



The Three Laws of Performance: Rewriting the Future of Your Organization and Your Life (J-B Warren Bennis Series)

Steve Zaffron , Dave Logan

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A proven system for rallying all of an organizations' employees around a new vision and ideas for making the vision stick

When something at work isn't going smoothly, managers struggle with what part of the problem to tackle first. Do they start with cost reduction? Or should they go for process improvements first? The authors—who have helped hundreds of companies and individuals change and improve—say spend time and money adjusting the *systems* in which people operate, rather than targeting people and their performance directly. The authors show that it's in fact possible to change everything at once—with a focus on making such transformations permanent and repeatable.

Brand-new Introduction written for the paperback edition Filled with illustrative examples from Northrup Grumman, BHP-Billiton, Reebok, Harvard Business School, and many others Two experts in the field show how to make major transformations happen

The book outlines a process for engaging all employees to buy-in to an improved vision of an organization's new and improved future.

The Three Laws of Performance: Rewriting the Future of Your Organization and Your Life (J-B Warren Bennis Series) Details

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From Reader Review The Three Laws of Performance: Rewriting the Future of Your Organization and Your Life (J-B Warren Bennis Series) for online ebook

Patrick says

Zaffron and Logan boil the decades of evolution of Werner Erhardt's initial distinctions into three basic concepts that empower anyone, or any group, to transform their context, and thus their performance. A straightforward read that starts with examples, so you can monkey read, monkey try out the practical application on your own issue.

The circumstances do not determine your experience- you do. Beware if you are not up to taking responsibility for your life.

Shubham Bansal says

Performance is what we all strive for in every area of our life, whether be it business, relationships, health, entertainment. Werner Erhard is a scientist whose research in the field of ontology provided the basic elements what makes us human beings. Every aspect of our life is governed by the 'being' we are in that situation. When someone says, "are being mean", it is the being that you are at that moment of time, in that situation, to which they are referring to and not you. Because you are not mean all the time. We act according to what we are being. Understanding of that fundamental concept can alter our performance as performance comes from the being. Animal beings cannot perform like a human being.

Although the book provides a very useful way to enhance your performance, it might be difficult to understand for someone who is not familiar with the concept of being. I did a course organized by Landmark worldwide education called Landmark Forum and so it was easy for me to understand the concept of the book. That is the only reason for low rating.

Cat says

I learnt in this book how to apply some of the main principles I learnt when doing the Landmark Forum to a business environment even though I am an employee and not the owner.

This book gives good tips on how to deal with relationships inside of a corporate culture without any drama or emotion, how to deal with change and empower your staff to be inspired by, instead of terrified of, transformation in the organisation. A great read for anyone in the working world.

Deanne says

This book is my all time favourite leadership book. I first read this book when I was exploring what extraordinary leadership means to me, and I gained quite a lot from reading it. This book looks at leadership in a way that is based on an Ontological approach. The laws are based on observing and understanding situations differently. There were some fantastic examples provided to demonstrate the concepts provided. I really learnt a lot from the approach described in this book. It will be in my library for a very long time, as I refer back to it regularly.

Seriously Jerome says

Self evaluation has its own language. It can be learned & applied. For Christians, the practical applications can be filtered through everything God has already taught us in His word about living for His glory. For instance, the "rackets," as the author puts it, are lies we tell ourselves to gain some sense of power or control over our circumstances. Even though we know we are supposed to "dwell on the things that are true..." from Philippians 4, if untrue thinking has been habitual, we might not even realize we do it until someone points it out. That is essentially the point of this book; to get the reader to evaluate & dismantle how he or she perceives problems & trials. I found the process of evaluation uncomfortable, revealing, & helpful.

