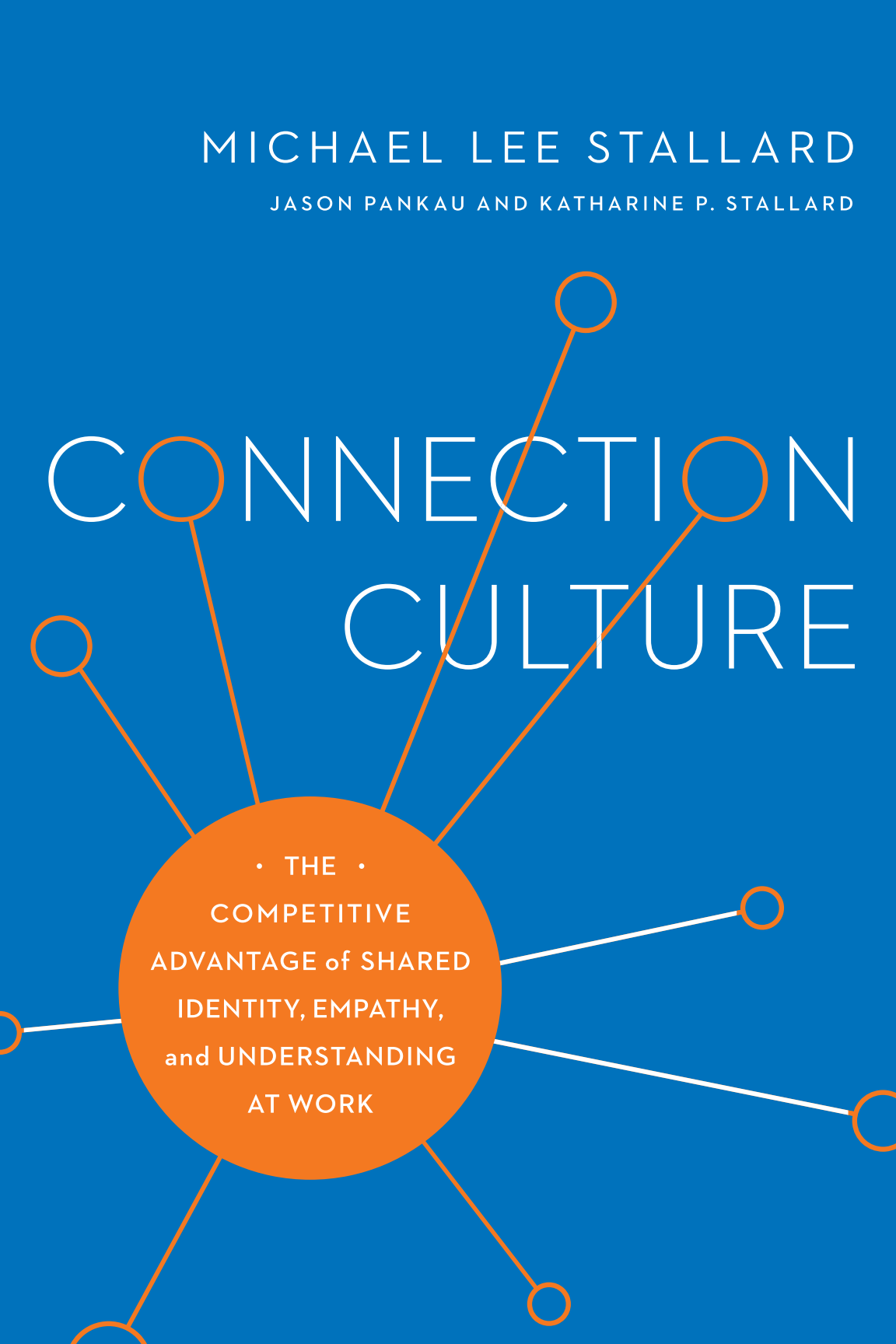


MICHAEL LEE STALLARD

JASON PANKAU AND KATHARINE P. STALLARD

CONNECTION CULTURE



• THE •
COMPETITIVE
ADVANTAGE of SHARED
IDENTITY, EMPATHY,
and UNDERSTANDING
AT WORK

ADVANCE PRAISE FOR CONNECTION CULTURE

“*Connection Culture* lays out a compelling case for a culture of connection in every organization, and provides a framework for leaders who want to apply positive personal values in practice in their organizations and teams.”

—John Young
Group President, Global Established Pharma Businesses, Pfizer

“Engaging, while offering real solutions to human challenges that occur in the workplace! As someone who has researched and published in the field of organizational psychology, I can honestly say that *Connection Culture* is right on target and a book that every leader should race to get his or her hands on.”

