

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Bjørn Aris - Netherlands (1965). Entrepreneur, global management trainer, published author, ex investment banker and Japanese swordsmanship instructor, Aris is well-acquainted with the business world and has more than 35 years of experience in martial arts and Zen philosophy.

After 12 years of experience as an investment banker and a successful career as an entrepreneur, he decided to deepen his knowledge in mindfulness, human behaviour and the differences of thought between Western and Eastern cultures.

With the goal of increasing the efficiency and creativity of employees, he created the Mental Bridging © training programme, effectively fusing Oriental wisdom with Occidental knowledge. Scientifically validated by academic research in 2007 and 2012, it received an innovation award in 2013.



Nowadays Aris works as a consultant, training and coaching employees in the middle and higher segment of businesses and organizations, assisting them in their search for a deeper and clearer understanding of their challenges, providing them with the tools to facilitate the fulfillment of their objectives.

Since 2000 Bjorn has inspired more than ten thousand leaders and employees in the corporate world through his lectures and courses, inspiring and guiding them to achieve an exceptional, balanced and continuous work performance, along with greater personal well-being, contributing to the creation of a positive and stress free work environment as well.

Professional Experience

Sōgo International - Amsterdam - Tokyo

Principal Partner - October 2014 - Present

Sōgo International (SI) operates as an independent advisor, matchmaker, and dealmaker which facilitates business relations between Japan and the Netherlands. Utilizing a unique combination of in-depth knowledge, 20+ years of field experience, and an extensive network at executive level in both business and government, SI provides guidance and support to clients who want results when developing business.

Return on People - Mental Bridging©

Founder- January 2003 - Present

Consultancy and training organisation.

Mental Bridging® Programme

- Designed for current and future leaders
- Tailor made
- Unique in its practical approach using a noble and ancient technique, iaido.
- Innovation prize in 2012 by Royal Dutch Military Police
- The sole corporate soft training program scientifically proven by academic researches conducted in 2007 and 2012
- Taught to over 60 nationalities in 4 continents

MEDIA
MEDIA



Bjørn Aris



TED



Return on
People



www.bjornaris.com



www.returnonpeople.nl



www.facebook.com/TheCuttingEdgeBjornAris/



www.linkedin.com/in/bjornaris



[TED Talk - The power of the sword](#)



twitter.com/bjornaris

THE BOOK



Synopsis

Do you unleash the full potential of your employees? Probably not.

Western society is guided by logical thinking and the five senses. Relying on them alone, we inadvertently drown out our infinite creative potential. Reasoning is just the tip of the iceberg that lies within us.

The problems that the Western business world faces are so vast that continuing in the same way is not a viable option. Time is money. And time is being invested in futile efforts that not only do not deliver any results but also lead to a greater level of stress. To solve this, we have to escape from our traditional way of thinking.

Based upon the wisdom of Eastern philosophies and martial arts, supported by Western science, at the heart of these pages you will find the necessary tools to achieve the right balance between reason and intuition, achieving success at work.

The advice and ground rules in this book will help you effectively and efficiently use your own strengths to find the right answers to any changing situation. Freeing yourself from internal obstacles, perceiving reality impartially, increasing our productivity and creativity, working with less tension and greater inner calm, are some of the classic principles and benefits of oriental martial arts that can be applied to the modern business world.

Achieving success no longer requires superhuman efforts, it becomes a state of being.

Title

The Cutting Edge. The
martial art of business.

Author

Bjørn Aris

Publisher

Sakura Foundation 2019

Género

Management.
Leadership.
Business and Finance.
Personal Development.

