



Your investment in the culture & environment where your teams spend more waking hours than they do at home with families is your most valuable contribution as a servant leader. Maybe your existing culture is a healthy one. But how do you know? This is a step-by-step guide to building a brand & creating a culture of authentic servant leadership.

**BUILDING BRAND & CREATING CULTURES
OF AUTHENTIC SERVANT LEADERSHIP**
by STACY WALL SCHWEIKHART

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**BUILDING BRANDS
CREATING CULTURES**

OF AUTHENTIC SERVANT LEADERSHIP

STACY WALL SCHWEIKHART
WITH INSIGHTS FROM RON HOLIFIELD

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Prologue

As a college student at the University of Dayton I serendipitously found my way in to an experiential learning course called “Leadership in Building Communities”. Taught by the then President of the University Brother Ray Fitz and two members of his team, Don Vermillion and Dick Ferguson, the course paired students with urban neighborhoods to complete an asset map and an action plan for desired improvements.

The entire course was built on the foundation of servant leadership and the teachings of Robert K. Greenleaf. We learned by the example to engage side by side with the community, not to sweep in and do something FOR them. We learned to facilitate constructive conversations. We learned that the key to sustaining change is authentic relationships. We learned that true leaders have heart, not necessarily titles.

BUILDING BRANDS & CREATING CULTURES

That course changed my life. A psychology major with plans to go to law school, I started shifting my path toward public service. Deep within, I felt a call to work to better communities. I felt a burden to help close the gap I perceived between where communities and organizations could be and where they are. In every role I've held since, servant leadership has been at the core of my why.

The experience also blessed me with a career mentor in Don Vermillion. He was the ultimate servant leader in each and every sense of the term. A former city manager and county administrator, Don "retired" and dedicated the rest of his life to illuminating the path to public service for students and young professionals. Look around the Dayton region and it is hard to find a public serving organization without leaders who were in some way students or mentees inspired by Don.

Fast forward a decade or so. I attended one of Ron's presentations and the underlying

servant leadership message resonated deeply. Over the years that followed, Ron & I had several conversations about the changing demands of organizational leadership and our common belief that though the pressure is growing the answer is still the same.

Your people and your culture will determine your ability to thrive in spite of the challenges.

When Ron released “4th Dimension Leadership” in 2017, I found myself immersed in the compelling challenge he laid out. I filled the margins of the book with notes, questions and observations.

When Ron exalted the need for all systems within an organization to align to build a servant leader culture, I wrote in the margin **Yes**, followed by **but do organizations know how?**.

I was blown away, and deeply honored, when Ron asked if I would consider writing the next book in the SGR 4th Dimension Leadership series. A book that would attempt to answer

many of the questions I wrote in the margins as I read his book.

I might as well get this confession out of the way. Ron did not ask me to write this book on branding and culture because I hold advanced degrees from a pedigree marketing or communication program. So if what you are looking for is pure, unadulterated branding advice, this is not the book for you. This is definitively not a marketing book.

If, on the other hand, your primary motivation is to deepen your commitment to being a servant leader, and to understand the critical actions you can take to shape systems within your organization to instill a servant leadership culture, read on. If you are called to build community, both within your organization and those you serve – read on.

This is not a “you should” book. If you are looking for why “you should” and you haven’t read Ron’s 4th Dimension Leadership book yet, start there.

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Until now the common way to get from “you should” to action involved hiring a consultant or bobbling your way through semi-blind with mixed results.

This book is the next step in the process.

It is built around the same foundation from Greenleaf that Ron cites in 4th Dimension Leadership - that the twelve characteristics of Servant Leadership are:

- Listening
- Empathy
- Healing
- Nurturing the spirit
- Building community
- Awareness
- Foresight
- Conceptualization
- Persuasion
- Calling
- Stewardship
- Commitment to the growth of people

This is truly a “how to” book. If you come along with me on this journey, you will be on the path to building a brand and creating a culture of authentic servant leadership.

I'm one of you. I believe in this stuff. If only one organization can use this roadmap to implement a shift toward a servant leadership culture my mission is accomplished.

