

The Rule of Three:

A Tribute to Prof. Dolan's Triadic Frameworks for Success in Business and Life

By

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Summary

Over the past four decades of my intellectual journey, I've come across an intriguing pattern that I believe holds a lot of wisdom for all of us: *the triadic configuration*. Whether I'm exploring values, trust, stress, change, the future of work, or even the complexity of life itself, I consistently find that three interconnected elements, axes, or dimensions provide the most insight. This isn't just a coincidence. It stems from a strong belief that to truly understand complex human experiences, we shouldn't rely on simplistic binary oppositions or chaotic multiplicity. Instead, it's through dynamic triads that we can achieve balance, movement, and integration.

In this brief paper, I want to share this insightful perspective that has played a significant role in navigating roadblocks throughout my research, career, and path to sustainable success. My hope is that, by my sharing it, you'll find it to be a helpful anchor and a compass. If you're navigating the sometimes-turbulent waters of personal and professional success in what I like to call "Tomorrowland," I believe the reflections shared in this paper can be instrumental in guiding you.

Introduction

There is an old saying that wisdom comes with age. Looking back on our lives often helps us understand things we wish we'd known sooner. As we grow older, we naturally have those reflective moments that make us realize how much we've learned along the way. Today, I want to share with you some insights from my own journey—a journey that spans over 50 years of academic achievement.

I am particularly excited to share these reflections here through MyEducator, which holds a special place in my heart. I was one of the very first authors who believed in the bold mission of MyEducator when it launched. It's easy to see how MyEducator fits into today's educational landscape, but back in 2013, creating an educational technology company focused on interactive online course materials—especially in fields like business, accounting, data analytics, and information systems—was quite the leap of faith! At the time, traditional textbooks were not only expensive but also quickly outdated and far from engaging.

When Chad Albrecht, who was then my doctoral student at ESADE, shared his project inspired by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints community at Brigham Young University (BYU), I felt an immediate spark. It ignited my passion, and I decided to shift my focus from publishing traditional textbooks in English to volunteering my books for MyEducator. Of course, the catalog was just starting out and got its real momentum in 2015.

Right from the outset, what set MyEducator apart was its innovative features, including the following:

- Built-in lecture videos
- Auto-graded assignments and quizzes
- Analytics for instructors to track student engagement
- Customizable content (so faculty can modify lessons to fit their needs)

Today, I feel truly grateful to continue collaborating with MyEducator and Chad, who has become a dear co-author and colleague. Looking back, I often wonder what sparked my enthusiasm for this project in the first place. The answer is quite simple—it boils down to a triad of elements that I believe were deeply rooted in my subconscious and pushed me to dive in headfirst.

First, there was my desire to be part of an “out-of-the-box” innovation. Then came my frustration with traditional publishing—having published with respected names like Prentice Hall in French and McGraw-Hill in Spanish, I knew there had to be a better way! Finally, I was genuinely committed to creating learning experiences infused with elements of gamification and playfulness for the new generation of students.

These three seeds became the foundation for what would blossom into countless scholarly projects, all extending from this initial motivation. As you’ll see in this article, what was once implicit has now become explicit, guiding my scholarly and professional endeavors over the years to come.

I can’t thank MyEducator enough for supporting someone as unconventional as me. I truly believe in the magic of three, and I hope that after reading my story, you might find yourself inspired by my journey as well.

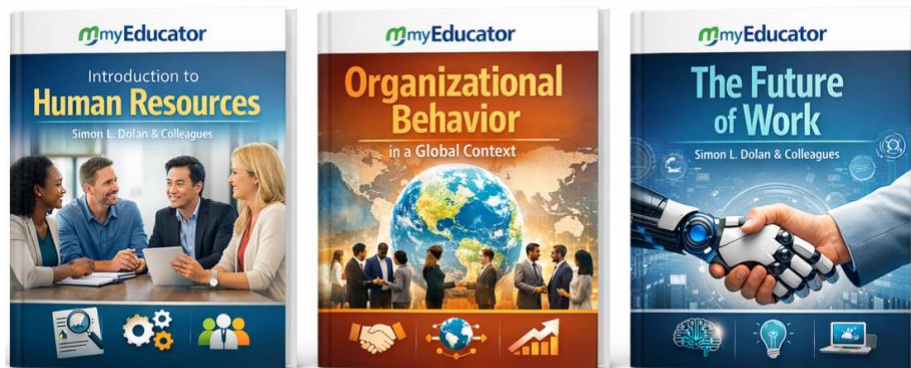


Figure 1: Prof. Dolan’s and his colleagues’ three principal prototype interactive textbooks.

My journey with MyEducator was transformative; it led me to embrace the triadic concept in all my subsequent books. With over 95 books in total, I think I have become an influencer shaping important topics such as values, trust, stress, resilience, managing people, and the future of work.

This shift not only enriches my writing but also offers my readers a deeper understanding of these critical themes. I will argue in this article that the triadic concept can really help people navigate challenges and foster growth in their personal and professional lives. It's inspiring to see how the communities we have established in the field of coaching, using our concept, methodology, and tools, voice their gratitude and encourage others to follow the experience.

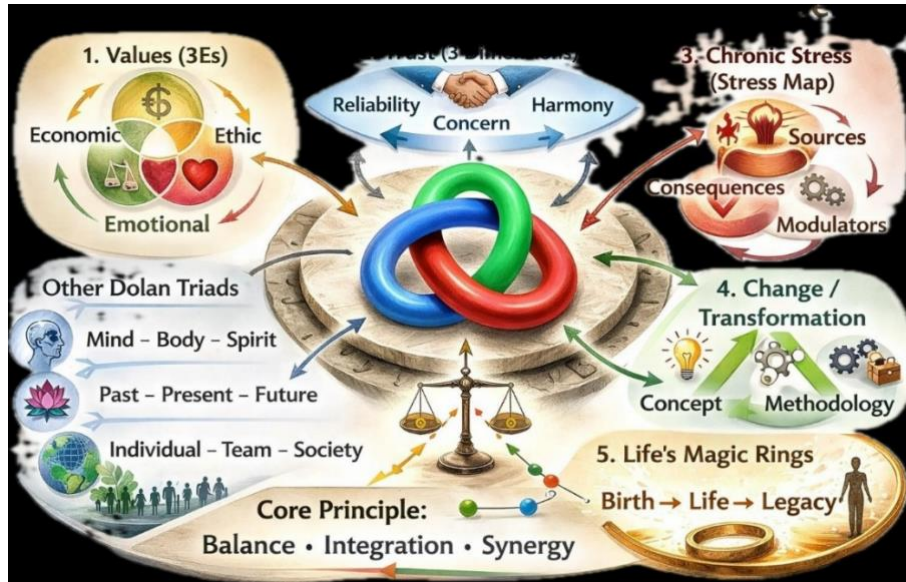


Figure 2: Triadic concepts.

