

Welcome to <Pull Zone>

The Power of Pull is not an enclosed, encapsulated train-ride kind of experience. Also *The Power of Pull* is not an express, bullet-train experience. We are not recalling a sentimental and romantic, old-fashioned cable car in San Francisco, being pulled on a rigid track from Union Square to Fisherman's Wharf. The mode of discussion may prompt interactive or indirectly repetitive kinds of challenges. This can seem spiraling, spinning, and maybe a bit dizzying at times, if approached with any amount of impatient presupposition.

Common words like "pull" or "push," "center" or "edge," "stocks" or "flows" are envisioned with a particular, specific intent here inside of <Pull Zone>. The discourse does set up its own deceptively simple word-lingo or distinctive lexicon, in some ways. The use of language might seem to be enclosed and encapsulated, if the experience is not.

The authors, John Hagel, John Seely Brown, and Lang Davison, deliver a highly polished, practiced, performance. A number of <Pull Zone> concepts may also be seen in Deloitte LLP white paper reports, edgeperspective dot com web log entries, or streaming video (talking-head/talking-figure) presentations sponsored by prominent business schools. These alternative experiences complement and reinforce each other. Here, more becomes better.

There is an increasingly compelling imperative to accommodate a responsive, deliberate type of mindset, in recognition of shared, emerging, worldwide conditions. The book, *The Power of Pull*, represents an incitement to join and to participate. Welcome to <Pull Zone>.

The peculiar topography of *The Power of Pull* follows a somewhat structured, somewhat syncopated rhythm. The introduction presents a complete, quick round-trip tour of the topic, serving more as an executive summary than as a preparatory immersion. A brief, necessary lexicon dictionary suggests basic definitions of <Pull Zone> terminology. There are three elements to keep in mind: *trajectory*, *leverage*, and *pace*. There are three levels: *accessing*, *attracting*, and *achieving*. There are three domains: *individual*, *institutional*, and *societal*. The specialized <Pull Zone> terminology is applied consistently throughout the book, for the most part. Now, some of these notions may seem to be like lessons about Sir Isaac Newton and primary physics. Remember that a body in motion (which often presents an alluring image) can have direction, velocity, and acceleration. Here the conventional sensibility, which usually accompanies this labeling, does tend to imply some reminiscence of the encapsulated train ride experience. But, that is not what is really happening. The atmospherics become more diffuse. And, the path of discovery is not in keeping with any familiar, geographical sensibility. A beam of light or an abstract matrix-field or even a yellow brick road pathway through Oz might begin to offer a more compelling context for metaphor. The somewhat simplistic wordage may provide a degree of comfort, while the logical consequences may generate a degree of disquiet, so far as the continuation of business-as-usual may be a concern.

The subsequent chapters establish a contrast between the older, diminishing <Push Dominion> attitudes and the newly emerging <Pull Zone> necessities. The levels of *accessing*, *attracting*, and *achieving* will each receive further clarification. The three domains of *individual*, *institutional*, and greater *global* will each receive more qualification. It is also useful to be aware of occasional, peripheral side-comments arising to tempt diversion into additional side-dimensions, beyond any remotely linear path of progress. Be ready to stop and smell the fresh breeze.

The <Push Dominion> worldview had served a purpose in an industrial age. An evocative reference to a native Venezuelan thinker, now a university professor in Estonia, Carlota Perez, should provoke a brief visit to her web site at [carlotaperez dot org](http://carlotaperez.org). Indulging in such spontaneous Internet excursions means that *The Power of Pull* engages active inquiry, aside from promoting a preset program. Keep the Internet browser nearby and available at close hand. In *Technological Revolutions and Financial Capital* (2002), Carlota Perez demonstrates three phases of industrial deployment. First the potential for a strategic innovation becomes recognized by the societal elite. Accompanying infrastructures are developed next. Then people learn to accommodate changes in their working lives and their personal lives. Electricity, power lines, and appliances. Automobiles, paved roads, and suburbs. The problem with all of this may be suggested in the realization that the first automobiles, which started to appear over a hundred years ago, could travel up to about twenty-six miles using a gallon of gasoline. Still, automobiles today continue to go twenty-six miles on a gallon of gasoline. Although the cars are more comfortable and more reliable, the patterns and dependencies become locked in place. Certain bureaucratic and corporate means of organizing resources and people were suitable, as long as industrial age tendencies were dominant.