Previous Editions

VBK Publishers,
2011,2012, 2014

Available formats

Paperback / Digital
Major bookstores
& online
(UK, USA, ES, bol.com,
El Corte Ingles, etc)

Reviews

How difficult it is to catalog a book like "The Cutting Edge". Difficult because it speaks about iaido but it is not a martial arts book, it speaks about business and it is not a book of education. It is neither a self-help, nor an illustrated novel, and also not a storybook. But when you read it, you realize that it can be all of these things at the same time and even more than that. It turns out that the way of the sword is more than a millennial art, it is a way of life, and it is so appropriate for the times we are living in where, beyond the material, individuals are juggling their lives in their search for balance. The tools to find it, in business and at all levels, are shown on these pages in a neat way. It has definitively become one of the must-read books of 2019 - L.Lopez Leigh

After devouring this compact read in one day, I knew it would be perfect for use in my university business classes. Mr. Aris' book has become a favourite with my students. - 2015 - Citurri

Bjørn Aris book "The Cutting Edge" is totally different from any other management book I've ever read. I am not into sword-fighting and know little about Zen (Buddhism), but I do appreciate a well written book opening windows to further exploring Bjørn's ideas. Were I in the Netherlands I'd try to join one of his training sessions and envy the people that get offered the opportunity through their work. I strongly encourage charity leaders to take note of Bjørn's views to increase the impact of their efforts. - 2014 - Alcanne Houtzaager

A timely book of wisdom for our modern world. As responsible leaders in the business community attempt to resurrect values and integrity that have been absent, Bjorn offers us a way to facilitate this process of repair. Ancient wisdom has more relevance now than ever. - 2014 - A. Martin Wuttke

BOOK EXTRACT

Epilogue

Through this book I hope to be able to provide some contribution towards a healthier business world that combines the wisdom of the East with that of the West.

This book shouldn't be seen as a reading book that once read through can be just put back on the bookshelf, never to see the light of day again.

If we in the West really want to take a big step towards an economy that can serve its employees, customers and society, then we will have to become more open to other ideas. The well-known saying 'you can't solve a problem with the same mind that created it' is often quoted - you then usually see lots of nodding heads, agreeing with it - and we follow this up by just getting on with the order of the day. Business as usual.

The problems that the western business world and the western population currently have to deal with are so exhaustive that 'just carrying on in the same way' is no longer an option. We either have to change our way of looking at life and at ourselves, fundamentally, or we will go under. There is no half way. Each past civilization was brought down in the end by self-satisfaction, egotism and the inability to change or adapt to changing circumstances.

I have every hope that our civilization will wake up in time.

The most important ingredient needed to wake us up is the awareness that our civilization has crashed into the end of a dead end street, regardless of the profit we have made over the last few decades.

That awareness is growing. Increasingly, for the younger generation, CSR or Corporate Social Responsibility is not seen as an option for possibly earning yet more money, but it is the natural choice. The interest in spirituality is increasing enormously in the West. Apparently, there is a great need to find another way. Every book or idea can help with this but at the end of the day it all boils down to ourselves.

Only if we can accept full, one hundred percent, responsibility for everything that happens in our life, can actual steps be taken. Becoming aware and changing is an inner process. Everything begins and ends here. My experience has shown me the the Way of the Sword is a fitting and pleasurable way that strengthens and speeds up this process.



Other Publications

Co-author

'Knowledge Productivity. The effect of investing in humans, knowledge and learning'

Pearson Education 2004.

Author

'The Cutting Edge.'

'El arte marcial de los negocios'

Spanish Edition. - Terra Ignota Ediciones 2019

Available at all major bookstores in Spain and online stores as well (Amazon USA, UK, ES. El Corte Ingles, bol.com)

Bjørn Aris has given countless interviews to the Dutch national television and print media throughout his career since 2004.

His articles have been published in several knowledge management books and financial newspapers.



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Q & A

What led you to write this book?

I worked as an investment banker for the financial and banking industry for about 12 years before changing my life and deciding to devote myself fully to the practice of samurai swordsmanship (iaido).

The path that led me to martial arts started during my adolescence. Over time I noticed that Eastern philosophies were increasingly influencing my attitude towards life and my two worlds, work and dojo, were becoming increasingly distant from one another, with the difference between them become more apparent. It was becoming difficult for me to reconcile their different values.

I then decided to expand my knowledge in Eastern Zen philosophies and human behaviour, and to dedicate myself to the study of the budo art of iaido. From this life experience, the idea arose to combine my knowledge of Western science with the wisdom of Eastern philosophies.