Section A: The Dolan Triadic Architecture

The Dolan 3Es Triaxial Model of Values

At the foundation of the triadic architecture lies the 3Es Triaxial Model of Values—economic, ethical, and emotional values. Organizations and individuals function effectively only when these three axes are aligned.

- **The economic axis** ensures viability and performance.
- **The ethical axis** safeguards legitimacy and moral coherence.
- **The emotional axis** fuels commitment and meaning.

Any system overdeveloping one axis at the expense of the others drifts toward dysfunction: profit without ethics erodes trust; ethics without performance breeds fragility; emotion without structure dissolves discipline. The triad creates sustainable equilibrium.²

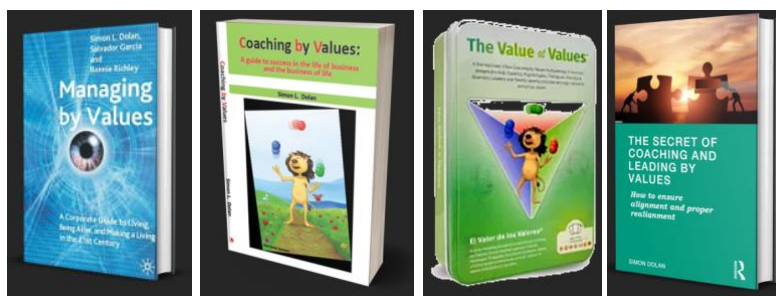


Figure 3: Prof. Dolan's materials discussing various value systems.

In my writing, I show that the 3Es Triaxial Model of Values is unique because it does not merely list values or categorize them psychologically; instead, it restructures the entire universe of human values into a dynamic, systemic configuration. Rather than treating values as isolated preferences, the model views them as interdependent forces operating along three fundamental axes that shape human behavior, decision-making, and meaning.

The uniqueness of the 3Es Triaxial Model can be summarized in four points:

1. Reducing Complexity: From Infinite Values to Three Axes

Human cultures have identified hundreds—even thousands—of values: honesty, achievement, loyalty, innovation, compassion, security, freedom, excellence, harmony, and many more. Traditional approaches attempt to rank or prioritize these values individually, often producing overwhelming complexity. By contrast, my model introduces a powerful conceptual innovation: the reduction of the vast universe of values into three core axes (the 3Es). Instead of treating values as an endless list, the model maps them into a three-dimensional space. Every person, organization, or culture can therefore be understood as occupying a position within this value configuration. This geometric framing is highly original; therefore, *values become coordinates, not slogans, and identity becomes a configuration, not a checklist.*

² For more on the Triaxial Model, read Dolan, S. L., Garcia, S., & Richley, B. (2006). *Managing by values: A corporate guide to living, being alive, and making a living in the XXI century* (Palgrave MacMillan); Dolan, S. L. (2011). *Coaching by values: How to succeed in the life of business and the business of life* (iUniverse); and Dolan, S. L. (2022). *The secrets of coaching and leading by values: How to ensure alignment and proper realignment* (Routledge).

2. The Triaxial Configuration: Values as a System

The model's triaxial structure implies that values operate systematically, and each axis represents a necessary but incomplete dimension of human functioning. For instance, too much economic-pragmatic orientation risks burnout or dehumanization. Excess ethical-social focus may reduce competitiveness or decisiveness. Overemphasis of emotional-developmental values may undermine execution or discipline. Thus, the insight here is profound: *no axis is superior; human flourishing depends on balance among tensions*. Thus, the model moves away from moral hierarchy toward dynamic equilibrium.

3. The Zero-Sum Hypothesis

One of the most distinctive aspects of my framework is the underlying hypothesis of a relative zero-sum relationship among value orientations. Because attention, energy, and organizational resources are finite, increasing emphasis on one axis often reduces available energy for the others. Value systems therefore involve trade-offs, not unlimited accumulation.

Example—A company maximizing efficiency (E2) may unintentionally erode empathy or trust (E1).

Example—An individual pursuing constant self-development (E3) may sacrifice stability or productivity (E2).

The zero-sum assumption does not imply conflict is negative. Instead, it highlights that value tensions are inevitable and must be consciously managed. This transforms leadership and personal development from choosing one correct value to orchestrating balance among multiple competing yet necessary values.

4. A Diagnostic and Navigational Tool

Because values are positioned within axes, the model allows for the following:

- Diagnosis of organizational culture
- Understanding of leadership styles
- Mapping of life priorities
- Anticipation of stress and conflict
- Alignment between personal meaning and professional action
- Misalignment across axes, which often explain workplace stress, ethical dilemmas, loss of motivation, organizational disfunction

So, remember, *balance restores coherence*.

In conclusion, the Dolan 3Es Triaxial Model of Values can be used as a compass for both life and work. Based on years of empirical research, it's been shown to function as more than a theory of values—it acts as a compass. By locating ourselves within the ethical-social, economic-pragmatic, and emotional-developmental axes, we gain orientation in moments of complexity and change.

In life, the model helps individuals ask the following questions:

- Am I succeeding economically but neglecting meaning?
- Am I caring for others while ignoring my own growth?
- Am I pursuing passion without sustainable structure?

