A Review on "The Three Laws of Performance" and Landmark Education

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Abstract

This article aims to scrutinize and expose the contextual link between *The Three Laws of Performance*: *Rewriting the Future of Your Organization and Your Life* and the Landmark Worldwide (or simply Landmark). Enriched with numerous real-life examples from around the world, "*The Three Laws of Performance*" is an original and rare contribution to the field as it exposes the fundamental distinctions and transformative technologies offered by the Landmark courses to its readers. While reviewing the content of the book, the article also automatically elucidates the critical distinctions provided by Landmark such as "change versus transformation", "possibility", "racket", "internal voice", "completing the past", "default future", "generative language", "rewriting future", "life sentence", "ontological leadership", and "authenticity". In spite of its certain critical shortcomings, "*The Three Laws of Performance*" deserves credit for originally and powerfully subsuming many of the various distinctions taught in Landmark courses under the axiomatic principles dubbed "the three laws of performance."

Keywords: Leadership, Performance, Transformative learning, Landmark worldwide, Werner Erhard, EST, Personal growth and development, Transformation, Ontological transformation.

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With its assertive title, *The Three Laws of Performance*: *Rewriting the Future of Your Organization and Your Life* by Steve Zaffron and Dave Logan is a remarkable book which lays out the fundamental skills and technologies of transformative education provided by Landmark Worldwide (previously also reffered to as Landmark Education). As one of the leading global education companies in personal and professional growth, training, and development, Landmark Worldwide provides four core educational courses to its customers around the world with a distinctive syllabus:

a)   Landmark Forum, b) Advanced Course, c) Communication: Access to Power, d) Communication: Power to Create.

Both the content and methodology of Landmark courses can be classified under broad field of transformative learning (Mezirow, 2003; Dirkx, Mezirow, and Cranton, 2006).

The organic link between the book's content and the curriculum of Landmark Worldwide is not surprising. After all, Steve Zaffron (the CEO of the Vanto Group) is an expert on utilizing the curricular methodology of Landmark courses to induce breakthrough performance in large companies across the world such as footwear company Reebok or mining companies such as Magma Copper Company. Despite some of its shortcomings, the book deserves a credit for providing a clear-cut axiomatic access to broad variety of fields (such as leadership, performance, business, management and organizational change) via the three laws of performance.

The introduction chapter of the book starts with the distinction "*change* versus *transformation*" which is one of the key distinctions of Landmark. The authors (Zaffron and Logan, 2011: xxxii) highlight that re-writing our very own personal future or the future of any organization cannot be achieve through change, but through transformation! In contrast to change, which focuses on fixing other people or things in the world, the authors emphasize that transformation precipitates a remarkable shift in our very way of being (Zaffron and Logan, 2011:61 and 102). Accordingly, the authors claim that every individual or organization can achieve transformation (through which a new future is written) by mastering the three laws of performance.

The book is composed of three sections. The first three chapter constitute the first section of the book and respectively expound on the three laws of performance, which are:

1-   How people perform correlates to how a situation occurs to them.

2-   How a situation occurs arises in language.

3-   Future-based language transforms how situations occur to people.

In fact, the first three chapters constitute the core of the book as they lay out the fundamental "*distinctions*" that are necessary in creating new possibilities and new futures for both our personal lives and for any organization. As is the case with the ontological methodology of Landmark Worldwide, *distinction* (McCarl et al, 2001:52) is a vital linguistic tool that enables us to distinguish something about ourselves or about situation that we were not aware of before. In the terminology of Landmark Worldwide, distinction enables us to distinguish something in our blind spot; an area that we do not know that we do not know.

Titled "Transforming an Impossible Situation", the first chapter shares two important distinctions embodied in the first law of performance. To begin with, the first law of performance highlights the necessity to differentiate between the world as it is, and the way the world occurs to us (Zaffron and Logan, 2011: 6-8). Although the nature of reality happens in our own subjective occurrence, we all tend to presume that the way incidents occur to us in the world is the ultimate objective reality. This is a blind spot that people have to distinguish for themselves instead of living in the illusion of ultimate objective reality. The second

important distinction is that if we need to improve our own performance, it may only happen by altering the way the world occurs to us. After all, our performance always goes hand in hand with our own distinctive occurring world (Zaffron and Logan, 2011: 9).

Chapter Two explores the second law of performance by highlighting how our own subjective reality occurs in language. Most importantly, this chapter exposes two critical distinctions of the Landmark Forum which are "*Internal Voice*" and "*Racket*." While Internal Voice refers to the automatic yet usually unidentified constant chatter in one's own head, Racket is a fixed and an ineffective way of being accompanied with persistent complaint (Zaffron and Logan, 2011: 44-47). People run a racket with their families, friends, or associates as it brings them pay off (such as being right, making others wrong, dominating others or avoiding domination by others, being a victim, avoiding responsibility). However, one receives these seemingly pay offs at the cost and expense of their well-being, love, affinity, happiness, and overall life satisfaction (Zaffron and Logan, 2011:58).

