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From Passion to Potential
Volume Four

"*The Power of Pull* examines the 'how question' —how can we effectively address our most pressing challenges in a rapidly changing and increasingly interdependent world? In *The Power of Pull*, John Hagel, John Seely Brown, and Lang Davison highlight fascinating new ways in which passionate thinking, creative solutions, and committed action can—and will—make it possible for us to seize opportunities and remain in step with change." - Bill Clinton

"*The Power of Pull* will do for our 21st-century information-age institutional leadership what Peter Drucker's *The Concept of the Corporation* did for industrial-era management. This book begins to create a body of learnable principles that will revolutionize our ability to access and work with knowledge flows." - Newt Gingrich

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From Passion to Potential

In the world being reshaped by the Big Shift, something quite remarkable is happening. As large institutions hold on to what they have, the locus of power and change is inexorably shifting to individuals. As individuals, we are embracing the foundational changes of the Big Shift to enhance our personal lives. More and more of us are adopting and actively using digital technologies that a few decades ago were a mere gleam in the eyes of a small group of futurists and science fiction writers. And while the young are leading the way, older generations are not far behind in exploring the power of search, social networks, and creation spaces.

Although this journey will begin with individuals, it will never achieve its potential until and unless we bring our institutions along as well. We cannot afford to jettison our institutions. Properly refocused, they provide us with unparalleled opportunities that we simply could not replicate as isolated individuals.

So far, our moves to harness the new digital infrastructures and public policy regimes have been mostly confined to our personal lives and existing social networks. Even in these domains, many of us have been somewhat sporadic in the development of the practices required to fully exploit the capabilities of these new foundations. Often, our efforts have been stymied by powerful resistance from the institutional environments in which we live so much of our lives—companies, schools, nonprofits, and governments. The examples of people such as Joi Ito, Yossi Vardi, Ellen Levy, Jack Hidary, and Tara Lemmey stand out as exceptional in part because few of us have yet to fully grasp the implications and practices required to maximize value from these foundational forces.

We now have the opportunity to build on these early efforts. To do so, we will have to venture into arenas where there are few defined road maps, where risks arise at nearly every turn, and where we'll need to learn to trust and rely on people that we do not yet know.

Passion will help to orient us and give us the dispositions we need to fully harness the power of pull. Passion will transform us and give us the motivation to find and deploy whatever pull techniques we can discover to help us more effectively achieve our full potential as individuals. The very same pressure that creates stress in a life without passion becomes a portal into exciting opportunities to develop our potential more fully.

Unlike most journeys, which have clearly defined starting and ending points, this journey invites us to embark on a journey without end. The farther we progress on this path, the less we find we need the traditional comfort of a clearly defined end. As the power of pull takes hold, we find that the world around us begins to exhibit broader and broader changes. We find that the pace of change accelerates, rather than slowing down, leading us to continually uncover new possibilities and potential.

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It's an exciting journey. As we make our passion our profession, we begin to see that our potential is far greater than we previously believed. We draw more people and institutions into the journey as we make our way through the uncharted terrain. As more people join us, we discover that we get better faster, which then spurs us to find and attract even more people to help us move more quickly and surely through the more challenging terrain.

Those who stay behind in the world of push may be able to carry on for a period of time, drawing on the resources they have accumulated. Beyond the walls of their homes and workplaces, however, pressures will continue to build, making it harder and harder to carry on as before. If we extrapolate the current trends laid out in the Shift Index, the world around us becomes ever more challenging and unfriendly. Without passion, we will find ourselves increasingly stressed as performance pressures inexorably mount until they become unbearable. As stress mounts, relationships fray, and we become ever more protective of the diminishing resources that we have. There is no sustainability to be found here; at best, we can hope for a grace period. But time will grow increasingly short and the likely scenarios increasingly unpalatable. We will seek refuge in the last remnants of push institutions only to find the walls eroding around us.

We can see real risks ahead on the path towards pull, but the true danger is that we will ignore the growing risks of remaining where we are today. There is no doubt that it will be a very difficult journey, that there will be unanticipated setbacks, and that the risks that lie ahead of us may be hard to measure. It is completely understandable that fear would hold us back. Our hope, though, is that by exploring the power of pull and providing a high-level road map for all of us as we seek to navigate the difficult journey from the world of push to the world of pull, we can enable our readers to overcome that fear by helping them to understand the real opportunities that lie ahead for those of us who master these techniques.

In short, the power of pull is not an option—it is an imperative that we ignore at our peril. The consequences of not making the journey are severe. But this perspective emphasizes only the negative incentives. The positive incentive is that

the journey offers enormous rewards, and these rewards only increase the more we begin to master the techniques of pull. Ultimately, we believe that the positive incentives, shaped by the rediscovery and pursuit of passion, will draw most people into the journey.