In organizations, the model guides leaders to design cultures where performance, humanity, and development coexist. The model teaches that fulfillment and effectiveness emerge not from maximizing a single value dimension, but from continuously recalibrating balance among the three axes—allowing individuals and institutions to move forward with clarity, coherence, and purpose.

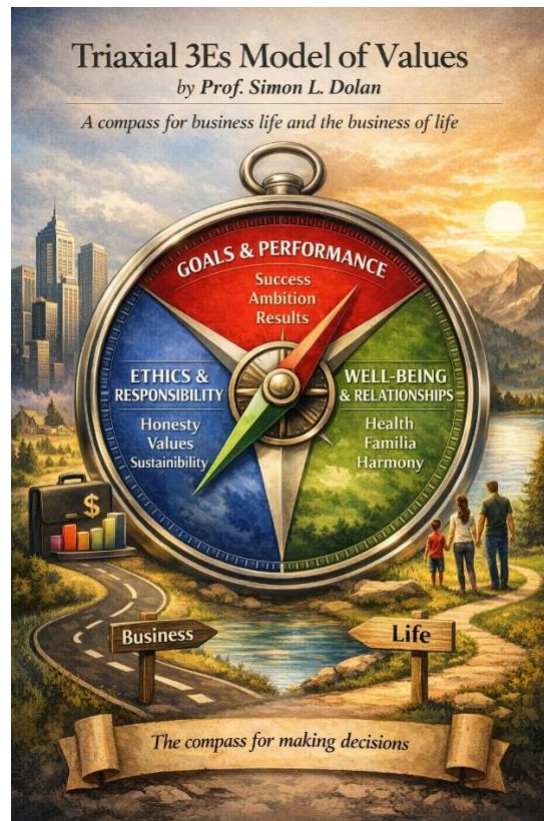


Figure 4: Simon Dolan’s 3Es Triaxial Model of Values, a compass for business life and the business of life.

RCH Trust Mode: The Three Dimensions of Trust

With Tzafir (in 2004)³ and Brykman (in 2024 and 2025)⁴, I conceptualized trust as emerging from three dimensions: reliability, concern, and harmony.

Trust is not simply predictability (reliability), nor merely benevolence (concern), nor just relational fit (harmony). Trust is the intersection of all three. Remove one and trust fractures. Again, effectiveness arises from triangular reinforcement, not linear causality.

³ Tzafir, S. S., & Dolan, S. L. (2004). “Trust me: A scale for measuring manager–employee trust.” *Management Research: The Journal of the Iberoamerican Academy of Management*, 2(2), 115–132; Dolan, S. L. (2026). *The trust toolkit* (Amazon.com).

⁴ Dolan, S. L., & Brykman, K. (2025). *Cracking the trust code* (Amazon.com); Dolan, S. L., Brykman, K., & Tzafir, S. (2024). “Trust me: A concept and metric to embed in leaders, enhancing their effectiveness.” *The European Business Review*.



Figure 5: RCH Trust Model.

Our model of trust has gained remarkable popularity among both researchers and practitioners because it succeeds where many trust frameworks fail: it transforms an abstract, emotional concept into a clear, measurable, and actionable construct. Evidence of its impact is visible through platforms such as ResearchGate, where more than 12,000 scholars have engaged with the work, alongside thousands of managers who use it in leadership development and organizational diagnostics.



Figure 6: Prof. Dolan's and colleagues' texts on trust.

Rather than treating trust as a vague sentiment, the RCH Trust Model proposes that overall trust can be understood as the combined sum of these three dimensions. This simplicity makes the framework

scientifically attractive while remaining highly practical for managers, coaches, and organizations seeking rapid diagnostics.

Its popularity also stems from its universality. The three dimensions capture fundamental human expectations of leadership across cultures, sectors, and hierarchical levels. Researchers appreciate the model’s conceptual clarity and measurability, while practitioners value a tool that can be applied immediately without complex psychological testing.

The RCH Trust Model helps explain why leaders who lose trust on any single dimension often experience a rapid decline in legitimacy. A leader who lacks reliability is perceived as incompetent or inconsistent; followers feel uncertainty and disengage. When concern disappears, leaders are seen as self-serving or indifferent, generating emotional withdrawal and resentment. When harmony breaks down, relationships become conflictual, fear increases, and collaboration collapses. Importantly, trust operates psychologically as a threshold phenomenon: failure in one dimension contaminates perceptions of the others. Employees begin to reinterpret behaviors negatively, and the leader may quickly be labeled toxic.

This explains why toxic leadership is often less about overt misconduct and more about erosion of trust equilibrium. When reliability, concern, and harmony are unbalanced, followers experience insecurity, injustice, or relational strain—conditions strongly associated with stress, disengagement, and organizational dysfunction.

Ultimately, the enduring appeal of our RCH Trust Model lies in its dual power: it is theoretically rigorous yet operationally simple. By reducing trust to three observable dimensions, it provides leaders with a practical compass for self-reflection and improvement. In a world of increasing complexity and uncertainty, the model reminds us that sustainable leadership effectiveness depends not on authority alone, but on maintaining a delicate balance of competence, care, and relational harmony.

The Value Engine

I’ve come across a fascinating idea that I’m excited to share with you! Imagine combining the Triaxial Model of Values visually with the RCH Trust Model. It’s truly inspiring to think about *trust* as the “mother of all values,” which I explore in many of my books and articles. I refer to this unique blend as The Value Engine, and I believe it could really resonate with you. There’s so much potential in this concept, and I encourage you to dive deeper into it and perhaps uncover new insights.



Figure 6: The Value Engine, combining components from the Triaxial Model of Values and the RCH Trust Model.

