



*the* **SOCIAL**  
**LEADER**

REDEFINING LEADERSHIP FOR  
THE COMPLEX SOCIAL AGE

FRANK GUGLIELMO  
SUDHANSHU PALSULE

Praise for  
***The Social Leader***  
and Frank Guglielmo & Sudhanshu Palsule

“Sudhanshu and Frank bring a fresh and much needed perspective to leadership in this great read. The book contains valuable insights and material for leaders navigating in our increasingly complex, interconnected world. I highly recommend that leaders and those of us in the business of getting leaders ready should read this book!”

—Mike Canning, CEO, Duke Corporate Education

“Farewell to lines and boxes, command and control, and other twentieth-century leadership and management practices. Social systems now rule the world. . . your employees, your customers, your associates, in short, everyone and everything is connected. . . socially. Learn to be a networked, community-focused leader from two of the best.”

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Chaired Professor of Leadership Development, INSEAD

“Can you be a leader in the future? Only if you change! In a world of ubiquitous connectivity, openness and access to information, and where society seeks greater engagement, leadership faces profound challenges and indeed, huge new opportunities. This work is not only timely but also critical for anyone in any leadership role in any group of people! Leadership will never be the same again!”

—Anton Musgrave, futurist and business strategist

“*The Social Leader* makes a compelling case for redefining how we think about leadership today. In an increasingly interconnected world, leadership requires building communities and unleashing the creativity and passion of those around you. The demand to lead with passion, purpose, and authenticity has never been greater.”

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THE COMPLEX SOCIAL AGE**

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**FRANK GUGLIELMO**  
**and**  
**SUDHANSHU PALSULE**

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*For Sil, who would much rather be in Philadelphia, and for Dee,  
who while never the Duke, was always a prince.*

*For Baba, whose kindness and wisdom inspires me each day,  
and for Daddy, whose presence is never far from me.*



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# INTRODUCTION

The world we live in, work in, and lead in has not just changed in the last ten years—it has been replaced, period. This book is about remaining relevant as a leader given the new realities of the Social Age.

If Johannes Gutenberg's invention of the printing press in the mid-fifteenth century radically changed the way people gained access to information, Web 2.0 and the digitization of communication are overhauling the production and consumption of information on an unprecedented scale. We are witnessing nothing short of a revolution as global social networks, aided by rapidly falling costs of communication, reshape the way we create and sustain new social identities around common interests and shared passions.

Given the way social networks instantly transport information into the social domain, it is no longer far-fetched to imagine that very soon all information will be social. Instant, constant, ubiquitous, cheap, and unmoored from constraints of geography or time, information is being set free. The socialization of information is altering the very way in which we connect with one another. Not since the time we stopped moving around as nomadic hunters and took what was then the radically disruptive step of settling in one place has something so momentously changed the very grounds for our existence.

What this new information paradigm is doing is fundamentally shifting the way we relate to one another as human beings. We call this new reality “the Social Age,” and it is characterized by three key points:

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1. The socialization of information
2. The rise of global, networked communities
3. The birth of the *prosumer*, who is completely at home in the Social Age

The term *prosumer* defines the shift in individuals from *consumers*, who seek to acquire goods and services that are created for them, to contributors proactively engaged with companies and one another in the creation, development, and even the conception of the products and services they use.

Those of us who came of age before the Social Age are immigrants to it. We need to learn how to adapt and find ways of coping, perhaps even thriving, in this new world. Recently, it must have come as a sobering experience for immigrants to the Social Age to see that in a *Time* magazine /ABT SRBI poll in 2013 more than 70 percent of those between ages of eighteen and thirty-four regardless of political affiliation, thought that Edward Snowden had done a good thing by leaking NSA secrets.<sup>1</sup> After all, to digital natives what use is information if it is not put into the social domain?

So what is this Social Age that is emerging around us? In January 2014 the top fifteen social networking sites had 1.9 billion monthly visitors.<sup>2</sup> Social networks have an estimated quarter of a million new users creating online profiles each day.<sup>3</sup> From the GSM Association, an association of mobile operators and related companies, come these figures:

- More than 2.5 trillion text messages were sent in 2013
- More than 1000 users are signing up every minute of the day for mobile services that support media and learning
- 64 percent of mobile users live in emerging markets

The big shift taking place is that networked communities are fast becoming the dominant societal and organizational form, redefining how we work, how we interact, and how we lead others in our organizations.

