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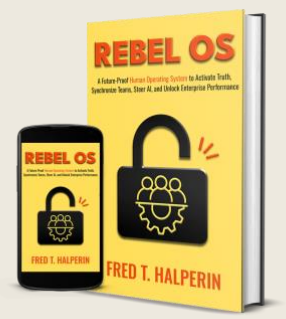
REBEL OS

A Future-Proof Human Operating System to Activate Truth, Synchronize Teams, Steer AI and Unlock Enterprise Performance

BY FRED T. HALPERIN



You don't have a talent problem.

You have an architecture problem.

BUSINESS / LEADERSHIP / ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

> *Most organizations don't have a strategy problem — they have a truth problem. Fred Halperin builds a practical operating system for leaders ready to change that, giving the truth-tellers in every organization a name, a framework, and a mandate to rewire how teams think, decide, and perform. For anyone tired of watching performance theater pass for leadership, this book delivers.*

— DR. MARSHALL GOLDSMITH

Thinkers50 #1 Executive Coach; New York Times bestselling author of The Earned Life, Triggers, and What Got You Here Won't Get You There

THE BOOK

// THE BIG IDEA

You've sat in that meeting. It goes too smoothly. Every success metric is green. Everyone nods; nobody raises a hand. And the bad news reaches you only after it's too late to act.

It isn't your people. They're doing exactly what the system taught them to do. ***Rebel OS*** is the owner's manual for that system: the human operating system underneath your org chart, where truth either moves or dies on the way up. It doesn't ask your people to be braver. It makes bravery unnecessary.

Everyone in the room knew. Nobody said it.

THE QUESTION EVERY LEADER SHOULD BE ABLE TO ANSWER

When someone in your organization knows something, does it reach the person who can act on it, ***whole and in time?***

Courage doesn't scale. *And AI only raises the price of silence.*

Forty years in the room taught Fred one thing: the truth is rarely missing. The pathway from the person holding it to the person who can act on it is.

THE NEW SCOREBOARD

Not how rarely something went wrong. How fast you caught it.

Catch-speed: the time from a problem existing to someone naming it out loud. Resolution-speed: from that flag to a decision.

THE BOOK

// YOUR REALITY / REBEL RESET *Which room are you running?*

YOUR REALITY

- The meeting goes too smoothly. Everyone nods. Nobody means it.
- Truth gets softened at every level before it reaches the top.
- Everything is green. Until, suddenly, it isn't.
- AI speeds up decisions nobody challenged.
- Silent objections come back as missed budgets and blown dates.

REBEL RESET

- "This is yellow, not green" is safe to say. And expected.
- Truth reaches the person who can act, while there's still time.
- AI accelerates decisions people have already tested.
- Dissent is a standard checkpoint, not an act of courage.
- Truth, dissent and ownership are architected. Performance follows.

// WHY THIS BOOK IS DIFFERENT

01 Not a leadership book. Not an AI book.

Thousands of books fix the leader. None fix the system the leader works inside. Rebel OS goes underneath the org chart, the AI and the culture, to the human operating system every team runs on, at any size, in any industry. Exceptional people can't out-run a badly designed system. Eventually, they adapt to it.

02 AI won't fix you. It will amplify you.

AI doesn't land on a blank slate. It inherits whatever your organization already is. Plug it into a team where truth doesn't move and the dysfunction doesn't go away; it speeds up. A fragile human operating system with AI doesn't get smarter. It gets more efficiently wrong: failing faster, at greater scale, with higher confidence.

03 A method, not a mantra.

Every concept ships as a named mechanism with an owner, a cadence and a metric: the Truth Meeting™, the Second Voice Protocol™, the Dissent Contract™ and No Proof, No Green™. It's built bottom-up (one team, one function, one live decision) not rolled out from the top down.

04 Written from inside the room. Not above it.

Forty years as a senior consulting leader, Executive Director in the Office of the CIO at Johnson & Johnson, startup CTO, Chief Commercial Officer and transformation advisor, with particular depth in life sciences. Fred didn't study the dissenter. He was the one who said it. And, for years, the one who didn't.