The Three Pillars of the Stress Map Model

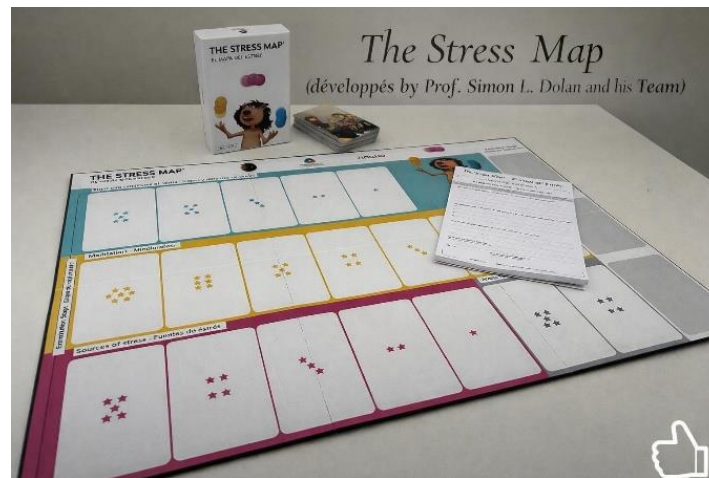


Figure 7: Simon Dolan's Stress Map Model, incorporating the three pillars: sources, consequences, and modulators.

Let me be clear. When I first went into preparing the Stress Map, I have identified hundreds of algorithms and configurations. Reducing the complexity into three pillars was a tremendous challenge. However, today, in retrospect, I and many important users of the concept and the tool are satisfied. My Stress Map Model incorporates the following pillars:

1. Sources
2. Consequences
3. Modulators.⁵

Stress is not reduced to stimuli (sources) nor to symptoms (consequences). The third dimension—modulators (coping resources, personality, culture, values)—explains variability. The triadic logic introduces systemic understanding: stress is a dynamic ecosystem, not a single-variable reaction.



Figure 8: Texts by Prof. Dolan and colleagues discussing stress.

The Stress Map Model, which I have developed with my collaborators, represents an important breakthrough in the understanding and diagnosis of stress, particularly chronic stress, one of the most complex and elusive challenges in modern life and work. For decades, researchers and clinicians struggled with the overwhelming number of stress theories, diagnostic scales, and psychological algorithms available. When I first approached the problem, I was confronted with hundreds of models

⁵ Dolan, S. L. (2007). *Stress, self-esteem, health and work* (Palgrave-McMillan); Dolan, S. L. (2022). *Destress at work* (Routledge); Dolan, S. L. (2025). *From stress to resilience: Tips to transform your life and enhance your well-being* (Amazon.com).

and configurations attempting to explain stress dynamics. The complexity was so great that even experts found it difficult to translate theory into practical diagnosis.

The genius of the Stress Map Model lies in its radical simplification without loss of scientific depth. We succeeded in reducing this complexity into three integrative pillars:

1. **Sources of Stress**—Distinguishing between pressures originating in the workplace and those arising outside work, acknowledging that individuals live in interconnected life systems rather than isolated professional roles.
2. **Consequences of Stress**—Identifying effects across multiple levels and intensities, including physical, emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and organizational outcomes. This allows users to see how stress evolves from mild strain to debilitating chronic conditions.
3. **Modulators**—Personal and contextual factors that either amplify stress or buffer its negative impact. These modulators explain why the same stressor may overwhelm one person while another remains resilient.

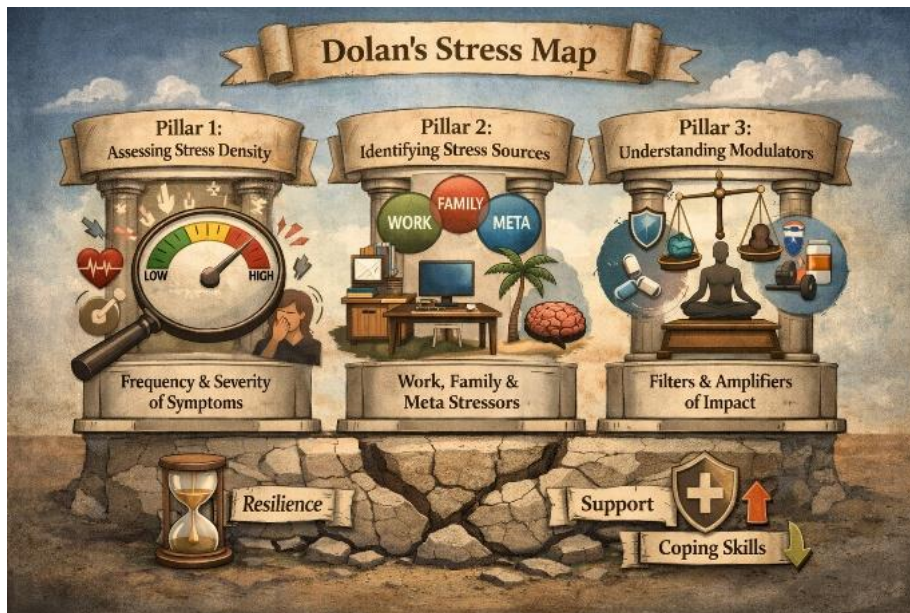


Figure 9: Simon Dolan's Stress Map Model, featuring the three pillars of stress.

By organizing stress into these three pillars, the Stress Map Model transforms a confusing diagnostic landscape into a clear visual framework. It enables rapid identification of patterns that previously required lengthy clinical assessment.

One of the strongest validations of the model comes from mental health professionals themselves. Psychologists, coaches, and occupational health experts report that the Stress Map significantly enhances their practice: diagnosis becomes faster, more structured, and more accurate, especially for chronic stress cases that are traditionally difficult to detect. The tool facilitates meaningful conversations between professionals and clients by making invisible psychological processes visible and understandable.

Another distinctive feature of the Stress Map is its engaging and accessible design. Unlike many clinical instruments that feel intimidating or abstract, the Stress Map is colorful, intuitive, and even fun to use. This playful visual dimension lowers resistance, encourages participation, and promotes self-reflection,

making it suitable not only for therapy but also for education, leadership development, and organizational well-being programs.