—Karla R. Peters-Van Havel
Chief Operating Officer, The Institute for Management Studies

“Listening to and engaging staffers in the right way at all levels is the key to driving business forward and is at the heart of Michael’s book. Running an organization of some 8,000 people, I have found Michael’s experience, guidance, and philosophy helpful in understanding and improving our company’s performance on multiple metrics. I hope others find the inspiration in this book that has helped FCB be better at what we do.”

—Carter Murray
Worldwide CEO, Foote, Cone & Belding

“*Connection Culture* offers a wealth of information, insights, and counsel that can help any organization develop a connection culture.”

—Robert Morris

Business Book Reviewer, BobMorris.biz and Amazon.com

“*Connection Culture* grabbed my attention from the beginning and had me jumping on the phone to share its ideas with friends and colleagues. We have to do better as leaders and as teachers of leadership development to be intentional in creating and sustaining connection cultures. Even when you think you’ve got it all in place (the surveys, training, recognition awards, and celebrations), disconnection creeps in. You must read this book.”

—Janis Apted

Associate Vice President, Faculty and Academic Development
The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center

“Much has been written about the impact of culture on organizational performance. *Connection Culture* digs deeper, putting the spotlight on the fundamental role that emotional connections play in fueling engagement, collaboration, and productivity. The ideas set out in this book will help you bring your people together to focus on collective success that results in a significant shift in your organization’s performance.”

—Bryan Crawford

Global Vice Chairman, Foote Cone & Belding

“Our organization has benefited greatly from the principles in *Connection Culture*. The book creates an engaging framework for leaders who want more for their businesses and employees. It is a must read for anyone leading an organization.”

—Mike Cunnion
Chief Executive Officer, Remedy Health Media

“Once again Michael Lee Stallard has mastered a rich description of the connection culture. He narrates a very concise and powerful road map to guide you as a leader and manager. Want to get strong results and fully develop your colleagues? Stallard’s ideas are compelling and abundant, providing practical actions to develop and refine your connection culture. Don’t wait another moment. Get a copy for yourself. And for your colleagues. They will thank you.”

—Tom Jansen
Team Leader, Strategy, Strategic Performance Office,
Boy Scouts of America

“Too many leadership books focus on developing work experience without acknowledging the rest of our lives. *Connection Culture* demonstrates how the positive habits, relationships, and character we’ve developed in the workplace can serve us well at home and in our communities. Not only does this deep exploration of connection culture explain the positive effects of using these skills, it also offers ways to get started on the journey.”

—James DaSilva
Senior Editor, *SmartBrief on Leadership*

“Thank you, Michael, for reminding us again that people—customers and employees—are the most important ingredient of any business. Leaders place so much emphasis on the operations and financials, but people connecting and working together is the key to success.”

—Jay Morris

Vice President, Leadership Development and Education
Executive Director, Institute for Excellence
Yale New Haven Health System

“The message of Connection Culture is profoundly personal yet ultimately universal. If you think you know what connection really means, you’ll come away with a whole new perspective after reading this gracefully written book.”

—Bruce Rosenstein

Managing Editor, *Leader to Leader*
Author, *Create Your Future the Peter Drucker Way*

“Connection Culture has everything you need in a leadership book: it inspires, it’s backed by solid research, and it has practical, proven ideas and action steps. If you are looking for ways to motivate, engage, foster innovation, or perhaps simply striving for a richer life for yourself and others, read and re-read Connection Culture.”