My first publications were related to knowledge management and productivity. Mental Bridging® training program was created to bring about and apply these changes effectively into our own life and work environment.

A little later, and with the intention of spreading my ideas and benefiting more people, I wrote the book.



What is the Mental Bridging® Programme?

The Mental Bridging® concept focuses on increasing the performance (or return) of employees.

The training pivots around the idea of combining effectively the use of the rational (left brain) and emotional (right brain) of people.

By stimulating and merging the synergy of the two hemispheres of the brain, employees can work more effectively, face stress situations calmly and without suffering and increase their creativity, unlocking approximately 75% of their brain potential.

The programs are made to measure, according to the needs of the client and are unique in their practical approach. Not only is the theory explained, but in practical sessions we use techniques derived from iaido, the art of Japanese samurai swordsmanship.

By experiencing theory in practice, one will better retain what he has learned, offering the opportunity to link the theory with the daily routine

Is there any evidence that supports the Mental Bridging® Programme?

The Mental Bridging® program has been academically validated several times through different studies. One of them was led by TNO (Netherlands Organization for Applied Scientific Research). In 2012, the program received special recognition for its innovation.

Research conducted in the United States (Dr Purvis) on the development and incorporation of knowledge in children, determined that more than 400 repetitions are needed to create a new synapse in the brain and thus achieve true learning. When "play" is used to learn, the result changes drastically, 12 repetitions are enough. The same result is observed in all the species of the animal kingdom.

Why the title of the book? "The Cutting Edge"

"The Cutting Edge" has multiple interpretations.

- ✓ "Cutting Edge" as a leading edge, 'state-of-the-art', innovative or pioneering. A movement or idea that anticipates its time.
- ✓ "Cutting Edge" referring to the edge of the blade. In iaido the katana (sword) is not only used with the intention of defeating a real enemy but also to resolve our internal conflicts. With time and regular practice, the sword, the body and the mind end up merging and behaving as a unit. When the mind and spirit are in peace and harmony, the body is relaxed and this is reflected directly in the efficiency of the applied technique. Iaido teaches us to listen carefully to our inner world and resolve conflicts within us.
- ✓ Within the pages of the book there is a poem of the same name. Its author was inspired to write it after having held a samurai sword from 1350 in her hands, forged by one of the most famous Japanese blacksmiths of that time.

How can Oriental philosophies and the Way of the Sword help us to work more efficiently and live better?

In our western society we predominantly use the left hemisphere of the brain. Science, academic knowledge, sequential and logical thinking guide us daily. Asians, however, make more active use of the right hemisphere. Intuition, feelings, and a more global and less restricted general vision of reality help them to have a holistic view of life.

The challenge of the West is to achieve greater use of the right hemisphere of the brain.

This half is stimulated in a manner that is opposite to that of the left hemisphere. While the left hemisphere is filled with all kinds of data and formulas, the right half of the brain is stimulated by "emptying the head".

Iaido, the martial art of Japanese swordsmanship, is considered to be "zen in motion" and it helps us immensely to achieve this.

In addition to the difference in the way of thinking between East and West, are there any other factors that prevent us from reaching our maximum potential?

External conditioning, our ego, our fears ... all of them acquired throughout our life inhibit us and affect our efficiency.

External constraints impose a distorted vision of reality. We focus on the wrong details, in the periphery, we look for solutions to the symptoms and we can not get closer and resolve the origin of the conflict. It is very important to recognize that we are conditioned and identify each of those factors.

As for the ego, on the one hand it is the force that drives our development and perseverance but on the other it limits us influencing our perceptions.

Finally, our fears. They force us unconsciously to repeat and walk the same path over and over again.

With this behaviour, we can not move forward. We think about what can go wrong and we stop being present in the here and now, we find ourselves in the uncertain future. We lose focus. Uncertainty brings stress with it, which in turn reduces creativity, etc. Thus the circle is perpetuated.

How does this change (the 'awakening' of the right hemisphere of the brain) affect learning and knowledge management?

