

# THE MOBIUS STRIP

A NEWSLETTER FOR LEADERSHIP PROFESSIONALS

## Expressive Arts and Innovation

A NOTE FROM AMY

IN THIS ISSUE

*Dear friends:*

I am pleased to offer the next in our series of newsletters focused on a specific aspect of the discipline of transformational leadership. Our last issue focused on Somatic Leadership and the importance of embodiment in driving organizational health. This issue focuses on Leadership and the Arts with contributions by many of our expressive arts team members.

Mobius is part of a vanguard of leadership development firms that elects to introduce highly experiential methodologies into its leadership development curriculum. We do this because we want to be working with leaders not just on skill development but at the level of character development or what could be called "beingness." When you reach people and can unlock their most creative thinking and ability to innovate, or reconnect them to meaning and purpose, or help them to move past long held habits and mindsets that are barriers to high performance, then you are even more likely to have lasting and wide business impact.

In this issue of the Mobius Strip we feature some members of our expressive arts faculty. We have also included articles on work by some of our affiliate organizations such as Moving Performance, a firm led by founder Ben Hines who brings leaders into active rehearsals of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and interviews the conductor and musicians on many relevant leadership themes such as team work, presence, and optimal performance. I've had the pleasure of including Ben's offering in leadership programs I am helping to lead and it always touches and inspires

participants to greater heights in their own leadership.

Our leadership programs also include a range of expressive arts depending on the programs' purpose, context and the learning environment. We have brought in expressive arts faculty who work with theatre exercises to evolve leadership presence; movement and dance and voice coaching to help with a leaders' self-expression and ability to influence and enroll others, and other modalities such as martial arts, drumming, yoga, Nia, mask making, and pantomime. All of this brings a program alive creating a vitality and spontaneity with participants learning together at the edge. It also helps integrate left brain knowledge with right brain intuition and creativity.

Articles in this issue include pieces by our Director of Presentation and Presence, the Actress and Director Anne Gottlieb and by our dear friend pianist and leadership expert Michael Jones. We have an excerpt of Michael's wonderful book *Artful Leadership* included here as well.

Our expressive arts faculty are selected for their intellectual solidity in linking the more expressive elements of our program with the business focus and the ongoing application to the organizational imperative underneath the program. More and more though we find that clients understand the importance of cultivating mindfulness, creativity, and collaborative skills for helping leaders to push organizational excellence and breakthrough thinking with their teams.

This Summer has been a period of slowing down for me personally and its reminded me of the close connection between an inner

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Chief Executive Officer

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### Special Section on Arts & Leadership featuring:

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Ben Hines, Frank J. Barrett,  
Anne Gottlieb, Carl Stormer,  
Jerry McGrath

### Professional Development Opportunities Fall 2012



**MOBIUS**  
EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP



Amy and Erica Fox and Mobius Coach Iris Bagwell and her daughter, Rory meet President Obama.

state of relaxation and intention and an outer state of full on execution and activity. As I moved from a restorative vacation back into action preparing our Fall client engagements I was struck by how much better my quality of attention and resilience was for plowing through a long to do list. I had a hysterical exchange with a colleague in Amsterdam when I sent out my "out of office alert" ahead of my vacation alerting colleagues and clients that all pending matters should be sent to me right away because I was headed away for two weeks. He noted how "North American" this was of me because in Amsterdam absolutely everyone takes four weeks off, and no one feels the need either to announce it or apologize for it. I think the Europeans are on to something I'd like to embrace.

Practitioners and clients wishing to get more involved as practitioners in our Community of Practice should please join us on Linked in at <http://www.linkedin.com/company/mobius-executive-leadership> Starting shortly we will be posting articles, sharing best practices, and providing copies of our newsletters through this website. We welcome you to get involved and to submit comments, articles or other resources as well.

Finally, in this issue you will also find some rich book excerpts including recent writing by Mobius coaches Joe Weston, Lawler Kang, Joel Garfinkle and Mobius Senior Expert Dr. Michael Stadter. Dr. Stadter's article is a bit of a departure for us as its adapted from a text written for therapists but we thought its insights were important for transformational practitioners. Longer versions of relevant chapters on working with trauma and disassociation will be found on the Mobius practitioner portal when it launches in January 2013.

We also share excerpts from new books by our colleagues Adam Kahane of Reos Partners and Andrew Davis of Tipping Point, Boris Groysberg of Harvard Business School and Fast Company's Michael Slind; and Mark De Rond, as well as the new offering by our dear friends Ben Benjamim, Amy Yeager and Anita Simon that we thought would be of interest. Finally, in the special section on Leadership and the Arts you will also find pieces from our friends at the Banff Leadership Center., Jazz Code and an excerpt from a new book called *Yes to the Mess*. We are pleased to share them with you.

To the left you will find a wonderful picture of several of us at the Boston event for the Campaign to Re-elect the President. Erica and I are joined in our photograph with President Obama by Mobius Coach Iris Bagwell and her daughter Rory. It was a thrilling afternoon and we are grateful to have been included in this way. Thanks as well to our friend Tom Fitzsimmons who took the photo for us.

We greatly look forward to hearing back from everyone on Linked In in the near term and on the portal in the New Year.

Warmest best,

A handwritten signature in cursive that reads "Amy Elizabeth Fox".

Amy

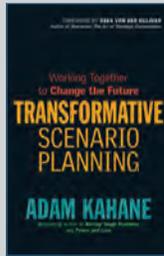
# Transformative Scenario Planning: Working Together to Change the Future

by Adam Kahane

Each of us must choose, in each situation, how we will approach the future. Sometimes we choose to accept what is happening around us and try to adapt ourselves to it. Other times we choose to challenge what is happening and try to change it. This is the choice that Reinhold Niebuhr pointed to in his much-loved maxim: “Lord grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.”

If we choose to try to change the future, then we must choose how. More often than not, we choose to push. We have an idea of the way we think things ought to be, and we marshal our resources—arguments, authority, supporters, money, weapons—to try to make it so. But often when we push, others push back, and we end up frustrated, exhausted, and stuck. Over and over we encounter such stuck situations, in all kinds of social systems: families, teams, communities, organizations, nations.

This book is for people who have chosen to try to change the future and have realized that they cannot do so unilaterally. They may be trying to change the future of their city or their country or the world; they may be focusing on health or education or the economy or the environment; they may be acting from a position in business or government or civil society. This book is for these people, who are looking for a way to work together—not only with friends and colleagues but also with strangers and opponents—and so to be able to get unstuck and move forward and



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facilitator of processes through which business, government, and civil society leaders can work together to address their most complex challenges. He is also the author of *Solving Tough Problems: An Open Way of Talking, Listening, and Creating New Realities* and *Power and Love: A Theory and Practice of Social Change*.

create change.

I first got a glimpse of such a new way of working with the future twenty years ago, during the transition away from apartheid in South Africa. I was unexpectedly plunged into working with a team of leaders from all parts of South African society—black and white, left and right, opposition and establishment—who were trying to construct a better future for their country. I saw, in what they were doing and how they were doing it, a brief and clear image of this new way—like a nighttime landscape momentarily illuminated by a flash of lightning. I knew that I had seen something important, but I didn't quite know what it was or where it had come from or how it worked. I have spent the past twenty years working on understanding what I saw. This book reports what I have learned.

Over these past two decades, my colleagues and I have worked with hundreds of teams of people who are working together to change the fu-

ture. These teams have tackled some of the most important and difficult challenges of our time: health care, economic development, child nutrition, judicial reform, social inclusion, food security, and climate change, across the Americas, Europe, the Middle East, Africa, Asia, and Australia. They have included politicians, peasants, activists, artists, academics, businesspeople, trade unionists, civil servants, and leaders of community, youth, indigenous, and religious organizations. Some of these teams have been local and others global; some have worked together for days and others for years; some have succeeded in changing their situation and others have failed.

Through these experiences, I have learned that it is possible for people who are in a situation they want to change—people who need each other in order to get unstuck and move forward but who don't understand or agree with or trust one another—to work together cooperatively and creatively to effect that change. And I

have learned the what and why and how of this approach.

My colleagues and I call this new way of working *transformative scenario planning*. Its purpose is to enable those of us who are trying to change the future collaboratively to *transform*, rather than adapt to, the situation we are part of. It involves a transformation of the situation—like a caterpillar into a butterfly—rather than only an incremental or temporary change. We bring this about through transforming our own thoughts and actions and our relationships with others. Trans-

formative scenario planning centers on constructing *scenarios* of possible futures for our situation, but it takes the well-established adaptive scenario planning methodology and turns it on its head—so that we construct scenarios not only to understand the future but also to influence it. And it involves *planning*, not in the sense of writing down and following a plan, but in the sense of engaging in a disciplined process of thinking ahead together and then altering our actions accordingly.

Transformative scenario planning offers us a new way to work together

to change the future. This new way is simple, but it is not easy or straightforward or guaranteed. It requires learning how to make a specific series of steps, but also, perhaps more important, making a profound and subtle shift in how we approach one another and the situations of which we are part. Above all, it requires practicing: learning by doing. This book outlines this new way and invites you into the doing. ■

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Photography by Mitch Davidowitz

*This isn't some passing fad sweeping middle management, or a pilot programme dreamed up by human resources. For seven years now, a growing number of General Mills workers have been practising meditation, yoga and so-called "mindfulness" in the workplace. And what began as a side project by one executive has transformed the culture of a Fortune 200 multinational.*

*"It's about training our minds to be more focused, to see with clarity, to have spaciousness for creativity and to feel connected," says Janice Marturano, General Mills' deputy general counsel, who founded the programme. "That compassion to ourselves, to everyone around us – our colleagues, customers – that's what the training of mindfulness is really about."*

*The General Mills initiative is at the vanguard of a movement that is quietly reshaping certain corners of the corporate world. With meditation, yoga and "mindfulness," the foundational tenets of Buddhism, Hinduism and other pan-Asian philosophies have infiltrated the upper echelons of some of the biggest companies on earth.*

*Financial Times Summer 2012*

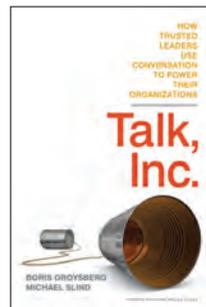
# Talk, Inc.

by Boris Groysberg of Harvard Business School and Michael Slind of Fast Company

LONG AGO, power within organizations emanated from the commands of top executives. Those leaders drove organizational performance by devising strategic objectives, which they translated into directives that passed down through a hierarchy before reaching employees, whose job was merely to take orders and to act on those orders. Today, that model of organizational life has essentially fallen apart. At more and more companies in more and more industries, leaders recognize that driving their company in a traditional command-and-control manner doesn't work anymore. To an ever-increasing degree, people—and the energies and capabilities that lie inside them—are the ultimate source of optimal performance and sustainable competitive advantage. Yet the kind of value that people now deliver to an organization isn't the kind of value that leaders can leverage simply by issuing orders from the executive suite. In an environment where employees have that much power to determine the success or failure of an organization, the ability of leaders to command grows weak and their sense of control grows weaker still.

For most leaders, that story will have considerable resonance. Even those who retain a firm grip on the main levers of activity within their organization will sense, deep down, that their ability to harness the creative and operational energy of their people has grown more tenuous over the years. Yet, as familiar as the loss-of-command story has become, leaders continue to grapple with the

question of where that story ends—or, more pertinently, the question of what comes next. Now that the model of driving a company from its commanding heights has become obsolete, what will take its place? How, in this new era, should leaders seek to power their organization?



In *Talk, Inc.*, we argue that a new source of organizational power has come to the fore. Our term for that power source is organizational conversation. Instead of handing down commands or imposing formal controls, many leaders today are interacting with their workforce in ways that call to mind an ordinary conversation between two people. What's more, they are fostering and facilitating conversation-like practices throughout their company—practices that enable a company to achieve higher degrees of trust, improved operational efficiency, greater motivation and commitment among employees, and better coordination between top-level strategy and frontline execution. The power of organizational conversation isn't the kind of power that manifests itself as control over a person or a process. Rather, it's the kind of power that makes a person or a process go. It's energy, in other words. It's fuel. In organizational terms, conversation is what keeps the engine of value creation firing on all cylinders.

It's a matter of *scale*. In a small company, leaders remain close to employees—close not just in terms of space, but also in terms of spirit—and employees trust them as a result.

It's a matter of *structure*. In a small

company, physical proximity and an open culture allow people to share key insights and crucial data, and information moves freely and efficiently in multiple directions.

It's a matter of *participation*. In a small company, cumbersome divisions of labor are rare, and a wide range of employees are able to play a part in accomplishing major tasks.

It's a matter of *focus*. In a small company, all employees enjoy a clear line of sight on the guiding plans and priorities that their leaders have developed.