While digital technology makes it possible to generate mass communication on an unprecedented scale, the entire communication

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network is actually run by individuals and groups whose membership is based on shared passion and interest. World of Warcraft has a million subscribers globally. Facebook's membership makes it the equivalent of the third-most-populated country in the world. Virtual communities based on the personal interests of members are constantly springing up. Communication is no longer what we thought it was: it is now about you, me, and all the others who share our passion.

One characteristic of social media is that the community of information sharers manages the way the network works. For example, the content on Wikipedia is monitored and managed by the user community. eBay works on the basis of community trust. Socially driven review sources such as Yelp for businesses and services, Rotten Tomatoes for films, Amazon reviews for books, and Glassdoor for employers are not only supplanting "expert opinions" but maintain quality by having their users review reviewers. Individuals rate and rank not only the content, but the quality of the reviews themselves. There is no "one" in charge, but the community has found a way to monitor itself, becoming a self-regulating organism. In the midst of all this, the following paradoxes of the Social Age are emerging:

1. We are spending an increasing amount of time online "alone," but are actually more connected to one another than ever before.
2. Digital technology apparently depersonalizes communication, but the nature of our passions and interests are driving the content and form of our communication.
3. We have become part of a droning 24-7 communication web, but our individual ideas and thoughts have reach on an unprecedented scale.
4. The world is becoming increasingly flattened through the globalizing force of digital communication, while the same technology is spawning new forms of cultural identities based on affiliation and identification.
5. As information becomes increasingly commoditized because of near-universal access, communities are beginning to surface around specific information areas.

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These paradoxes play themselves out in the workplace as well. The interconnectedness of the Social Age and the ubiquitous availability of information are fundamentally altering the landscape in which we lead our organizations and our people. The structure of our companies, modeled after military hierarchies, was established to control the flow of information and the means of production. Today, these structures are giving way to flatter, more deeply connected community-based structures that work best when they harness the shared passions and interests of employees—what we call Social Energy, which we believe is fast becoming the differentiator for successful companies.

Moreover, the leaders who led like *generals*, directing and commanding the troops of our traditional organizations, are giving way to new leaders who are *mayors*, influencing diverse constituents and harnessing Social Energy to create success. The Social Age has moved us from a world where planning, forecasting, and strategy controlled business success to a world of complexity where unanticipated disruptive forces are common and awareness, agility, and proactivity in the face of ambiguity rule the day.

In this new world, given the new realities of the Social Age, are you leading in a way that is relevant? Have you dropped the command-and-control trappings of a general and found a way to bring together constituents across and beyond your formal sphere of responsibility to drive success? This book is intended to engage you in a conversation about just that, about becoming what we call a Social Leader.

### THE PLAN OF THE BOOK

We have divided the book into two sections. Part 1 talks about the Social Age, its impact on companies and on leadership, and what you can do to shift your leadership approach to that of a Social Leader, making the transition from general to mayor.

Chapter 1 discusses the nature of the Social Age, the driving forces and defining features of this new reality. We look at the five core challenges of the Social Age and their implications for business and for leadership. Chapter 2 is about the business organization

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as a community. We explore the implications of the community metaphor for the way companies operate. We also look at how the shift to a community-based organization means understanding leaders as mayors who manage diverse constituencies. Chapter 3 refocuses on the five Tenets of Social Leadership and how these tenets interact to create authenticity in leadership. We demonstrate why it is more critical to focus on “who the leader *is*” rather than “what the leader *should do*.” We also introduce you to the CAB model—conversations, actions, and behaviors—and examine the productive things leaders can do to succeed in the Social Age.

In chapter 4, “Understanding Yourself as a Social Leader,” we will help you uncover your Personal Narrative and develop your Social Leader Learning Arc. The Learning Arc is an adaptation of Joseph Campbell’s hero’s journey, and we will use it to help you create a model for learning from your experiences.

Chapter 5, “Becoming More: Developing Yourself as a Social Leader,” builds the argument that leading by virtue of who you are is far more effective than chasing after competencies. Our emphasis is on expanding your productive leadership capabilities. Recognizing your blind spots and finding ways to compensate for them is more effective than attempting to turn weaknesses into mediocre capabilities.

Part 2 of the book looks at the Social Leader in action and examines each of the five leadership challenges of the Social Age, describing how the Tenets of Social Leadership help a leader succeed in addressing these challenges.