Sachin says

Why did your father behave the way he did? Why do your mother or child or your spouse act the way they do? Why does your boss say and do the things the does? Why do you behave and act the way you do, even if you don't want to act that way? Why do organization and corporation function in the way they do? Psychologist, management experts and philosophers have sought to explain human behaviour in innumerable ways. There are plenty of theories and systems of thought to explain and understand the way we and people around us act and do things. But the problem with these theories and concepts is precisely this: they explain and help us to understand but don't allow us a concrete, hands-on access to alter the behaviour and action of people or us. They give us 'tips and strategies' to 'fix' the problems.

The Three Laws of Performance: Rewriting the Future of Your Organization and Your Life by Zaffron and Logan is not a theoretical book or a book giving 'tips and strategies or solutions' to 'problems'. Most of the times, Zaffron and Logan say, 'the problem-solution' mode of thinking doesn't work. The reason they say lies in what they term 'the problem-solution mass' where the solution to a problem becomes an additional problem. The example they give is a youngster who feels lonely and frustrated and thinks that marriage will 'solve' the 'problem of loneliness'. However, after marriage, what really happens is that he has two problems on his hands: loneliness and marriage! He tries to 'fix' this by raising a family and how he has three problems on his hand: loneliness, marriage and children! He tries to 'fix' it by 'divorce' or an extramarital affair and now he has one more problem in his life! The answer lies in 'transforming' rather than finding solutions to the problems.

The laws are not 'ideas, strategies, principles or theories': they are 'laws' like the law of gravitation. Knowing these laws help not just to explain but also transform the performance of a person or an organization, that is, rewrite the future of that person or organization. That's the incredible power of this book. Let's look at the three simple laws in brief.

The First Law: How people perform correlates to how situations occur to them.

The law is very simple and yet we simply have no idea how deeply it affects our life and the life of the organization. The most important words here are 'occur' and 'correlate'. The word 'occur' indicates that it is NOT what situation or a person really IS but how it OCCURS TO US that determines our behaviour. For instance, if we see a situation or person as threatening, our actions will be correlated to our perception of threat IRRESPECTIVE of the fact whether it IS threatening or not.

Speaking from my own experience, my mother 'occurred' to me as a person who has treated my father badly and as a person who did not care for me at all. After I was able to distinguish that this is how my mother occurred to me and that was NOT how she WAS, great bitterness and anger towards her vanished. This realization transformed my behaviour towards her so much that I don't fight with her at all after this. When this bitterness and anger and fights disappeared, there was unprecedented peace and affinity in my life. In fact, before this realization, when my psychotherapist had asked me to tell him 'three good qualities' of my mother I could not even tell him one! So much was the anger and resentment I was carrying around.

How situations or person occur to us is closely dependent on Zaffron and Logan term as 'default future'. Default Future, according to the authors, is our future which we SEE as certainly coming unless something dramatic and unexpected happens. This 'default future' does not include the inevitable things like death or ageing. It includes the things like 'how your evening will turn out' or what you will be doing tomorrow, unless something unexpected happens for instance. We know this future at the gut level. If we know we are going to meet someone we love in the evening, our present becomes something else and if we know that she or he has changed the plan our present becomes something else. In fact, it is not our past that controls our life; it is our 'default future' which controls our life. Our present moment, our activities in the present are CORRELATED to how our FUTURE OCCURS to us this moment. That is, our present way of being and acting is a function of our 'default future'. If we see in the morning when we wake up that it is going to be 'the same routine day' in our default future, our actions will be correlated to this perception. If we receive a phone call informing us of something totally unexpected, our morning changes for better or for worse. Imagine, a phone call informing us that we have won something by the sale scheme we got yesterday while shopping. Or imagine a call telling us about our application for something has been turned down. It changes our present way of being and acting.

What applies to us as individuals applies for the institutions and organization. The way people in the organization are working at present is correlated to their 'default future'. If it is bleak and uninspiring, people's activities will be correlated to this perception.

The question which comes to our mind now is HOW a situation (or a person) occurs to us the way it does? What made my mother occur to me the way she did? This brings us to the second law of performance.

The Second Law: How a situation occurs arises in language.