The innovation has been extended further through digitalization. Using the Stress2Resilience App, individuals and organizations can conduct online assessments, receive immediate feedback, and monitor progress over time. This integration of science, visualization, and technology allows stress diagnosis and resilience development to move from the therapist's office into everyday life.

In essence, the Stress Map's tremendous utility stems from its ability to do something rare: translate complex psychological science into a practical navigation system for human well-being. By simplifying diagnosis while preserving rigor, it empowers professionals, leaders, and individuals to understand stress not as an uncontrollable condition, but as a dynamic process that can be mapped, managed, and ultimately transformed into resilience.

The Future of Work: A Three-Driver Transformation Framework

In my messages (books, articles, and speeches), I insist on a critical distinction: change is incremental, while transformation is systemic and irreversible; transformation reshapes values, behaviors, skills, and institutions at once. We are not adapting to a new world of work—we are entering a fundamentally different paradigm (“Tomorrowland”).



Figure 10: Simon Dolan's texts on the future of work.

My core ideas can be summarized into three drivers.

1. Technology Is Not a Tool Anymore

It is the primary architect of work reality.

- Continuous waves of digitalization, AI, and automation redefine jobs, skills, and organizations.
- The key competence is no longer learning but learning-unlearning-relearning.
- Human work becomes increasingly augmented, virtual, and hybridized with machines.
- Hard skills depreciate quickly; adaptability and cognitive flexibility become strategic assets.

The Implication: Employability = Ability to evolve faster than technology.

2. Radical Globalization and Interconnectedness

The labor market is now borderless, fluid, and culturally complex.

- Work is no longer local—talent competes globally.
- Physical borders lose importance; digital platforms create a global talent ecosystem.
- Migration, remote work, and distributed teams reshape organizations and careers.
- Success requires cross-cultural intelligence and a global mindset.

The Implication: Professionals must think and act as global citizens, not local employees.

3. Permanent Innovation and Creative Reinvention

Stability is obsolete—continuous reinvention is the new normal.

- Creativity is not optional; it is the central driver of survival and competitiveness.
- Organizations and individuals must constantly create, destroy, and recreate value.
- Innovation requires risk-taking and experimentation—standing still equals decline.
- The future belongs to those who combine creativity, courage, and agility.

The Implication: Career = A continuous innovation project, not a linear path.



Figure 11: The Future of Work: 3 Key Drivers of Transformation, which involve global adaptation, constant innovation, and the evolution of technology.

The Three Key Elements for Successful Change and Transformation

For transformation to succeed, three elements must align:

Concept - Methodology - Tools

A powerful idea without methodology remains abstract. Methodology without tools lacks execution. Tools without conceptual clarity create mechanical compliance. Transformation becomes effective only when the three components reinforce each other.



Figure 12: Concept, tools, methodology—the three essential elements of effective transformation.

Organizational and personal transformation rarely succeed through isolated actions or just a few inspiring ideas. Over the past 30 years, whether we've been delving into values, stress, coaching, leadership, or other concepts, I've consistently emphasized the importance of developing three key components of transformation. Remember, in the past, we often referred to adaptation as change, but now that we've embarked on this journey, it's clear there's no turning back; we're truly focused on transformation. Consider the logic and importance of aligning concept, methodology, and tools in transformation.

1. Concept: The Foundation of Meaning

The concept represents the philosophical and intellectual foundation of transformation. It answers fundamental questions: *Why* change? *What* is the purpose? *What* values guide the process? Without a clear concept, transformation becomes reactive rather than intentional. The concept provides direction, coherence, and legitimacy. It defines the vision of the future state and establishes shared meaning among stakeholders. In organizational contexts, the concept often integrates values, strategy, culture, and leadership philosophy. A transformation agent who lacks conceptual clarity risks implementing activities that are technically correct but strategically irrelevant.

2. Methodology: The Architecture of Action

If the concept defines *why*, the methodology defines *how*. Methodology translates abstract ideas into structured processes, sequences, and frameworks for action. Methodology provides discipline. It ensures that transformation follows a logical progression rather than relying on improvisation or personal intuition alone. It creates replicability, learning cycles, and measurable progress. Importantly, methodology bridges vision and execution. Even the most inspiring concepts fail when they are not operationalized through clear stages, roles, feedback mechanisms, and governance structures.

3. Tools: The Instruments of Execution

Tools represent the practical instruments used to implement the methodology: diagnostic assessments, coaching techniques, analytics, workshops, digital platforms, or decision-making frameworks. Tools enable action at the operational level. They make transformation tangible and observable. However, tools are often the most misunderstood element. Organizations frequently adopt fashionable tools without understanding the concept behind them or the methodology guiding their use. When tools are disconnected from concept and methodology, they produce superficial change rather than transformation.

In other words, my message reveals a critical truth: *transformation is not an event but a disciplined system*. Effective transformation agents act simultaneously as thinkers, architects, and practitioners. By aligning concept, methodology, and tools, they ensure that change is meaningful, structured, and sustainable—turning vision into measurable reality.

The Three Magic Rings of Life

In my most recent book, I use the metaphor of life as expressed through three critical moments or “rings.” Whether framed as past–present–future or birth–life–legacy, the message is constant: identity is constructed through temporal integration. Meaning emerges when continuity connects origins, lived experience, and transcendence.

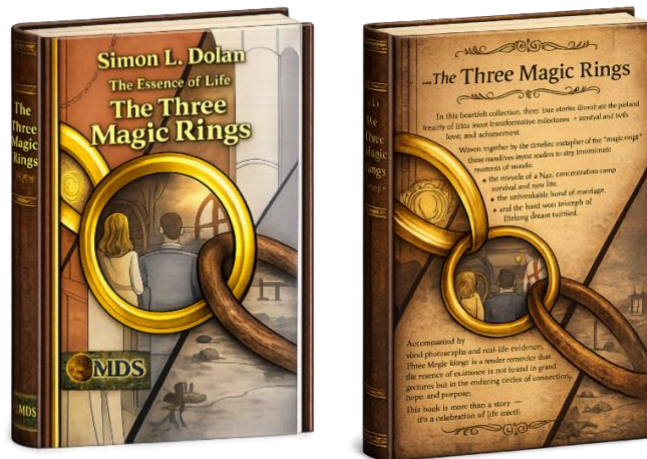


Figure 13: Simon Dolan’s *The Essence of Life: The Three Magic Rings*

In *The Essence of Life: The Three Magic Rings*, I present more than an autobiography; I offer a reflection on how human beings construct meaning through memory. By framing my life story around three symbolic “rings,” I transform personal history into a universal meditation on resilience, love, and legacy. The metaphor of the rings illustrates how certain events transcend chronology and become the essence of life itself.

