



## Epilogue to *Winning By Sharing* by Léon Benjamin © 2005

By Anna Pollock, CEO of DestiCorp Ltd, London

If Leon had grown up in Hawaii, I guarantee that he would be a champion surfer and his preferred playground the beaches of the northern coast. Cursed to live in interesting times in North London at the turn of the millennium, however, he has developed surfing skills of a different sort. By riding the waves of enormous but subtle economic and social change, Leon has developed exemplary skills of observation, analysis and experimentation. His heroic tale of adaptability, agility and persistence would be worthy of Homer's focus were the ancient chronicler of adventurers alive today. True to his values, and with no hint of hubris, Leon has decided to share his journey with his peers. Those of us, faced with having to figure out what's really happening to and with our professional lives, will benefit from his generosity of spirit and insights. Forced by both choice and circumstance to walk on ever shifting economic and financial ground since his early twenties, Leon has in his thoughts, words and deeds literally crossed the chasm that separates one way of viewing the world to another. Like the scouts hired by early explorers of exotic landscapes and unfamiliar territories, Leon has learned to read the signs and place markers for others to follow.

The book is like its author – accessible, passionate, intelligent yet unpretentious, and utterly sincere. This is no management report crammed with buzzwords, acronyms and jargon designed to impress but a set of musings, recollections and observations developed as a self-taught, white collar worker tries to make sense of the world and re-create himself in it and for it.

In the first section, *Tales of Power*, Leon explores the biggest change of all – a recognition that in a digitised, networked world, value is no longer vested in things but ideas and creativity. These invisible, intangible assets now determine the likelihood of success and prosperity for those who can generate and stimulate their appearance. Ideas, like diamonds, are mined from the creative sub and super conscious of the human mind. They emerge from people not the ground, or factories or offices. Their appearance and effectiveness is nurtured by the number and diversity of connections (i.e., relationships) between human beings; the depth and breadth of dialogue; the degree of honesty, openness and authenticity that accompanies each encounter; as well as the amount of passion, commitment and above all caring associated with each engagement. In the old order, personal and corporate power came from a hoarding mentality and closed, secretive approaches based on separateness, scarcity and exclusivity. In the emerging new order, power, energy and sustainability depend on an attitude of openness and sharing based on a reality of abundance, unity and inclusivity.

In human terms this shift is equivalent to the north and south poles switching places. Those of us born before 1980 and trained and brainwashed in the old worldview are understandably having difficulty coming to terms with the implications of the new. The forms and structures that will reflect this fundamental shift in perspective are only beginning to emerge and thankfully are still plastic and pliable.

In a world focused on hard, quantifiable and, above all scarce assets and resources, zero-sum, competitive games dominate and the organisational icon is the pyramid. Power is concentrated and leadership and direction emanate from the “top” of the hierarchy. In a world of hard things, change is slow and predictable. Even information is perceived as yet another scarce resource that must be protected and conserved. As each individual perceives that he can only succeed at the expense of another (there is after all only so much time, money, power, prestige to go around!) all encounters take on an adversarial form no matter how politely and courteously conducted. This worldview collapses like a castle of cards when value is sourced from ephemeral, invisible ideas as opposed to things and when, as a result, the notion of scarcity is replaced by abundance. The organisational icon switches to a lattice, matrix and web-like structure or some form of telecommunications antenna beaming and receiving a constant stream of signals from the surrounding ether.

For ideas to grow, develop, morph and take on substance in this fluid environment of possibility they need sharing, discourse, and playfulness to the same extent that plants need water, air and soil. Connectivity and openness replace separation and secrecy. In a world of soft ideas emanating from the grey matter of organic beings, change is rapid and unpredictable. Inclusivity and diversity are the hallmarks of successful networks be they families, companies, communities, or nation states.

Most importantly, power concentrations are atomised and vaporised. It is no coincidence that in a digital, binary world of zeros and ones, we are becoming aware that we are all extensions of each other where the zero represents the whole and the one represents the unique power and manifestation of the individual. In the section titled The Network Economy, Leon shares his experience in information technology to describe and explain how individuals and companies can best adapt to the new game.

Once your perspective has changed, i.e., you “get it” and join up the dots in a new way, the big picture changes start to make sense at a strategic level. But that does not necessarily make it easy to determine what one should do differently as an individual. That is why Leon focuses the third section of his book on The Future of Work because it is the workplace that acts as the interface between old and new paradigms - no wonder Leon talks about ‘Dispatches from the Frontline!’

In a network economy, we humans can return to being living, breathing human beings rather than doings or units of production and consumption in an inanimate economic machine. More of us can and will enjoy a higher degree of self-direction, autonomy and responsibility than at any other period of history.

Global connectivity enables us to address our social and emotional needs by participating in a multiplicity of on and off line communities that are shaped less by geography and more by common interest and focus. Increasingly we are seen and see ourselves as a unique mix of skills, experience, intelligence and aspirations packaged on two legs yet capable of transcending all geographical boundaries.

We are motivated by the project, the opportunity, the cause as much as the money or

identification with a company or brand. We seek stimulation, fun, growth, meaning, purpose and variety. We know we cannot “go it alone”. We expand our connections, we share ideas and contacts, we learn when and how to trust strangers; when to be proactive, when to “not do”. Our corporate institutions – especially those tasked with managing us as a Human Resource – can’t keep up with our evolution as autonomous, self-directed yet co-creative, co-caring, often work sharing individuals.

The boundaries between our work and non lives blur. Our roles as employee-producers, consumers, advocates, parents, voters, carers, breadwinners, students, teachers blend. Smart brands, smart companies are realising that the worker on the shop floor has the same intelligence as their best customer and starts to tap the knowledge and wisdom of each by treating them respectfully as equals, as co-creators of value. Smart companies, smart brands recognise that any value that exists in a transaction emanates entirely from the need and desire of the customer to complete a task or fulfil a need.

They, therefore, create the ideal conditions in which that customer can pull towards them the goods and services they need. Seller and buyer experience their relationship as a joyful dance not an exploitative game. Sellers develop a web of commercial relationships with other providers to support their customers in accomplishing their objectives. These are the themes explored in the last section, The Future of Brands.

At no point in this book does Leon claim to be anything other than a fellow explorer. While his musings pose more questions than answers, that is as it should be. We are all joined together in a shared task: co-creating a new world more in harmony with natural law, as is now being more fully understood by modern science. Leon will no doubt be pleased if he has encouraged his readers to leave the comfort of their own or borrowed preconceptions and venture forth into a world of uncertainty and change. He will be even more pleased, if you the reader are encouraged to do likewise.

The entire book can be download from [www.winningsharing.net](http://www.winningsharing.net).