

Book Review

The Arbinger Properties, LLC (2018), *Leadership and Self-Deception: Getting Out of the Box*, published by Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 1333 Broadway, Oakland, California 94612-1921, USA, ISBN: 978-1-5230-8681-8 (Hard back). This book was first published in 2000 and the third edition in 2018.

The Arbinger Institution is a worldwide training, consulting, and coaching organization whose programmes and methodologies are based on forty years of research in the psychology of human behaviour and motivation and more than thirty five years of experience working with organizations worldwide.

The book is about pointing out what blinds people to the true causes of problem, and once we are blind, all the 'solution' we can think of will actually makes matter worse. Whether at work or at home, self-deception obscures the truth about ourselves, corrupts our views of others and our circumstances, and inhibits our ability to make wise and helpful decisions. The extent of self-deception undermines our happiness and our leadership at every turn. This book educates people about a solution to the most central problems. It helps to sharpen vision, reduces feelings of conflict, enlivens the desire for teamwork, redouble accountability, magnifies the capacity to achieve result, and deepens satisfaction and happiness.

The book is divided in three parts covering different aspects of individual and cultural self-deceptions and help discover the way out of those self-deceptions and gives birth to the hope and new possibilities and lasting solutions. The book is presented in the form of consulting dialogue between the newly hired department head and his boss, the senior management and the right-hand man to the Zagrum's president.

The first part entitled – 'The self deception and the "Box"' of this book provides the contextual background of the consulting dialogue. Tom Callum hired to lead one of the production lines of Zagrum Company was invited for a daylong one-to-one meeting with the senior management Bud Jefferson. Bud intends to discuss the Zagrum's three phased strategy with newly hired leadership on 'an accountability transformation system' a concrete and systematic way of focusing on and accomplishing results - that minimizes self-betrayal at work and maximizes the company's bottom line of reducing common organizational people problems.

The consultation dialogue started with defining a 'Problem'. Every people knows that you have a problem, but you don't know it. There are ways to see the problems and techniques to address it for improvements. If someone pin points the problem, people start defending, which leads to bigger problem-not being able to see the problem that I had a problem. Philosophers and psychologist called it 'self-deception', and in Zagrum the term 'being in the box' has been coined. And by overcoming the problem you are 'out of the box'. Person's behaviours determine its influence on other - it's whether we

are in or out of the box. When we are in the box, our view of reality is distorted - we see neither ourselves nor others clearly. We are self-deceived that create all kinds of trouble for the people around us. In order to solve this problem, it is necessary to think of the individuals, you may be in the box towards one person and out of the box towards another at the same time.

‘How we get in the Box’ is the second part of this book. Kate Stenarude, the president of Zagrum Company joined the consultation dialogue with Tom and Bud in the second part to discuss about ‘How we get in the box’. Another term coined to define how you are in the box to some individual is ‘Self-betrayal’. It is an act contrary to what you feel you should do for another is called an act of ‘self-betrayal’. The process of getting in the box starts with betraying one-self, which would require to justify his/her self-betrayal behaviour. That is, after one betrays one-self to someone, his/her view towards oneself and other become distorted and see the world in a way one justifies his/her failure. His/her perception become distorted systematically in his/her favour (self- deceived). And thus, self-betrayal leads to ‘in the box’.

After discussing how people gets ‘In the Box’, Bud explains how over the time, self-betrayal behaviour carrying self-justification images along, become the characteristic of the person ‘In the Box’. Bud continued that ‘The Box’ can have quite an impact on others. Another characteristic of the person ‘In the Box’ would be provoking other people to get in the box by blaming them to be in the box in response. When a person is in the box, they self-deceive - blind to the truth about himself and others; and above all blind to how the box itself undercuts their every effort to obtain the outcome what they think they want. One needs the feeling of justified in the box. Thus, provoke other to be in the box by inviting mutual mistreatment and mutual justification. In a way establishes a collusion by giving each other reason to stay in the box.

Both Kate and Bud described Tom that in Zagrum they use the term ‘what focus’ to describe whatever the person is focused on achieving. Out of the box, people’s Box Focus at work should be the results. And in contrast ‘in the box’ it is justification. Then Bud summarized consultative dialogue by claiming that self-betrayal is the germ that creates the disease of self- deception with many different symptoms - from lack of motivation and commitment to stress and communication problems. Organizations die, or are severely crippled, by those symptoms. And that happens because those who carry the germs don’t know they are carrying it.

Lou Herbert, Former Head of the Zagrum Company joined Tom and Bud in the consultation dialogue to shares his experience of transforming Zagrum in the third part ‘How do we get out of the Box’ of this book. In course of sharing Lou expressed when two or more people are mutually in collusion in their box towards each other, it would not be possible to get out of the box by trying to change others or doing best to cope with others or by leaving, communicating or implementing new skills and techniques. Even changing one-self would not help. You can’t get out by continuing to self-focused behaviours. It only provokes other in the box to change as I’d like.

Now, the important question is ‘How one can get out of the Box?’; In the process explaining, Lou further added that usually people are both in the box towards some and out of the box towards others at the same time. Getting out of the box starts with the keen desire to be out of the box for them and you see them as ‘People’ instead of ‘Objects’.

Another question: ‘How do one stay out of the box towards once s/he is out?’? Lou explained that with the keen desire to be out of the box, all of sudden we tend to see the presence of the people standing before us. When this happens, you have two choices: either to honour them as a people with needs, hopes and worries as real and legitimate, or betray them as objects. Thus, Lou summarized, in order to stay out of the box, it is critical that we honour what our out of the box sensibility tells us we should simply do our best we can under the circumstances for these people. In order to see what you needed to do, you need to understand the nature of my self-betrayal, because when we blame, we blame because of ourselves, not because of others.

Lou explained how Kate helped him initializing ‘Accountability Transformation System’ in the Zagrum, which identify and develop a specific plan of action that minimizes the basic workplace self-betrayal and create organization where everyone is focused on others and on achieving results. Lou concluded his experience saying Tom that the two-day consultative dialogue was foundation for everything that will come later, which will make the Zagrum’s result possible.

Bud, reminded Tom that ‘A little knowledge can be a dangerous thing’. Merely knowing the material doesn’t get you out of the box. Living it does and we are not living it when we are using it to diagnose other. Rather, we are living it when we are using to learn how we can be more helpful to others and handed over two checklist cards ‘Knowing the Materials’; and ‘Living the Materials’ as a reminder for staying and living out of the box.

The consultative dialogue of two completely different life experience - a self-deceived, in-the-box experience and a un-self-deceive, out-of-the-box, at the beginning of the carrier do have tremendous impact for achieving the targeted result possible. The choice to move from living in the box to living out of the box amounts to a radical shift in one’s way of being in the world in terms of thoughts, emotions, interpretations of events and views of past, present and future whether at work or at home.

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