A few key discoveries with computers and communications have made a dramatic impact. The development of faster and faster computer processing devices with integrated circuits, along with technologies for directing communications electronically in tiny, digital TCP/IP packets, initiated new possibilities. The possibilities continue extending and accelerating in unpredictable directions without apparent limitations. Several important effects have resulted. Information is ubiquitous and instantaneous. Business competition is intensifying. Risk, instability and uncertainty are increasing. Political borders are more porous. The <Push Dominion> was maintained through centralized concentrations of proprietary information resources, material resources, or distribution resources. Today <Pull Zone> activities are overriding older ways of doing things everywhere.

All this is not just speculation. All this is not just theory. There are compelling quantitative figures to reinforce the qualitative observations. Aggregated annual return on assets (ROA) measurements for American companies show a steadily diminishing trend line since 1965. By 2022, the consolidated benefit for utilization of owned resources and leased resources of all types will average zero for large American businesses, taken as a whole. Deloitte LLP has been publishing the numbers: *The 2009 Shift Index: Measuring the Forces of Long-Term Change*, *The Shift Index 2010 Macroeconomic Report*. Bigger no longer necessarily means better.

One of the most successful aspects of *The Power of Pull* focuses on the adventures of real personalities demonstrating <Pull Zone> profiles already in action right now. These are summaries of interviews and face-to-face encounters with people currently actualizing new ways of doing things. These are not academic case studies. One example, a few young surfers in Hawaii are devoted to extreme maneuvers. Yes, this might show how following your bliss leads to success. Yes, we might think about bodies in motion again. But the book is dedicated toward a leadership audience and a business audience, and something very different may be going on here.

If John Seely Brown approaches a young surfer in Hawaii, Dusty Payne, and he begins talking about “pull” or “push,” “center” or “edge,” and “stocks” or “flows,” these words will have instantaneous sensible and physical meanings. A big wave can have a center and an edge. A surfboard can react to a pull or a push by the rider. A stock or a flow probably has to do with taking stock of a situation and being ready to go with the flow, by waiting for just the right time to jump into action. That is not exactly what John Seely Brown and the other authors are trying to convey in *The Power of Pull*. The same words in the context of <Pull Zone> are operating at a different level of mental abstraction, in stealth mode, almost like the resonance of the right soundings in a well crafted poem. These are impulses that do share commonality, in that these can be made observational. But, these are not rational impulses. Physical exertion can be deliberate behavior without being calculated and rational. Appreciation of patterns of engagement in a working world can be held through deliberate intuition, without being a calculated, programmed activity. Few, if any, other declarations about leadership and business potentialities have ventured so far, so successfully, in promoting this manner of comprehensive appreciation for human capabilities.

The differentiation between rational and non-rational knowing may be implied through the terms “explicit” and “tacit” in <Pull Zone> speaking. The original idea is to be found in *Personal Knowledge* (1958) by Michael Polanyi. This distinction does deserve additional clarification beyond what is available in the immediate presentation of *The Power of Pull*. Instinct is different from intuition. Deliberate intuition is different from whim and whimsy. Rote behavior is not necessarily useful tacit knowledge.

For the sake of the argument, push efforts are largely predetermined, depending upon predictable stability. Pull efforts act responsively with greater immediacy and flexibility.

A center core refers to any closed and tightly controlled organizational way of performing, in keeping with established practices according to an expected, localized tradition. An edge invites spontaneous discovery, experimentation and innovation.

Knowing how to get useful information about a topic, whenever it may be needed, is becoming more important than attempting to have and hoard proprietary static information, which is rapidly depreciating. The same principle can be true with resources or products. Stocks represent stockpiles. Flows represent interactions.