—Dan McCarthy

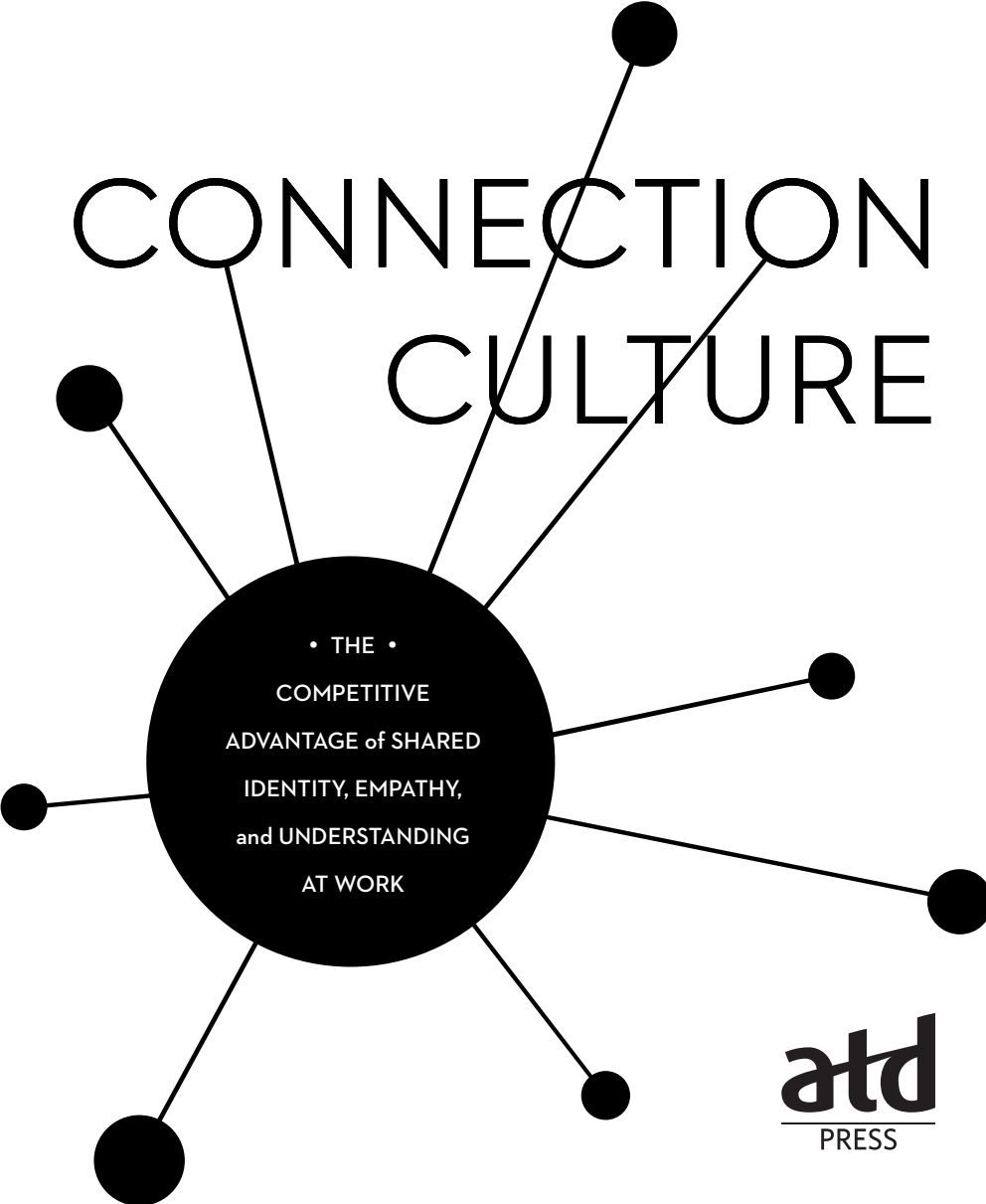
Leadership author, consultant, and executive coach

“Connection works when we work on connection. Michael Stallard draws us in with his stories, convinces us with his evidence, and guides us with his recommendations. He concludes by inviting us to mark the day we finish the book as the start of a new outlook, focused on establishing a thriving work culture through freshly enlivened, engaged, and enriched connections.”

—David Zinger
Employee Engagement Global Expert
Founder, Employee Engagement Network

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WITH JASON PANKAU AND KATHARINE P. STALLARD

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Parts of this book are adapted from articles in *Leader to Leader* from the Frances Hesselbein Leadership Institute.

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ATD Press is an internationally renowned source of insightful and practical information on talent development, workplace learning, and professional development.

ATD Press
1640 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314 USA

Ordering information: Books published by ATD Press can be purchased by visiting ATD's website at www.td.org/books or by calling 800.628.2783 or 703.683.8100.

Library of Congress Control Number: 2015932216

ISBN-10: 1-56286-927-2
ISBN-13: 978-1-56286-927-4
e-ISBN: 978-1-60728-499-4

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Text Design: Lon Levy, Marisa Fritz, and Maggie Hyde

Printed by Maple Press, York, PA, www.MaplePress.com

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FOREWORD

BY VICTOR J. BOSCHINI JR.

Connection Culture presents a new way of thinking about leadership, employee engagement, and organizational health. It shares the stories of many different organizations that found tremendous success by nurturing connections—from Pixar to the U.S. Navy to the Duke University men’s basketball team. Combined with an array of data and research findings, as well as examples from real-life experiences, Michael Lee Stallard makes the compelling case that a culture of connection provides a clear competitive advantage for organizations and individuals. *Connection Culture* provides powerful tools for enriching and transforming organizations, continuing and deepening the conversation begun in Stallard’s highly acclaimed book *Fired Up or Burned Out*.

Texas Christian University is proud to be one of the organizations profiled in *Connection Culture*. At TCU our goal is to produce graduates who can deal with change and ambiguity, assess risk, and motivate others. These are the qualities most needed for leadership in an unpredictable environment. This emphasis on the individual also extends to faculty and staff—the Chronicle of Higher Education continually recognizes TCU as one of the 100 Great Colleges to Work For.

But we want to do more.

Some years ago I was intrigued to learn that Stallard, the father of two of our students, was an expert on leadership and organizational culture. When I read what he wrote on connection culture it really resonated with me. During the course of my career in higher education, I’ve seen how students thrive when supportive relationships make them feel connected, and I’ve seen how they struggle when they feel lonely. I was thankful to see how well TCU resonated with Stallard’s connection culture theory—the university’s culture is rooted in a long

history of valuing service to others and inclusiveness, both of which increase connection.