1. The Ring of Survival: Memory as Identity

The first ring originates before my own birth—the wedding rings my parents used to marry inside a Nazi concentration camp. In circumstances designed to erase dignity and humanity, the act of marriage became an affirmation of life. The ring symbolized hope, resistance, and continuity. This episode demonstrates that memory is not merely recollection; it is identity. By preserving and retelling such

moments, individuals anchor themselves to values stronger than adversity. Celebrating these memories honors not only personal ancestors but also humanity's capacity to choose meaning even in extreme suffering.

2. The Ring of Love: Life as an Unpredictable Journey

The second ring marks my wedding in Seville, a celebration filled with unexpected events, surprises, and seemingly impossible circumstances. Here, the symbolism shifts from survival to choice. Marriage represents commitment, partnership, and the willingness to embrace uncertainty. Life's essential moments often resist planning. They emerge through coincidence, emotion, and human connection. By remembering and celebrating such events, individuals acknowledge that life's richness lies not in control but in participation—in saying yes to relationships, vulnerability, and shared destiny.

3. The Ring of Recognition: Legacy and Contribution

The third ring corresponds to my receiving the Doctor Honoris Causa from the University of Huelva, one of the highest academic honors. This moment symbolizes recognition of a lifetime dedicated to scholarship, leadership, and societal contribution. Unlike the first two rings, which relate to origin and relationship, this ring represents legacy. It embodies the culmination of decades of work and the affirmation that one's efforts have created value beyond oneself. Celebrating such milestones is not an act of vanity; it is an acknowledgment of purpose fulfilled and responsibility toward future generations.



Figure 14: Three rings of life—identity, journey, and legacy.

Memorizing these moments gives coherence to life's story. Celebration, in turn, transforms memory into shared meaning. Rituals, anniversaries, ceremonies, and storytelling allow individuals and communities to reaffirm values, strengthen bonds, and cultivate gratitude. In a fast-moving world obsessed with constant change, people often overlook the milestones that truly define them. My objective in writing this book is to remind myself and others who reads it, that fulfillment does not arise from accumulating events but from recognizing which moments carry existential significance.

Distilling Principles Through Storytelling

I realize that most parents already want to become good parents and most educators already want to become good educators, but it can be tough to find effective ways for parents and educators to teach kids about values. I had a lightbulb moment: storytelling! Kids of all ages just love a good story—it's a great way to grab their attention and teach them important lessons at the same time.

I began my journey as an educator by writing animated stories for children of various ages. My first story is called *The Magic Carpet and the Islands of Values*. It follows three siblings on a thrilling adventure

through three unique, imaginary islands, each representing a different set of values. There's the Economic Island, where industriousness reigns; the Ethical Island, focused on respect; and the Emotional Island, all about fun and games. Through their journey, these kids discover that to be truly happy and healthy, they need a mix of values—not just one single focus.

Thinking about my audience growing into teenagers, I felt inspired to tackle more serious themes. It's heartbreaking to think about issues like bullying and teen suicide, so I decided to tailor my second book to teenagers and titled it *Ayé: The Magic Drone and the Islands of Values*. This time, the islands are real, and since it's the age of AI, the teens in this story create and fly their own drones! Along with the adventures on the three original islands, I introduced a fourth island where the characters first encounter the idea of spirituality and learn how to practice it.

I'm especially excited about the guide I created, which shows parents and educators how to use these stories as tools to instill important values. By combining fun and meaningful lessons, I hope to inspire a generation that's resilient and values driven.

Dr. Simon's Tales for Teaching Values
A storytelling journey to help parents, educators, and children develop values for life

- Available in print, audio, and from Amazon & each publisher's website
- Designed using Dr. Simon's Values Framework
- Each book includes a detailed guide for parents and educators

Book Title	Published	Audience	Key Features
<i>Magic Carpet and the Islands of Values</i>	First published: 2014 Republished: 2023	Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Theme: A magical carper transports children to the Islands of Values, each representing a different core value (trust, friendship, courage, responsibility, etc.) Introduces values through adventure Encourages empathy, imagination
<i>Ayé the Magic Drone and the Islands of Values</i>	Published: January 2025	Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A friendly futuristic drone, Ayé, takes children on a new exploration of the same islands—but from a fresh perspective suitable for modern kids Values in a digital world Cooperation, resilience, curiosity
<i>AYÉ: JOURNEY TO THE ISLANDS OF INNER STRENGTH</i>		Teenagers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A deeper, more introspective journey where Ayé guides teens to discover their inner strengths, self-identity, emotional intelligence, and personal values Helps teens navigate challenges Connects personal choices with values

Figure 15: Dr. Simon's Tales for Teaching Values, using Prof. Dolan's storytelling to help parents, educators, and children develop values for life.

Recurring Triads in Other Leadership Writings and Research

Understanding Humans: Mind–Brain–Behavior

Effective leadership begins with understanding human functioning at three interconnected levels. Mind represents beliefs, values, meaning, and interpretation—the subjective world through which leaders and followers make sense of reality. The brain provides the biological infrastructure shaping emotions, decision-making, and reactions. Behavior is the visible outcome expressed through actions, communication, and performance. Leadership fails when it focuses only on behavior without understanding cognition and emotion. Sustainable leadership recognizes that changing behavior

requires influencing mental models and respecting neurobiological limits. Leaders who integrate mind, brain, and behavior create psychologically safe environments, improve motivation, and foster adaptive change.