THE BOOK

// INSIDE THE BOOK *Three parts. One build sequence.*

PART I

Your Human System Is Lying to You

Five roadblocks bury truth before it reaches a decision: conformity, politeness, comfort culture, legacy entanglement and hero mythology. Strong engagement scores. Growing revenue. Dysfunction compounding underneath. Welcome to the poker face room.

PART II

Your Human System Is Being Amplified—for Better or Worse

Tessam, a fictional $1.1B healthcare technology company with a good culture, layers AI onto an untested human operating system and loses $5M and nearly a year on a launch nobody owned. Watch it break. Then watch leadership reverse it. Spoiler: AI isn't the villain.

PART III

Your Rebel OS Owner's Manual

Face reality. Open a Truth Path. Build the four operating layers (Guiding Principles, Operating Structures, Decision Loop and Reinforcement Mechanisms) until Structural Autonomy emerges. Leaders stop running a command tower and start running air-traffic control.

THE RADAR CHECK™ *A five-part diagnostic. Start with one team. Scale from there.*

R — **REALITY**
How you actually operate. Not what the survey says.

A — **ACCOUNTABILITY**
Where ownership, decision rights and truth break down between teams.

D — **DISCERNMENT**
Root causes, recurring friction and the risks quietly compounding.

A — **ADAPTATION**
How you learn and adjust, including how people and AI work together.

R — **RESULTS**
The highest-value fixes, turned into measurable action.

WHAT IT BUILDS **Structural Autonomy:** truth, ownership and judgment architected into how the organization runs. Think murmuration: thousands of starlings turning as one on shared logic, with no single senior leader and no all-hands meeting required.

Not another culture campaign. Not a quick technology fix. Not another catchy taxonomy.

It turns the rebel from a personality trait into a system function.

ADVANCE PRAISE

// WHAT LEADERS ARE SAYING

> *Fred Halperin is on the right track... I believe cultures that are focused on speaking 'truth to power' in a constructive fashion that is faster, better, and more complete than the competition will always prevail. Fred's insights are spot on.*
>
> **— DOUGLAS R. CONANT**
> FOUNDER OF CONANT LEADERSHIP; FORMER PRESIDENT, NABISCO FOODS; FORMER PRESIDENT & CEO, CAMPBELL SOUP COMPANY

> *Most organizations do not suffer from a shortage of smart people. They suffer from systems that make it difficult for those people to challenge assumptions, share what they see, and act on it. Rebel OS addresses that problem directly. One of the best books I've read.*
>
> **KAREN FREEMAN**
> Chief Product Officer, DCMi Insights; Co-Author of The Activator Advantage

> *Every leader sprinting toward AI should read this first: augmentation doesn't fix a broken culture, it multiplies it. Rebel OS is the missing chapter on human infrastructure for the Age of AI.*
>
> **PAUL TORREY**
> CEO & Strategic Advisor to Industry Leaders, Torrey Associates LLC; Former AWS, Google Cloud & Deloitte Executive

> *...We need teams that speak truth, voice dissent, and confront reality, and Rebel OS provides an experience-tested roadmap for achieving this.*
>
> **JEFF MAURONE**
> Partner & COO, Technology, Citadel Securities

> *Rebel OS is a must-read for leaders ready to move beyond tweaking culture and start reconstructing how work actually gets done.*
>
> **DR. JAKE TUBER**
> Managing Principal, Ticonderoga Advisory; Author of The Deliberate Manager

MEET THE AUTHOR

// FRED T. HALPERIN



FOUNDER, REBEL OS GROUP
AUTHOR, REBEL OS

Fred T. Halperin is a strategic advisor, author, and speaker with more than forty years of practitioner experience operating deep inside the machinery of organizations. His career spans senior consulting leadership, an Executive Director role in the Office of the CIO at Johnson & Johnson, startup Chief Technology Officer, Chief Commercial Officer, and enterprise transformation advisor — with particular depth in life sciences and related industries.