In an effort to strengthen our culture of connection even further, TCU is partnering with Stallard to create a Center for Connection Culture at the university. Through the leadership of Chancellor's Associate for Strategic Partnerships Ann Loudon, who is also the Center's director, we are committed to embracing connection cultures in higher education. It begins at home as we equip our faculty, staff, and students with the skills to be more intentional about connection. Our strong connection culture on campus is being enhanced by the work of the Center. And we are committed to embracing connection programs and activities for our entire university, as well as for community participants.

While reading *Connection Culture*, I was reminded of Moore's Law, which states that the processing power of computers will double every two years. I find this to be an apt metaphor for the rapidly evolving environment we must prepare our TCU graduates for. This book provides positive ways of thinking and acting that can help them—and us all—navigate that unpredictable future.

—Victor J. Boschini Jr.
Chancellor
Texas Christian University

FOREWORD

BY TED GEORGE

As a practicing psychiatrist and neuroscience researcher, I've seen how important work is in people's lives, as well as the impact it can have on their emotional well-being. As I talk with people, I often hear about their problems with supervisors, boredom with work, or being overwhelmed with responsibilities. These situations and others like them have a negative impact on job performance and mental health.

Steps need to be taken to change the status quo. Michael Lee Stallard's *Connection Culture* not only ventures into research about the positive influence a connection can have on the work environment, it also offers practical approaches to make a change. Such tools have tremendously positive implications for managers and employees, as well as the companies that count on superior performance to stay competitive.

In the book, Stallard focuses on the six universal needs humans have to thrive: respect, recognition, belonging, autonomy, personal growth, and meaning. When these needs are not met, the nervous system responds with anger, fear, or a passive state of "disconnect" in order to restore a sense of well-being. In a healthy workplace, these emotions serve to right wrongs and re-establish a thriving environment where the autonomic nervous system and endocrine system promote a sense of well-being and good health. However, when interactions and the general office environment don't meet those six needs, they can cause unhealthy emotional responses by both employees and managers. These feelings of disconnection make people more vulnerable to stress, anxiety, depression, and addiction.

Only recently has modern technology allowed us to understand the profound effect that feelings of exclusion have on the nervous system.

A group of scientists at the University of California placed participants in an fMRI scanner and examined how the blood flow in their brains changed when they were excluded from social interaction. One interesting observation was that in some of the individuals the rejection activated the part of the brain that processes pain. *Connection Culture* builds on these ideas, highlighting findings from other researchers to champion the importance of connection within the workplace. This research demonstrates how increasing connection has a favorable effect on organizational outcomes, including higher customer satisfaction, revenue, and profits, and lower employee turnover and accident rates.

Stallard also includes many case studies featuring organizations and managers that have excelled at creating a culture that connects people. These stories provide real-life examples of leaders who had the courage and insight to take a dysfunctional organization and inspire change by empowering people to truly succeed and have a sense of importance and meaning. Stallard uses them to demonstrate how connection culture provides a competitive advantage in a variety of fields, including business, government, healthcare, higher education, and sports, as well as the religious and social sectors.

In addition to telling the stories of successful leaders, *Connection Culture* also offers a wealth of practical advice. It provides 15 building blocks to help leaders get started—five each in vision, value, and voice. These encouraging, helpful suggestions are easy and approachable, and will set you on the path to connecting people.

The book ends with the message that connection begins with you. In my psychiatric practice I see many people get to the point of change, but then get bogged down with pessimistic thoughts, such as “it won’t work” or “no one will listen to me.” *Connection Culture* asks you to take an honest look at yourself as an employee, a manager, and a leader, and to take ownership of the culture. The rewards you reap will not only empower you, but also your employees. It will give you

the satisfaction of knowing that you are helping to make your organization a healthier and better place to work.

—Ted George, MD

Clinical Professor at George Washington School of Medicine

Senior Investigator at The National Institute on Alcohol

Abuse and Alcoholism

Author of *Untangling the Mind: Why We Behave the Way We Do*

INTRODUCTION

THE SECRET OF U2'S SUCCESS

U2 began as a rock band that people booed and laughed at. Now, after receiving its 22nd Grammy Award in 2005, U2 has more than any band in history. It recently surpassed the Rolling Stones's record for the highest revenue grossing concert tour ever. Critics rave over the band's music, and fans worldwide can't seem to get enough of its songs and concert appearances. All the signs indicate that U2 is at the top of its game and will be going strong for the foreseeable future. So how did this group rise to such lofty heights, and what can we learn from its success?

The way U2 functions is even more extraordinary than its music. The band's four members—lyricist and lead singer Bono, lead guitar player “the Edge,” bass guitar player Adam Clayton, and drummer Larry Mullen Jr.—have known one another since they were teenagers in Dublin, Ireland. Bono has described the band as more of an organism than an organization, and several of its attributes contribute to this unique culture. Members value continuous improvement to achieve their own potential, always maintaining the view that they can become even better.