The authors underline the huge cost of the unidentified and unarticulated rackets that people run against each other in the same work place and how this dramatically reduces the level of their performance in both their business and personal lives (Zaffron and Logan, 2011: 62-63). By identifying and exposing rackets within the contextual framework of authenticity, people start completing with each other or with their own past. In other words, they leave the past in the past to where it belongs (Zaffron and Logan, 2011: 78-81). "Completing the past" incidents is another critical distinction borrowed from Landmark courses. It means more than a "getting a closure" and once you are complete with the incident from your past, "it no longer lives in your future" (Zaffron and Logan, 2011: 77). Thus, the process of completing the past is essential in the actualization of rewriting the future.

Without completing the past, people or organizations are doomed to live their own "*default future*", which is actually a mere continuation of their own past that is incomplete (Zaffron and Logan, 2011: 81-85). In the terminology of Landmark Worldwide, the distinction of a default future is also referred to as one's probable/almost certain future. For this reason, Chapter Three starts by distinguishing between *descriptive language* and *future-based language* or (generative language). Also termed generative language, future-based language is qualitatively different from descriptive language as the former has the ability to envision and create a new inspiring future that is different from the past (Zaffron and Logan, 2011: 196-198). Without a doubt, rewriting the future also requires vast amounts of commitment.

Borrowing from Werner Erhard's *ontological approach to leadership* (Erhard, Jensen, and Granger, 2010) along with his concept on the positive model of *integrity* (Erhard and Jensen, 2014), Chaper Four covers ontological transformation in the way of being a leader (Sieler, 2003). At this point, it is essential to underline the critical role that Wermer Erhard played through his Erhard Seminar Trainings (EST) during the 1970's in the formation of this transformative and ontological leadership (Bartley,1978). Acclaimed as the "father of self-help" by Peter Haldeman in the New York Times (Haldeman, 2015), most of the distinctions and transformative educational technology that Landmark Worldwide uses today have originated from Erhard's EST (Rhinehart, 1976).

In contrast to the second section (chapter four and five) which focuses on leadership at the organizational level, the third section of the book (comprising the last three chapters) scrutinizes on the micro individual level. Chapter Six, for instance, emphasizes the importance of authentic leadership by introducing the distinction of a "*Life Sentence*". Accordingly, we construct our life sentence during our childhood based on the experiences which makes us think either "something is wrong here" or "something is wrong with me" (Zaffron and Logan, 2011:146-49). In order to cover this apparent lack or inadequacy about ourselves, we decide to live our lives in a certain way; hence the term life sentence.

Although our life sentence is originally designed to allow us to survive and achieve success in life, it later becomes an automatic armour that we cannot remove. As a result, our life sentence (which resides in our blind spot) narrows our way of being and our views on life (Zaffron and Logan, 2011:150). Moreover, the authors argue that life sentences become our persona (mask), which block us from having authentic relationships with ourselves and other people. In Landmark courses (and originally at est), the distinction "life sentence" is also referred to as "strong suit" or "winning formula". Despite the authors usage of the Jungian term persona, the life sentence (winning formula or strong suit) distinction conforms better to the Adlerian notion of overcompensation rather than the philosophy of Jung's analytical psychology (Sharf, 2012: 82-159).

Enriched with numerous real-life examples from around the world, *The Three Laws of Performance* is an original and rare contribution to the field as it exposes the fundamental distinctions and transformative technologies embodied by Landmark Worldwide to its readers. While acknowledging the author's contributions, one must also underline the book's critical shortcomings as well. To begin with, the authors exclusively restrict their analysis to business performance. Just like the transformative learning model provided by Rosenberg's Nonviolent Communication (Azgın, 2018)), all of the transformative learning technologies explored in the book can also be applied to various other fields including education, social work, political reconciliation, conflict resolution, and conflict management.

Furthermore, the authors do not provide in depth discussion of "possibility", which is one of the most critical distinctions in Landmark Worldwide. Suffice to say, it is impossible to create a new future without creating a possibility in our very way of being and it is the very moment of "the genesis of a new realm of possibility" (Landmark Forum) that breathes life into people, leaving them deeply moved, touched and inspired.

Lastly, the oblivious approach towards the unequal power dynamics within the hierarchical organization of big capitalist corporations is the most fundamental shortcoming of the book. Problematic aspects of the neo-liberal economic principles that are dominating the global economy are not mentioned at all. Nevertheless, all of the important distinctions and transformative learning technologies explored throughout the book (such as racket, internal voice, default future, generative language, or rewriting future) can be retrieved from the exclusive usage of business performance and utilized in the hope of empowering and expanding the imaginaries of radical democracy (Little and Lloyd, 2009) or intersectionality (Hill and Bilge, 2016).

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