Simple again. How my mother occurred to me was based on what I kept SAYING to myself over and over again in my mind to myself or to her openly. I kept on saying, 'she does not care for me or for my father. She treats him badly'. Remember this saying was not always conscious, it was often at the 'gut level'. I ran this conversation repeatedly and every time I repeated it my anger went up exponentially. My feelings, expectations and beliefs are nothing but my conversations with myself and they determine how someone occurs to me. If I keep saying, as I did, that this is an 'arranged marriage' and there is no space for love in it, there wasn't any.

Conversations are verbal and nothing is 'just words'. Our feelings and emotions are correlated to our words. The 'default future' is a conversation we have with ourselves at the gut level. If you look at the conversation I had about my mother 'she does not care for me at all and she treats my father badly', you will realize that it

started in the PAST, and that it uses language to DESCRIBE what my mother IS. This is a past-based use of language and it is mostly 'descriptive'. In this use of language situation (or a person) 'IS' the way it is. When I describe something by saying it is the way it is, I m speaking from my past experience. For instance, if I say, as I have said often, 'the most of the teachers in the colleges and universities are not really eligible for the job', that is how I will see them, that is, this is how they will occur to me and how I behave with them is correlated to how they occur to me.

Zaffron and Logan call this 'reality illusion', the illusion that reality IS the way it OCCURS to us. It is the illusion that reality is 'fixed' and is independent of our conversations. . This is similar to what structuralists and poststructuralist philosophers (under influence of Heidegger) have been pointing out. That doesn't mean, they point out, there is no 'reality' 'out there', but they emphasize that we cannot access it without language. My reality illusion was 'this is how my mother is'. When we realize that there is no 'fixed and stable' reality existing independently of our conversation, reality becomes 'malleable' to us. We can now 'rewrite' our future.

Now if our performance is correlated to how situation occurs to us and how a situation occurs to us is due the language we use to talk about it to ourselves with others, how can we transform our performance? We can transform our performance by transforming our language (not 'changing' it mind you, this is not a book about 'positive thinking') and consequently transforming the way the situation occurs to us.

Most of our conversations are past based. Our complaints, our expectations, our intentions, our communication strategies that we use to get results all are based on our past. There is nothing wrong with this, except for the fact that most of us put them into our future most of the time. Zaffron and Logan call this 'filing error'. The stuff that should go into the box file labeled 'past' should go into that file; however, it goes into the file labeled 'future'. My conversation, 'mine is an arranged marriage and there is no scope for love' came from some past conversations; however, by putting it into my 'default future', it controls my present. I don't see any scope for love to exist at present. The 'filing error' makes me see my marriage as a closed space. There is no possibility of love here. I can see a possibility only when I put my past based conversation to where it belongs to the file called past only then can I see some 'space' some possibility in my default future and hence in my present as my present. This practice of rectifying the 'filing error' by putting the files from my past back into my past instead of my default future is called 'completion'. This completion opens up a blank space from which new possibility can be created. How can I create a new possibility?

The Third Law: Future-based language transforms how situation occur to people.

By declaring your commitment to create a new possibility and keeping your word, you can create new future from the cleared space in the 'default future'. The future based speech acts like, 'I will do.....', 'I will create' or 'I declare the possibility of being.....' actually can CREATE new future. If you don't believe this, just look at your past. When I was a very young child I said to my self, 'I am not wanted, I am unwanted' and I became 'unwanted' in my eyes. People said they loved me but as I saw myself as 'unwanted', I did not believe them. I thought they were manipulating me. Here was a classic 'filing error'; I was putting my past based conversation into future. When I dropped this conversation, I no longer feel 'unwanted'. I can sense that people want me and love me, in their own ways.

But the statement ' I am unwanted' is actually nothing but a speech act. A verdict that I passed on myself: I was the judge, the jury, the advocate and the culprit at the same time. I BELIEVED in it, it was 'TRUTH' to me. If this decade old statement determined all my past, a speech act based in future can create my future.