Centers and stocks dominate <Push Dominion> understandings. Edges and flows characterize <Pull Zone> understandings.

It would also seem that <Push Dominion> approaches will often emphasize narrow, more rationalistic capacities excessively, while undermining less deterministic possibilities. <Pull Zone> approaches may accommodate a more balanced appreciation for peripheral, non-rational capabilities in relation to rational means and methods. The decisively structured institution is the motivational force for <Push Dominion> dominance. The curious, well intentioned individual is the motivational force for emerging <Pull Zone> possibilities. A reconsideration of the destiny of the individual, in relation to the fate of the larger society, was clearly being played out in the streets of the country of Myanmar in 2007, in the streets of Iran in 2009, and more recently in the streets of Egypt, Libya, and Syria in 2011.

The issue of *accessing* is cited as a factor in the activities following the Iranian election in June of 2009. Joichi Ito became part of a spontaneous, international virtual gathering, working to invent a secret code script to disguise the source of Twitter information. The government of Iran had quickly suppressed all of the other Internet social networks, which formed the sounding ground for the political dissidents. The rapid international response to keep Twitter available allowed the Iranian protest movement to sustain a freedom of expression in ways that previously would have never been possible. The operative distinction becomes the concept of the platform, like an alternative shared social network, in <Pull Zone> open intercommunication. More examples related to commercial business are offered as well: Li & Fung, PortalPlayer, and the SAP Developer Network. Effective kinds of open platforms may display modular and loosely-coupled characterizations, using <Pull Zone> parlance.

An appreciation of unplanned, serendipitous encounters becomes the operative insight with the issue of *attracting*. Using search techniques, it is necessary to have some clear expectations about exactly what it is you are trying to find. With serendipitous awareness, it is possible to recognize, to assimilate, and to utilize nearly connected bits of discovery. Realizations going beyond exactly specified discovery can come into fair consideration for seemingly out-of-the-way adjacent and appropriated practicalities. Unexpected connections can become important relationships. There are ways of encouraging and leveraging the power of serendipity. Again, "The Travels and Adventures of the Three Princes of Serendip," is another, potentially worthwhile Internet side-excursion. Many ways of channeling unexpected connections are possible: appropriate places, practices, and preparedness. Being always on the lookout, for peripheral kinds of potential contributions, represents a talent departing outside of more tightly reigned and tunneled habits of corporate behavior.

The concept of new creation spaces informs the operative insight with the issue of *achieving*. Scalable collaboration now encourages exponentially expansive interaction. Individual resourcefulness becomes complemented with guild-club resourcefulness and becomes complemented further with even more open, widely shared congregational resourcefulness. The examples will illustrate the point: big wave surfing, massive online role-playing games like World of Warcraft, and the SAP Developer Network.

Certain standard rhetoric came to characterize corporate practices during the middle of the twentieth century. It could be established that cost efficiencies related positively to accumulated production volumes. Larger size of an enterprise meant reliable lower costs per unit. Barriers to entry protected established companies from competition by entrants into a market arena. Individuals were required to conform to <Push Dominion> scripted behavior standards, if they wanted to be successful in a closed corporate environment. However, with shifting twenty-first century conditions today, the contribution of the proposed, exponential, ever increasing Collaboration Curve can transcend the well known diminishing returns of the Experience Curve. Quantitative evidence should become available to support <Pull Zone> value creation, beyond simple cost cutting. Today, the protection provided by barriers to competition due to scale is beginning to dissipate. Adaptability becomes more and more essential.

Having covered some essential qualities of the three levels: *accessing*, *attracting*, and *achieving*, attention turns toward the three domains: *individual*, *institutional*, and *greater global*.

Ellen Levy has learned to practice deep listening and deep understanding with respect to any other person's needs and interests. She has been exercising her abilities successfully in roles with LinkedIn, Stanford University's Media X, and Silicon Valley Connect. Her facility with spontaneous association and strategic interconnection contributes to formation of new approaches, shared liberally among those she encounters.