Leadership Excellence: Balance—Integration—Synergy

The process through which leadership maturity develops is balance, integration, and synergy. Balance involves managing tensions—stability versus change, results versus people, and rationality versus emotion. Integration goes further by connecting diverse perspectives into coherent systems. Synergy emerges when the whole becomes greater than the sum of its parts. Leadership excellence lies not in choosing one priority over another but in orchestrating relationships among competing forces. Leaders who achieve balance prevent fragmentation; those who integrate create alignment; those who generate synergy unlock innovation and collective energy.

Operation: Science—Policy—Practice

Leadership operates at the intersection of knowledge, governance, and execution. Science generates evidence and understanding; policy translates knowledge into frameworks and rules; practice applies these principles in real-world contexts. Many leadership failures occur because these domains remain disconnected: policies ignore evidence or practice neglects research. Effective leaders act as translators among the three. They promote evidence-based decision-making, design policies grounded in reality, and encourage continuous learning from practice. This triad ensures that leadership is not ideological but informed, responsible, and impactful.

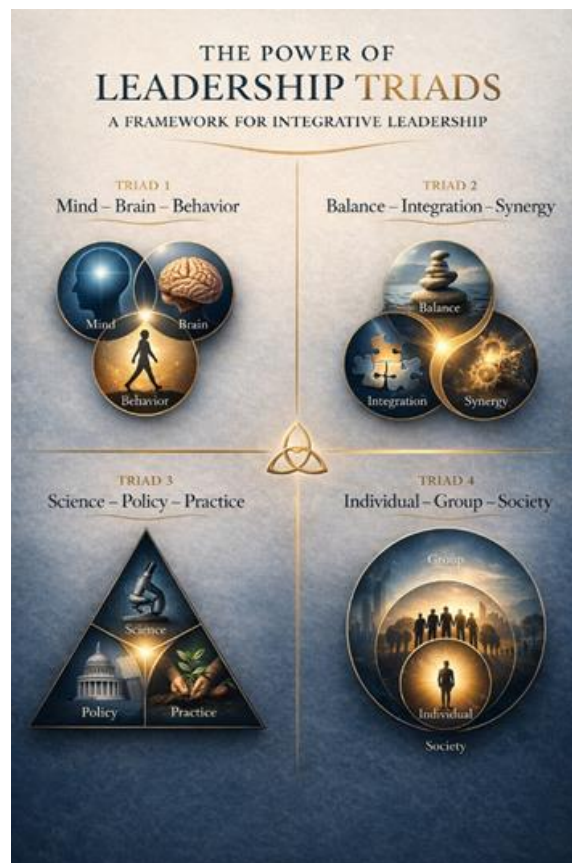


Figure 16: Prof. Dolan's leadership triads provide a framework for integrative, lifelong leadership.

Social Levels: Individual—Group—Society

Leadership influence expands across three social levels. At the individual level, leadership shape's identity, motivation, and personal development. At the group level, it builds trust, cooperation, and shared purpose. At the society level, leadership contributes to ethical standards, social cohesion, and collective well-being. Modern leadership requires navigating these interconnected layers simultaneously. Decisions benefiting individuals must align with group effectiveness and societal responsibility. Leaders who recognize this triadic relationship move beyond short-term performance toward sustainable and socially responsible leadership.

The Three Principal Objectives of Managing Human Resources

An effective human resource management (HRM) system can be understood through a powerful triadic logic—one that aligns seamlessly with Prof. Dolan's broader rule of three. At its core, HRM fulfills its strategic mandate by mastering three fundamental objectives: *attracting talent, retaining talent, and unleashing talent*.

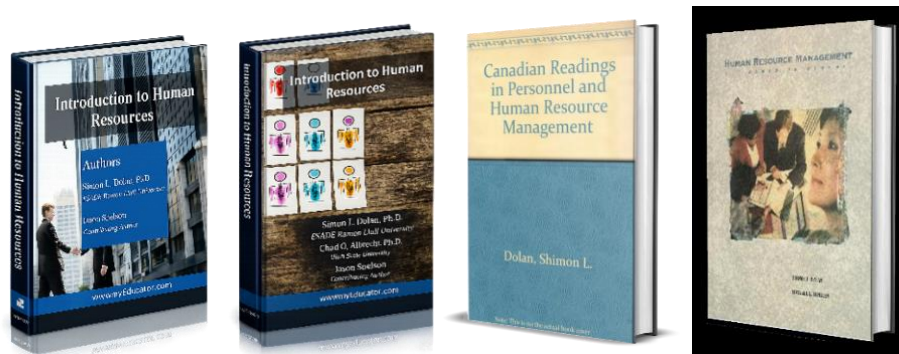


Figure 5: Prof. Dolan's texts on human resource management.

1. Organizations Must Select and Recruit the Right Candidates

This is not merely an administrative function, but a strategic one. It requires clarity of values, foresight in identifying future competencies, and rigor in matching individuals not only to roles but to culture. As emphasized in my earlier works on talent management, recruitment is the gateway through which organizational identity is preserved and renewed.

2. Organizations Must Retain Their Best People

Retention goes beyond competitive compensation; it encompasses continuous learning, career development, recognition systems, and a fair, trust-based employment relationship. In my books published in English, Spanish, and French on managing human resources and talent, I have consistently argued that retention is a function of perceived equity, growth opportunities, and alignment between personal and organizational values.

3. Organizations Must Motivate Talent to Excel and Innovate

Perhaps the most critical, this involves cultivating a culture of trust, fostering meaningful work, and ensuring leadership that inspires rather than controls. Employees today seek purpose, autonomy, and the opportunity to contribute creatively. HRM must therefore act as a steward of culture, embedding values that energize individuals and encourage responsible risk-taking and innovation.

An Effective HRM System Powerful Triadic Logic:



Figure 17: Prof. Dolan's HRM triadic framework, featuring a strategic cycle of attracting and recruiting talent, retaining talent, and motivating or unleashing talent.

