



Editor-in-chief, Huffington Post — Arianna Huffington

“LEADERSHIP IS ABOUT SEEING THE OPPORTUNITIES OTHERS MISS”

We are on the brink of far-reaching change that could see organisations finally wake up to the reality that terrible business decisions are made when we do not address quality of life

When the stress and long hours of launching and running her media empire caused her to collapse at home, breaking her cheekbone, Huffington was forced to radically reconsider the relationship between work and wellbeing.

Now a leading advocate for workplace wellbeing, Huffington had recently attended the funeral of a friend when she spoke to *Work*. “After the ceremony all of us were asking ourselves the question – why are our résumés so different to our eulogies? Why is the time we spend during the day prioritising the things that we consider important, so different to the values that people remember us by when we die?”

This also encapsulates how business finds itself in “a perfect storm”, argues the *Huffington Post*’s talismanic founder, who outlines her own personal experience in her latest book *Thrive*. “The way we have been living our lives for decades has become unsustainable. We have more and more people paying an unacceptable price: heart attacks, high blood pressure, diabetes. Seventy-five per cent of healthcare costs come from preventable, stress-related diseases. That is stunning.”

Today’s always-on technology and 24/7 workplaces make it even harder for us to disconnect and, she believes, if organisations are to avoid crashing and burning along with their workers, they must introduce formal policies to help employees switch off and recharge.

Meetings at the *Huffington Post* are now device-free, and as a result have become shorter and more productive. Yoga and mindfulness classes and sleep pods are available and the email policy makes it clear that when employees leave work they are not expected to monitor their messages.

“We are about to launch something that Daimler first introduced in Germany whereby if you email someone while they are on vacation, you receive an email back saying ‘Linda is on vacation. She will not see

this email. If it’s urgent please contact George, otherwise please email her again in two weeks. This email will be deleted’. Don’t you love it? And you know what they found? Linda only gets 25 per cent of the emails because the rest get handled. And she comes back truly recharged.”

When the business world wakes up to this necessity, it will be “as huge as moving from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance,” says Huffington. “I was on a panel recently with a CEO who said he expects his chief of staff to be available 24/7. I predict in five years’ time he will not be able to say that in public.”

This has important implications for the future of leadership. “Leadership is about seeing the opportunities that others miss, and seeing the icebergs before they hit,” she argues. “I can say that the biggest mistakes I’ve

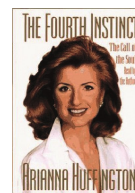
made as a manager is hiring the wrong people when I was so tired that I entirely missed the red flags and just wanted to cross one more thing off my very long and stressful to-do list. If we don’t address this, we are endangering our very survival because we are being led by leaders – in politics,

media and business – who are very smart and with very high IQs, who are making terrible decisions because they are not addressing their own quality of life issues and those of the people who work with them.”

Today’s economy is in a period of transition, concludes Huffington: “Every kind of behaviour is co-existing. You see some behaviour that is truly neanderthal, while other organisations like Aetna and LinkedIn, even some financial companies, are taking steps towards changing. What is really a source of optimism for me is that the science is now so conclusive. There are 55 pages of scientific end notes in *Thrive*. It shows that these measures are actually performance enhancers that improve productivity and creativity. The way the world is now is not working, and it must change.”

Words: Tim Smedley

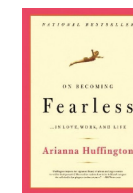
ARIANNA HUFFINGTON IN BOOKS



The Fourth Instinct: The Call of the Soul, 1994



Greetings from the Lincoln Bedroom, 1998



On Becoming Fearless: A Road Map for Women, 2006



Thrive, 2014

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