U2's members share a vision of their mission and values. You might expect a band's mission to be achieving commercial success as measured by number 1 hits and concert attendance. However, U2's mission is to

improve the world through its music and influence. Bono has described himself as a traveling salesman of ideas within songs, which address themes the band members believe are important to promote, including human rights, social justice, and matters of faith. Bono and his wife, Ali, help the poor, particularly in Africa, through their philanthropy and the organizations they've created.

U2's members value one another as people and don't just think of one another as means to an end. Bono has said that although he hears melodies in his head, he is unable to translate them into written music. Considering himself a terrible guitar and keyboard player, he relies on his fellow members to help him write the songs and praises them for their talents, which are integral to U2's success.

Bono has also had his band members' backs during times of trial. When Larry lost his mom in a car accident a short time after the band was formed, Bono was there to support him. Bono, who had already lost his mother, understood Larry's pain. When U2 was offered its first recording contract on the condition that it replace Larry with a more conventional drummer, Bono told the record company executive: There's no deal without Larry. When the Edge went through divorce, his bandmates were there to support him. When Adam showed up to a concert so stoned he couldn't perform, the others could have thrown him overboard for letting them down. Instead, they had someone step in to cover for him, and then went on to help Adam overcome his drug and alcohol addiction.

Bono's bandmates have his back too. One of the most vivid examples of this came when U2 campaigned during the 1980s for the observance of a Martin Luther King Jr. Day in the United States. Bono received a death threat that warned him not to sing "Pride (In the Name of Love)," a song about the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., at an upcoming concert. The FBI considered it a credible threat. Bono described in an interview that as he sang the song, he closed his eyes. When he opened his eyes

again at the end of a verse, he discovered that Adam was standing in front of him to shield him from potential harm. Years later, when U2 was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, Bono thanked Adam for being willing to take a bullet for him.

Unlike many bands in which one megastar gets most of the economic profits, U2 shares its profits equally among the four band members and their long-time manager. This further shows the value Bono has for his band members and manager. (We're not saying that all organizations should split the company's economic profits equally; simply recognize that when leaders take too much it works against engaging the people they lead.)

Each member has a voice in decisions, thanks to the band's participatory, consensus-oriented decision-making approach. If one person strongly opposes a particular action, the band won't do it, which encourages the flow of knowledge among band members, allowing the best ideas to come to light. Their passion for excellence is also reflected in relentless arguments over their music. Bono has stated that this approach can be slow and frustrating at times, but the members of U2 believe it is necessary to achieve excellence.

These factors—which this book calls shared identity, empathy, and understanding—create a culture of connection, community, and unity among the members of U2. Bono has described the band as a tight-knit family and community. Their commitment to support one another extends beyond the four members of the band to a larger community that includes their families, crew members, and collaborators—many of whom have known each other for decades.

The secret of U2's success is its leadership and culture. Bono connects as a leader among equals because he communicates an inspiring vision and lives it, he values people as individuals, and he gives them a voice in decision making. It is this culture of vision, value, and voice that has helped U2 achieve and sustain its superior performance.

This is a connection culture. In examining how U2 operates we see the influence a connection culture can have on the individual, as well as the group as a whole.

HOW ABOUT YOU?

An organization's culture reflects the predominant ways of thinking, behaving, and working. To appreciate the importance of culture in the workplace, consider your own experiences. During the course of your career, have you experienced times when you were eager to get to work in the morning, you were so immersed in your work that the hours flew by, and by the end of the day you didn't want to stop working? What was it about the job that made you feel that way?

How about the opposite? Have you experienced times when you struggled to get to work in the morning, the hours passed ever so slowly, and by the end of the day you were exhausted? Again, what was it about the job that made you feel that way?

If you are like most people, you've experienced those extremes during your career. I have too. As I reflected on my experiences, I realized I hadn't changed—the culture I was in was either energizing or draining the life out of me.

Thus I began a quest to identify the elements of workplace cultures that help people and organizations thrive for sustained periods of time. When the practices my team and I developed to boost employee engagement contributed to doubling our business's revenues during the course of two and a half years, I knew I was on to something. A few years later I left Wall Street to devote my full attention to understanding employee engagement and culture so I could help others improve the cultures they were in.

THREE PSYCHOSOCIAL CULTURES: CONNECTION, CONTROL, INDIFFERENCE

What type of culture are you in right now? As we explore what it takes to establish and strengthen connection cultures, it is instructive to understand how they differ from cultures of control and cultures of indifference.

In cultures of control, people with power, influence, and status rule over others. This culture creates an environment where people fear to make mistakes and take risks. It is stifling—killing innovation because people are afraid to speak up. Employees may feel left out, micromanaged, unsafe, hyper-criticized, or helpless.