Across his forty years, he kept seeing the same pattern: capable people sitting on what they knew. He founded Rebel OS Group to fix the human operating system underneath it. His first book, Rebel OS, publishes in January 2027. He lives in New Jersey.

THE STORY BEHIND THE BOOK

For most of his career, Fred was the person in the room who asked the hard question and told the truth when it was unwelcome. He was often told, “Fred, just play the game.”

Over forty years he watched the same meeting play out in company after company: false alignment, all-green status reports, and the long pause after “Any concerns?” He named it the Poker Face Room. The truth was rarely missing. It just never reached the person who could act on it.

Rebel OS is his answer. It doesn’t ask people to be braver. It builds truth-telling into how the organization works, so speaking up becomes the expected norm. The excerpt that follows tells how it began.

FAST FACTS

- 40+ years inside organizations as consultant, operator and advisor
- Former Executive Director, Office of the CIO, Johnson & Johnson
- Former startup CTO and Chief Commercial Officer
- Founder and Managing Partner, Rebel OS Group
- Particular depth in life sciences; works across industries
- Writes the newsletter The Human Operating System Underneath AI

SHORT BIO FOR INTRODUCTIONS

Fred T. Halperin, founder of Rebel OS Group, is a 40-year strategic advisor and “business rebel” known for truth-telling candor and executive judgment. In Rebel OS, he shows leaders how to build resilient, AI-ready teams that perform under pressure.

EXCERPT

// FROM THE INTRODUCTION *Where the rebel got its name*

A stalled client deliverable, a long week inside a Fortune 100 company and a 1997 Steve Jobs speech. Here is how Rebel OS begins.

It was late on a Friday night in November 2014. I was deep in a client deliverable for a large functional team within a Fortune 100 life sciences company that was highly matrixed and very political. It was the type of place where all the top consulting companies had their own parking spaces. My point-person led a team that was struggling with a changing workforce, a misunderstood operating model, and underappreciated services. Dense and high-stakes, the draft document staring at me from my computer screen was meant to clarify direction for a nine-person leadership team, comprised of operating and support functions that felt stuck but couldn't quite admit it. My analysis of the situation was going to come as a shock, because the data was revealing a different—and deeper—challenge than they were anticipating. There would definitely be pushback. I needed to be precise in my delivery and thorough in my preparation, but I kept circling back to the same words: status quo, transparency, alignment, accountability—all accurate, but hollow. At a deeper level, I was wrestling with something more difficult to pinpoint—the quiet cost of comfort. I was in charge of delivering the wake-up call, and it felt massive, even downright rebellious. The weight of it sat in my tightening shoulders.

As a strategic advisor, you're often hired to challenge the status quo. But there's a sort of zombie-like state that settles over people when they are repeatedly encouraged not to see what's right in front of them. And it was in this type of daunting environment that I was being asked to compel change. As I stared at my computer screen, struggling to find the right words after a long, exhausting week, I realized this was my new norm. For years, I'd been walking into more and more executive and project team conference rooms where the air was heavy with unspoken truths. I'd been listening to too many leaders debating strategy and execution problems that were really architecture problems. The breakdown wasn't only happening inside teams—it was happening between them. The mechanism connecting the work was weak, so execution kept falling apart at the seams. In response, I'd build meaningful team execution playbooks that were praised in offsites only to see them diluted by senior leaders weeks later. I kept seeing bold ideas sanded down into consensus, and dissent softened into suggestion. Longer-term strategies were continuously undermined by short-term market pressures. Team ambition was regularly compromised by the urgency of short-term expectations.

People were saying “I,” “me,” and “my” much more often, instead of “we,” “our,” and “us.” More frequently, it seemed, companies were willing to ignore the truth right in front of them in order to preserve a failing status quo. It was disheartening.