The future based language, or what Zaffron and Logan call, 'generative language' is not an empty ' positive thinking' as it comes from the space in default future cleared up by putting past into past, it comes out of a perception of possibility. Most of the 'positive thinking' fails because one does not SEE POSSIBILITY in this thinking. If I SEE myself sitting in front of a hungry lion, no amount of positive thinking can actually

CONVINCE me that I won't be eaten, unless I see that it is actually chained to the tree. No completion (rectifying the 'filing error'), no possibility, no possibility, no new future.

Zaffron and Logan make a very interesting use of the term 'integrity', which is at heart of creating a future. According to Logan and Zaffron, 'integrity' has nothing to do with 'ethics' or 'morality' as it is commonly understood. It has nothing to do with right or wrong. It has everything to do with 'workability' in our life. Integrity, according to the authors, means keeping your word, honoring your word. If you don't keep your word, the work cannot be done. If you cease to honour your word, people will be even quicker to cease to honour it. Integrity, according to Zaffron and Logan, is 'being whole or complete'. A chair with one leg missing has no workability; a wheel with one spoke missing has no workability. Only when it is restored can there be any workability in life. A chair with a broken leg is not 'bad or wrong', a wheel with a broken spoke is not 'bad or wrong', it simply doesn't WORK.

The key to rewriting a new future is by using future based language and with integrity.

This is a book about results and not about ideas. This is a book which leads to action. Reflections and insights are usually dime a dozen. This is a book which is not concerned with 'explanation' or 'understanding', but with performance: as a leader, as a father, as a teacher, as a doctor, as a brother, as a daughter, as a friend, as an employee, as an employer, as a businessman and as anyone. The book, the authors tell us, can be our coach in this game of life. If we sit and argue with our coach about theoretical niceties, we won't be on the court. So I recommend this book about anyone who wants to act effectively and powerfully so as to get the results one wants. So get hold of a copy and get on the playground!

Steve Zaffron and Dave Logan. *Three Laws of Performance: Rewriting the Future of your Organization and your Life*, San Francisco: Josey-Bass, 2009
Distributed in India by the Times Books, Rs. 395

Yamato says

Definitely going to keep this book close by for future reference.

It was such a great reminder of the Landmark Forum course.

The laws are very easy to understand and so difficult to master. The book is concisely written to make it easy to reference.

I finished it right at New Year's, so it will be a great application towards my new years resolution.

Joshua Wulf says

I've read a lot of self-development and leadership books in the last decade, and this is one of the best.

Having said that, I read this book after participating in the Landmark Forum, and I am certain that this book would have been far less impressive, useful, or even comprehensible to me prior to that. Which speaks to the fact that a review says about much about the reviewer as it does about what they are reviewing - a great point to meditate on with respect to this book.

As a set of "interesting ideas", it's academic, and more than a little abstract.

With the "experiential transformative learning" approach of Landmark Education, it is powerful.

I sat in the Landmark Forum and found myself thinking at various points: "*I already know this, and furthermore*". Then I would stop myself and look around me. In the room, 120 people were getting what "I already knew".

My immediate reaction was: "*OK, I may know that, but I don't know how to communicate that to 120 people in a way that (at least a large number of them) get it like this.*"

That awareness of something unfamiliar at the periphery of my perception changed my listening, and suddenly I had access to something that I didn't have access to before.

Mouthing slogans and precepts and having facts that sit in memory doesn't change either individual or organisational performance. Weird Al's new song and video "Mission Statement" is a great statement on that point.

Approaching this book as a set of slogans and precepts and ideas misses the point that the book puts forward: quantum performance improvement comes about through a transformation of your processing, not by merely adding more information within your existing "framework for facts".

I don't know if you can provoke the same transformation of frame merely by reading a book. Humans are social and a lot of our thinking takes place outside of our head. Large Group Awareness Training, which is an aspect of Landmark Education, rests on the same biological principles that underlie religious ceremony, sports events, and political rallies - a lot of our unconscious thinking is collective.