Cultures of indifference are predominant today. In this type of culture, people are so busy chasing money, power, and status that they fail to invest the time necessary to develop healthy, supportive relationships. As a result, leaders don't see value in the relational nature of work, and many people struggle with loneliness. Employees may feel like a cog in a machine, unimportant, uncertain, or invisible.

Both of these cultures sabotage individual and organizational performance. Feeling consistently unsupported, left out, or lonely takes a toll. Without the psychological resources to cope with the normal stress of modern organizational life, employees may turn to unhealthy attitudes and behaviors, many of which are addictive and destructive.

A distinguishing feature of these cultures is a sole focus on task excellence. Leaders may openly dismiss the need for relationship excellence. Others may give it lip service and occasional attention, or see its value without knowing how to bring it about. In order to achieve sustainable, superior performance, every member of an organization needs to intentionally develop *both* task excellence and relationship excellence. A connection culture produces relationship excellence.

In a connection culture people care about others and care about their work because it benefits other human beings. They invest the time to develop healthy relationships and reach out to help others in need, rather than being indifferent to them. This bond helps overcome the differences that historically divided people, creating a sense of connection, community, and unity that is inclusive and energized, and spurs productivity and innovation.

A MAJOR OPPORTUNITY FOR YOU

Understanding the factors that create a connection culture that enables us to thrive is extremely important. According to Gallup's employee engagement research during the last decade, 70 to 74 percent of American workers are not engaged in their jobs. Globally, that percentage rises to 87 to 89 percent (Gallup 2013). Disengaged people show up for the paycheck, but don't perform anywhere near what they are capable of if they were in a culture that energized and engaged them.

This lack of employee engagement is a problem that has serious ramifications. The business world is becoming a much more global and competitive place, with standards going up all the time. Organizations with a large percentage of disengaged employees may not survive. Individuals who fall behind thanks to poor work cultures will also be in trouble.

This may sound bleak, but you should consider it to be a major opportunity. In *Connection Culture* you will gain the knowledge to become part of the turnaround story and create cultures that help people thrive, whether you are a leader in a formal position of management or leadership authority, or if you informally lead others through your influence as a concerned employee who wants to see change. It will give you the tools to become more intentional about putting yourself in a healthy culture; creating a culture to boost employee

engagement, productivity, innovation, and performance; and implementing actions that increase and sustain the health of the culture you work in. Although *Connection Culture* is focused on organizations and the workplace, it also applies to the culture in your family, volunteer group, and community.

In chapters 1 and 2 you will learn about the force of connection, the six universal human needs required to thrive at work, and the five elements that are necessary to create connection cultures that achieve sustainable superior performance.

Chapter 3 demonstrates in practical terms how connection applies to all groups through inspiring stories about the connection cultures of diverse organizations. You will learn how leaders and organizations in many different sectors incorporate connection.

Chapter 4 arms you with interesting and relevant research supporting the case for connection from a wide variety of fields, including psychology, sociology, neuroscience, and organizational behavior. You will also see how a lack of connection affects a person's wellness, well-being, and length of life.

Chapters 5 and 6 equip you with very specific, practical, and actionable ways to create a connection culture. In these final chapters you will discover ways to connect—including new ways to think about your attitudes, language, and behaviors.

Connection Culture provides a new way of thinking about leadership and organizational culture. In the pages ahead you will learn about this new approach and discover how to tap into the power of human connection.

1

THE COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE OF CONNECTION

In this chapter you will learn:

- the definition of connection and its effect on organizations and individuals
 - the six universal human needs to thrive at work.
-

One of the most powerful and least understood aspects of successful organizations is how employees' feelings of connection, community, and unity provide a competitive advantage. Employees in an organization with a high degree of connection are more engaged, more productive in their jobs, and less likely to leave for a competitor. They are also more trusting and cooperative; they are more willing to share information with their colleagues and therefore help them make well-informed decisions.

Connection in the workplace is an emotional bond that promotes trust, cooperation, and esprit de corps among people. It is based on a shared identity, empathy, and understanding that moves primarily *self*-centered individuals toward *group*-centered membership. Without that sense of connection, employees will never reach their potential as individuals. And if employees don't reach their potential, the organi-

zation won't either. Connection is what transforms a dog-eat-dog environment into a sled dog team that pulls together.

When interacting with people, we generally find a connection with some, but not with others—"we really connected" and "we just didn't connect" are common phrases in our daily conversations. Connection describes something intangible that we sense in relationships. When it is present, we feel energy, empathy, and affirmation, and are more open; when it is absent, we experience neutral or even negative feelings.

Although we know what it's like to feel connected on a personal level, few understand the effect connection has on us, our families and friends, and our co-workers and the organizations we work in. Let me explain the power of connection by sharing some observations from my personal experiences.