I had mastered the necessary choreography to “win” in this delusive world. I knew when to push, when to retreat, and when to wait for the inevitable moment when a company realized the real problem wasn’t its “plan.” But this unnatural and exhausting dance had taken a toll on me. At all levels, I was told, “You’ve got to learn how to play the game better.” A classic line, usually delivered by people deeply committed to preserving their installed reality. I was tired of hearing it. I was tired of swallowing the truth in the name of feigned “alignment.” Trying to surface the facts and preserve my reputation as a “team player” felt like walking a tightrope every day. I was weary from watching leaders choose comfort over clarity and then ask me to help “drive execution,” as if it were a lever that could be pulled without touching truth. I wasn’t burned out; I was just over it—the politics, the fake consensus, and all the prep for the team meetings where everyone was technically right but strategically mistaken. I was witnessing too much performance theater disguised as leadership.

I was performing a function the system didn’t have.
I was forcing truth into rooms designed to avoid it.

Desperate to find an example of what truth could unleash when allowed in the room, I began searching for a case study to prove that the spell of complacency could be broken and unlock true potential. I closed out of my document and typed, “Examples of transformational team leadership” into my search browser. Nothing interesting popped up, so I stopped to consider my search term. I’d always had a rebellious streak, and felt like the message I was about to deliver fit this category. So, I typed “rebellious.” And that’s when I saw it, a link to a YouTube video of Steve Jobs’ iconic 1997 “Think Different” campaign speech. Although I had admired the company since buying the first iPhone when it was announced in 2007, I’d never watched the “Think Different” speech before. I clicked, “play.”

Right from the start, his talk was different. Jobs, who had co-founded Apple but left in 1985 after losing a boardroom power struggle, was back—and he had a lot to say. He’d watched Apple’s decline through the early 1990s, as it suffered from product fragmentation, poor management, and a failure to compete with cheaper, lower-cost

Windows PCs. The company was bleeding money when the "Think Different" campaign speech was delivered less than two weeks after his official return to leadership in September 1997. And as he strode quietly into a small internal theater at Apple headquarters wearing a simple black turtleneck and shorts, his words were calm, even casual—but, boy, did they pack a punch:

> *I think Apple has pockets of greatness, but in some ways has drifted away from doing the basics really well. So, ...[w]e looked at the product roadmap going out for a few years and we said, 'A lot of this doesn't make sense, and there's way too much stuff, and there's not enough focus. So, we actually got rid of 70 percent of the stuff on the product roadmap. I mean I couldn't even figure out the damn product line after a few weeks.... I kept saying, 'What is this model? How does this fit?' And then I started talking to customers and they couldn't figure it out either.*

Jobs went on to talk straight about other functional problems—distribution, marketing, and the Apple brand as a whole. It was so refreshing, even inspiring, to hear a leader speak so candidly about a company's true state of affairs. He didn't cushion the blow. He didn't perform around it. As I watched, a sleeper cell awoke in my brain. I'd been in so many rooms where leaders faced their versions of Apple's situation and had chosen to circle reality as if it were radioactive. Not Jobs. He wasn't just giving a talk; he was breaking a spell.

Jobs continued, evangelizing that Apple needed to return to its core values. "[W]e believe that people with passion can change the world for the better." I was mesmerized. Finally, here was a leader speaking my language! Then, Jobs introduced the campaign, "honoring the people who think different and who move this world forward." The room grew silent as he asked his team to roll the ad and black-and-white footage of Albert Einstein smoking a pipe appeared on the screen as the narrator spoke these words:

> *Here's to the crazy ones. The misfits. The rebels. The troublemakers. The round pegs in the square holes. The ones who see things differently. They're not fond of rules. And they have no respect for the status quo. You can quote them, disagree with them, glorify or vilify them. About the only thing you can't do is ignore them. Because they change things. They push the human race forward. And while some may see them as the crazy ones, we see genius. Because the people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world are the ones who do.*