I recommend participating in the Landmark Forum before reading this book, if you really want to get it. If you read it without doing the Landmark Forum and find it trite, superficial, familiar, or incomprehensible - consider that "what you are using to process the information" is getting in the way, because that's what the book is actually addressing.

To give an example: you are reading these words because light is entering your eyes. You can see the words, but you can't see the light by which you are seeing them. It underlies your perception.

In the same way, the ideas in the book arrive in your consciousness as "meaning" through the medium of your meaning-making capability. You are aware of the meaning, but not the meaning-making that makes it perceptible to your consciousness.

The book states clearly that changing your meaning-making apparatus *is* the key to a quantum improvement in performance, and that it cannot be done by study or thinking alone, but requires action outside of your current comprehension to create breakthrough performance.

If you find the book uninspiring or incomprehensible, you have a great opportunity to perform a powerful A/B test by reading it again after doing the Landmark Forum.

I listen to it as an audio book daily, and find that it is giving me access to further insights.

I read a study about Landmark Forum participants that found a measurable difference with the control group four weeks after the Forum, but no measurable difference 18 months later. I think a study should control for what people do after the Forum - for example, by comparing those who complete the entire curriculum for living with those who only do the Forum. Since much of our thinking takes place outside our head, if after the Forum you don't stay in the association of people who are applying the distinctions of the Forum, then it's inevitable that your group think will revert to the wider society that you are in.

Studies are inconclusive. Here's something that I'm pretty sure would not show up in a study - at least I can think of no study that could identify it:

My wife is an amazing cook, and we've been married for 16 years. In all that time, every time she cooks the food is out of this world, but the kitchen is like a bomb-site. Every pot, pan, and dish has been used; the sink is filled with potato peelings; sponges are soaking wet and covered in gunk. Every time, I tell her: "*Why don't you clean things up as you go? If you are going to put the potato peels somewhere, why not put them in the bin?*"

Sixteen years of this go by, to no avail, and no change. She goes away over a weekend and does the Landmark Advanced Course (the course that follows on and builds upon the Forum). When she comes back, the next day she cooks and the kitchen is spotless. A month or more has gone by, and every time she cooks, the kitchen is spotless.

This is a perfect example of what Landmark Education, and The Three Laws of Performance talk about: your performance in any area is affected to a significant degree by factors that are *outside of your conscious awareness*. Quantum transformation or improvement in performance is thus not a question of *improving what you are already aware of*, but rather changing your consciousness to bring more factors inside your conscious awareness.

I don't know what was in the background that showed up as the intractable "performance challenge" of not cleaning the kitchen while cooking, but the shifts in perception through the Landmark Education definitely gave my partner access to a new way of being and a new level of performance that she didn't have access to previously.

Shifts in consciousness in human beings require a combination of action, reaction, and interaction, because our neural network is built through experience of the world. That's how we are, biologically.

The Three Laws of Performance is not a book to be analysed from an "objective perspective". It is a book that changes your perspective and drives unfamiliar actions. New levels of performance are by definition unfamiliar actions, and there is a reciprocal cause-and-effect relationship between actions and awareness. A new awareness drives unfamiliar actions, leading to new performance. Unfamiliar actions cause new awareness, leading to a transformation of performance.

The Three Laws of Performance and the Landmark Forum talk about getting on the court, and the book ends with the instruction to use the book as a coach and to connect in to a community.

The entire thing is a process, and it is much larger than a book. When you interact with the book in this way, it's a great tool to unlock new levels of performance.

Jon says

I have a love-hate relationship with books like this. They can have good things in them, but then they get caught up in their own narrative and also in trying to pad out the text to make it a book and not a leaflet.

In this case, the padding does give good examples from different angles to help the reader understand the concepts which can be summarized in a paragraph. You can make a case that some of the language used is self-consistent with the methods being described, so it is forgivable if still a little annoying.