Look closely at those elements of small-company success, and you'll note that they correspond to elements of a good person-to-person conversation. When two people talk with each other, and when that talk is at its most robust, the scale of their conversation is typically small and, indeed, intimate; the structure of their conversation is dynamic and interactive; their participation in the conversation is equal and inclusive; and their approach to the conversation is focused and intentional. Those qualities (as we will explain more fully in a moment) also correspond to the defining elements of organizational conversation.

Through conversation, we contend, a big or growing organization can retain or recapture much of the nimbleness, the cohesiveness, and the raw, productive energy of a well-oiled small company. That, at bottom, is the core promise of this book—that leaders, drawing upon the ideas and practices that we present in the pages that follow, can tap into this new form of organizational power.

Where organizational conversation flourishes, it involves up to four

elements. These elements reflect the essential attributes of interpersonal conversation, and likewise they reflect the classic distinguishing features of a high-flying small company. In developing our model of organizational conversation, we have attached to each element a word that begins with the letter I.

**Intimacy:** Conversation between two people both requires and enables its participants to stay close to one another, figuratively as well as literally. Only through intimacy of that kind can they achieve a true meeting of minds. In organizational conversation, similarly, leaders reduce the distance—institutional as well as spatial—that would normally separate them from their employees. They do so by cultivating the art of listening to people at all levels of their organization, and by learning to talk with those people in ways that are personal, honest, and authentic. Conversational intimacy equips leaders to manage change within their company, and it helps them to solidify buy-in among employees for new strategic initiatives. In short, it allows them to build trust through talk.

**Interactivity:** Talk is a two-way affair—an exchange of comments and questions, of musings and mutter-

ings. The sound of one person talking, whatever else it may be, is not a conversation. Following that same logic, organizational conversation replaces the traditional one-way structure of corporate communication with a dynamic process in which leaders talk with employees and not just to them. Changes in the technology of communication, especially those that incorporate emerging forms of social media, support that shift. Equally important, though, is the emergence of cultural norms that favor dialogue over monologue. The benefits that accrue from conversational interactivity include lower transaction costs, an easing of the pressure caused by information overload, and an increase in employees' ability to respond readily to customer needs.

**Inclusion:** At its best, interpersonal conversation is an equal-opportunity proposition. It invites all participants to put their own ideas, and indeed their heart and soul, into the conversational mix. Organizational conversation, by the same token, calls upon employees to participate eagerly in the work of generating the content through which a company tells its story, both internally and externally. People in frontline and midlevel posts act as semiofficial company bloggers, for example, or as

trained brand ambassadors. By empowering employees to communicate in that way, leaders relinquish much of the control that they formerly exerted over organizational messaging. But they gain a great deal in return. Through conversational inclusion, leaders are able to boost employee engagement, to spur innovation and creativity, and to improve the branding and reputation of their organization.

**Intentionality:** Even in the most casual two-person chat, the two people in question will each have some sense of where they want the conversation to go. Talk that's truly rewarding is never truly "idle." So it is with organizational conversation, which puts a premium on developing and following an agenda that aligns with the strategic objectives of a company. Over time, the many voices that contribute to conversation within an organization must converge in a single vision for that organization—a single understanding of its mission in the world and its place in the marketplace. While the elements of intimacy, interactivity, and inclusion serve to open up that conversation, the element of intentionality serves to "close the loop" on it. Among the outcomes that conversational intentionality helps to promote are a keen focus on driving

When we look inside with a clear, steady focus, the mind we see is transparent, spacious, and open. It feels like something's there, but when we look for it, there's no "thing" we can find. Our thoughts and emotions are vivid, yet we can't put our hands on them. They melt away as soon as we notice them. Even sights and sounds, which seem to be real, distinct entities, evade our grasp when we search for their true identity. When we recognize the flowing, open and spacious quality of all our experiences, even for a moment, that's the emptiness side of the wisdom of emptiness.

When we look at our mind, however, we see that it's not just spacious. There's luminous, clear, and creative energy that's the source of compassion and joy. There is also a quality of wakefulness, of all-encompassing awareness. This is the wisdom side of the wisdom of emptiness.

*I Want to Be Wise* by Dzogchen Ponlop Rinpoche from July 2012 Shambhala Sun

business value and a more effective approach to strategic alignment.

Our findings also revealed that the shift from corporate communication to organizational conversation has occurred because of several long-term changes that have affected the business world profoundly.

First, there is economic change. As service industries become more economically significant than manufacturing industries, and as knowledge work supplants other kinds of labor, the need for sophisticated ways to process and share information grows more acute.

Second, there is organizational change. As companies become flatter and less hierarchical in structure, and as frontline employees become more pivotally involved in value-creating work, lateral and bottomup communication comes to be no less important than top-down communication.

Third, there is global change. As workforces become more diverse and more widely dispersed, the challenge of navigating across lines of cultural and geographic division entails modes of interaction that are fluid and complex.

Fourth, there is generational change. As millennials and other younger workers gain a foothold in organizations, they bring an expectation that peers and authority figures alike will communicate with them in a dynamic, two-way fashion.

Fifth, there is technological change. As digital networks make instant connectivity the norm of business life, and as social media platforms grow more powerful and more ubiquitous, a reliance on older, less conversational channels of organizational communication ceases to be tenable.

Finally, there is the brute fact that all of these changes have steeply accelerated the pace at which business gets

done today. As the time available for decision making becomes shorter and shorter, a commitment to engaging employees in that process becomes a make-or-break imperative for leaders.

There is a conversation that takes place within every company—whether company leaders know it or not, and whether they like it or not. At the nearest water cooler or at the virtual rumor mill, employees chat about the state of their organization, and that chatter has a bearing on the company's operational performance. Is the company doing well? Does it treat its people well? Is it heading in the right direction? What people say when they talk about those issues, and how they say it, will affect the capacity of leaders to drive their organization forward. Smart leaders understand that they can't avoid that conversation for very long. Nor can they fully control it. But if they engage with it in the right way, they have the potential to unleash organizational energy of a sort that no leader could ever command.

### From the Chapter on Intimacy

In an organizational context, conversational intimacy is a function of leadership. It refers to a mode of human relations in which those with decision-making authority seek and earn the trust (and hence the careful attention) of those who work under that authority. It thrives when the leaders of a company succeed in getting close to employees—when senior executives, in particular, shrink the gaps that would otherwise separate them from employees. Sometimes those gaps are, indeed, spatial. (As we'll see, one aspect of effective conversational leadership involves getting close to employees in a straightforwardly literal way.) More profound than any challenge caused by physical distance, however, are

the institutional and psychological gaps that typically open up between leaders and employees in organizations that feature a sharply delineated hierarchy. Even in a small company, the functional distance between top executives and lower-level employees can grow quite large quite fast. To counteract that tendency, many leaders today have begun to change the way that conversation unfolds between the “up” and “down” parts of their organization.

The four elements of organizational conversation that we describe in this book are all salient to our model of high-performance internal communication. Without a commitment by top executives to making the distance between themselves and their employees as narrow as possible, neither they nor those employees will be able to tap the full power of organizational conversation.

Over the past few decades, as we noted in our introduction, the top-down approach to organizational management has yielded to an approach that encourages a more complex and fluid interaction between the upper and lower levels of an organization. Companies and their leaders have gravitated toward a managerial system that's less about command and control than it is about collaboration and coordination—less about issuing and taking orders than about asking and answering questions. Communication has become less top-down in structure and more bottom-up, less corporate in tone and more casual. For leaders, commanding assent and being “right” matter less than talking straight and listening well. In relating to employees, they adopt a stance that has less to do with projecting an aura of authority than it does with carving out opportunities for dialogue. Forging a



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relationship with employees, in fact, has become a prominent goal of organizational communication.



**MICHAEL SLIND** is a writer, editor, and communication consultant. He served as managing editor and as a senior editor at Fast Company magazine. During his tenure as managing editor, Fast Company won a National Magazine Award for general excellence. More recently, he has written case studies on organizational strategy at Harvard Business School.

Where there is no trust, there can be no intimacy. And for all practical purposes, the reverse is true as well. No one will dive into a heartfelt exchange of views with someone who seems to have a hidden agenda or a hostile manner, and any discussion that does unfold between two people will be rewarding and substantive only to the extent that each person can take the other at face value. The need for trust within organizational conversation is no less strong. Indeed, it might well be stronger, since group dynamics and institutional complexity by their very nature increase the risk that cynicism and feelings of alienation will fester among would-be conversational participants. A habit of tuning out whenever executives try to

particularly when senior managers exhibit that quality in dealing with lower-level employees, carries great symbolic weight. It signals a feeling of respect for people of all ranks and roles, a sense of curiosity, even a degree of humility. It tells employees that their views matter within the organization—and that they matter. Yet the habit of listening when rank and file employees take the opportunity to speak carries more tangible benefits as well. By attuning themselves to the contributions that employees make to organizational conversation, leaders gain access to new information and critical insights that might otherwise escape their notice. They learn about what's happening, both for better and for worse, at the front lines of their company.

The art of enhancing organizational trust through “better communication” requires executives to display two key leadership behaviors: an openness to hearing what employees have to say, and a willingness to talk straight about matters that senior leaders often prefer not to talk about. (Those behaviors, not coincidentally, align with the practice of listening to employees and that of speaking with them authentically.) Trust flourishes when it operates like a two-way street. After all, people aren't apt to trust a leader who doesn't trust them enough to let them speak out. Meanwhile, when it comes to addressing topics that might otherwise be off-limits—in particular, topics that involve sensitive financial data—many leaders find that the value of entrusting that data to employees outweighs the risks that come with doing so.

Leaders who take organizational conversation seriously know when to stop talking and to start listening. Few types of behavior enhance conversational intimacy as robustly as the practice of attending to what other people say. Real attentiveness to others' questions and concerns,

particularly when senior managers exhibit that quality in dealing with lower-level employees, carries great symbolic weight. It signals a feeling of respect for people of all ranks and roles, a sense of curiosity, even a degree of humility. It tells employees that their views matter within the organization—and that they matter. Yet the habit of listening when rank and file employees take the opportunity to speak carries more tangible benefits as well. By attuning themselves to the contributions that employees make to organizational conversation, leaders gain access to new information and critical insights that might otherwise escape their notice. They learn about what's happening, both for better and for worse, at the front lines of their company.

The watchword, in this context, is *authenticity*. While that term can too easily devolve into a mere buzzword, behind it there lies an abiding truth: We know authentic leadership, and likewise authentic communication, when we see it. The closer leaders in an organization get to their employees, the harder it becomes for them to hide behind a false corporate front or behind canned corporate language. In a conversation that's “real,” whether it's a chat between friends or a dialogue that extends across an entire company, participants must themselves be real. They must let down their guard, set aside the roles that they otherwise play in life, and talk straight with each other. Leaders in any industry, we contend, can draw upon this element of intimacy to energize their people and to improve the way that information flows up and down their organization. ■

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# Brandscaping: Unleashing the Power of Partnerships

by Andrew Davis, Co-founder of Tipping Point Labs, a Mobius Alliance Partner

**B**randscaping uncovers how unconventional content partnerships lead to unparalleled marketing success. You'll learn how to bring together like-minded brands and undiscovered talent to create content that increases demand and drives sales. Brandscaping is a big, infectious idea designed to be embraced by C-suite executives and implemented by savvy marketing professionals.

## The Paradigm Shifts

Marketing is broken. Social media won't save it. Online ads won't reinvent themselves. Google's acquiring. Public relations is changing. The music industry is reinventing itself. The movie business is struggling. Newspapers are dying. Your email inbox is full. Your mobile device is always on. Your DVR is recording. Your iPad apps are updating. I don't need to tell you that the media business is in flux.

If you're going to survive in a world where everything's changing, you're going to have to think differently. You're going to have to:

- Break down the barriers between corporate communications, product development, branding, and public relations.
- Find new ways to work with your spokespeople, your customer service team, and your account managers.
- Ask more from your media partners and advertising channels.
- Find new ways to interact with your influencers and embrace your loyal customers.
- Explore innovative ways to test, develop, and promote your products.

- Rethink the way you access a valuable audience.
- Find new customers, fans, and followers.
- Increase margins by relying less on promotions, sales, and group discounts to drive revenue.

You need more than new marketing tactics to survive. You need a new marketing philosophy.

## Chapter 6 The Insatiable Demand for Content

### You Need Content, Not Tactics

I know—you're on Facebook, your company's tweeting, you started a Tumblr (on Tumblr), you're pinning crap on Pinterest, you uploaded a video to YouTube, your Flickr feed is neglected, and your SlideShare account lies dormant. Meanwhile, you've got a website that needs updating, a blog you post on as often as possible, and an email newsletter you think could be better. You're running ads in a trade magazine, your Yelp reviews keep coming in, you just met with your PR firm, and you're trying to measure the impact of all of this. Every channel, every platform, each agency, and every media outlet you participate with demands more time, more energy, more money, and more content.