On a journey like this, when we never know quite what to expect, we want to work with people who can be trusted to stand by us even in challenging times and stretch themselves beyond their areas of expertise to come up with creative solutions. We cannot achieve this level of trust without gaining a much more holistic understanding of the individuals we are dealing with, rather than satisfying ourselves with narrow slices of their persona. To build this level of trust, we must begin the process of reintegrating ourselves, and often, in the process, rediscovering ourselves, so that we can present ourselves more fully and authentically to others around us.

The ultimate promise of pull is the opportunity to reclaim our individuality and pursue our potential in ways that were never feasible in a world of push. Many of us will attempt to approach the world of pull in a very instrumental fashion. We will study the techniques and practice them as if they were the familiar scripts that we learned in the world of push, all the while hiding our individuality and defining our potential in very extrinsic, material terms. We will try this, but we won't get away with it. For, you see, pull requires much, much more from us. It requires us to get in touch with ourselves, to relearn how to be, in order to more effectively become.

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Those of us who continue to believe that pull can be pursued in the same instrumental way that push programs are will quickly find that we are only scratching the bare surface of the potential of pull. Pull demands that we pull out of each of us an authentic presentation of who we are today so that we can more effectively work together to pull out of each of us our ultimate potential.

To present ourselves authentically, we must first develop a deep understanding of who we are. For many of us, that will be a novel and somewhat discomforting quest as we strip away the scripts, routines, and facades that we have so carefully cultivated in order to integrate successfully into the push world. We must work to reintegrate the compartmentalized elements of our being that we kept so carefully apart.

But we will find that quest deeply rewarding as we gain a much clearer sense of who we are today and what we need to be successful. We begin to learn that who we are and who others are matter just as much if we are to engage in joint knowledge creation. The individual we tried to suppress from an early age springs forth once again and demands attention. In the process, we learn that that individual has passion and that passion provides us with the key to achieving our full potential.

Pull is truly subversive. It forces us to confront and understand ourselves as individuals in ways that most of us have long forgotten how to do. It motivates us to learn more about the people we work with, and it drives us to seek out others who can be trusted to engage with us in very risky yet satisfying ways to push our performance envelopes and learn faster. In the process, we begin to realize there is no going back—and there is no way to accomplish this in more traditional institutions still driven by the push model.

Embracing our individuality and passions, however, doesn't mean breaking free of all organizations; nor are we suggesting an "end to the firm." Instead, organizations of all stripes have an opportunity to tap into, leverage, and magnify the individuals who work for them. This isn't about the end of the organization, but its transformation. We won't be working from mountaintops and coffee shops, although we will be looking in new and unexpected places for like-minded individuals. Institutions will remain absolutely necessary as home bases for people looking to use pull to its fullest potential.

Pull is deeply subversive at the institutional level as well. As we begin to discover our passions as individuals and seek to make them our professions, we will increasingly run into the institutional barriers that surround us on all sides and prevent us from moving forward. Those of us who pursue our passions in the workplace, seeking to adopt and nurture pull mechanisms in our existing institutional homes, will find ourselves increasingly frustrated by the roadblocks we encounter. Here's the paradox: The more we choose to pursue our passions within the confines of existing push-based institutions, the more unhappy and frustrated we will become. Many of us will flee these institutional homes, as others already have, in the quest for freedom to pursue passion.

But some of us will see the potential that resides latent in even the largest institutions and become motivated to connect with others in efforts to reorient these institutions around cultivating passion rather than suppressing it. This quest will encounter powerful resistance, especially from those who do not share our passions and instead seek to protect the status quo in an effort to maintain some degree of safety and stability in an increasingly turbulent world. There will be setbacks and even casualties along the way. But those with passion

can rest secure in one basic fact—the forces of the Big Shift are on their side. The pressures on our institutions are mounting on all sides, and they will not go away. Instead, they will intensify. And the only way to overcome them will be to reorient our institutions around collaboration curves and talent development.

Our efforts as individuals to work within larger institutions will be aided by the rise of a new generation of institutions. This new wave will be designed from the bottom up and from the edge in with the goal of providing platforms for passionate individuals to amplify the power of pull. The old guard will face increasing pressure from these new institutions.

This will be a long march. But it is an essential part of our journey. If we just focus on our evolution as individuals on harnessing the power of pull, we will fall far short of our full potential. Institutions can significantly amplify the power of pull, making it far easier to connect with a broader range of people and resources and to learn faster from each other than we ever could in the absence of institutions. We must therefore reclaim our institutions—whether from the inside of existing ones or by creating a new generation of our own.

But it is not just about transforming individual institutions in profound ways, either. It is also about engaging more broadly with the world around us and deeply understanding its potential. As we begin to understand the power of pull, we begin to look at the world in a different way. We begin to use much more imagination, exploring possibilities and potential, not just in ourselves, but in the people and arenas around us. We begin to realize that what is, is only a precursor of what could be, and that we can play a leading role in helping to realize that potential. But we do this with a very different mindset from the engineer or technocrat

who thinks in terms of detailed blueprints and a carefully designed path to realization of these blueprints.