I left Wall Street in May 2002 to begin researching and writing the book *Fired Up or Burned Out: How to Reignite Your Team's Passion, Creativity, and Productivity*. In addition to researching organizational behavior, psychology, sociology, history, political science, and systems theory, I did a great deal of reflecting about my own life experiences. To my surprise, some of the things I learned came from unexpected places.

EPIPHANY

In late 2002, my wife, Katie, was diagnosed with breast cancer. During her treatments, we were comforted by the kindness and compassion of healthcare workers at our local hospital, some of whom were cancer survivors themselves. The connection we felt with them boosted our spirits.

Twelve months later, tests indicated that Katie might have ovarian cancer. January 7, 2004, was one of the most sobering days of my life—after her three-hour surgery, we found out that it was ovarian cancer, and that it had spread. I still remember the surgeon telling me that he was sorry. That night I took our daughters (Sarah, 12, and

Elizabeth, 10) and Katie's mom to visit her in the ICU. Seeing her so weak and pale scared the girls. Sarah backed up against a wall and began to faint. After an ICU nurse helped us revive her, we knew it was time to head home. As we walked through the deserted hospital lobby, Elizabeth began to sob. Sarah and I wrapped our arms around Elizabeth until she regained her composure. I recall how alone I felt and afraid of what the future might hold for our family.

After six chemotherapy treatments and a short break, Katie started a second regimen of chemotherapy, this time at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York City. On our first visit, as we got within eyesight of the 53rd Street entrance in midtown Manhattan, a larger-than-life friendly doorman named Nick Medley locked eyes with Katie and smiled at her. This was the first of many happy surprises—few make eye contact with a passerby in New York City, let alone smile! I realized that Nick was probably a seasoned wig-spotter and, recognizing that Katie was a cancer patient, was intentionally reaching out to connect with her. In the lobby, the receptionist called everyone “honey.” (Again, very unlike Manhattan.) Each person we encountered was friendly. Katie's oncologist, Dr. Martee Hensley, spent an hour educating us about treatment options and answering our long list of questions. Her warmth and optimistic attitude gave us hope.

By the end of the visit, I had two reactions. First, I had done the research and knew this was one of the best teams in the world to treat ovarian cancer. That was a rational reaction. Second, I believed that they cared. Even though I knew Katie's chance of survival was less than 10 percent, I was hopeful that these amazing people would get her through the difficult season ahead.

One day while Katie was undergoing treatment I stumbled upon a meeting in a lounge where employees who worked at that location were discussing the results of an employee survey. Nick was there and

I overheard him say that he loved working at the center because he loved his colleagues, the patients, and their families—and most of all he loved the cause, which is to provide “the best cancer care, anywhere.” It was apparent that Nick’s co-workers also felt a connection with one another, their patients, and their patients’ families. During the time we spent at Sloan Kettering it struck me how much more joy and esprit de corps I felt in a cancer treatment center than I experienced while working on Wall Street. I wasn’t at all surprised when I saw a segment about Nick on ABC’s *World News Tonight* that said that this cancer survivor gives 1,300 hugs a day to patients and their families.

According to the American Cancer Society one of the worst things for cancer patients is to feel alone. We rarely felt alone. I’m convinced that the connections we felt with healthcare workers, friends, and family helped Katie go into remission and protected our family’s spirits. When people stopped by to visit us, which happened regularly, it wasn’t a somber occasion—we talked, laughed, and enjoyed one another’s company. Christian, Jewish, and Muslim friends told us they were praying for Katie and our family, and an atheist friend said he was sending positive thoughts our way.

Having had such a good experience at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, we enthusiastically recommended it to a friend of ours who was diagnosed with a different type of cancer. The physicians in that specialty were located in a different building, and surprisingly, her experience was completely at odds with ours. After the initial consultation, she felt alone and unwelcome and decided to seek treatment elsewhere.

Reflecting on these experiences made me realize three things about connection:

1. It is a powerful force that creates a positive emotional bond between people.

2. It contributes to bringing out the best in people and energizes them, making them more trusting and more resilient to face life's inevitable difficulties.
3. It can vary dramatically across teams, units, and even locations of organizations, depending upon local culture and leadership.

In 2014, Katie was diagnosed with another episode of breast cancer. When we returned to Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center we found that the connection was just as strong as ever. Katie's surgeon, Dr. Alexandra Heerdt, her oncologist, Dr. Tiffany Traina, and their teams were upbeat and optimistic. On the day of Katie's surgery we arrived at the hospital at 7 a.m. and found Dr. Heerdt dressed in hospital scrubs waiting for us in the reception area. She gave Katie a big hug and asked if we had any questions. After the surgery Dr. Heerdt told me that she had removed the tumor and it appeared that it hadn't spread (which was later confirmed by lab results). When we met with Dr. Traina later to discuss adjuvant treatment options, she was personable and compassionate. With our faith and the power of connection, we are optimistic Katie will overcome this cancer too.