If there's one thing the proliferation of digital media has created, it's an insatiable demand for content from your customers, your friends, your followers, your fans, your subscribers, your leads, and your partners. You need status updates and images, PowerPoint presentations and podcasts, videos, and infographics. You

### About Tippingpoint Labs

For over a decade, the team at Tippingpoint Labs has helped brands like Breville, Putnam Investments and Legg Mason increase demand for the products and services they sell. They've built digital strategies for publishers like Rodale and Meredith. For more than a decade, Drew has led the charge to change the way publishers think and how brands market their products in a digital world. Learn more about Tippingpoint Labs at [www.TippingpointLabs.com](http://www.TippingpointLabs.com)

still need ads and press releases, trade show signs, and direct-mail pieces. You need tweets and LinkedIn answers, not to mention something for the webinar you're hosting this week.

You don't need a bunch of social media tactic tutorials or a day-long session on how to use LinkedIn. You need a new strategy to focus your energies and efforts on driving more revenue. Today, your marketing team creates more and measures less. That's got to change, and it all starts by realizing that you have to make an appointment with your audience. You have to get them to start consuming your content on a regularly scheduled basis.

### Information Overload

Just because you're developing more content doesn't mean your audience is consuming it. The amount of information created in the always-on digital world streams by at an unbelievable pace. Let's go back half a century to look at the content consumption habits of the average consumer.

Figure 1 represents the gap between the information one can consume and the perception of the information available. As you can see, the amount of information accessible by consumers has skyrocketed since 1990. That's because anyone can be a publisher these days, and marketers, news organizations, magazines, television networks and bloggers are all creating more and more content.

Just because consumers have more access to information now than they did in the pre-Internet days doesn't mean they can consume 10, 20, or 30 times more content than they used to. Can they consume more than they did 50 or 60 years ago? Sure, but they certainly can't consume all of it.

In a world where your consumers are bombarded with information from every brand on the planet—not to mention news organizations, family blogs, photo-sharing sites, viral video spam, and, of course, Nigerian royalty sending out offers of riches beyond belief—how do you move from being part of the problem

to being part of the solution? You find the most effective channels for reaching your own particular audience and then you get them to consume your content on a regularly scheduled basis. You build a relationship, through your content, with the customers you're looking to attract.

### The Joe Show

The Advertising Specialty Institute (ASI) has found a way to cut through the clutter of information overload with a weekly video program on YouTube called *The Joe Show*. Those of you in the promotional products business probably already know Joe. For those of you who don't, here's a quick primer.

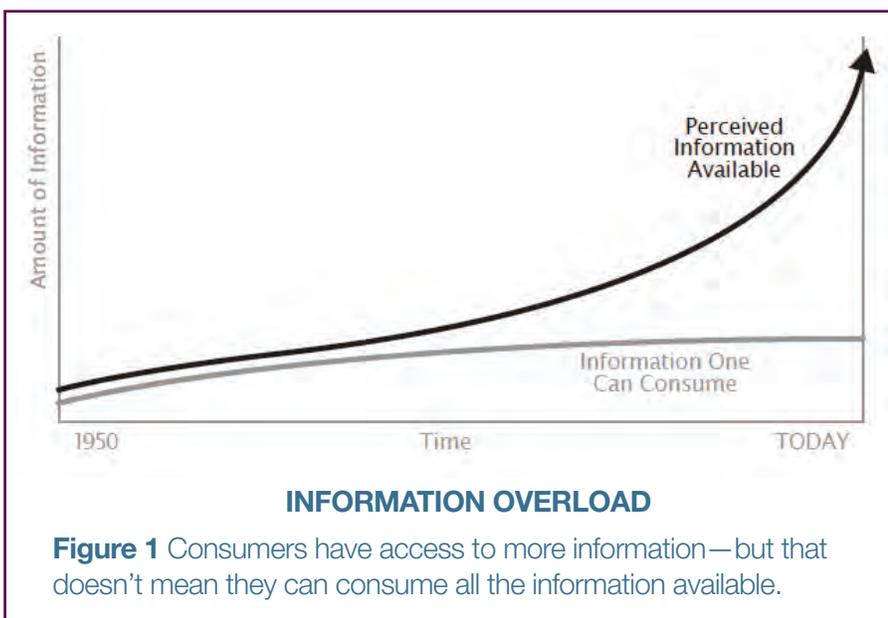
You know those logo pens, party glow sticks, t-shirts, thumb drives, and logo-laden coffee mugs you get at trade shows? Those are called promotional products. If you've ever seen a promotional products catalog, you know that the options and ideas are endless. The promotional products business is an \$18 billion dollar industry and ASI is its trade association. ASI publishes a maga-

zine and hosts industry events, but in 2008 it also began producing *The Joe Show*.

Imagine if your job was to sell promotional products every single day. It's a tough job. You would need some motivation. You would need some inspiration. That's where *The Joe Show* comes in. Each week, without fail, Joe Haley, one of the editors from ASI's trade publication, hosts a three- to four-minute video that showcases new promotional products you could suggest to your clients. Sure, the product ideas are timely and relevant. But more importantly, Joe enthusiastically delivers ideas on how to sell these products to your clients. Joe is fun, genuine, easily excitable, and a real personality. He's a promotional products celebrity. Whether he's showcasing a flashing LED-sequin hat, inflatable clappers, or logo-emblazoned plastic cups, Joe helps fire-up promotional sales staff to pick up the phones and start making calls! (Wanna watch an episode? <http://bit.ly/thejoeshow>)

Joe understands his audience. He knows what they need: motivation to make another call with a new promotional idea to talk about. He's formatted his show to deliver relevant information every week and he's built a loyal following. Joe doesn't expect or need to have millions of YouTube viewers. He has about 1,000 YouTube subscribers and attracts around 500 viewers a week. For those 500 weekly video viewers, Joe is an invaluable resource. His shows increase demand for every product showcased.

Take it from Joe—you don't need a "viral success." You need a high-quality audience that subscribes to your content and looks forward to receiving it on a predictable basis.



## Stop Chasing the Social Stream

Everyone—from your local newspaper and TV stations to your competition in the marketplace—is creating more content in the hopes that your audience will consume it. This is the perceived opportunity: create more crap and my audience will consume more. But the truth is, consumers are actually ignoring more content than ever. This is the paradox of information overload.

If you want to create content that fits into the consumption habits and routines of your audience, you have to stop measuring your success by the *quantity* of consumption, and start creating content that builds long-term relationships with *higher-quality* consumers. The way to deal with your audience's information overload head-on is to frequently deliver high-quality content that's *relevant* to them.

The most successful brands are not creating more content, they're creating *better* content that solidifies relationships and drives demand for their products and services. They're creating content their audience *wants* to consume on a regular basis.

So stop chasing the social stream of content that's flying by at millions of posts per second, and start creating content your audience actually wants to consume.

In a digital world, where it's so easy to create more content, more often, we must resist the urge to pursue the idea that more content means more results. Good brandscapers focus on creating higher-quality content designed to generate higher-quality leads or more loyal customers. They combat the paradox of information overload by building relationships with their audiences that add value to their lives through content. They make their customers look smarter

and live better by becoming part of their content consumption habits and routines.

If you stopped sending your email newsletter out each month, day, or week, would anyone notice? If not, you are contributing to information overload.

### What If...

One of the ways marketers, consultants, brands, and experts are trying to combat the phenomenon of information overload is by curating valuable content for their targeted audience. Essentially, they're sifting through all the relevant content created on the web and contextualizing, even ranking, it on one website to help their audience consume the most valuable information in a more efficient and effective manner.

Suites of tools and even new companies have sprung up to help brands and content publishers manage, suggest, review, and re-post content around niches ranging from environmentally friendly data warehousing and cell-phone towers to NASCAR drivers and travel destinations. But no tool can do what Dave Pell has done.

Dave Pell is a self-proclaimed "curation savant" and "Internet superhero." He's a technology entrepreneur and well-respected writer. But what's most interesting about Dave is how often his email newsletter is opened and consumed.

Dave's daily email, NextDraft, is sent to 10,000 opt-in subscribers. More than 65 percent of his audience opens and consumes his curated content. (To put Dave's numbers in perspective, the average email newsletter open rate in Q1 2012 was 26.2 percent.) So what kind of content could be so compelling that his audience consumes it each and every

day? Dave's links to "The Day's Most Fascinating News."

Each day, Dave spends around three hours scouring 50 or 60 websites looking for the stories he thinks are the most interesting or important. He hones that list to about 10 links, expounds on each story with some witty commentary, and hits the send button. His stories aren't the ones you'll see in The New York Times or hear about on CNN—they're the stories that, in an information-laden world, can rapidly fly under the radar.

"Everybody's so overwhelmed by the incoming tweets and Facebook status updates and never-ending news cycle that they need some way to sift through it and find the good stuff they should be paying attention to," Dave said in a recent interview on PandoDaily.com. Dave's used his ability to filter through that information to build a loyal and valuable audience.

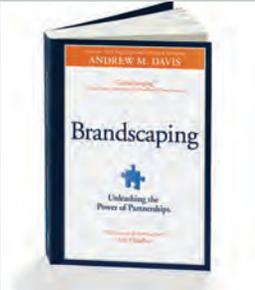
Dave's actually built some of his own curation assistant tools, like Addictomatic.com, to help him on his quest to find the best stuff. Go ahead, sign up for his newsletter. You, too, will find yourself embracing "the day's most fascinating news."

So what's Dave's perspective on cutting through information overload? "We're getting to the point with the amount of information that people are being asked to absorb that it almost feels more like a responsibility or an anvil or a weight that's attached to us. To the extent that someone can say, 'Let me take that weight off you. I'll do the heavy lifting. You can just go about your daily life, and once a day I'll send you a list of stuff you might be interested in.' I think there's a benefit to that." You should too.



**Andrew M. Davis**  
**Author, Co-Founder Tippingpoint Labs**

Andrew Davis has wrangled for The Muppets and written for Charles Kuralt. He's marketed for tiny startups and Fortune 500 brands. His novel combinations of old ideas that leverage new technology have been tapped by the Obama administration and Russian media moguls. *Brandscaping: Unleashing the Power of Partnerships*, his new book, puts his common sense approach to work for you. You can learn more about Brandscaping at <http://www.brandscapingbook.com>



What if you bought into the simple idea that curating the most valuable content from other sources, even your competitors, and sharing it with your leads or prospects increases their trust in your brand and the likelihood they'll engage with your company?

What if you leveraged a content curation tool to find the most under-consumed, but highest-value content for your audience? What if you contextualized and then emailed that content to your leads? What if you

introduced your prospects to content that impacts their business—content that cuts through the clutter of information instead of adding to it? What if you followed Dave Pell's lead and worked to combat information overload?

**Ask Yourself...**

*What can we stop doing now to afford ourselves the opportunity to create something of higher value?*

Go ahead: Make a list of all the marketing-oriented activities

you do on a monthly basis. List everything. Include the whitepapers and the promotional emails. Don't forget the webinars (and all the things that you do to promote them). What about the tweets, the blog posts, the status updates, and the giveaways?

I know you're resourced-strapped, but one of the problems we all face is making the hard decisions to stop doing things that don't add enough value. You really need to stop doing the things that add to information overload. Sure, some people open your emails and some of them actually sign up for your webinars. But to be an effective brandscaper you have to realize that anything you attempt is going to be more effective if you stop doing the things that aren't.

You need to shift your focus to providing higher value content with a predictable frequency to build a valuable audience. So stop doing too many half-assed things and put those resources to work doing one thing better than anyone else on the web.

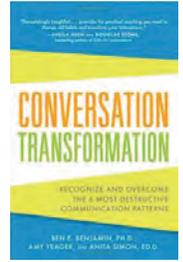
What can you stop doing today so you can start doing something better tomorrow? ■

...Alchemists always worked with particular embodied substances. waiting in slow motion for them to reveal their intelligence. This highly refined embodiment, called subtle body, is a pure manifestation of primal matter. Subtle bodies are embodiments existing between physicality and abstraction, in a real of quasi-physicality, which we have called embodied imagination. Subtle bodies belong to a primal world between body and mind-less physical than matter, more embodied than mind-and their very existence annihilates the mind/body conundrum by adding a third, an in-between primal matter. This in between primal matter is both embodied intelligence and the physical body, partaking of both inspired metaphor and physical anatomy. It was called soul-as-medium, animus media natura, soul stretched painfully between eternal abstraction and decaying flesh.

Robert Bosnak, *Embodiment: Creative Imagination in Medicine, Art and Travel*

# Question Traps

Excerpted and adapted from *Conversation Transformation: Recognize and Overcome the 6 Most Destructive Communication Patterns* by Ben Benjamin, Amy Yeager, and Anita Simon



The only thing more dramatic than Ricardo Garza's rise to success and influence was the speed with which it all seemed to be falling apart. Ricardo had been the pride of the HG Biotech sales division, a superstar with an entrepreneurial spirit, keen intuition, and a wealth of creative ideas. Given his outstanding performance as an account executive in Latin America, he'd been the natural choice to lead the company's push to develop a major new market in Europe. He was quickly promoted to sales director and charged with assembling a team to manage this initiative.