For an individual, a beneficial <Pull Zone> distinction would differentiate between personal passion and personal satisfaction. From a <Pull Zone> perspective, a passionate person can, and often should, become frustrated with too many working restrictions. Intelligently disciplined passion can be instrumental in the detection of actionable edges, where unpredictable originality can begin to occur. It is not enough to remain complacent within comfortable, well-structured, strongly-tied interrelationships. To become increasingly active in less determined, more random, weakly-tied interconnectedness can invite spontaneous generation of previously unforeseen possibilities. Clear focus and reciprocity will both help to accentuate the energetic deployment of beneficial new insights.

Shai Agassi wrought interesting changes at SAP. Opening the development system code, for the benefit of independent innovators, has led to dramatic new directions through shared collaboration. The established, central core may even migrate out to the most promising edges, under the best of conditions.

For a big institution, even the most fundamental reason for being is now being called into question. The patent practice of trying to attract and retain talent becomes increasingly less and less relevant. Developing talent becomes more and more essential. Freedom of invention, understanding the implications of working challenges as these arise, replaces the need for preconceived training programs. This concerns the entire workforce, and not just knowledge workers. Trusted working relationships reaching beyond the well-delineated borders of the company also can be mutually reinforcing.

Exception-handling activities would provide one area where instantaneous, social media responses make good sense. No one single approach will necessarily be suitable under all conditions. Recognition for heterogeneity accommodates diversity. Leadership furnishes resistance or encouragement.

Tara Lemmey understands the dynamics of change, better than many conventional business managers. Imagine the job of the Markle Task Force on National Security in the Information Age. Imagine the daunting problems to be faced in permitting a scattered array of local, state and federal agencies to share information effectively, in response to growing threats of terrorism following 9/11. An authentic vision about new collaborative environments becomes an imperative mission, “going big or going home.” A *shaping view* can even hold the power to move the world. A shaping strategy can be vast in scope, inspiring large numbers of participants.

Shaping strategies make the most of all three levels of pull. Through shared platforms, they make it possible to *find* and *access* highly specialized resources among the participants in the ecosystem – the first level of pull. Positive incentives also help attract and influence very large ecosystems of people and institutions – the second level of pull. By focusing attention on a particular long-term direction and highlighting both the opportunity and challenges involved in getting there, these strategies motivate people and institutions to more fully achieve their potential – the third level of pull. (PoP PP. 213-4)

Here, this is a fascinating, new twist. The *shaping view* is appearing as the fourth factor necessary for true <Pull Zone> performance. This really seems to represent the primal vision needed in order to permit the more tangible (shaping strategy) elements of *trajectory*, *leverage*, and *pace* with space to play. Here, this is being brought forward more decisively and more explicitly than with other, typical explanations of business practice potential, as most frequently presented in other sources in the past.

In *The Power of Pull*, previously, the operative distinction with *accessing* was related to the concept of the platform, like an alternative shared social network, in <Pull Zone> open intercommunication. It may seem to be somewhat confusing or inconsistent that, finally in the last chapter, the *leverage-shaping platform* is indicated as a concept to keep in mind with regard to *leverage* – instead of, or in addition to, *trajectory*. Another comment indicates that shaping platforms can accelerate, or improve *pace*, with regard to generation of revenue and profits from investments. Any evident contradiction in <Pull Zone> terms might be better resolved so long as vision is clearly distinguished from direction. A direction can be understood as a specific, tangible expression of a less tangible, even somewhat non-rational vision. An expression of vision paraphrasing Bill Gates from about 1980 is really not entirely rational: “Computing power is moving inexorably from centralized mainframes to the desktop. Companies that want to be leaders in the computer industry need to move to the desktop.” (PoP P. 216) Again, the outside notion of deliberate intuition is relevant.

