



FASTEST-GROWING COMPANIES

Why organizations fail

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We have hired and promoted generations of managers with robust analytical skills and poor social skills, and we don't seem to think that matters.

By David Rock

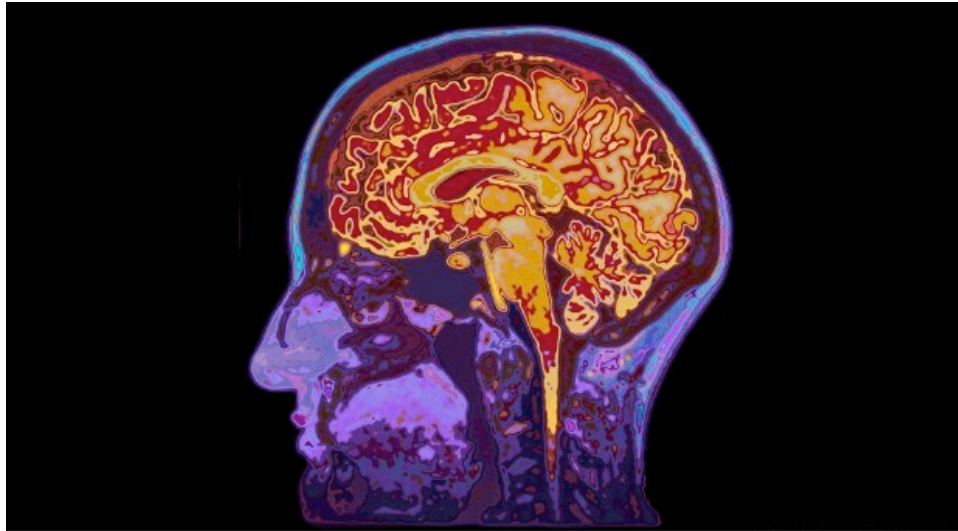


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FORTUNE -- The technology to see very small things up close showed us we had much wrong about health. The technology to see big things far away showed us we are not the center of the universe.

More recently, a technology called fMRI, that lets us collect images of oxygen use inside an active brain, has shown us that some of our long-held beliefs about human motivation may be wrong.

Matthew Lieberman, one of the founding fathers of a field called social neuroscience, tells this story in his new book, *Social: Why Our Brains Are Wired to Connect*.

As Lieberman explains, for a long time we believed that people were rational, logical agents, driven by self-interest, greed, and desire. While this is not untrue, it is only half the story. It turns out that people have another driver that is of equal, if not greater, importance: the drive to be social.

The studies tell the story: Giving to charity activates the brain's reward system more than winning money. Painkillers like Tylenol relieve social pain the same way they relieve physical pain. Being socially rejected can lower your I.Q. score by 20% and cut your GRE score nearly in half. Seeing a friend regularly has the same effect on our well being as making an extra \$100,000. Volunteering to help others regularly produces the same increase in well being as making an extra \$50,000. When an employee meets a person who benefits from their work, that employee can double their productivity. People will pay \$30,000 to be recognized as a high-status employee. And, finally, being socially connected is literally as good for your health as quitting smoking.

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Clearly, social activity matters more than we have realized. Yet our institutions and organizations, from political systems to