I know the impact it will have on hearts of your team and I am confident that it will shift the soul of your organization for the good of the people you serve.

Think of this book as a guide to establishing your own road map. I will walk you through figuring out where your journey must begin and where you'd like it to end. I'll make sure to point out critical parts of the path and potential stumbling points along the way. I'll give you some suggestions that might make the journey more meaningful. I'll even give you a heads up about places where you might encounter a traffic jam or a detour.

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Just like a family road trip, there is one rule. No asking “are we there yet”. I assure you that when you get there, and even when you’re on the right road along the way, you’ll know it. More importantly, there is no way to estimate how long this road trip will take. Take your time and enjoy the journey!

INSIGHTS FROM RON

When I first began deeply studying organizational culture as part of my research in writing *4th Dimension Leadership – Radical Strategies for Creating an Authentic Servant Leadership Culture*, I was honestly surprised at what I learned regarding the interconnectedness between culture and brand reputation. And the more I learned, the more I realized how much I did not know. I discovered that for me (and probably for you) the entire concept of brand management was more than a bit of a blind spot when focusing on creating the type of sustainable culture we desired.

As a result, I began searching for an expert who not only understood brand management, but also understood local government and authentically bought in to servant leadership principles. I went in search of someone who could help fill the critical gap in practical

understanding of how to successfully manage your brand from a culture perspective because I knew I did not have that expertise.

I had heard Stacy speak at other conferences, and as a result asked her to speak at the SGR Servant Leadership Conference on brand management. After hearing her speak at the SGR Servant Leadership Conference, I knew I had found the right expert and immediately urged her to do a book on the subject. Stacy brings the expertise that I (and most of us) lack in the practical strategies needed to manage a brand. But she also brings a wealth of experience in media relations, crisis communications, and community relations, as well as branding and culture.

But most significantly, Stacy has studied, believes in, and walks the talk of authentic servant leadership.

The fact that Stacy “gets it” has been demonstrated in her being tapped repeatedly to serve in leadership roles with various

regional, state and national associations and organizations. Stacy has a national reputation in local government circles and is clearly a thought leader when it comes to managing your brand reputation. I have learned much from her in the process of assisting her in the development of this book. I am confident you also will learn much from her about how to manage your brand in a way that helps you create an authentic servant leadership culture just as I have.

We have been conditioned to equate building a brand with marketing. But marketing is what you do to accomplish audience specific goals, while your brand is who you are (or at least who others perceive that you are!).

Let that sink in for a moment.

Your brand is your identity... it is how others see you.

Your brand can be positive or negative, accurate or inaccurate, but the impact that your brand has on your success is profound...

far too important to be left to chance.

Unfortunately, that is exactly what most organizations do – they leave their brand identity to chance by failing to understand (and then act upon) the ways they can positively build their brand.

Behavioral norms create authentic culture, and your authentic culture determines your brand reputation.

Culture is simply the behavioral norms of your employees -- and those behavioral norms determine how those you serve are treated each time an interaction occurs.

In the case of local government, a typical citizen only has a significant interaction with your organization about once every two years. Yet every time an employee interacts with someone you serve, your brand reputation is being shaped in a way that will define your brand in the mind of that person for a long time to come. Each, and every personal interaction is an “aha moment” which has a

disproportionate impact on how that person will define your brand. In doing so, you shape expectations regarding the type and quality of services you provide, and then people tend to demand that their expectations be met.

As the organization becomes conditioned to meet those expectations (both positive and negative), behavioral norms are established, and those norms define the authentic culture and brand identity of an organization regardless of what posters you have on the wall claiming it is.

Think about a closed loop... your brand reputation shapes expectations of those you serve...which shapes team performance... which shapes your reputation.

Your brand is shaped most by interaction.

Think about a typical driver's license bureau and the last time you went to get your driver's license renewed. You likely put it off until the last minute because you anticipated what a

negative experience it was going to be.

