

Can Two Rights Make a Wrong?: Insights from IBM's Tangible Culture Approach

Sara J. Moulton Reger



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"This is the book for people who never get past page two of a management book—it is as close as the genre comes to being a compulsive page turner. Its main thesis is built on at least three big ideas that are individually persuasive and cumulatively compelling. They naturally fit into an alignment tool that is applied to the range of day-to-day and exceptional challenges all enterprises face, including the Holy Grail of transformational change."

—Donald Macrae, general counsel and chief knowledge officer, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, England

"Having been in the business of cultural transformation and alignment for many years, I've carefully looked for a thoughtful strategy and an intentional approach to bringing about healthy and thriving cultures. *Can Two Rights Make a Wrong?* is simply the best—it is the most thoughtful and practical work I've seen in this growing and critical area. This is a must buy!"

—Dr. Ron Jenson, Future Achievement International, international author, speaker, and consulting and executive coach

"*Can Two Rights Make a Wrong?* is a superb account of how to manage the 'soft side' of mergers and acquisitions, but it has great value for managing many other new business practices as well, such as Open Innovation. It provides a powerful, practical method to identify conflicts, develop alignment, and achieve effective coordination between two parties that would be tremendously helpful in a variety of collaborative contexts, such as alliances, research partnerships, or joint ventures. Moulton Reger and her colleagues at IBM should be congratulated for a thoughtful, insightful book."

—Henry Chesbrough, professor at University of California Berkeley's Haas School of Business, author of Open Innovation

"Numbers are neat and clean. Human beings are often messy and complex. If everyone in your organization knew what to do and when, how, where, and—most importantly—why to do it, how would your organizational culture be defined? The authors of *Can Two Rights Make a Wrong?* have introduced new ways to proactively address culture and, most importantly, tie it to bottom-line benefits."

—James H. Amos, Jr., chairman emeritus, MBE/The UPS Store "This book is a must read for leaders hoping to change their organization's culture as well as those attempting to merge firms with uniquely different cultures. Moulton Reger's insights are grounded in theory and real-world experience. In this unique book, culture change is a complex concept broken down into bite-sized pieces and presented in a way that any leadership team can embrace at its own pace."

-Merrill J. Oster, author of Vision Driven Leadership, founder Oster Communications, Inc.

"Here at last is a business book that takes culture seriously and isn't intimidated by it. The method described can be used with practically any type of business problem in any industry, and the book does an excellent job of drawing on research and theory while keeping the focus practical. The three elements of Outcome Narratives, Right vs. Right, and Business Practices are significant ideas in their own right—each is a unique insight. All three ideas have been around in various guises for several years, but have not been as well crystallized or as focused on complex business problems as they are in this book. The authors' achievement is extraordinary and goes a long way toward making the juicy idea of culture something to be built on and worked with."

—Peter Vaill, professor, Antioch University

"The Achilles heel for any major organizational change is that organization's culture. In every change, consultants talk about culture, but few provide specific sequential steps designed to actually do anything about it. This book provides such steps, and provides them in ways that makes sense. 'Makes sense' is the key because the steps provided can be easily adapted to virtually any organization, large or small." —George Falldine, Air Force civil servant, Air Force Materiel Command

"Sara Moulton Reger is one of the premier organizational design consultants in the country, and this book reflects her in-depth knowledge of and experience with the subject matter. This book is essential reading for those striving to achieve greater results from ongoing change initiatives. *Can Two Rights Make a Wrong?* contains a broad range of concepts, examples, and specific steps culled from Moulton Reger's direct experience. Such a complete presentation of strategic and tactical advice makes *Can Two Rights Make a Wrong?* a mandatory addition to every manager's bookshelf."

-Steven Bragg, CPA, author of twenty-eight business books, CFO of Premier Data Services

"This is a serious book that gives intelligent guidance to anyone who leads an organization and takes creating and managing culture seriously. The section on Outcome Narratives is the best 'how to' on casting a unifying vision that I have seen. If you're a leader and take your role in creating and managing corporate culture seriously, then you should read this book."

-Regi Campbell, principal, Seedsower Investments, author of About my Father's Business

"I don't read most 'culture change' books—waste of time. This book is different. *Can Two Rights Make a Wrong?* combines both soft and hard approaches, with a continuous focus on how-to and results. Buy it. But, more importantly, read it."

—Jack Grayson, founder and chairman, American Productivity and Quality Center (APQC)

"We used Right vs. Right to help integrate an important acquisition—one that brought many differences we needed to carefully leverage to achieve IBM's business objectives. I found it to be a powerful technique for quickly reconciling strategic views of the business model and different operating preferences. Now, a few months later, we have the business results—and employee satisfaction—to prove Right vs. Right works." *—Jim Corgel, general manager, Small and Medium Business Services, IBM*

"Leaders wouldn't think about doing a major project without a plan and a project manager, but how many consider the cultural implications? This book fills a key void because it clarifies the topic of culture so that it is easier to understand, and includes examples for applying the framework to many types of situations, including business-to-business alliances and crossgeography teams."

-Cindy Berger, vice president, American Express

"There is no question that the biggest hurdle to achieving a successful merger is culture. Market opportunities may be staggering and synergies may seem perfect, but, without a cultural match, odds are the merged company will struggle. *Can Two Rights Make a Wrong?* can help you avoid the problems. Even if you are not contemplating a merger, Moulton Reger's deep insight provides an excellent management primer and interesting historical perspective. A worthwhile read."

-John R. Patrick, author of Net Attitude, president of Attitude LLC

"This is an excellent book that provides a pragmatic approach to identifying and alleviating cultural issues created when two groups of people must work together. Effectively blending business cultures is a key requirement for successful outsourcing, and most companies lack the tools necessary to do this. Companies looking to reduce outsourcing risk should follow IBM's *Tangible Culture* approach." *—Lance Travis, vice president, Outsourcing Strategies, AMR Research*

"This book will help leaders and cultural-change practitioners take a practical, well-architected approach to creating the culture they need to support their strategies. Thanks, IBM, for sharing what you have learned from your own transformation."

-Valerie Norton, vice president, Talent Management and Organizational Effectiveness, Merck & Co., Inc.

"Based on IBM's own experience with organizational transformation and mergers, this book belongs on the reading list of any executive contemplating major changes to their business."

— Peter Richerson, professor, University of California Davis

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Carmine Adams:

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