BACKED BY SCIENCE

As I continued my research it was exciting to see hard evidence corroborate what I was seeing anecdotally. Neuroscientists and endocrinologists have discovered that human connection reduces the levels of the stress hormones epinephrine, norepinephrine, and cortisol in the blood so we are more likely to make rational decisions; triggers the release of an enzyme named telomerase, which heals damage to the telomeres on the tips of our chromosomes caused by stress; increases the neurotransmitter dopamine, which enhances attention and pleasure; increases serotonin, which reduces fear and worry; and increases the levels of oxytocin and/or vasopressin, which makes us more trusting of others (Hallowell 1999; Sapolsky 2008).

Other research establishes that connection improves wellness, well-being, and performance throughout our lifetime, indicating that we are biochemically hardwired for connection. It enhances the quality and length of our lives. Conversely, disconnection (social isolation or exclusion) brings about dysfunction and depression.

This is also supported by the observations of psychiatrists. For example, Edward Hallowell, a practicing psychiatrist and former instructor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, has written that most of the business executives he encounters in his practice are deprived of connection. They report loneliness, isolation, confusion, distrust, disrespect, and dissatisfaction, so Hallowell helps them identify ways to increase connection in their lives (Hallowell 1999b).

HUMAN BEINGS, NOT MACHINES

Why is connection so powerful? Because humans are not machines—we have emotions, hopes and dreams, and a conscience.

Humans also have universal needs that must be met in order to thrive. It's important to understand that these are *needs* not just *wants* (or desires). The resulting sense of connection from having these needs met makes us feel connected to our work, the people we work with, and our organization. The work context has six specific needs: respect, recognition, belonging, autonomy, personal growth, and meaning. This list is derived from personal research, as well as research and insights from A.H. Maslow on the hierarchy of needs and need deficits, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi on flow and optimal experience, Richard M. Ryan and Edward L. Deci on autonomy, and Viktor E. Frankl on meaning.

The first three needs (respect, recognition, and belonging) are *relational* needs. When these needs are met, we feel connected to the people we work with. The next two (autonomy and personal growth) are *task mastery* needs, which affect how connected we feel to the work we are doing. Finally, the sixth need, meaning, is an *existential* need.

RESPECT

We need to be around people who are courteous and considerate. People who are patronizing, condescending, or passive-aggressive drain the life out of us and keep us from thriving.

RECOGNITION

We get energized when we work with people who recognize and voice our task strengths, “you’re a great manager,” or character strengths, “you persevere to overcome obstacles.” It’s almost as if we have a recognition battery that periodically needs to be recharged—except that the outlet is on our back, where we can’t reach, so we have to rely on those around us to charge our battery. If it’s not charged, we feel emotionally and physically drained.

BELONGING

When we feel as though we belong to a group, we are more resilient to cope with life’s inevitable difficulties. And don’t worry, *everyone* has them—sickness, death, job loss, divorce, depression, and so on are part of life. The people in our group help us through hard times because they care. (And they also tell us when we have food on our chin or are doing something unwise.) They care enough to tell us what we need to hear and are there for us when we need them.

AUTONOMY

We need the freedom to do our work. Being micromanaged or slowed down by red tape, bureaucracy, or control-obsessed personalities prevents us from thriving.

PERSONAL GROWTH

When we are engaged in a task that is a good fit with our strengths and provides the right degree of challenge, we experience a state that psychologists describe as flow. It is like being in a time warp—time flies by when we are immersed in a task. Unchallenged, we feel bored.

Over-challenged, we feel stressed out. The optimal degree of challenge invigorates us.

MEANING

When we are engaged in work that is important to us in some way, we are energized and put additional effort into it. When our work has meaning, we feel a sense of significance.

CONNECTION IS CRITICAL TO ORGANIZATIONS

It follows that the effect of connection on individual performance will have an influence on an organizational level. There is an extensive amount of research showing that connection provides a competitive advantage, which we'll review in greater detail in chapter 4. For now, consider this:

- Compared to business units with engagement and connection scores in the bottom 25 percent, the top 25 percent's median averages were:
 - 21 percent higher in productivity
 - 22 percent higher in profitability
 - 41 percent lower in quality defects
 - 37 percent lower in absenteeism
 - 10 percent higher in customer metrics (Gallup 2013).
- Employees who feel engaged and connected are:
 - 20 percent more productive than the average employee
 - 87 percent less likely to leave the organization (Corporate Leadership Council 2004).

Fostering connection in the workplace is a win-win for individuals and for organizations. Given the evidence, it is irrational not to be

intentional about connection because it is the key to help you thrive personally and professionally. It affects the health of your family, workplace, volunteer organizations, community, and nation. You cannot thrive for long without it.

The following chapters demonstrate how you can bring out connection in the workplace by creating a connection culture—a culture with the necessary elements to meet our human needs.

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