And again, the precise <Pull Zone> application of terminology needs to be reinforced in the mind. The notions of “pull” or “push” would carry particular meaning for young surfers in Hawaii. The notions of “pull” or “push” are also particular and different for a technician, who may be trying to describe how a software application program is getting information in relation to an electronic file or a database through a computer network. At some point in time, Bill Gates may have been proposing, whether you might like it or not, that arising new technological possibilities would push companies out of traditional, older ways of doing things and would pull companies toward not fully defined new methods. In talking about “pull” or “push,” the young surfers would naturally expect a physical and sensible meaning. However, someone like Bill Gates is probably implying a non physical and non sensible meaning, which is actually visionary, conceptual, and intuitional. The place where Bill Gates said companies would be going did not exist in reality anywhere at the time.

Several real world business examples help provide added clarification: Marc Benioff with Salesforce dot com or Malcolm McLean with Sea-Land. There are a number of others. But, it is also possible to contribute toward a *shaping view* with respect to any of the three <Pull Zone> defined domains: *individual, institutional, and greater global*.

While the way ahead may require personal disorientation from the comforts of the past, the explicit and implicit rewards are inviting. Welcome to <Pull Zone>.

William Jefferson Clinton has offered a concise endorsement of the *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.” Of course, an acknowledgement by the former President is impressive, but there may be more to the recommendation than some degree of pure prestige.

It might be remembered that Bill Clinton also made an intriguing statement about the qualities of leadership in a speech immediately before the 2008 election. Leadership requires a philosophy; it requires policies; it requires decision-making; and it requires the ability to follow through with what is to be done. While everyone may not agree with Bill Clinton on everything, he is in a good position to say something about leadership.

A strikingly similar declaration by the authors happens to appear in the first section of *The Power of Pull*: “Pull is about expanding our awareness of what is possible and evolving new dispositions, mastering new practices, and taking new actions to realize those possibilities.” (PoP P. 6) With reference to Bill Clinton’s four dimensions of leadership, expanding our awareness can be related to a personal philosophy. Evolving new dispositions relates to decision-making. Mastering new practices relates to policies. And, taking new actions relates to following through with what is to be done. The apparent, close correlation deserves further consideration.

For some time, professional practitioners in the area of Depth Psychology have been articulating increasingly sophisticated ideas about the capabilities of the mind, which can be applied now toward better integrated decision management. For an individual to be able actually to perceive many different and sometimes conflicting aspects of a situation requires dedication and discipline. It is much more common to utilize just one or two comfortable and conditioned habits, rather than a fuller range covering many possible dimensions. In a world of ever greater interdependency, there is an increasingly compelling necessity to accommodate a more comprehensive, more responsive, and more embracing style of mindset.

John Beebe, M.D., is a prominent contemporary psychologist, who has been considering distinctive expressions of personality over several decades. And, he has been refining a robust, full-scope model of human inner consciousness based on the earlier theories of C. G. Jung. Dr. Beebe quotes directly from Jung in a chapter about four basic functions of consciousness titled, "Psychological Types," which appears in *The Handbook of Jungian Psychology*, published in 2006:

Jung found it easier to define the first three functions than the fourth. On one occasion, he said, 'Sensation tells us that a thing is. Thinking tells us what the thing is, feeling tells us what it is worth to us. Now what else could there be? One would assume one has a complete picture of the world when one knows there *is* something, *what* it is, and what it is *worth*.' He added immediately, 'But there is another category, and that is time. Things have a past and they have a future. They come from somewhere, they go to somewhere, and you cannot see where they came from and you cannot know where they go to, but you get what the Americans call a hunch.' (Jung 1968: 13)

The four functions of consciousness, then, which are recognized through Depth Psychology, cover sensation, thinking, feeling and intuition. Here it should not be a difficult stretch of the imagination to understand that philosophy may refer to intuition. Policies and procedures may refer to thinking. Decision-making, especially involving many people, may refer to feeling. And, sensation may refer to the ability to follow through with what needs to be done. It is apparent that these psychological principles are finding pragmatic application and expression in a variety of practical spheres, going well beyond just the clinical or counseling fields. But, even though techniques like the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator have achieved a considerable level of acceptance in corporate and university settings, the dynamics of change over time are not adequately apprehended using the MBTI approach only by itself.