At first, there was every indication that Ricardo would excel in his new role. His reputation and charisma helped him attract an impressive group of talented, independent-minded managers—entrepreneurial mavericks much like himself. These executives respected Ricardo's accomplishments, and also liked him as a person. Some considered him a friend. Together, they should have made an unstoppable team. None of them would have imagined that after just six weeks, more than half the group would be threatening to quit, placing the whole initiative (not to mention Ricardo's career) in jeopardy.

What went wrong? To Ricardo, it seemed clear that the managers he'd hired were unwilling to accept direction from him. It's not that he was looking for blind followers; on the contrary, he'd made it clear to the team that he valued everyone's input and wanted open dialogue. However, he did need some cooperation in order to get things done, and all these people did was argue with him. The managers themselves saw

the situation quite differently. While they still liked Ricardo personally, they experienced him as a dominating and controlling leader. In theory he might want collaboration, but in practice he just pushed through his own agenda.

Knowing that something needed to change, and change quickly, Ricardo called in Claude Marchessault, a leadership coach who'd worked with other executives in the company. When Claude sat in on one of the team's meetings, he saw exactly how they were getting derailed.

For the first fifteen minutes, Ricardo was the only one who spoke. Prior to the meeting, he had drawn up a diagram showing several different market segments, together with strategic business alliances the team was developing in those areas. Now he circled a spot on the diagram, say-

ing, "This is where our main focus needs to be, yes?" After a momentary pause, he went on, "Here's what's happening with these customers..." Ricardo proceeded to give a detailed analysis, stopping periodically to ask, "Isn't that right?" Primarily he addressed the group as a whole, but every so often he'd turn to one individual and ask, "Don't you think?" or "Wouldn't you agree?" Receiving no response, he'd say, "Okay, then" and continue talking.

Only when Ricardo had finished and sat down did the other team members speak up. All of their comments pointed out problems with what their leader had said: "That's what we thought a week ago, but it's not quite accurate." "Sure, you've identified one important point of focus, but there are several oth-



Ben Benjamin is a communications consultant, business coach, writer, and entrepreneur who has been teaching communications skills for more than 30 years. A certified Senior SAVI Trainer, Ben has developed and led communication workshops for a wide range of organizations - including

various business sectors, such as finance, legal, and manufacturing, as well as educational, healthcare, and religious institutions. He also provides advanced facilitation training to help organizations resolve conflicts and hold more effective meetings.

Amy Yeager is a certified Senior SAVI Trainer. She has designed and led SAVI trainings for multinational corporations, schools, healthcare organizations, and other nonprofit institutions, as well as individualized coaching programs and Web-based seminars for ongoing skill development. Also a writer, editor, and information designer, Amy has designed course materials for a variety of training programs, including most of the SAVI manuals currently in use throughout the world.

ers you haven't considered." "What you're saying applies to our traditional alliances, but some of our new partnerships don't fit that mold."

As Claude observed these interactions, it was easy to see why the managers saw Ricardo as domineering, as well as why he saw them as rejecting his leadership. It was also easy to see which dysfunctional communication pattern lay at the root of their problems.

### Leading Questions— A Question and Answer All Rolled Into One

The managers contributed to the communication breakdown by *yes-butting*—giving a token agreement ("That's what we thought" or "Sure") followed by a different, competing idea.

(We discuss yes-butts at length in Chapter 3 of *Conversation Transformation*.) But what was it that triggered this arguing? What was their leader doing?

What Ricardo Garza intended to do was facilitate an open dialogue. Often a good way to do that is to ask questions, and he did ask quite a few. The problem was the types of questions he asked: "Yes?" "Isn't that right?" "Don't you agree?" All of these questions encourage competition, rather than collaboration, because all of them are *leading*.

Most people find leading questions extremely frustrating. When someone uses this type of communication, they're doing two different things at once: giving their own opinion and asking you for a response. The opinion tells you that the "right" or expected response is to agree with their opinion. Suppose your aunt says,

"Aren't these fruitcakes delicious?" Her opinion is "These fruitcakes are delicious," and the expected response is yes. Or maybe your manager says, "It won't be a problem for you to work overtime today, will it?" Clearly the expected response is no.

In addition to the problems they create on the receiving end, leading questions also cause trouble for the people who use them. Typically this type of communication happens unconsciously. In our training and coaching, we hear a lot of people use leading questions, and in almost every case, they have no idea they're doing it. Often they sincerely want an honest response, and they're dismayed to realize that people feel pressured to agree with them. This type of pressure tends to provoke one of two opposing reactions:

Leading questions have two components embedded within them:

- An opinion
- A question

The opinion makes it clear what the "right" response to the question is.

defiance or compliance. The managers in our opening story became defiant, asserting their divergent viewpoints with yes-butts. A compliant response—agreeing inauthentically, because that's what seems to be expected—can be even more problematic.

The compliance elicited by leading questions may be particularly damaging for individuals in leadership positions, who are already at risk of not getting truthful information. As the authors of *Primal Leadership* explain, high-level leaders are often subject to *CEO disease*: "the information vacuum around a leader created when people withhold important (and usually unpleasant) information."<sup>1</sup> Business leaders can be intimidating, simply because of their position and power (including their power over the jobs of their em-

ployees). It's no wonder people are afraid to disappoint or upset them. This same effect can happen in any situation where one person has more power or authority than the other—for example, with a doctor and patient, parent and child, or teacher and student.

Leading questions exacerbate this problem. Imagine that a CEO asks his manufacturing team, "You're all set to meet this customer's deadline, right?" Who wants to be the one to say, "No, we're running three weeks behind"? If nobody has the nerve to give the "wrong" answer, there may be serious negative consequences for the team, the customer, the leader, and the organization as a whole.

The combination of leading questions and compliance masks conflicts, rather than resolving them. In the short term, the communication may seem highly efficient—people reach decisions quickly, without any debates or disagreements. The problem is that if those decisions aren't based on reality, they're not sustainable over the long term. They may also generate resentment, leading to a lack of follow-through or even outright sabotage of supposedly agreed-upon ideas. Leaders who mistake forced agreement for true consensus may get a nasty shock when the plans they pushed through start falling to pieces.

One final drawback with compelling agreement through leading questions is that it discourages innovation and imagination. When you block the free flow of ideas, it's difficult for new, creative solutions to emerge.

Although leading questions are generally counterproductive, in some situations they serve an im-

1. Daniel Goleman, Richard E. Boyatzis, and Annie McKee, *Primal Leadership* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2002), 93. The term *CEO disease* originally appeared in an article in *Business Week*: John A. Byrne, William C. Symonds, and Julia Flynn Siler, "CEO Disease," *Business Week*, April 1, 1991: 52–59.

portant purpose. One clear example is legal cross-examination. Think of the courtroom dialogue in *Perry Mason*, *Law and Order*, and other legal dramas. Hostile witnesses frequently face aggressive barrages of questions, like “Isn’t it true that Mrs. Johnson filed for a restraining order against you? Isn’t it true that you wanted her dead? You went to her house that night, didn’t you?” In this situation, leading questions suit the lawyer’s purpose perfectly. The implied “right” answer is exactly what they want the jury to hear.

### Don’t All Questions Lead?

The short answer is yes. To some extent, all questions lead by pointing in a certain direction. You can think of a question as a funnel, channeling information into a conversation. Different types of questions create different types of funnels. (See the sidebar “Four Types of Questions.”)

The largest possible funnel is a broad question. If you ask your co-worker, “What are your thoughts about the upcoming merger?” you’re defining the topic of discussion (the merger) but you aren’t putting any limits on what they might say about that topic. Even the somewhat narrower question “What do you think is the greatest challenge we face with the merger?” is still broad, since there are any number of opinions the person could give in reply.

A narrow question such as, “Do you think the merger is a good idea?” or “When will the merger be announced publicly?” provides a much smaller funnel. The possible answers are now strictly limited—in these cases, to either yes or no, or to an isolated piece of data. With a leading question, the funnel is even smaller. When you ask, “Aren’t you nervous about the merger?” or

“Don’t you think it’s a good move for the company?” you leave room for only one acceptable answer: agreeing with you. (The alternative is to disagree and risk a confrontation.) With some leading questions and all righteous questions (like “Can you believe they let this happen?!”), you’re not asking for an answer at all. Essentially, the funnel is completely blocked.

The ability to use questions to set the direction of a conversation is an essential leadership skill. For instance, if you’re trying to encourage people to think creatively and generate new ideas, you’ll want to use plenty of broad questions. If you’re trying to pin down specific pieces

of data, you’ll want to use narrow questions. And most of the time, if you want to get an honest, straightforward answer, you’ll want to avoid asking questions that are leading or righteous.

### Transformation Skill: Taking the Push Out of Your Questions

All of us ask questions, and all of us sometimes fail to get accurate information. Often the most important information we can receive is something we don’t want to hear: a disagreement with our ideas, challenge to our perspective, or objection to our plans. If you find that you frequently don’t get that

#### Four Types of Questions

The questions that people ask fall into four general categories. Only the first two (broad and narrow) serve the real purpose of a question: asking for new information. The other two (leading and righteous) take the form of a question, but have entirely different effects on a conversation.

**1. Broad questions:** Open-ended questions that invite others’ thoughts, conclusions, opinions, or proposals.

*What’s the best way to reduce our debt? How do you think we should respond to this applicant? How should we spend our next vacation? Why do you think those problems keep happening? Where could we find the money to fund this program?*

**2. Narrow questions:** Direct, specific questions asking for yes/no, either/or, or short factual answers.

*Do you think this is a good idea? Is it shorter to go by route I-95 or the turnpike? Which of these two products is cheaper to produce? How many people will be in the class? Who was the seventh President of the United States?*

**3. Leading questions:** Opinions in question form, implicitly seeking agreement rather than new information—or, in some cases, seeking no answer at all.

*Isn’t this a great plan? It’s really hot today, isn’t it? Do you really think that? Don’t you think he’s the best candidate? Wouldn’t you rather have breakfast before we go out?*

**4. Righteous questions:** Attacks in question form, expressing blame, indignation, or outrage.

*Do you think I like working day and night? Do you ever think of anyone but yourself? Does he have any idea how stupid he sounds? What’s the matter with you? What were you thinking?!*

type of information, the strategies we're about to describe may be important for you to learn.

**Transformation Step 1: Self-awareness.** To stop yourself from asking leading questions, you first need to have an awareness of them. Read through the "Spotting Leading Questions" sidebar and see if you recognize any expressions that you tend to use frequently (like "Don't you think?" or "Wouldn't you say?" or "Right?"). If you're not sure, we recommend that you ask someone who's close to you, and whom you trust to tell you the truth—someone who isn't reluctant to give you difficult feedback (as a subordinate employee might be).

For instance, you might ask a coworker, "When I ask for your reactions to my ideas, do you feel like I'm open to hearing your opinions,

or do you feel pressure to agree with me?" Or you might ask your spouse, "When we're making plans and I ask what you want to do, do I come across as really wanting to hear your answer? Does it ever feel like I just want you to do what I want to do?" Be sure to avoid asking leading questions such as "You tell me the truth, don't you?" or "I don't pressure you, do I?"

If you learn that you do come across as leading, ask what you do to give that impression. What words do you typically use? Also, you can invite the person to speak up in the future when they hear you use a leading question. You'll probably find that it's easier for somebody else to notice how you're communicating than for you to notice it yourself. (Just be careful not to get defensive or hostile, punishing the person for doing what you asked.)

Children tend to have great radar for this type of communication. If you have a child old enough to understand the concept of leading questions, try making them an offer: every time they catch you using one, you'll give them a quarter or some other reward. Kids usually jump at the chance to point out their parents' mistakes. As a side benefit, they wind up with useful knowledge about effective communication. Some of the people we've coached have been amazed at how much they've learned in this way (not to mention how many rewards they've had to hand over!).

No matter whom you enlist to help build your awareness, you'll gradually get better at noticing your own leading questions. Eventually you'll reach the point where you can stop yourself before you use one and try a new approach.

**Transformation Step 2: Action—Separate Your Opinion from Your Question.** The first challenge in rephrasing a leading question is figuring out what you want to communicate. Remember that a leading question combines two separate components: an opinion and a question. You may want to state both of these, or just one or the other.

Sometimes, when the stakes are low and you don't need anyone else's feedback, you might want to give only your opinion: "I think the landscapers did a nice job." "I thought the acting in that play was great." "I think I look better with short hair." At other times, you might want to follow your opinion with a request for the other person's perspective. You can do this using either a broad question ("I think this cherry pie is delicious. What do you think?") or a narrow question ("I think the first offer sounds like the best deal. Do you agree?").

## Spotting Leading Questions

There are several identifying features that can help you spot leading questions.