The knowledge we handle today is nothing more than information stored in our memory. The true knowledge, the "know-how", only occurs when it is rooted in the depth of our being and is an integral part of a person. Considering the rational thought and the 5 senses as the most important characteristics of the human being, intuition and perception are left aside. But reason is only the tip of the iceberg that lies within us. We have to explore and use the rest of our hidden potential.

The concepts expressed in the book, the 4 basic principles, are the basis of my Mental Bridging® training program. By experiencing the theory in physical form, in a relaxed manner, the efficiency of training increases substantially. Knowledge is more easily assimilated and internally retained more firmly. As a consequence, what is learned is best applied in practice.

The secret lies in "playing."

Are the 'here and now, mindfulness and awareness, relaxation and letting go' enough to make everything better? Is it so simple?

Yes and No.

The secret resides in its consistent application. We know how to do many things, but our problem is still doing it. The four basic techniques explained in the book help to achieve it. They help us find the intrinsic motivations, the inexhaustible source of our own energy, which always feels liberating, no matter how difficult and complex the task is for others.

The moment you know how to apply one or more of the four basic techniques, you will immediately feel better and stronger.

What are these 4 rules or basic techniques?

1. The breathing. Connect with the here and now. Let go of the thoughts. Very soon, after a little practice, our mind will calm down. Five minutes of exercise per day are enough. It is not much, the only difficulty lies in repetition.
2. The balance of the body. A balanced body ensures a balanced mind. And vice versa.
3. Be relaxed. Stress and tension are phenomena of our left hemisphere, and they interfere with our creativity.
4. Conditioning. Identify them and be aware of them. We can think of everything that it is not and probably will never be. These thoughts are not functional and keep us away from our goal.

Where do these 4 techniques come from?

I was inspired by the curriculum of Muso Shinden Ryu (one of the oldest Iaido schools). There are many katas (or forms) of combat with imaginary opponents, but in the base there are only four simple techniques. Combining these four techniques, countless fighting scenarios can be simulated. All the experiences of the Japanese battlefield for more than three centuries are summarized in them.

Because man has barely changed from a genetic point of view throughout these centuries, it is not surprising that this knowledge is still applicable today, even here in the West.

Why do you consider this training method to be more efficient than traditional methods? How does 'The Cutting Edge' differ from other management books in which the art of war and the samurai ways are explored and explained to businessmen?

In general, the training courses are based on well-known paths and experiences. They provide knowledge, information and purely rational skills. These courses are oriented to the diagnosis and, therefore, the equipped person can use them in a limited way by definition. Faced with a different situation with the same problems, this same person will have difficulties finding the right answer and being able to offer the right solution.

It is common to confuse information with knowledge. And the latter with "know-how". The Cutting Edge offers the secret of "know-how". True knowledge applicable in any environment, any situation or circumstances.

What advice would you give to entrepreneurs and businessmen?

Entrepreneurs know that one of the most expensive components of a company is the staff. Maximizing their satisfaction and their efficiency is essential.

The world is changing and the speed with which this happens seems to increase steadily. Organizations and people are forced to adapt constantly. The acquisition of specific knowledge and skills to be able to act in all kinds of situations becomes an important issue for both, the employee and the organization.

In the long term, focusing only on external satisfaction as a reward and main driving force, exhausts.

The secret lies in allowing employees to fully develop as individuals, helping them to discover their intrinsic motivation, deepening their conscience and giving them the true "know-how", a lasting knowledge, applicable at any time, in any situation, in both their working life and personal life.

What are the benefits expected on a personal level?

Inner peace, tranquility, less stress and quiet thoughts. When this happens the general vision is clarified. We can focus on the here and now, not on the uncertainty of the future. Fears and conditioning are left aside and we dare to go out of the known ways and explore freely.

We use the knowledge acquired in a better way and firmly incorporated through playing a game and in a physical form. Creativity expands.

When finding and knowing how to use our intrinsic motivation and not an external motivating force (money, status, etc.), we do not create resistance and we do not need more energy to achieve a better result. We increase our efficiency.

Success does not require efforts, it becomes a state of being.