A serious understanding of the implications of integrated decision management represents another complementary realm, immediately underlying the logical argument of *The Power of Pull*. It would seem that this awareness should not be foreign to the authors, although it is true that little direct reference to psychology appears in the book. There is every indication that the raw, untapped capacities of the human mind will complement the <Pull Zone> tendencies discussed as *accessing, attracting, achieving*, and having a *shaping view*.

In a commentary entitled, "Resolving the Trust Paradox," which was posted on [edgeperspectives dot com](http://edgeperspectives.com) on June 27, 2011, John Hagel writes: "The masculine archetype is all about projecting strength and not sharing weakness. Machismo is the epitome of the masculine archetype. In contrast, the feminine archetype expresses vulnerability much more readily. As I have suggested before, the future belongs to the feminine archetype as we move from a world of knowledge stocks to knowledge flows." Here it is evident that the authors of *The Power of Pull* would be quite cognizant of certain psychological principles, beyond what is being presented on the surface in the language of the book.

What is most important is the acknowledgement that this discussion is now beginning to come out into the open in practical ways, not occurring previously. Here the authors of *The Power of Pull* are to be commended for daring to take the next step. While the logical presentation of the book may not be clear to every kind of reader, the needs and the benefits should be convincing enough to encourage inquiry in places not normally sympathetic to this kind of talk.

Dr. John Beebe has been reaching outside of the limited spheres of psychology or psychiatry, writing concise and accessible articles on topics such as business teamwork, popular entertainment, and the dynamics of sporting events.

Dana Gioia is a former business executive, who also served as the top government agency administrator of the National Endowment for the Arts during much of the last decade. He has been successfully publishing and reciting deeply personal poetry in high profile, public venues.

It happens that Dana Gioia wrote a challenging narrative poem a number of years ago, when he was also undergoing substantial personal and professional transition. Certain succinct characterizations appear in the poem, "Counting the Children." And, now it can be established that those characterizations happen to correlate exactly with the advanced mind model created independently by John Beebe, representing the capabilities of human consciousness. However, Dana Gioia and Dr. Beebe would not have known about each other's work, up to his point. This is a clear example, then, of an imperative for increased recognition of commonalities of the mind. There are far reaching serendipitous potentials for agreement, going beyond what is suggested in *The Power of Pull*.

Charles Causley was a British working-class poet, not a scholar or academic professor, born the generation before Dana Gioia. Some time ago, Causley wrote: "Gioia's is the poetry of the commonality of human existence as well as the uncharted countries of the imagination." (*The Gods of Winter*, Peterloo UK Edition) The comment is striking because it demonstrates how the poet's hunch, or deliberate intuition, could grasp the meaningful direction of a situation, long before any empirical, exacting observations arrive to validate the claim. Call it poetic resonance or poetic insight. Still, at the time while he was employed as a marketing manager with General Foods, Dana Gioia felt that he had to make every possible attempt to keep his creative efforts from coming into awareness within the company, even as more and more of his material was beginning to appear in popular publications, like *The New Yorker*. The stories about all of this are quite funny. See [danagioia dot net](http://danagioia.net).

The authors of *The Power of Pull* observe, "Passion in this context refers to a sustained and deep commitment to achieving our full potential and greater capacity for self-expression in a domain that engages us on a personal level. We often develop and explore our passions in areas such as sports or the arts outside of work, but we rarely integrate our passions with our professions." (PoP P. 21)

A great deal more could be said about the role of individual passion and creativity in relation to commercial, business enterprises. More could be said about acceptance for these kinds of ideas in other societies, particularly the eastern cultures of Asia. More could be said about the means by which greater appreciation of integrated decision management can be encouraged in different settings. It may be hoped that *shaping views* and shaping strategies are actively advancing to allow a growing realization of <Pull Zone> possibilities in the not too distant future.

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