### Aren't, Don't, Isn't, and Other Leading Lead-Ins

The most obvious giveaway that a question is leading is that it starts with a negative contraction like *aren't*, *don't*, *isn't*, *can't*, *won't*, or *wouldn't*: "Don't you just love this dress?" "Can't you come a little early?" "Won't it get too cold?" Sometimes negative contractions come at the end of sentences, in little mini-questions like "Isn't it?" or "Wouldn't you say?" These transform simple statements of opinion into leading questions: "The president made a great point, don't you think?" "We should buy now, shouldn't we?"

### Right?

An even shorter version of the mini-question is simply saying, "Right?" or "Yes?" For instance: "You're on top of this, yes?" "He's the most qualified candidate, right?"

### Really, Truly, Honestly

In a subtler form of leading question, the asker's opinion comes out through words like *really*, *truly*, or *honestly*: "Do you *really* think people will buy that product?" "Is that *truly* what you want?" "Do you *honestly* believe John will follow through this time?" It's obvious to the listener what the "right" answer is ("No, I don't think people will buy that product," "No, that isn't what I want," "No, I don't believe John will follow through").

**Table 5-1.** Sample wording for rephrasing leading questions. The options you choose may vary depending on the context, the person you're talking to, the subject you're talking about, and your own personal preferences.

**Leading question #1: Wouldn't it be great to hold the leadership retreat at my beach house?**

Opinion: I think it would be great to hold the leadership retreat at my beach house.

Follow-up question: Do you agree? or What are your thoughts?

Narrow question: Do you think it's a good idea to hold the leadership retreat at my beach house?

Broad question: Where do you think we should hold the leadership retreat?

**Leading question #2: Our new website is too complicated, isn't it?**

Opinion: I think our new website is too complicated.

Follow-up question: Do you agree or disagree? or What do you think?

Narrow question: Do you think our new website is too complicated, too simple, or just right?

Broad question: What do you think about our new website?

**Leading question #3: This medication has been working well for you, hasn't it?**

Opinion: From looking at your chart, it seems like this medication has been working well for you.

Follow-up question: Is that right? or Is there anything I'm missing?

Narrow question: Is this medication working well for you?

Broad question: How is this medication working for you?

Both of those options are less problematic than asking a leading question (like “Don't you think the first offer sounds best?”). However, if you're looking for an entirely unbiased response, we recommend leaving out your opinion and moving straight to a question. After you've told somebody what you think, they may feel uncomfortable expressing a different opinion. This is particularly true in situations where your opinion holds a lot of weight. If you tell someone who reports to you that you like offer #1, they may be hesitant to tell you they prefer offer #3. You're better off asking, “Which of these offers do you think sounds best?” (narrow question) or “What are your reactions to these offers?” (broad question).

Table 5-1 gives three different examples of leading questions and options for rephrasing them in the form of opinions, narrow questions, and broad questions.

By transforming his leading questions, Ricardo Garza helped to

rescue his sales team from the brink of collapse. When coach Claude Marchessault described the communication pattern he'd observed, Ricardo was able to see how his own behavior had fostered conflict, rather than open dialogue. He was eager to try a new strategy. What would work best, he concluded, was to first state his opinion and then ask a broad question like, “What's your thinking on this?” or “Does anyone have a different opinion?” or “Do you have anything else to add?”

At Ricardo's invitation, Claude also did some coaching with the group as a whole. The managers realized that they'd been reacting more to the way their leader was talking than to the content of what he was saying. In fact, even in their yes-butting, they rarely disagreed with what he said; they were just bringing in new information that he didn't have. After Ricardo made a commitment to asking broad, rather than leading questions, the managers commit-

ted to stating their ideas without the “buts” that made them sound like objections or criticism.

This relatively simple change, from leading questions and yes-buts to broad questions and straightforward answers, made a tremendous difference for the group. Freed from the frustration caused by their dysfunctional communication, they were able to focus their energy on what they did best: market analysis and sales strategizing. They began to live up to their potential as a group, developing into a high-performance team that capitalized fully on the knowledge and skills of all its members.

For more information on managing leading questions in yourself and others, including a comprehensive series of exercises, see *Conversation Transformation: Recognize and Overcome the 6 Most Destructive Communication Patterns*, by Ben Benjamin, Amy Yeager, and Anita Simon. You can also find additional resources at [www.conversationtransformation.com](http://www.conversationtransformation.com). ■

# Redefining Power and Leadership in the 21st Century: The Four Pillars of True Power

by Joe Weston, Mobius Transformational Faculty and Executive Coach

At the heart of Respectful Confrontation® is the belief that it is possible to stand in your power, speak your truth, hear the truth of others, and get your needs met in a way that won't harm you or others. Many of us have negative associations with confrontation; we think it is the same as conflict. However, by exploring the principles and exercises of Respectful Confrontation®, you will discover that confrontation is nothing more than openhearted engagement and ultimately the most effective way to avoid and resolve conflict.

New trends in leadership are advocating the use of vulnerability and transparency as an effective way to manage a team and lead a company. The hierarchical approach is giving way to a more circular, inclusive model where the insights and unique skills of employees are honored. People are the building blocks of every organization and their interactions form the cement. Doing *business* differently requires dealing with *one another* differently.

Respectful Confrontation® fosters communicating with others from a place of self-respect and transparency

while tapping into your own assertiveness and vulnerabilities, yet respecting others' points of view. It teaches you to communicate in terms of what you need instead of what you think others should be doing. It provides new perspectives on and examines the differences between aggression and assertiveness, brute force and true power, conflict and confrontation.

There is a direct connection with personal power and how you view yourself in the world, your level of comfort in engaging with others, and your ability to assert your needs. Personal power is also related to your self-confidence, how much of an impact you have on the world, and how much you are able to fulfill your life purpose and live out your true potential.

In order for you to open fully to your own potential and to other people, a distinction needs to be made between *true power* and *brute force*. Most of human history has been shaped by a false belief that power is limited to something outside of us. Using brute force to obtain power and resources became commonplace.

And in personal and professional relationships, we see the same dynamic played out with manipulation, gossip, deceit, financial scandals, and secrets. The old-fashioned view of power is not what I would call *true power* but rather a strategy to use brute force to impose one's will and ensure one's success at the expense of others.

By tapping into your true power, you discover that you are more vital and capable than you thought you were. You discover that your own personal power is unlimited and you overcome limited perceptions of yourself and the world around you. This leads to a renewed sense of confidence in yourself and others, and the ability to respect, understand, and creatively collaborate with others.

I have used all my encounters with cultures around the world and all my life experiences to examine what real power is. If true power is not just brute force, what is it? Yes, strength is an important aspect of power, but what else is involved? I looked to martial arts to find my answer. I thought about the different ways my teachers trained me to develop my

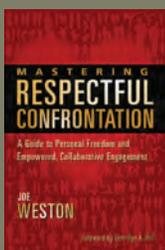


## About Joe Weston

Joe Weston is an international workshop facilitator, author, consultant, personal life coach, creative social activist, and advocate for peace. His book, *Mastering Respectful Confrontation*, is selling throughout the world.

Born and educated in New York, Joe lived in Amsterdam for 17 years and now lives again in the U.S. He is committed to helping others embody their true power, and supporting them on their journey towards personal fulfillment and freedom. Joe brings a wealth of insight to his work based on many teachings, including Tai Chi Chuan and a variety of ancient traditions—plus his experience in theater and various organizational trainings.

He also volunteers for the Liberation Prison Project, teaching Buddhism to inmates. He is the founder of the Heartwalker Peace Project, initiating various Heartwalks (peace rallies with routes in the shape of a heart) and peace vigils to create opportunities for connection, discussion, and creative collaboration.



technique and improve my form. I thought about the masters who, in their eighties, can still defeat opponents half their age or younger. How do they do it?

I concluded that to truly be in your power, *strength must be balanced with grounding, focus, and flexibility*. Although they are developed separately, they support and enhance each other. Strength is one of the Four Pillars of True Power, but it is not necessarily the most important.

To be in your true power, you must have an equal mastery of all four qualities. Without this, you will be out of balance and have challenges to accomplishing your goals.

When you are secure in your grounding, focus, strength, and flexibility and you know you have reached a certain level of proficiency in these areas, you will walk through life with the confidence needed to achieve anything you choose. Having talents like physical strength or great focus are valuable assets on your path to fulfillment and reaching your goals, but they can only go so far. Not only do these four qualities improve your performance and how you function in the world, they will help sustain you when you take on challenges and take risks, increasing your probability of success and personal fulfillment. Mastering the Four Pillars of True Power is essential when communicating with others, especially in challenging confrontations.

### **Pillar One: Grounding**

Let's start with the power of grounding. Like all things in life, building something requires starting with a strong foundation. When your foundation is strong, then you have the confidence to grow, take risks, build on your experiences, and reach for your highest potential.

All martial arts begin with establishing a relationship between you and the ground. Many beginning exercises help you to develop a strong sense of balance, a sense of sure footing, a comfort in falling and getting back up, an awareness of gravity, and the benefits of working within that force.

When a martial artist feels grounded, she is confident to do leaps, to kick, to take risks and “fly” because she knows she will always land with secure footing and find her stability. The more confidence she has in her grounding,

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**Mastering the Four Pillars of True Power is essential when communicating with others, especially in challenging confrontations.**

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the bigger the leaps she will take.

The dynamic of grounding is *downward-moving*. The lower body is engaged and we use this downward force to stay balanced, unwavering, and unmovable when necessary. The element that is associated with grounding is *water*. If you observe rivers, you will see that they flow from higher to lower altitudes. All sources of water manage to find their way to lower ground.

Grounding provides a sense of connection with the earth and a feeling of being at home in the world. It leads to an unwavering self-confidence and conviction in what you do and believe. With a strong personal philosophy, you can't be easily swayed from your beliefs. It is hard to be manipulated when you know what you believe; you stand strong and always land on your feet when challenged.

Grounding helps you to find flow in your life and can even support you in harnessing gravity. Gravity is a powerful force. To go against gravity takes enormous amounts of energy reserves. When you learn to yield

to gravity, you let go of unnecessary holding and align with the natural flow of things around you.

Master grounding and you will develop a stronger relationship with yourself, with your surroundings, and with others. You will develop a keen awareness that allows you to be more alert to the signals around you. This will assist you in fending off tensions at work and confidently engaging in opportunities that lead to growth, success, and connection. You will replace hyper-vigilance with natural, relaxed awareness. You will walk through the world in a centered, confident way.

### **Pillar Two: Focus**

Now that you have started the process of grounding, you will notice that you are more aware of what is happening around you. You will be more sensitive to impressions, feelings, opportunities, energy, power, creativity, the actions of others, and your surroundings. You'll notice all the sensations in your body, all the emotions flowing through you, and all the thousands of thoughts running through your mind at any given moment. You will feel how vibrant and inspiring life can be.

However, that's a lot to take in. What do you do with all this? Having so many options can cause you to freeze, get distracted, and not take action. This is where focus comes in.

The innate force within focus manifests in two ways. The first is to find the stillness amongst the chaos; the second is to give direction to one's efforts. The role of focus is to unify and stabilize all the impressions, creative energy, and experiences of life, and subsequently create a channel for this to flow in a constructive, intentional way. This leads to success in communication, as well as realizing life goals.

The dynamic of focus has two directions. First, it has an *inward movement*, bringing you inside yourself to gather your own personal resources and channel your energies. Secondly, that inner focus is then taken *upward and outward* to reach desired goals with clarity and precision.

The element that is associated with focus is *fire*. Fire brings clarity to those things that are unclear, sluggish, and “wishy-washy.” When you look at fire, it has the ability to hold your attention (inward focus). At the same time the force within the fire moves upwards through the flames and the smoke.

The wisdom of focus understands that life is never static; it never stands still. The most successful way to navigate through life is to have a clear idea of where you are now (inward focus), establish a clear picture of where you want to go, and then consciously plot the course of least resistance to get there (upward, outward focus). It is not the force of focus that actually gets you there. The power of strength—discussed in the next section—propels you forward. But in order to get somewhere, all the force in the world won't lead to success if you don't start with mental stability, precision, and a clear idea of where you are headed.

Think of the image of a boat out at sea. You may notice that your mind is like a stormy sea of emotions, thoughts, fears, doubts and insecurities. Or you may notice that somewhere on your journey you get thrown off course and distracted. The inward force of focus first calms the waves of your mind to ensure smooth sailing. Then the upward, outward force of focus provides you with the rudder and sails on your boat, as well as a compass, and all the navigational tools and equipment you need, to plot a clear course towards your goal. This gets you to your des-

tinuation in a quicker, more efficient way. Even if you get distracted for a moment, you know exactly how to get back on course.

When you tap into the power of focus, you use less energy to reach your goal and you develop the skill of mindfulness. You become aware of the state of your mind, you have certainty about your life direction, you approach things with precision and lightness, and you communicate in a way that is intentional. With clients of mine, I have seen how this new approach led to efficiency in communication and reduction of miscommunication, resulting in a more productive work culture and increased profit.