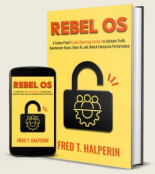
As I listened to these soul-stirring words and stared at the grainy footage on my laptop, I experienced a profound personal shift. Not only had I found my case study, I'd also found my mantra. I knew these people, these rebels. I'd worked with them and watched

them labeled as “difficult” in polite performance reviews. I’d seen them sidelined because they refused to nod along with ideas that wouldn’t work. I’d watched them either conform or leave. And if I was being honest with myself, I’d always been one of them. I just could never put my finger on the right term. I’d been ruffling feathers and making people uncomfortable since elementary school. It had gotten me in trouble at times and led to personal regrets. But watching Jobs speak about rebels with reverence rather than resistance changed everything. I wasn’t just a strategist, advisor, or consultant. I was performing a function the system didn’t have. I was forcing truth into rooms designed to avoid it. I was asking crucial questions everyone was afraid to answer and challenging plans everyone was passively embracing. I just had never known what to call my approach to work and life—until I watched Steve Jobs’s speech. I had always operated differently—and now I was listening to someone I admired say that was fine, even valuable. On that chilly Friday night in November 2014, I proudly called myself a rebel for the first time.

As for a case study demonstrating the value truth can create when it’s embraced rather than feared, well, Apple during Steve Jobs’s second term was perfect! After the “Think Different” campaign launched and Jobs instituted other changes, the company successfully resurrected its brand image and drove a massive increase in market capitalization from $1.6 billion to $15.6 billion in only two years! Profitability was restored, the iMac G3 was launched, and Apple’s “cool,” creative, and rebellious brand identity set the stage for the extremely popular iPod and iPhone.

After watching the speech a few more times, I returned to work on my presentation. It was well after midnight, but I was energized by my new rebel state of mind. My fingers raced across the keyboard. Steve Jobs had given me the courage to help my clients face the truth so their companies and colleagues could experience a better future. I felt inspired and empowered. “Just be yourself, you rebel. Just be yourself,” I said out loud all alone in my office. And I would never look back.

Excerpted from the Introduction to ***Rebel OS*** by Fred T. Halperin. Rebel OS Publishing, January 2027.



KEEP READING

Rebel OS *publishes January 2027*

Hardcover · Paperback · eBook · Audio

REBEL-OS-GROUP.COM

FOR MEDIA, PODCASTS & EVENTS

// STORY ANGLES *Conversations Fred is ready to have*

01 The architecture problem

You don't have a talent problem. You have an architecture problem. Why hiring stars and training leaders won't fix a room where truth can't travel.

02 AI won't fix your culture. It will amplify it.

Organizations rushing to AI are layering it onto human operating systems nobody has tested. The result isn't smarter. It's more efficiently wrong.

03 Inside the Poker Face Room

Why the most dangerous meetings are the ones that go too smoothly, and what that pause after "Any concerns?" is really telling leaders.

04 Heroics aren't sustainable or scalable

When an organization depends on a few brave people to speak up, that's a red flag, not a strength. Courage doesn't scale. Systems do.

05 The new scoreboard

Stop measuring how rarely things go wrong. Start measuring catch-speed and resolution-speed: how fast a problem gets named, and how fast it reaches a decision.

06 From "just play the game" to Rebel OS

Fred's own story: forty years as the person asking the hard question, and why he decided to turn that instinct into a system any team can build.

SUGGESTED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is a "human operating system," and why does every organization already have one?
2. Why do you say most companies have a truth problem rather than a strategy problem?
3. What happens when AI is plugged into a team where people don't speak up?
4. What is the Poker Face Room, and how can a leader tell if they're running one?
5. If courage doesn't scale, what should leaders build instead?
6. Where should a leader start on Monday morning? What does one team, one decision look like?
7. How is Rebel OS different from the work on psychological safety?
8. What does a healthy organization look like when truth moves freely?

BRING REBEL OS INSIDE

// WHO SHOULD READ IT FIRST

- Board Members and CEOs
- CHROs and CPOs
- Chief Transformation and Strategy Officers
- Chief AI, Digital, Technology and Information Officers
- Business Function and Support Leadership
- PE/Portfolio Operating Partners
- Consultants, Advisors and Change Practitioners

// BRING IT INSIDE

Built for leadership cohorts, AI-readiness programs, executive team sessions and enterprise book clubs. Bulk and custom editions available.

Then go further. Through Rebel OS Group: keynotes, executive sessions, the RADAR Check™, Human-AI Team Design™ and Rebel-in-Residence™.

// BOOK DETAILS

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