Rather, we adopt the perspective of a gardener who seeds, feeds, and weeds his garden, carefully shaping the vegetation in ways that will create a more fulfilling experience for us.

This is ultimately the power of pull. For the first time ever, we have the real opportunity to become who we are, and more importantly, who we were meant to be. Pull provides us with the opportunity to achieve our own individual potential while at the same time pursuing the enormous potential embedded in whatever institutional environment surrounds us. We now have the ability to shape a world that encourages and celebrates our efforts to become who we were meant to be.

To do this effectively, though, we must first strive to understand ourselves more fully and learn to discern the potential hiding in plain sight of the world around us. As individuals, we truly now have the potential to remake our world, not in a way that simply serves our needs, but in a way that deeply honors the potential of all of those around us as well as our own potential. While pull helps us to connect with others in richer and more satisfying ways, perhaps the real opportunity lies within each of us. To harness the potential of pull, we must begin with ourselves as individuals, join together in the long march required to transform our institutions, and return inevitably to ourselves in a process of discovery that knows no end. On the way, we will continually surprise ourselves as we discover that small moves, smartly made, can set really big things in motion.

Endorsements for *The Power of Pull*

"The authors have given us a provocative and insightful look at the power of today's knowledge flow. If you want to meet the challenges of working and living in the 21st century, this book should be your guide." - Eric Schmidt, *Board Chairman and CEO of Google*

"*The Power of Pull* is a powerful new meme for navigating and networking in the 21st century. Any one of its 36 key questions (in the 'Bring It Home' sections) could change your life and the world." - John Doerr, *Kleiner Perkins*

"*The Power of Pull* is a roadmap of how to get from where you are now to where you really want to be. Read it and be inspired. (You'll probably want to surf too.)" - Marc Benioff, *CEO of Salesforce.com*

"In times of unprecedented change, we as individuals and institutions can have extraordinary leverage and influence if we marshal the passion, knowledge and resources necessary to achieve great things. The Power of Pull empowers and guides us to make the most of today's enormous possibilities." - John Naisbitt, *author of* Megatrends

"Stop whatever you are doing and read this amazing book. The authors totally nail it. Digging beneath the surface of stuff that distracts us on a daily basis, they unpack the deep forces that really truly matter and provide a guidebook each of us can use to unleash passion, transform how and why we work, and restore destiny and dignity to our lives." - Richard Florida, *author of* The Rise of the Creative Class *and* The Great Reset

"This brilliant and exciting book shows how to pursue your passions by harnessing the power of networks. Success no longer comes from possessing knowledge; instead, you have to participate with others in creating a flow of knowledge. The

power of 'pull'—the ability to draw out people and resources for each endeavor—can transform both individuals and institutions." - Walter Isaacson, *President and CEO, the Aspen Institute, and author of* Einstein: His Life and Universe

"Connecting many important threads through beautiful metaphors and wonderful narratives, the authors provide both a mind expanding view of how the world is changing and a solid framework and context to approach the future for anyone interested in surviving and enjoying it." - Joichi Ito, *CEO of Creative Commons and Internet venture investor*

"We live in a global village, where borders are blurred, where all humanity could and should be responsible for the well-being of others. *The Power of Pull* proposes fresh insights that coalesce into a powerful way forward in this new world. This erudite manual for change is a testament to the creativity and insight of its authors." - Mark E. Tucker, *Former Group Chief Executive of Prudential plc, Member of the Court of the Bank of England*

"This is a seminal work that explores the personal and professional implications of a powerful convergence of technologies, ranging from in memory databases for speed, massive parallel processing in the cloud, access via telephone for anything, anytime, everywhere. We are just beginning to understand what this means for us. The authors help us to understand where and how pull will change our lives and our work given the new digital infrastructures re-shaping our landscape. It offers us a roadmap that we neglect at our peril." - Hasso Plattner, *Founder and Chairman of SAP Supervisory Board*

About the authors

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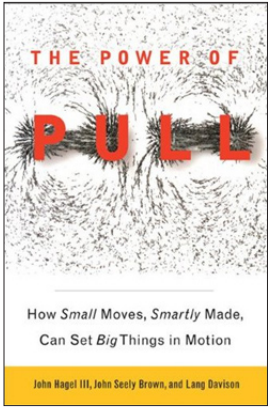

Volume Four: From Passion to Potential

This volume is an excerpt from the book, *The Power of Pull*. Other topics and essays in this series include:

- Pursuing Passion
- Shaping Serendipity
- Passion versus Obsession
- Three Levels of Pull
- Talent: The Dilbert Paradox

For more information and to read about these other topics, please visit:
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