That all said, this book was helpful for me at the time that I read it. Some concepts about creating a new future using declarations help to frame up how someone like Steve Jobs could make anything real while he was talking about it. I can see how the whole system is very compelling and powerful for many people.

Is it life-changing, I'm not sure, but it at least does give you something to think about and different ways to view problems and potentials in your life and business.

Santhosh says

This book is all about the most common laws where an organisation's focus should be at. As the title goes, there are 3 laws explained in depth to rewrite the future of the organisation. 1 - How problems occur and the effective ways to handle them as a team. 2 - Questioning ourselves why such problems occurred and then trying to identify the core to analyse and decide the future course of action 3 - This law is about involving thoughts of several people within the team and communicating with them to find a possible way to handle such situations. The results will not disappoint anyone when the laws are followed as explained says the Author. This is a good book to read and I give this book a 3 star.

Shaun says

This was a quick read about how to improve how your performance at work. The authors shared many interesting anecdotes and stories and ways to think about a given situation. These mindsets can help you see things from the perspective of others, your boss, your customers or clients, your vendors, etc. I am striving and trying to learn how to follow Stephen R. Covey's habit of seek first to understand, then to be understood. The three laws of performance are closely related to this Covey habit. I found this very applicable in my current job, where I'm striving to perform better and make a real difference with my boss and colleagues.

Trung Nguyen Dang says

The book was recommended by Mr L??m (Mobile World). The book is not informative but more spiritual, not backed by scientific studies but stories. It's not one to read for understanding but for absorbing. It's probably one that requires multiple reading.

I attended the culture sharing event by Mr Tai and Mr Luom in Mobile World. Mr Tai warned that half of the audience would not be able to get it and he was one among the 50% ten years ago. Admittedly I didn't fully appreciate it.

Rob says

Inspiring stories, for sure, but not all that actionable.

I did the Landmark Forum, Advanced Course, and SELP, and was excited to read a book from the makers of those programs. The book doesn't at all live up to the course's standards.

Saad says

I'm disappointed by this book because I didn't learn anything truly applicable from it. Certainly, the ideas related to how circumstances occur to people, and how language relates to that, aren't useless... but in this case I think it's just a repackaging of common sense notions of leadership and people-motivation in fancy terminology.

Marcelo Bahia says

One of those difficult-to-rate books. It certainly delivers less than you would expect from the summary, but, unlike many bad books out there, at least it delivers something. The quality of the book is not consistent, as the "something" delivered is all concentrated in the first half, where the core concepts are presented. The second half tried to discuss the application of those concepts, and that's where the book goes downhill. The advice provided sounds like a compilation of a plethora of other leadership books, with a whole self-help tone that will definitely annoy those who don't enjoy such kind of books.

On the good side, some of the concepts presented here can be really useful and worth your read. The "default future" concept was my favorite, it's so true & real that I would say that almost everyone will relate to it some way or another. It sounds obvious after you read it, but you probably never stopped to think about it in that way. Other concepts of the book can also fall into a similar category. Although many of them definitely weren't presented here for the first time ever, I would give a thumbs-up for the way the authors organize them.

On the bad side, the book will disappoint those who expected something minimally scientific, like me. Like I said before, the second half is the ultimate self-help segment, but even the first one in some way would fit into that category as well. Authors say what their concepts are, and give example of situations in which they have worked, but they don't really ask themselves WHY they work. Having read some cognitive & behavioral science books in the past, in some occasions I could relate part of my reading background to what was being discussed. In that sense, I would expect that the authors delved a little more on the WHY as well, instead of just focusing on the WHAT and HOW.

Overall, I don't intend to persuade you to discard the book once and for all - as I said, it has a few useful ideas in it - but I wouldn't recommend you to put it in your priority list, especially if you wouldn't enjoy books that are on the self-help borderline.
