

**E X P E R T  
H U M A N S**

*Critical Leadership Skills For A Disrupted World*

**M I C H A E L  
J E N K I N S**

# EXPERT HUMANS

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## Critical Leadership Skills for a Disrupted World

By

**Michael Jenkins**



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India – Malaysia – China

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

This book is dedicated to Margaret Dunlop, a truly Expert Human.

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Michael Jenkins

Singapore, 2020

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## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

**Michael Jenkins** was born and spent his early years in Malaysia. He graduated from Durham University in Chinese Studies followed by postgraduate studies in Japanese language, politics, and economics at Nanzan University, Nagoya, Japan (supported by a scholarship from the Rotary Foundation for International Understanding) after which he worked for Toyota Motor Corporation for four years as a Motor Analyst in the Overseas Planning Department.

Returning to the United Kingdom in 1988, he worked at the University of Bath as Director of the Foreign Languages Centre where he established and taught on the UK's first PG Diploma in Japanese and English Interpreting and Translation. In 2001, after two years with INSEAD in France as Regional Director, Japan and Korea, he returned to Asia as Director of INSEAD Executive Education in Singapore. He subsequently took on the role of Managing Director of the Center for Creative Leadership Asia Pacific and in 2009 he joined Roffey Park Institute in the United Kingdom as CEO. Moving back to Singapore, he joined the Human Capital Leadership Institute as CEO in July 2018 before moving to set up a new company, Expert Humans in April 2020.

The United Kingdom's *HR Magazine* named him as one of the United Kingdom's Most Influential Thinkers in Human Resources in 2013 and again in 2016. He served as a member of the Institute of Human Resource Professionals Board in Singapore from 2018 to 2020 and in July 2020 he joined the UK-based FutureWork Forum (which explores the working world of tomorrow) as a Partner. He is a regular contributor at conferences in Singapore and abroad where he specialises in topics such as humanising the workplace, new thinking in leadership development, the Future of Work, and sustainability.

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# INTRODUCTION

We live in a disrupted world where change is rapid and relentless. Technological advances and an acceleration in adverse global climate change underscore a massive quickening of transformation and disruption. Added to this we have far-reaching global health challenges, ongoing and persistent inequality of many kinds and an all-pervasive crisis of trust in human institutions across the political, social, and business landscape. In *Expert Humans*, we take a look at all these disruptors and ask: what are the critical leadership skills needed to chart a course to benefit human beings now – and into the future?

Change has always been part of the human experience, but it is the speed of current disruption that marks the changes we are going through now as being fundamentally different to the changes of the past. At the same time, there is growing unease around our ability *as humans* – to keep up. This book aims to take the reader through a brief history of fundamental human qualities and core attributes, pointing out along the way the ‘hidden gems’ of what it means to be human and the nature of the human experience, while also making specific reference to what it means to be a working individual, in the workplace, in the here and now. *Expert Humans* looks at important aspects of human psychology as well as suggesting practical ways to make the world of work a better place, starting with improving the quality of our leadership.

In writing *Expert Humans*, I have tried to combine the knowledge I have accumulated over three decades spent in people development to propose some new approaches to how we work together in organisations. In the book, we scrutinise the often overlooked and under-emphasised human attributes of altruism, compassion, and empathy via the ACE model, arguing strongly that these are fantastic elements at our disposal if only we knew more about how to make the most of them. Stories about how organisations have adopted a more human approach to business and work life afford examples of what is possible, and they give the reader the impetus to get started on developing a more human workplace for themselves. We also look at concrete actions we

can take to develop some of our under-utilised human skills to complement the professional and technical skills we already possess. The book draws on a broad set of data sources – economic, financial, social, and demographic – to strengthen the evidence base for change and to give those sceptics the reassurance that the deep human skills we examine in the book are far from soft and ‘nice-to-have’: in fact, they are going to come strongly to the fore in the years ahead as technology accelerates the replacement and augmentation of humans and the clamour for action around sustainable business becomes ever louder. We will also consider how strengthening our human skills, as humans, benefits not only organisations in terms of equality, creativity, innovation, talent attraction, and talent retention, but critically, individuals themselves are less likely to suffer the mental ill-health that frequently results from working in a toxic or psychologically unsafe workplace.

The book closes by underscoring the growing awareness across the world that digital disruption is less about robots and chatbots and more about real people and that climate change and the concomitant encroachment on animal habitats and the increased potential for animal to human viral transmission – were wrought by the action of humans and in turn, must be arrested by humans.

The good news is that the development of more human organisations and leaders is attracting an increasing amount of interest and support. Adding fuel to calls for substantive change have been the disruptive events of recent times, giving us a rare window of opportunity that we should try to use to everyone’s advantage – in other words, we should act before disillusionment about the true potential for change sets in. Calls to re-imagine the future of work, advocacy for sustainable and responsible business plus the eruption of anger around racial equality should give us all hope that despite the enormity of the tasks at hand, the biggest disruptors of the day can be tackled head on by talented people and the deep human skills of altruism, compassion, and empathy.