When you arrived, there was a mass of people already in an unbelievably slow-moving line, the design and furnishings of the room felt like something out of the 1950's, there were not enough clerks to handle the number of people, and the clerks that were there reminded you of the teacher in Ferris Buehler's Day off dripping with slow moving boredom as he called out "Buehler, Buehler".

That may or may not be a fair or accurate reflection of reality, but it is the real brand reputation that too many drivers' license bureaus live with.

In Texas, I am only required to go in person to get my driver's license renewed once every 8 years. But my interaction from "the last time" still shapes my dread of doing it again a full 8 years later! Interaction (positive or negative) has a profound impact on how we interpret the brand of organizations we deal with and once formed, those impressions are hard to

overcome.

Your brand creates self-fulfilling expectations of both current and future individuals you serve.

I worked with one community whose elected officials value low taxes above all else and are willing to sacrifice quality of services for the lowest possible tax rate.

At the same time, I worked with another community who considered excellence in both the array of services offered and the quality of those services to be a priority and are willing to pay for excellence.

It is not hard to predict, that the type of residents who move to the first community tend to tolerate mediocre services, while the type of residents who move to the second one expect excellence and are willing to pay for it.

And predictably, the community with a commitment to excellence maintains higher property values, which drives up home prices

because demand for a home in the second community is higher, which means that the people who move there expect quality services and are willing to pay for it.

In other words, your brand reputation tends to create more of what you are known for.

Your brand shapes your candidate pools.

This is one of the most often missed aspects of the importance of brand management.

One city I work with can simply post an ad on their state municipal league job board and they will have an overflowing pool of high quality candidates aspiring to work for them.

An adjacent city which I also work with can spend tens of thousands of dollars on recruitment marketing and struggle to have an acceptable candidate pool. Both cities are about the same size and complexity and both pay about the same.

What creates such a profound difference in the candidate pools?

Brand reputation.

Your brand doesn't just determine who wants to live in your community; it determines who wants to work for your organization.

A mediocre brand produces mediocre candidate pools. Mediocre candidate pools produce mediocre behavioral norms, which produces a mediocre performance culture. A mediocre culture produces mediocre brand reputation.

It is a vicious circle which can be very difficult to break out of.

Your brand helps you deal with internet trolls and political dysfunction.

We are in a new world in which many of the old rules no longer apply.

A significant problem in discourse and decision making in communities and organizations today is the amount of information, and especially inaccurate information that is shaping opinions and attitudes.

In fact, we are drowning in information which can create dramatic challenges to community decision making.

Gloria Origg in Fast Company magazine has written that “We are experiencing a fundamental paradigm shift in our relationship to knowledge from an ‘information age’, we are moving towards the ‘reputation age’ in which information will have value only if it is already filtered, evaluated and commented on by others.

Seen in this light, reputation has become a central pillar of collective intelligence today.” Origg goes on to say that “The paradigm shift from the age of information to the age of reputation must be taken into account when we try to defend ourselves against fake news and other misinformation and disinformation techniques that are proliferating through contemporary societies.

What a mature consumer in the digital age should be competent at is not spotting and

confirming the veracity of the news.

Rather she should be competent at reconstructing the reputational path of the piece of information in question, evaluating the intentions of those who circulated it, and figuring out the agendas of those authorities that lent it credibility."

In other words... your brand reputation will determine how credible you are.

Your brand reputation will determine the type and expectations of individuals and businesses who will move to your community, seek out your service or purchase your product; their attitude and expectations once they become a part of your community; the type of candidate pools you have to choose from; and your very credibility in your own community or organization.

Building your brand must not be a side function of your Marketing, Community Relations or Public Information office.

If you are to control your destiny in today's world, building your brand must be a core responsibility of the entire organization, but especially of senior leadership.

This book provides you with a practical roadmap for building a brand and creating a culture of authentic servant leadership.

Stacy is going to walk you through the process of creating a roadmap.

My job is to share some insights along the way.

Throughout you can look for my real world bumps, bruises and best ideas in boxes just like this one.

Let's start the journey!

Ron



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