This triadic framework—recruit, retain, and motivate—captures the essence of strategic HRM. It reflects a shift from transactional personnel management to transformational people leadership. Across my academic contributions in multiple languages and editions, this rule of three has remained a consistent thread: organizations succeed not merely by managing people, but by enabling them to thrive, contribute, and grow.

Three Core SPIRE Competences of Successful Twenty-First-Century Leaders

In the twenty-first century, successful leaders are not just defined by their position or authority, but by three core competences: *aspire*, *perspire*, and *inspire*. This idea is strongly reflected in my work promoting the idea of the 3-SPIRES of successful leadership. My view helps us understand that good leadership is not only about strategic thinking, but also about personal effort and the ability to touch people's hearts. In simple terms, today's best leaders are those who *dream big*, *work hard*, and *inspire others* to do the same.

1. Aspire

Aspire reflects the leader's capacity to envision and define a meaningful future. It is about purpose, direction, and ambition grounded in values. Leaders who aspire do not merely set goals; they articulate a compelling vision that aligns economic performance with ethical responsibility and human development. This idea resonates strongly with my work, more specifically in my *Managing by Values* framework, where I emphasize that leadership must be anchored in a coherent system of values to guide decision-making and behavior. My 3Es Triaxial Model of Values—economic, ethical, and emotional-developmental values—demonstrates that sustainable success begins with clarity of aspiration and alignment of purpose.



Figure 18: Prof. Dolan’s Works highlighting his frameworks and principles of global organizational leadership competences.

2. Perspire

Perspire represents disciplined execution—the effort, resilience, and perseverance required to translate vision into reality. Leadership is not only about dreaming but also about doing. In my perspective, values must be lived and operationalized; otherwise, they remain abstract ideals. And in my book *The Secret of Coaching and Leading by Values*, I highlight the importance of aligning daily behaviors with declared principles, ensuring consistency between what leaders say and what they do. Perspiration, therefore, is the bridge between aspiration and achievement: it is where credibility is built and trust is earned.

3. Inspire

Inspire captures the leader’s ability to energize others—to ignite commitment, creativity, and engagement. In today’s organizations, where talent seeks meaning and autonomy, inspiration is not optional; it is essential. In several recent articles, I have raised a profound question: If you are not spiritual, how can you inspire? This question underscores that inspiration stems from authenticity, emotional connection, and a deep respect for human values. Leaders who inspire create cultures of trust, empowerment, and innovation, enabling individuals to not only perform but to thrive.

Three Core SPIRE Competences of a Successful Leader in the XXI Century



Figure 19: 3-SPIRE competences of a successful leader.

Section B: On the Logic and the “Magic” of Three

Why Three?

- **Cognitive Parsimony**
The human mind naturally organizes complexity into triads. A single element is static. Two elements create tension or polarity. Three elements generate resolution and movement. In rhetoric, storytelling, religion, architecture, and psychology, triads are memorable because they create closure with dynamism.
- **Structural Stability**
In geometry, three points define a plane; a tripod is more stable than a bipod. Three interlocked rings create structural resilience. Stability does not arise from rigidity, but from balanced interdependence.
- **Dialectical Completion**
Two forces create opposition. The third introduces simple synthesis. My models avoid simplistic dualisms (e.g., profit vs. people and stress vs. coping). The third dimension transforms conflict into integration.
- **Systemic Synergy**
In systems theory, effectiveness arises when components interact non-linearly. Three interacting dimensions create emergent properties—trust, resilience, meaning, and sustainability. The whole becomes greater than the sum of its parts.

A Unified Meta Model

When viewed together, my work suggests a meta-principle: *Effectiveness emerges when three complementary dimensions are configured and aligned to create a dynamic homeostasis.*

When we talk about effectiveness, we’re really diving into how three key elements come together; they are parts of a puzzle that fit perfectly when aligned just right. This creates a sense of balance, or what we call dynamic homeostasis. In simpler terms, it’s like finding that sweet spot where everything works harmoniously. When these elements are well configured and in sync, amazing things happen!

The triadic configuration is not decorative; it is algorithmic. Today, with so much discussion about aim and meaningfulness, a triadic model provides the following:

- Analytical clarity
- Practical diagnosis
- Intervention logic
- Communicative simplicity

Conclusion: The Power of Three as a Philosophy of Balance

Across values, trust, stress, change, leadership, management of people, and even life itself—I hope that my contribution can be understood as advancing a philosophy of balanced integration. My triads offer parsimony without reductionism and complexity without confusion.

The magic of three is therefore neither mystical nor arbitrary. It is cognitive, structural, and systemic. It reflects how humans think, how systems stabilize, and how sustainable effectiveness is achieved.

In this sense, the three interwoven elements are more than a symbol—they are a signature of a lifetime of research devoted to understanding how alignment among three essential forces creates meaning, resilience, and performance.



About the Author

Prof. Simon L. Dolan is a renowned thought leader in management and organizational behavior. With decades of experience in academia and consulting, Simon is passionate about empowering future leaders to embrace innovative philosophies for success. His work focuses on creating value through human-centered approaches in business. You can find him inspiring change and championing new ideas, reminding us that leadership is a journey built on collaboration and adaptability.

He's a prolific author, boasting over 95 books translated into multiple languages and more than 150 articles featured in scientific and professional journals! His teaching experience spans across the leading business schools in Europe and North America. After earning his PhD from the University of Minnesota, he received multiple awards, including a recent honorary doctorate from the University of Huelva in Spain.

These days, he serves as the Honorary President of the Global Future of Work Foundation, which he founded and is doing amazing work as a thinktank. Along with numerous thought leaders, he's not just brainstorming ideas; he's also driving breakthrough innovations, like the one-hundred percent virtual executive doctorate program (DBA) that focuses on the future of work (check it out at www.globalfutureofwork.com or <https://en.business-science-institute.com/>). On top of all that, he's the president of Gestion MDS Inc., a consulting firm based in Montreal, Canada, and he proudly holds honorary presidential positions at several other consulting firms around the world. For more, see www.simondolan.com or www.learningaboutvalues.com.