The power of focus is essential for someone who practices Respectful Confrontation. Harm and conflict can only surface when we are mindlessly reactive or not conscious of the thoughts, feelings, and impulses that are arising. The Buddha said, “Whatever an enemy might do to an enemy, or a foe to a foe, the ill-directed mind can do to you even worse.” Just think about how much of an influence you have on your surroundings, on the people around you, and on yourself. Have you noticed how you, or a family member or work colleague, can quickly affect the overall mood with words or even with facial expressions? Someone who has mastered the power of focus chooses to be responsible in creating a better world by staying mindful and lessening their reactive, harmful behavior.

Mastering focus in your communication is also an important tool in business settings. In a study from the University of Maryland's Robert H. Smith School of Business, researchers put a price tag on the cost of poor communication in American hospitals at \$12 billion per year. We are vague, we waste energy to push

to our goal, and we often have to repeat things before we finally get them done. When we clear our mind, focus on the desired target, and channel our energy, we don't need so much effort and our first attempt has the necessary impact. Energy saved! Efficient results!

While others are running around aimlessly, distracted by the slightest thing, overcome by emotional stress, arguing, and burning out, you will walk through the world with calm, ease, determination, harmony with others and your surroundings, and see the slow, steady realization of your goals.

### Pillar Three: Strength

Developing the powers of grounding and focus gives you a strong foundation to start with. You have mastered within yourself stability and efficiency. However, it is the power of strength that propels you forward. With a renewed sense of self, characterized by confidence, awareness, stability, calm, centeredness, clarity, and presence, it is now time to interact with others and realize your goals.

The power of strength takes you out of stasis and brings you into movement, adventure, and exploration. The dynamic of strength is *forward-moving*, and the element that is associated with strength is *earth*. Like rocks and the denser parts of the earth, your body is the densest part of who you are when you take into account your emotional, mental, and even spiritual aspects. The better you can make use of your body, and the more you can open to your courage, the more you will tap into powers that will help you manifest your goals and finish what you start. You will feel more confident about taking care of yourself and find it easier to engage with others.

The innate force within strength is expressed in two ways. The first is the *courage* to move out of your safe space and into the unknown, and the second is the *physical force* needed to accomplish your goals.

The power of strength offers you the courage to take risks, the courage to speak your truth, and to hear the truth of others. To be held accountable and to assert yourself in ways that are productive and welcoming are the true aspects of strength that lead to strong character and an increase of success in all endeavors. Keeping your promises and asking for help are important parts of building lasting relationships and require the power of strength.

When you let go of brute force and mindfully use the true power of strength to manifest your goals, open to your courage, and maintain good physical health, you avoid the destructive factors that have caused so much harm in the past. When strength is balanced with grounding, focus, and flexibility, there is no need to fear your own power; you embrace the forward-moving force that throws you out of balance and into the dance of life.

#### **Pillar Four: Flexibility**

So far you have developed a strong sense of awareness, you've learned to channel your forces, and you have committed to moving forward to manifest your dreams and connect with others. However, with all this powerful force asserting itself without stopping or yielding, you will create conflict and waste a lot of energy pushing against things that aren't going your way. Why? Because you haven't brought in the powerful force of flexibility.

There is an ancient Taoist story where the master asks the student, "Which is stronger, a mighty oak tree or a blade of grass?" The conclusion of a long discussion is "that in a heavy

monsoon, the mighty oak will snap like a twig, but the blade of grass will always persevere." The Taoist master, Lao Tzu said, "A tree that is unbending is easily broken." In some situations, the strength of an oak tree is needed, and in other situations, the flexibility of a blade of grass is stronger. It is your task to develop both kinds of power and then have the wisdom to know which of the two to implement.

The element that is associated with focus is *air*. Air may not seem very substantial compared to earth or the other elements. You can't seem to get a hold of it. Yet, within air is oxygen, the most essential element necessary for survival on this planet. Also, air has the power to keep an airplane in the sky or blow down houses in a storm. Like the force of air, the power of flexibility is not to be underestimated!

Of the four pillars, flexibility may be the most illusive and challenging. However, I believe it is the most powerful of the four and the one that takes you to your highest power. The potent force of flexibility will lead you to the next level of your evolution. The doorway to understanding and compassion, it is the only force that can eventually overcome brute force. American poet and leader of the Transcendentalist Movement, Ralph Waldo Emerson, said, "Before we acquire great power we must acquire wisdom to use it well."

While the dynamic of strength is forward-moving, the dynamic of flexibility is *backward-moving*. Again, this is not to be underestimated. Making the empowered choice to move backward does not mean you are weak or defeated. Standing your ground and still choosing to yield requires tremendous courage, strength, and skill.

The force of flexibility results in swiftness, agility, receptivity, cunning, wisdom, and "street smarts." Those who have mastered flexibility have the

ability to stretch and bend, to twist and turn, to match any attack, and to overcome any obstacle. You master the use of the skillful means to adapt and positively influence all situations with ease and conservation of energy.

Flexibility allows you to yield to, and cooperate with, a constantly changing world. If you look at nature and all things in it, you will notice that the only way to ensure the survival of a species is if that species is able to adapt to its environment, seek support, alliance or cooperation, and develop new ways to persevere. As long as we hold onto an idea that adapting is weak, things will never change.

When you use the power of flexibility, you use the wisdom to know that you are not always right, that your way isn't always the best way, and that true collaboration means that the end result is partially your contribution and partially that of others. You learn to utilize the circumstances presented to you to move you forward and you don't have to use as much energy to get things accomplished because there is no need to push against obstacles.

In fact, in the process of adapting and yielding to what is presented to you, you grow and get stronger. With every encounter, you are asked to use certain skillful means unique to that situation. If you are in familiar surroundings, you have an "arsenal" of ways to make that situation work for you. Each time you find yourself in a new situation, you have to use your creativity and power and increase your skill set; it's like you are upgrading your own internal "software." The larger your skill set, the wiser you become, and the more your true power is revealed. This is the key to successful leadership! ■

*Practices for cultivating the four pillars of leadership can be found in the resource section of the Mobius website.*

# Leading at the Purpose Level

by Lawler Kang, Mobius Consultant and Executive Coach

*“I have been working with these people for years and I realized I didn’t know a thing about them.”*

*-Cisco workshop participant*

Over the last seven years my work has focused on helping individuals, leaders, teams and organizations connect at the ‘Purpose Level.’

**What is the ‘Purpose Level’?** Quite simply, it is the underpinning of our humanity and what binds us as a species. It is our common core. And regardless of whatever may be on your resume or from where you come, there are distinct and predictable similarities between all of us at this level.

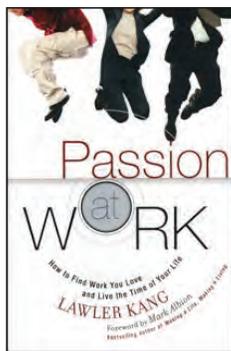
The Purpose Level is an amalgamation of your purposes, passions, talents, values, priorities and dreams. It is always present, lurking in your unconscious, yet I’ll bet the vast majority of people reading this article have never actually written down these drivers. You may have a good idea of a few, but we all understand – and to some degree fear – the powerful commitment of transcription.

## Why has the Purpose Level been absent in the workplace?

Historically, organizational cultures, which have been predominantly male-based, have not been open to addressing this territory, corporate tag lines aside. Sharing at the Purpose Level with yourself and others has not been part of leadership mindsets and budgets. You are hired into a function and are expected to meet certain goals and metrics. So long as you produce and your Key Perfor-

mance Indicators don’t start blinking red, everyone is happy (right?).

You may have received prolific amounts of assistance and corporate support to strap on your Six Sigma black belt, get your CFA or a cornucopia of other ‘certifications,’ or to understand and apply your MBTI classification. These tools and achievements are fine and serve a very good purpose. Ongoing learning and development is critical



to workforce productivity. This said, there has been scant interest in understanding the emotional requirements of that same workforce, of which roughly 70% are ‘disengaged’ or ‘actively disengaged’ per a recent Gallup survey. To quote feedback from my work with Cisco’s Corporate Marketing team, “This is the first time in 10 years we have taken the time to focus on us, who we are as individuals, and what is really important to us.”

Another reason is a dearth of available tools that elicit these drivers and are geared specifically for the business community. Many organizations have skirted the Purpose Layer but there are only a few who have actually developed and iterated exercises within processes that can deliver it. Without an environment conducive to sharing with yourself and others, and easy-to-use tools that can deliver immediate gratification, the whole effort breaks down rather quickly.

A final reason is fear. Fear of knowing yourself in a deeper way, what might emerge in the process, and that irascible feeling that what you write down will differ dramatically from where you are.

## What are the benefits of connecting and leading at the Purpose Level?

**I will focus on four primary applications:** *individuals, teams, clients, and leaders.*

### Individuals:

Understanding your personal Purpose Level can be incredibly insightful and empowering. It essentially provides you with some very useful filters to assess whatever opportunities – from promotions and new work, to volunteering and partners – that will come your way. To what extent does this opportunity help you meet your personal purposes? Draw on your passions? Leverage your talents? Adhere to your values? Mesh with your priorities? How does this choice help you realize your dreams? Career paths (many at the same employer) can be re-charted, retirement desires crystallized, and financial planning to realize your dreams can rapidly come to the forefront of your personal operating budget.

Conversely, understanding yourself at this level may also provide some excellent developmental next steps both personally and professionally. Are your talents what your desired functions demand (from Director of Product Development to parent) and customers require (from your matrix responsibilities to spouse/kids)? And if you are absolutely horrible at and/or dislike any of these characteristics, where can you find others with complementary skills to support you?

A final benefit that cannot be ignored is the positive repercussions of giving individuals the “gift” of understanding themselves at the Purpose

Level, on corporate time and dime. Why? For most, it is the first time in their professional, and even academic, careers where someone is truly making an investment in them, as people (versus classifications, which I will get to in a bit). It is simply this indication of interest in them at a human level that triggers positive, and sometimes wildly positive, responses and results. This demonstration of care for others is also a big contributing factor to the retention of the vast majority of participants post-workshop for a common and quite expected question I field is “Well, what if my employees realize they don’t want to work here any more?” From my experience, the vast majority want to stay.

### Teams:

The benefits individuals accrue from connecting with their own Purpose Level are magnified when shared and aggregated in a team context. Contrary to the popular aphorism “There is no ‘I’ in team,” I believe teams are indeed made up of ‘Is’ and if you can’t identify and align each member’s Purpose Level with themselves, their careers, their colleagues, and their leader, that team will never function optimally. Note I do not include an organizational Purpose Level here. If that kind of alignment can be instilled organization-wide, and it can be with multi-pronged effort, fantastic! From my experience and research, alignment between colleagues and leaders is equally as important to the team’s happiness of productivity and should receive first focus before trying to expand. This dynamic is especially important in executive circles as passion and purpose run downhill.

There are oftentimes very surprising overlaps among team members’ outputs which can really bring the group together. We did some work for an administrative function at one

of the world’s leading strategy consulting firms who was experiencing communication issues. People in the predominantly female team came from completely different backgrounds, pedigrees, and geographies. Everything from a relatively recent war veteran from Ohio, to a classics major from Germany, to a technology wonk, to a female Harley-rider.

Yet, even within this vast expanse of characters, 75% of the team shared a common purpose, 94% shared a common passion, and over half the team shared three similar values. Impressive given none of these entries were selected from a list. When these results were presented to the team, there was a collective gasp. They already knew how different they were at a Life Level, but the fact their Purpose Levels were so similar was remarkable. This was a large contributing factor to the construction of a layer of understanding that met the desired objective of increasing communication and reducing tension.

What happened here was essentially a breakdown of stereotypes into something much more human. It is natural to accumulate stereotypes of people based on relatively superficial data points. “She is a classic Gen Y-er, she must be lazy and self-centered.” “He is Asian and in finance, he must be a geek.” “He is my boss, all he cares about is his own career, bonus, and getting the spotlight for our work.” And to some degree, stereotypes are based in reality, particularly in cases where classifications get involved, such as the afore-mentioned MBTI four letter acronyms, and other similar tools such as Strength Based Leadership characteristics, color wheels, etc. These classifications can unfortunately support irrational stereotyping.

This reality should stop where your interactions with people begin.

Applying old schemata, and ways of dealing with past templates, is often where a good portion of workplace friction begins and distressing spiral of self-deceiving assumptions (per The Arbinger Group’s brilliant work) can easily follow. This is not to say classifications don’t add value though from personal experience, trying to remember how to optimally mesh my outputs with those of others on my team – regardless of system – was considerably more difficult than negotiating my divorce.

These classifications should be used more for personal reflection and development efforts than applied to group settings. Merely knowing the person in the next cubical is an Introvert who Judges can quickly lead to unfounded impressions that support a self-serving intent. Understanding people at the Purpose Layer is a critical relief because it neatly undercuts all associations with external characteristics and functions and focuses on the human behind them.

