaphors, do work well, and I believe it will encourage the dissemination of good organisational practices.

Having said that, I cannot but experience a personal concern: How can old patterns created by organizations be transcended when we use the same mindset, language and jargon? The fact that one of the first ideas is: *“We now understand that if we don’t do this work, our organizations will not be able to compete against organizations that do”* (p.1) set off this alarm within, because although it does create the well-known “sense of urgency” in the reader, what the book is seeking to do — looking at it from my best understanding and using my own words — is moving from an exploitation and power over another, towards a relational space of respect and cooperation. Although what each reader does with their ideas is not the responsibility of the authors, this made me think that the authors’ message could risk subordinating the purpose of creating Relational Workplaces to earnings and profits, given the insane spirit of competition that currently prevails.

Beyond this entirely personal concern, I do insist on this being a book necessary for these times, and that it offers clear practices which can be used in an organisation’s day-to-day. Also, the book impressed me in providing models and concepts with great openness and flexibility, becoming a meta-model which welcomes practices from other sources, which can be freely incorporated.

One of the topics I most enjoyed (which the management best-sellers do not dare to address), is the invitation to become aware of those topics we are “forbidden” to discuss, which it might in fact be advisable to discuss, as the author Alain de Botton once advised (De Botton, 2004).

The book is structured in six parts. Part one, The Opportunity, reminds us of the fact that organisations are made up of conversational networks which make meaning and can cultivate a purpose, and shows us outcomes of studies which evidence the enormous inequality, disconnection, and mistrust in most organisations nowadays.

Part two, The Relational Practices, introduces “The Six Relational Capacities” model, not as “tools”, but as “orientation” — as a conscious choice of what we intend to create in those conversations. This model is not one of exclusionary dimensions, but of interaction. I can easily imagine it in combination with techniques such as Warm Data, or Systemic Constellations, to explore those topics within organisations.

Part three, The Relational Frames, is probably the richest chapter, both in terms of the visuals and of resources to incorporate, create, recognize, or strengthen healthy practices within an organisation. The description of these frameworks alone would merit a full book review.

Part four, *The Work*, shows us useful ways to incorporate these forms of conversation within organisational cultures. Parts five and six, *The Case Studies* and *The Closing* respectively, become a good landing and preparation for having each of us start our own adventure in supporting the creation of anti-racism, diversity, equity and inclusion (ADEI) spaces within organisations.

So, I totally recommend reading and re-reading this book. I advise you to follow its guidelines, and I encourage you to create your own. I can envision it in the library of any business owner, manager, consultant or academic who, from the bottom of their heart, wishes to create healthy organisations.

Discover more about the book at <https://relationalworkplace.com/>.

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