

PREFACE

The *LIFE Magazine* article “Death of a Genius” (May 2, 1955) chronicled the life of the then recently deceased Albert Einstein. He was quoted as saying “The important thing is not to stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing. One cannot help but be in awe when he contemplates the mysteries of eternity, of life, of the marvelous structure of reality. It is enough if one tries merely to comprehend a little of this mystery every day. Never lose a holy curiosity” (p. 64). That being said, Einstein is not known for his “curiosity” rather, he is revered for his great intellect; one of the greatest “brains” of the 20th century. The two concepts, curiosity and intellect, are clearly not the same.

Curiosity is the inquisitive interest to learn without constraint or the desire to explore and do things differently. It is the driving force behind new discoveries in not only technology and science but across all disciplines. Indeed, curiosity often begets the exotic and the uncommon. Unfortunately, in our complex and fast-paced society that is rife with rules, routines, deadlines, and liabilities, curiosity is oftentimes not looked upon as a particularly critical attribute of success. It generates a fear of the unknown, and with the unknown comes a lack of control, as well as risk. Our society is conditioned to mitigate risk at all cost. This is especially true in the modern American university, where novelty is seen as a barrier to publication, promotion, and tenure. As two very “battle-tested” scholars, we know that this book could not have been created on the coattails of intellect alone. Without the synergy provided by curiosity, the discovery process would have been seriously curtailed.

Indeed, this book is largely the result of curiosity. Something extraordinary happens when you show curiosity about what someone else is doing. If you spend an extended time asking questions of someone, he or she will walk away thinking that you are more interesting and more intelligent. If you are curious about that person, you may also find him or her to be more interesting and intelligent.

Over a decade ago, Pierre Balthazard just happened to be sitting in an airport waiting for his return flight from Detroit to his then home, Phoenix. He struck up a conversation with a gentleman sitting next to him, a clinical neurotherapist who, serendipitously, had just attended the same leadership conference and was traveling home on the same flight. The conversation eventually turned to the consideration of how leaders might be developed through neurofeedback. This developed into a five-hour conversation. Days later, Pierre described his conversation to David Waldman, an individual who had been studying leadership phenomena for the past two decades. David was Pierre's colleague in what was then the School of Global Management and Leadership at Arizona State University. This particular unit of the university was unique since it was non-departmentalized and encouraged interdisciplinary thinking – and curiosity. Indeed, we (i.e., David and Pierre) represented unique backgrounds in terms of organizational behavior and management information systems, respectively. However, we both shared interests in leadership and interdisciplinary approaches to dealing with or solving business-related issues.

Time passed, and with some modest resources, we attempted to use electroencephalogram (EEG) technology to start examining the potential of a neurological basis of effective leadership, with encouraging results. Along the way, we continued to be curious and take advantage of serendipitous events. For example, a critical point was reached around 2008, whereby additional funding was necessary to continue to move our now fledgling research program forward. Because of contacts we had developed at the United States Military Academy at West Point, we approached the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) in an attempt to secure about \$200K in seed funding. An initial meeting with a program director at the DARPA headquarters yielded nothing.

However, just several months later, we happened to be in the Washington, DC, area again, and decided to attempt a second meeting. Approximately half-way through that meeting, it again seemed like things were not going well. The program director did not appear to be very interested or attentive until something “curious” happened – the fire alarm system in the building went off. Following strict agency protocol, the director immediately escorted us to the stairwell and out of their highly secure building to a pre-determined destination across the street as quickly as possible. We ended up standing under a basketball net at an adjacent park, where the director's sole responsibility was to watch over us until an “all-clear” would eventually allow us to go back into the building in an equally orderly way.

It was at this point that we finally managed to peek the program director's curiosity, tell our story, and plead our case for funding. We did so, and before leaving the basketball court that day, she had agreed to fund our endeavor. Woody Allen is generally credited with the oft-spoken quote, "80 percent of success is showing up." If we did not already know it, the importance of showing up and persistence was reinforced that day.

These lessons have also applied to other efforts associated with this book, especially in terms of getting the approval and involvement of our peers. Years ago, we made a presentation of initial findings to some colleagues at our university. At the conclusion of the session, one of them commented that "this neural stuff is interesting, but you shouldn't quit your day job." The implication was that as compared to traditional organizational research and methods, it would be very risky to pursue a research program involving neural-based theory and methodology. We have indeed never quit our "day jobs," although over time we have given increased emphasis to neuroscience applications. The result is this book as well as increased attention and approval on the part of journals and the popular press. Perhaps even more fulfilling is how we have seen the field of organizational neuroscience really starts to take off over the past few years, as evidenced by the range of excellent authors in this book. Our hope is that this book will in turn peek the curiosity of others and accelerate the development of this interesting discipline.

David A. Waldman would first like to acknowledge several graduate students who have been very helpful over the past decade. They include Danni Wang, Ben Galvin, and Pete Jennings. Without their assistance, the data collection and analyses associated with our neural-based research would not have proceeded as efficiently and effectively as they did. He would also like to thank his loving parents, Ida and Lester Waldman, for their devotion and support over the years, without which none of his accomplishments would have been possible.

Beyond the students already listed above, Pierre Balthazard would like to thank the following colleagues that have selflessly given up their time and talents to help gather EEG and related data: Reza Mousavi, Irfan Kanat, Roberto Mejias, our doctoral student team at ESADE, and especially Travis Richardson whose efforts have gone beyond the call of duty. He would also like to express special thanks to his loving family, especially to his wife Terri, who has always unconditionally supported his work and provided him with great confidence throughout his scholarly journey, and to his children Arielle and André for the excitement and pride they continue to provide him.

Additionally, we both would like to acknowledge the several hundred individuals who have allowed us to apply conductive gel to their skulls and cheerfully offered their brains for the development of organizational neuroscience. Finally, we are indebted to the many chapter authors, ad hoc reviewers, Series Editor Yair Berson, and all the fine folks at Emerald who have made the production of this book a curiosity-satisfying endeavor.