Common feedback we receive from teams who have discovered and aligned their Purpose Levels reflects this sentiment. “I have been working with these people for years and I realized I didn’t know a thing about them,” from the Cisco engagement. This understanding breeds increases in eased communication, collaboration and productivity emblematic of rejuvenated engagement. Above all, the Purpose Layer builds trust amongst all who come into contact with it. This will be further fleshed out in a bit.

A final benefit of connecting teams (and organizations) at the Purpose Level is the power of aggregating data. Team-wide patterns can be a great source of discussion for generating mission or cause statements, the latter proving to be more effective in attracting and retaining

younger demographics. Group values, which can be used throughout the talent value chain from recruiting to promotions, are also a natural application. The big plus here is that research shows getting people involved in the generation of these devices has a significant impact on them walking their talk. These mechanisms don't have to be corporate-wide either. Teams or groups can always develop their own internal elements. And for folks who join the party after the initial bubbly has been served, the culture they are entering will be markedly engaged and accepting and sets a distinct tone for the length of their tenure.

#### Clients:

A few words on engaging your clients at the Purpose Level. I define 'client' as anyone who you need to help you, your team or business drive and sustain revenue. They can range from internal customers, to channel/marketing partners, to key decision-makers at other firms, to retail customers – specifically those buying a service from you (and yes, you can also include a spouse in this category). And guess what, the same trust-related dynamics that cause tension and breakdowns in team settings – stereotypes, lack of understanding, lack of communication, lack of connection, etc. – apply in this realm as well.

Imagine understanding the purposes, passions, experiences, values, priorities, experiences, and dreams of your buyer, sharing yours with them and noting the overlaps. You can't align interests and connect any better than this! Taking it a step further, the information generated can be extremely useful in growing the relationship (and referrals). As a financial services provider, understanding your client's experiences and dreams can give you meaningful con-

necting points and valuable data for product selection and development. When was the last time you received a communication about something important to you personally from your broker or insurance rep?

In this context, the impacts of bringing the Purpose Level to high net worth clients and their families can also be profound as, per a Managing Director of such a firm, "Money doesn't solve problems. It only exacerbates the characteristics, good and bad, of the people who have it." Helping them as a team, and individually, realize their dreams and build supporting career paths for progeny to these ends can have distinct societal impacts.

#### Leaders:

I had the distinct honor and pleasure of seeing General Colin Powell present a few years ago. What a riveting treat! He shared three principles of leadership he has used throughout his career that, by his reckoning, enabled him to rise from an Army grunt to Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Secretary of State:

1. Give your team a noble purpose that draws on their passions.
2. Look out for your team's best interests; get to know them as people.
3. Be honest; praise in public, improve in private.

Aside from the obvious overlaps with the Purpose Layer, if you were to integrate these principles in an organization of whatever size, what one value would be brilliantly burnished in the common perspective? *Trust. From my experiences, trust may be the most important characteristic with which a leader can grace their team and which will boomerang with extremely positive results. Trust*

*impels engagement, can punch politics in the nose, takes a big whack out of unwanted attrition, breaks through stereotypes and is the cornerstone of successful relationships of every sort. Trust requires connecting at the Purpose Level and again, there is a tremendous amount of connection at this level, regardless of what you do.*

As a leader, sharing your Purpose Level with your reports can be an exhilarating, and sometimes disquieting, exercise. Opening your kimono takes courage. But the impacts on how you are perceived by your peers, reports, and even clients can be profound. You are showing them your human side, whose underlying purposes, values, priorities and dreams will correlate with those of the others in the room. This correlation, best done visually with the leader providing talking points, is what drives the connection, breaks through tainted mental templates hardened by years of self-deceiving observations, and rolls this dead log over, exposing a rich and fertile ground in which the seeds of trust and compassion can be sown and nurtured.

I say "can be" because from this point onward, it is the leader's game to lose. First, they must review their reports' outputs with them, understand them, and then, most importantly, use the information in the team member's best interests, per Powell's principles. This can be done individually and/or looking at patterns across the team/organization. For example, a very common dream is "sending my kids to college" (which I interpret as 'paying for college'). Do they understand the latest 529 plans and other ways they can save? Imagine the impact of getting some reps in to talk about college planning with your team and kicking in \$100 to start or augment an account? Whatever is spent will be

well worth the investment. You are helping your employees realize their dreams, not just career development.

Here is another phenomenal example of the power – and profitability – of understanding your employees' dreams. I was recently working with a group of CEOs and one of them shared a story about a company he helped found and had just sold. It was a call center business focused on doctors. They did an excellent job getting business but the delivery-side was suffering. Attrition was in excess of 100% per year, including the six-month ramp-up time. A partner in the business suggested they start an 'I have a dream' program, whereby employees would share their dreams, or the dreams of fellow employees who they knew could use one, with management.

At first, the CEO said he saw no benefit from the idea at all. His partner persisted. Over the course of time, more than \$200,000 was channeled into employees' dreams, everything from giving a daughter a very special birthday the employee couldn't afford, to making a house payment for an employee who was facing foreclosure. The most touching dream though, was that of an employee's husband, who had Stage 4 pancreatic cancer and was told he had a few months to live. Not only was he limoed to see his favorite team (the Eagles) play and provided tickets on the 50-yard line, but he was allowed onto the field post-game, slapped hands with all the players as they entered the locker room, and had a sit down, one-to-one chat with his favorite player for 20 minutes. He subsequently, against all odds, beat his cancer. Coincidence or causal, I do not pretend to know. What I do understand though, is the power of someone caring for me, on my terms, with dignity.

The impact this program had on the company's financial performance,



## Lawler Kang, Founder, Passion at Work Mobius Consultant

After 15 years of corporate and entrepreneurial leadership, Lawler was on vacation and being a recovering consultant started doodling a process that became the genesis of his current work. Soon thereafter, he walked away from empire building, wrote *Passion at Work* (Pearson Prentice Hall), and eventually founded Passion at Work Partners, whose mission is unleashing the profitability of emotional engagement by connecting leaders, teams, and talent at the Purpose Level. He has worked with leading organizations such as HP, Cisco, Ernst & Young, Oracle, Microsoft, Booz Allen Hamilton, Pfizer, Vistage, Stanford School of Medicine, and most top-tier business schools. He leverages a history of strategy, technology, incubator and turnaround consulting and is a graduate of The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania and Vassar College. He resides on the North Shore of Boston where, when not serving as a human jungle gym for his three hooligans, he loves to love his spouse, ski, surf, and play bridge.

and underlying culture, was profound. Attrition dropped to 25%. Employees made a YouTube video extolling the program in which they gleefully refer to their employment at this company as a "lifetime commitment." From the CEO's data points, he probably got an additional 2 to 3 times EBITDA on the sale valuation because of this investment. In fact, he recounted he knew the deal was going to happen the moment when the buyers saw the YouTube video as part of their due diligence.

### Looking forward...

We all become leaders when our Purpose Levels are tapped. This could explain why leadership is in such short supply as most of us haven't taken the time, energy, courage, or had access to tools that can elucidate the Why and the How we bring to What we do. From my experience, Why + How has a far greater impact on your happiness (a.k.a. performance) than merely the What. In truth of fact, the Why + How (your Purpose Level) should drive your What to significant degrees. To quote a key figure from the masterful HBO series that serrat-edly explores the heart of leadership, *Game of Thrones*, "We can only get

what we want if we know who we are."

*I ask you now to think of Leaders who have struck you as **legendary** from whatever corner of our global society and history. Three or four will suffice. Now ask yourself, "What is it about these people that gives me such a charge? What is it that solidly positions them in a different league from all the rest?"* A pattern might emerge here. Chances are these legends have a lucid purpose, impenetrable values, palpable passion for their cause, and a dream. It could be something small or huge, but they have one and they aren't afraid to share it with the world. They know themselves. Even with all their human baggage, they still aren't afraid.

Do you want to be a legend? Maybe not to the scale of a Martin Luther King, Jr. or Ghandi. It could merely be a legend in your community, your working circles, or even just your family. I believe we all want to be remembered for something good, something noble, something in which we believe, something at the Purpose Level.

It takes courage to be legendary.\*

*\*A rallying tagline from my days at Scient, the fastest, organically-grown services firm in US history. ■*

# Getting Ahead: Three Steps to Take Your Career to the Next Level

by Joel Garfinkle, Mobius Consultant and Executive Coach

## What makes one person more successful than another?

Who comes to mind when you hear the phrase successful leaders? Do you think of someone you work with now? Are these leaders people from your past employment? Or are they individuals you've only seen from afar or read about? Do you know how these successful leaders advanced and achieved the promotions they desired, or how they became recognized as being highly capable, credible, and respected by upper management? Perhaps the most pressing question is: What do they do that is so different than what you are doing? You search for the answers, wondering what the secret ingredient is and how you can get your hands on it. You want to know what makes one person more successful than another, or—more bluntly—exactly what these people have that you don't.

The answer: perception, visibility, and influence.

The most successful leaders have gotten to where they are by leveraging and applying perception, visibility, and influence better than anyone else. By honing these three areas, you too can fast-track to the next level and become both a valued employee and an in-demand leader.

This book has three parts that we are about to look at in more detail:

## Part One: Improve Your Perception

People constantly are forming opinions of you based on how you act,

what you do, and how you behave at work. These impressions have a direct impact on how you are perceived. Others' positive or negative discernment of you affects myriad elements of interaction—how they treat you, the level of respect you receive, and the overall success you gain at work. This is precisely why perception management is vital to your professional success. If you don't take control of how others see you, you will undermine both your career and your future success. People will form opinions about you without any input from you. You can't leave the fate of your career in someone else's hands.

## Part Two: Increase Your Visibility

Visibility makes you a known, valued, and desired commodity at your company. Take a look at the successful employees at any organization: Every single one is visible. If you fail to make yourself recognized at work, you run the risk that your peers and management may not actually

know who you are, what work you're doing, the impact you are having on the company, or the overall value you bring to the organization. Increasing visibility is vital to success.

## Part Three: Exert Your Influence

With influence, you move organizations forward and change outcomes for the better. You motivate, arouse interest, and sway others to do what is deemed important. You are depended on and seen as a difference maker who has the courage to

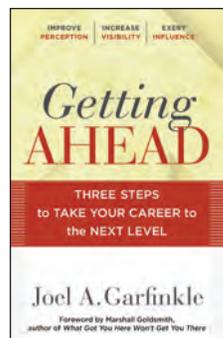
make tough and important decisions. Without influence, your career stalls and comes to a standstill. You must have the courage to make an impact and be influential.

## Improve Your Perception Take Control of How Others See You

It is difficult to change someone's negative perception of you. It only takes one mistake, bad move, or missed deadline to begin eroding the positive reputation you've developed. Negative opinions are so difficult to change because the way someone sees you becomes their reality, even though what they think may not be true. Even if the majority of the people who work with you have positive perceptions of you, you still want to focus on enhancing and improving perception continuously. This will help create the perception that you want reinforced.

It's important to remember that perception can be changed in a short amount of time. You don't have to fear that you have cemented a negative perception and feel hopeless about being able to change it. You can do something about it right now.

One of the important steps toward changing perception is to become aware of the unspoken reward system inside your organization. This system isn't about pay or bonuses; it's about the subtle recognition given out by decision makers on a daily basis. For example, why did Jill gain that plum assignment? Why was George asked to head up a prestigious committee when the regular chair was on vacation? Why was Carlos asked to brief



a group of executives from another division about your work group's latest breakthrough? Instead of being jealous or resentful, assess these situations as objectively as possible, and consider the perceptions that company leaders have of these individuals. Now consider the perceptions they might have of you for each situation. Where do you fall short? What tangible steps can you take to positively influence those perceptions?

The following are four specific steps you can take to reinforce a positive perception and/or to change a negative one.

**1. Identify advocates who can speak on your behalf.**

Take advantage of having someone else act as an advocate for you. This is someone who will campaign on your behalf, champion your cause, and help improve others' perception of you. They will speak up about your accomplishments to others, which can be extremely beneficial to someone who is not comfortable tooting one's own horn. With a strong advocate working on your behalf, you don't have to aggressively self-promote. An influential individual sharing how great you are has a lot more impact than you can achieve on your own.

**2. Take the lead on a project.**

If you are working on a project as a team member, see if you can become the team lead. This is the person who represents the group and discusses their progress when the manager wants to know how the project is going. This will provide high visibility and will influence how people perceive you, since the team lead is often the one who presents information to members of management. Management



Photography by Mitch Davidowitz

will see you as someone who can take charge, even though the entire team worked on the project together.

**3. Be assigned to highly visible projects at work.**

When you work on projects that have high visibility, you have the opportunity to directly affect how others perceive you. This influence can help you enhance others' respect for you. One way to get started is to identify a project that your boss's boss deems most important. Discuss this project with your immediate boss, and create a plan on how you can do more work for it. When you add value to this highly visible project, your boss's manager's perception of you will become increasingly approving.

