

FRANCESCA CARDONA

WORK MATTERS

Consulting to Leaders
and Organizations in
the Tavistock Tradition



Work Matters

Work is complicated: it can be fulfilling and exciting, or disappointing and disruptive. We spend most of our adult lives at work; it shapes our identities and provides a context for our creativity and talents. It can be the source of great pleasure – and of profound distress.

In *Work Matters*, organizational consultant and Tavistock lecturer Francesca Cardona examines our changing relationship with work today. Drawing on case studies from a wide range of individuals and organizations, she considers the dynamics at play in our working lives. Cardona examines how to navigate times of transition, and the balance of power in the work place, while also addressing latent issues such as the effects of shame, the cost of ill-conceived organizational structures and tasks, the interface between the personal and the professional, and the manager's most precious skill: the ability to be psychologically present. Finally, Cardona casts an eye on the consultant's role in helping organizations move forwards in ways that are professionally and personally rewarding.

Whether you are a business leader, manager, consultant or student, or simply interested in how your work affects you, *Work Matters* offers essential insights into an area that occupies so much of our lives.

Francesca Cardona is an organizational consultant and teacher of consultancy and coaching in the Tavistock tradition. Italian by birth, she has been based in London since the mid-eighties. She works in a variety of organizational and cultural contexts, helping leaders and organizations to face issues of change, transition and the emotional dimension of organizational life.



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To Gennaro, Luca and Marco



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Foreword

Looking at the coaching and consultancy field from a publications perspective, there has been a clear change as the market has grown enormously over the past five years. Coaching and consultancy of various sorts have of late become increasingly ‘fashionable’ and the topic nowadays draws individuals from neighbouring professions, such as psychiatrists, psychotherapists, counsellors, HR personnel and even sectors such as banking.

Yet the main suppliers of the ‘coaching and leadership’ commodity consists of a handful of global consultants. For the average reader their works are beyond application. And while many other individual consultants’ writings and publications can be impressive, too often they give details only of specific areas of work. For the leader, manager and consultant these can be hard to apply to their own situations.

Francesca and her new book fit into neither of the above mentioned categories, and are therefore a most welcome addition to the field. Her book is ripe with experiences of coaching and consultancy, with the exceptional advantage that what comes out of it is easily understandable and therefore applicable to tasks that the reader might have in their in-tray.

Her thoughtfulness, experience and expertise arise from the fact she has had numerous engagements across the whole spectrum of consulting, coaching and leadership, and has made excellent use of reflecting on the learning to be had. Like the master craftsmen and women of the past (think of the painter Angelica Kauffman) she has had placements in a variety of settings throughout her native Italy and elsewhere in Europe, and many years to take in and take on the English field of work.

One of the pitfalls of training in the coaching/consultancy field is that one can become an acolyte of the ‘grand master or mistress’ at whose feet one sits. Given the widespread work she has done, Francesca has avoided this trap and instead offers a mix and match of possible interventions that enable the reader to find their own style.

Her book is a rich and enriching collection of techniques and interventions. Newcomers to the field should have a copy and it would do old-timers no harm whatsoever to have a copy by their bedside as a sample of how reflection and learning can be integrated into one’s life’s work.

Anton Obholzer

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More specifically I wish to thank all of the people who have encouraged and supported me on the journey of writing this book.

First of all, my editor and ‘partner in crime’: Sue Lascelles. Her professionalism, ‘outsider’ perspective and warm encouragement provided me with much needed structure, focus and support.

I would like to extend this thank you to my first readers, Megan Meredith and Derek Raffaelli, whose comments and feedback have been invaluable in refining the contents of this book.

And to my sons, Luca and Marco, for their enthusiasm for this endeavour, with a special thank you to Luca for his wonderful design of the cover.

I also wish to express my gratitude to my mentors, Franca Manoukian, Eric Miller, Harold Bridger and Anton Obholzer. Their innovative thinking, insights and pioneering practices have been, and remain, a constant inspiration.

A note on confidentiality

All names of the examples in the book are fictitious and the identifying details have been changed to preserve anonymity.

Several case illustrations are composite descriptions of individuals and organizations presenting similar dynamics.



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Introduction

Why this book?

Love and work are the cornerstones of our humanness.

Sigmund Freud

Work, like love, is complicated. It can be fulfilling and exciting as well as disappointing and disruptive.

Work is 'life': it shapes our identity and gives us a setting in which to exercise our creativity and competence. It can be the source of both great pleasure and profound distress.

Work is challenging, regardless of people's experience and commitment.

I have always been interested in the world of work. From early on, I expected to enter a profession: I was both excited and daunted by the prospect of engaging with work. While my initial experiences were disappointing, they provided me with significant learning opportunities. As I will explain below, different elements ultimately contributed to my choice of career; however, I realize now that my struggle at a very demanding and rigid high school was probably my strongest initial motivation: it generated my desire to 'do something' about organizational dysfunction and individual stress.

My personal sense of being both an outsider and an insider, the political context of my formative years, my own experience of organizational distress and the encounter with psychoanalysis had a profound influence on my career and approach to work. The outsider-insider dynamic remains central to my choice of profession: it is a very familiar experience, a space where I feel at home.

Brought up in Genoa, a proud and reticent provincial town in Italy, and coming from a family of diverse outsiders – grandparents from Umbria, Emilia Romagna, Dalmatia and Great Britain – I learnt to move in and out, to observe and join in, wanting to belong as well as feeling different. I learnt to manage the tension between taking part and staying outside, looking in from an outside position, while also experiencing empathy for, and curiosity about, other people's situations and dilemmas.