LIVING IN ORGANIZATIONS

How I Recovered My Heart and Soul

Joanna Staniszewska

Thirty-three essays on what people actually carry into organizations, and what organizations ask of them in return. For consultants, coaches, and leaders who know that presence shapes everything strategy touches.

Guide to Organizations Press

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First Edition.

ISBN 978-83-983009-0-2

Published by Guide to Organizations Press.

Edited by Douglas Breitbart.

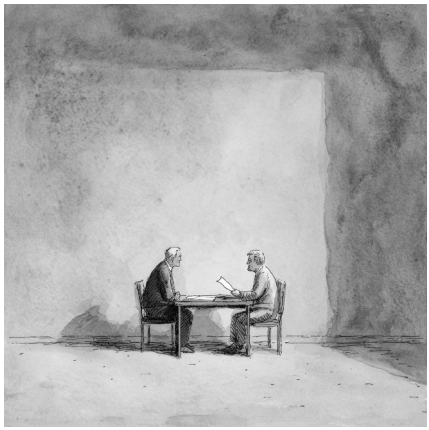
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AI disclosure: The illustrations in this book were generated using Perplexity, Midjourney AI, and Gemini (Nano Banana) from briefs by the author. The text was written by the author, with writing and editorial assistance from Claude (Anthropic) and ChatGPT (OpenAI). The author holds full editorial responsibility for all content.

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Chapter 1: Recruitment

Recruitment is stress. Stress about the future, about a decision that will determine how two people, or a person and an organization, will build together. The relationship is something like a marriage of convenience. There is attraction, a sense of fit. We do not really know who we are marrying. And neither do they.

Before the first serious interview I prepared for, I looked up everything. The person who would be interviewing me. How long the company had existed. What it boasted about publicly. I tried to translate all of that into something I could carry into the conversation.

Beyond assessment centers, ordinary human conversation worked best. Interaction with the person in front of me. Reading their energy by careful observation. These told me more than any structured exercise. I imagine that went both ways.

When I was the one hiring, I used to approach it like an equation. The competencies, the skills, the candidate profile. I wanted it filled out completely. What I actually saw rewarded in most organizations was different from what the ads promised. Take initiative, they said, but when someone proposed something, suddenly there was no budget. Fit in, but stand out. The contradiction was structural.

I did not go back to the equation after that. I started paying attention to who the person was when no one was performing. Talent Assessment helped when I designed them well. Tasks reflecting the actual work, not performed in isolation. But when I was put through similar tests myself, the experience was nothing like what I had designed. The constant comparison with others, the unknown rules. A feeling of being watched, like a lab rat. The self-doubt stayed. That changed how I design them now.

It took me some time to hand off recruitment to the team. I had been doing it for so long that I did not know how to delegate it. What finally moved me was not a principle. We had been through enough together. We knew each other's instincts. What we were actually building, and why. The logic was plain. We are the company. If we look after each other, we will look after who we invite in. As a practical matter, each of them noticed different things. The graphic designer read candidates differently than the copywriter did. Together they could see a person from several perspectives at once. They brought me their recommendations. I no longer had to be the only one who knew.

The team I think of most was everyone who passed through and stayed. Each one was unique. At some point I stopped bringing in people I already knew: friends, contacts. It felt like a risk at the time. But the team had to be allowed to choose for themselves, and what surprised me was that they carried the accumulated knowledge of the place without anyone having to teach it to them. Each person's soul

was in the project; it showed in who they chose to let in, and why. I did not have the word for it then. I think I do now.

The person hiring holds the power. The person applying knows it. That imbalance does not dissolve just because the conversation feels warm. But I have been in rooms where both sides were actually present, and in those rooms, the meeting was worth the time for everyone present.

The person who walks through the door is carrying something before they say a word. Recruitment, at its core, is the reading of that something, and everyone in the room is doing it. What the organization becomes begins there.

I am still finding my way on this one.