Chapter 6 is about leading from a state of mindfulness. In this chapter we describe why mindfulness is vital for anticipating discontinuity. Chapter 7, “Moving Through Ambiguity: Proactively Influencing the World Around You,” talks about being an actor rather than a recipient and suggests ways of improving your personal agency by expanding your productive CABs in this area. Chapter 8, “Connected Constituencies: Relating to Others Authentically,” addresses the challenge of creating influence given the din of competing viewpoints. Chapter 9, which focuses on adjusting perspective, discusses the challenge of social information and what it means to develop a

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learning mind-set. Finally, chapter 10 is about social scalability and how leaders must learn to adjust their approach for communicating with diverse constituencies simultaneously.

We will use two different sets of examples to illustrate concepts. First, we will look at actual examples of leaders drawn from research and from our own experience of working with several companies. We spent considerable time interviewing leaders at all levels to study the impact of Social Leadership and the shifting organizational context driven by the world of social media.

In part 2, in addition to stories from leaders in different companies, we will use a fictitious case study of a company called IKU Industries. We will introduce the company and follow it and some of its leaders. This case will help us examine the challenges of leading in the Social Age and the ways in which the tenets of Social Leadership can help executives meet these challenges.

Finally, within each of the chapters you will find opportunities and tools that invite you to pause, reflect, and look at yourself as a leader and at your organization as it operates in the Social Age. We encourage you to take the time to act on these opportunities, as your growth as a leader will occur only when you proactively examine your own lived experiences.

# Part I

## **Making the Shift from General to Mayor**



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# 1

## Leading in the Social Age

*Lead from the back, and let others believe they are in the front.*

NELSON MANDELA

In 1995, the commercial Internet came into existence and the world ended and was reborn. This is not an overly dramatic statement. If you are over thirty-five years of age, you learned to think and work in a world defined by planning for foreseeable trends and competitors. That world has been completely replaced by the Social Age—a time marked by digital connectivity, socially created information, and globally connected networks where constant disruption, agility, and competing points of view are the rule. If you are less than thirty-five years old, all you know is the Social Age. You joined the world of work in the twenty-first century and only know a world where the Internet and social media are part of life. You are native to this world and everyone else has immigrated to your world, bringing with them ways of thinking and leading that don't quite fit.

Let's take the example of Julia—a digital immigrant struggling to make the shift. Julia is the global head of strategy for a well-known telecom company in the United Kingdom. She is talented, in her forties, and has earned her place in senior management. With a track record of driving change in her past three organizations, she is now working in a corporate role. Many of the teams that report in to her are spread across the world and loosely linked together. Julia thought she knew all about managing a matrix and understood that she had to drive the corporate marketing vision and strategy across the regions

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and the local markets. She gathered her regional marketing heads at an off-site meeting to explain the company's new strategy to all of them and share the vision of the top team. She gave them lots of detail on how regions would provide information to the center, what the numbers were to look like, and, most importantly, the key processes that would make sure the matrix worked.

A year later Julia was starting to realize that she hadn't gotten the traction she wanted. In one particular region there was a young marketing head named Dmitri who had tweaked some of the core messages that came from her office and developed a marketing campaign using a local celebrity that clearly did not fit with the global marketing message. But the campaign was a big hit and the region was doing very well. Julia struggled with balancing the need for order and consistency with the corporate message and the need to manage employees like Dmitri. She congratulated him on the new campaign but asked him to henceforth report to her on every decision he made, and made it very clear that from now on, no campaign was to be launched without her approval. Dmitri soon left the company, and the numbers in the region began to dwindle. Before leaving the company Dmitri logged onto Glassdoor and made sure that he expressed his views on what was wrong with the organization.

Julia hadn't even heard of the "Glassdoor thing," as she called it when the head of HR brought it up at a Monday morning meeting. He connected to the website and displayed Dmitri's comment on the LED TV screen at the end of the room: "...good company to work for but there is zero culture of innovation. Managers like employees to do what they are told to do, and any attempt at thinking on their own or being creative is disallowed."

"But surely we have to enforce discipline and standard procedure across all regions!" exclaimed Julia when one of the meeting participants referred to the need to understand people like Dmitri. "We cannot be held ransom by anyone..." agreed Paul, the head of finance. Julia was struggling with the Social Age and she was playing by the book.

Julia saw in Dmitri an employee who was "refusing to play ball." If only she had been able to step into the shoes of a Social Leader, Julia