**4. Have your manager (and even his or her boss) acknowledge your contributions publicly.**

It helps to have someone else speaking up on your behalf when you're trying to improve others' perception of you. Ask if they would share praise, discuss your successes, and emphasize the impact you've had on the company. Others will start to see the value you provide to the company when your superiors consistently extol your achievements publicly.

**Increase Your Visibility  
Stand Out Get Noticed By  
the People Who Matter Most**

Name a leader who isn't visible. Chances are that you can't. To be a leader you must be visible. Leadership and visibility require each other. When you have both, people will see you as someone with power, influence, authority, and leadership. They'll know who you are and what you do, and will appreciate the value you provide. Without visibility, you won't be noticed, and your career progression will come to an abrasive halt.

The importance of visibility may not seem obvious. Perhaps working hard and producing results have been enough during your early career experiences for others to take notice and compensate the good work you've done. You may have received past promotions based solely on merit and hard work. Your career may for a time move ahead nicely until suddenly—bam—it comes to a standstill.

This can occur when you come to a point in your career where you are successful, but stuck. Talent and ability to perform take you only so far. Be warned: If you don't proactively leverage and utilize visibility, your career will stagnate. A client of mine confessed to me, "I've reached a plateau where my talents and skills aren't enough. I used to feel that I had my success under my control, and I don't

anymore. My growth plan was once clear; I knew exactly what I needed to do to gain my next promotion. Now that I've jumped to the management level, the path is not as obvious. It's not a documented process anymore. I need to initiate a visibility plan so I am noticed, or my career will stall."

What happened? No one alerted you that you were going to hit a professional wall that would demand that you learn and apply a new trait for success—increased visibility. Visibility is important because the people who make decisions about your career need to be aware of your value. You might be performing well, but unless the right people know how well you are performing, you'll be overlooked, especially if you work in a group of very talented people. The key is to actively inform others of your value so that you reach the most influential individuals' radar screens. Dorie Clark in the Harvard Business Review blog advises, "No matter how brilliant and talented you are, you won't be sufficiently appreciated within your organization or by your customers until the broader public recognizes you."

**Increasing visibility means presenting yourself in a way that compels people to take notice. You must be impressive, show others your talents and skills, and have them acknowledge what you offer the organization. When others know about you, they are able to recognize your value, appreciate your contribution to the company, and leverage your talents.**

Here are four ways to gain visibility and raise your profile.

### 1. Speak Up and Share

Share your ideas and solutions. Companies are desperate for ideas and ways to generate new revenue, improve customer service, stream-

line operations, and reduce expenses. Actively seek out opportunities to present your ideas so that others will appreciate what you know and the work you have done. The attention that your big ideas generate will provide increased visibility.

### 2. Gain Face Time with Top Executives

Create time with the most influential people in your organization. Find the executives with influence in the company and attend the meetings, conference calls, and interactions they attend. The more face time you have with executives, the better the chance that they will know you and see your worth to the company.

### 3. Find Cross-Departmental Opportunities

Find projects outside your own line of business. Identify tasks that will gain you exposure to other business units besides your own, and that will allow you to interact with leaders and peers who don't know you. They will understand the value you produce and seek you out in the future for your knowledge and expertise.

### 4. Become Known and Recognized

Make yourself memorable. People with power and influence need to remember you. What, specifically, is memorable about the work you do? What do you do that is unique and makes you stand out from the rest? Whatever it is, make sure this is what people know and remember about you.

## Exert Your Influence Lead Situations, People, and Events

So what exactly is influence? Influence occurs when you have the

power to alter or change a situation. It could mean swaying just one other person or a large group, undertaking a major project, or creating new initiatives. In short, you influence the outcome of something by improving it, and you make important decisions that have impact. Influential people do what others deem to be important. Ask yourself these questions to see how influential you currently are:

- Has someone above you in the chain of command recently acted on one of your ideas and given you credit?
- Do your employees act on your requests and delegations swiftly and accurately?
- Do your peers get on board with your cross-organization initiatives?
- Do people buy into your projects and ideas?
- Do you constantly take the initiative in leading projects and assignments?

People with influence make things happen. They move their organizations forward by taking action and producing powerful results. They use their visibility to extend their influence and make an impact. These people inspire others to execute and accomplish a significant amount, irrespective of power or authority. They make the tough and important decisions. Famed business leader Jack Welch discusses the value of making the difficult decisions. He says, "A lot of people have good ideas, and good values, and they can even energize others. But for some reason they are not able to make the tough calls. That is what separates... whether or not someone can lead a business."

## Why Influence Is Important

All leaders must manage through influence to be successful. Their abilities and strengths help them to

accomplish what is deemed crucial, so that positive change can occur for the organization.

Leaders who use influence are excellent collaborators who bring people together to create solutions. They help everyone to become aligned so that the organization can achieve the desired results. They are able to bring successful coalitions together, and they know how to appeal to people's needs and turn them into advocates for their idea.

Influential leaders know how to build connections within their business units, cross-functionally, and with top management. As these relationships develop, influence begins to take hold and move things forward. As the relationship becomes more established and mutually respectful, those involved are able to exert greater influence. These leaders can mobilize people from different groups to create successful outcomes.

The number-one realization to keep in mind is this: You can't be a leader unless you have influence. No one will follow you unless he or she believes in you. People need to see that you're able to trigger change in people and projects.

## Evaluate Your Current Influence Ability

What can you do to become a leader who influences others? Look at the 10 actions listed to see which ones you are currently doing, and which ones you need to develop. Though I've touched upon many of these points throughout the book, this list provides an organized way to digest and implement prior points in a way that's directly related to influence.

I encourage you to think, evaluate, question, and ponder each one of these points. They are simple and easy to relate to and comprehend.



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He is the author of 7 books and over 300 articles on leadership.

While achieving influence often seems a bit distant and too grand for some, everyone understands why each of these points is necessary and needed. Once you accomplish all 10, you reach a high level of influence.

### Influence allows you to:

- 1. Get things done.** People know they can count on you to accomplish even the toughest assignments.
- 2. Become a go-to person.** Others seek you out for advice to accomplish the most essential tasks and to make important decisions.
- 3. Build strong alliances.** You're able to create alliances across all business units, thereby developing a wider base of support and cooperation.
- 4. Gain buy-in for your ideas.** Your established credibility and respect will prompt people to embrace your ideas and to want to be a part of what you are doing.
- 5. Leverage your allies.** Your allies will help support your ideas and accomplish the tasks that have been deemed important.
- 6. Sway decisions.** When you speak, people will listen to what you have to say so that you can sway decisions to your desired outcome.
- 7. Cause others to rely on you.** When you influence decisions and change outcomes for the better, people appreciate your confidence and know they can depend on you.

**8. Lead up.** You'll establish mutual respect with people above you who want to seek out and hear your opinions, ideas, and insights.

**9. Gain results from others.** You will inspire others to take on activities that affect the organization and positively impact bottom-line results.

**10. Attract the star employees.** You'll create a committed, engaged, and excited workforce that executes the projects or activities related to what you are influencing.

## Conclusion

Learning to enhance perception, increase visibility, and command influence will serve as a catalyst for reaching the next rung on the ladder of career success. You can use the strategies, insights, and tips above as a starting point on the road to mastering the PVI model, which will be your guiding light throughout your entire career.

What makes one person more successful than another? This article started with that question, and you now know the answer. You know how to be more successful. You need to leverage and apply perception, visibility, and influence better than anyone else. The PVI model is the competitive advantage that will allow you to stand out from the talented stars surrounding you, so you can maximize your potential and realize your professional greatness. ■

# There is an I in Team, A Book Excerpt

by Mark de Rond

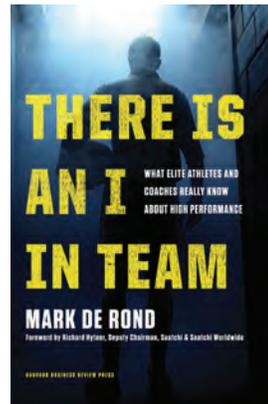
Love them or loathe them, individuals matter. So much then for that old devil. While grammatically correct, as a guiding principle, it is flawed and impractical. It downplays the extent to which high-performance teams benefit from variations in talent, in personality, and even in pay. And it diminishes the value of competition between team members. Even those blissful moments of team flow, when mind and matter fuse effortlessly as all are absorbed in the task at hand are more often than not the consequence of individual differences cleverly brought into play by good leadership. The choice of who is in and who is not will have been decided based on the relevance of particularized attributes to an available set of competencies. In sports as in business, it is the combination that matters. Even in teams that are greatly interdependent and prize uniformity—think of synchronized swimming or team sprints in cycling—individuality can be a positive differentiator.

Team decisions require individuals to commit to those around them and to be accountable for their own performance to the team. Should they choose to commit, they will only ever do so for their own reasons. As one of Britain's most distinguished coaches, David Whitaker, put it: "If you want an exceptional team, keep your eye on the individual . . . Teams thrive on individual choice and commitment . . . the most powerful teams are made up of individuals who have chosen to work as a team." Having coached hockey teams to Olympic gold and bronze, World and European silver, he deserves to be taken seriously.

Thus, teams begin and end with individuals. This is not an ideological statement. Nor is it a normative one. This book has no intention of lionizing individuals at the expense of teams or of, God forbid, sanctioning egotism. It does not prioritize individual over collective effort (even if some tasks—particularly those that require logical problem solving—are often better done by individuals than teams). It doesn't even go as far as Jordan's gibe. Its perspective is far subtler. To focus on the I in teams is to pursue a very specific level of granularity. It is to see the trees for the forest by granting individuals that degree of choice missing in much popular writing on teams. To keep in mind the individual is to emphasize precisely the sorts of issues that are easily lost when considering teams as the primary unit of analysis.

The *I* in team also suggests that the key to managing teams lies not just in advanced statistical techniques, skill complementarities, or team bonding but in an appreciation of their humanity. When teams work well, it is because, and not in spite, of individual differences. These differences are at once a source of brilliance and tension, leaving teams poised between entropy and synergy, tension and collective genius.

What may appear like picture-perfect teams are then in reality often quite intricate tapestries of distinct characters united by a common goal but forced into a sanctum where trade-off choices must be made be-



tween likability and competence; where powerful but conflicting pressures coexist; where one's success hinges on being able to reconcile camaraderie and rivalry, trust and vigilance, the sacred and the profane; and where they end up getting it wrong as often as right.

These teams can feel fragile to those on the inside, even if perfectly functional on the outside. In contrast to popular belief, teams of high performers are not easy places to be. At times, they are anything but harmonious, but then harmony may well be the result, not cause, of superior performance. Workplace teams are even more complex. Businesses rarely have the luxury of focusing on a single team with one clear objective. The composition of the I's in charge of production will invariably be different to the composition of the I's in charge of sales or R&D. Adding to this complexity, sitting on top of these various teams is typically a small team (the executives) charged with understanding, leading, and managing the multiplicity of teams in their business. And the I's inside them.

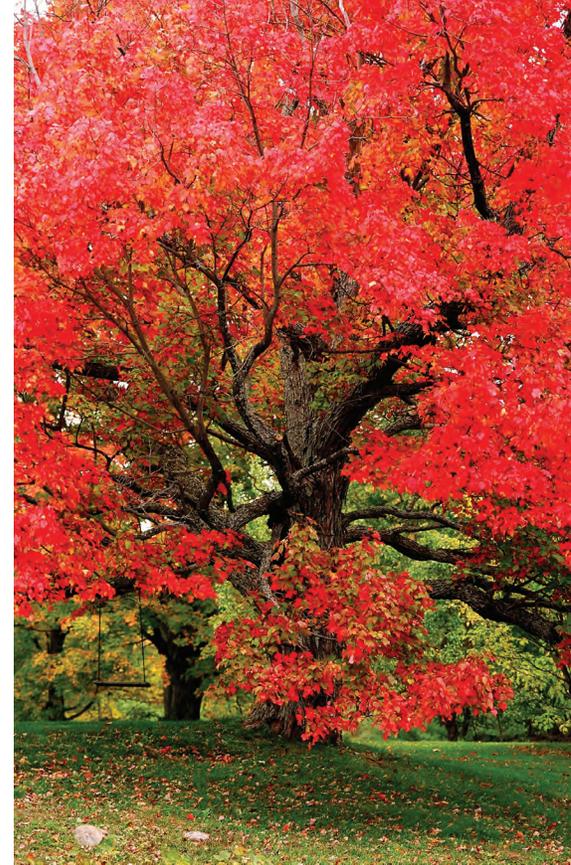
**Perfectionism:** While it may help raise team performance, the desire to identify scope for improvement can also contribute to a joyless, souldestroying environment. This is particularly true when perfectionism is triggered by worries about getting it wrong, instead of the desire to make sure every next thing is better than the one before it. The difference is

subtle but important. Recent research in psychology suggests that the latter is generally associated with positive experience, whereas the mistake-avoidance variety is associated with anxiety and, paradoxically but importantly, suboptimal performance. Unsurprisingly perhaps, the two are highly correlated, meaning that most of those people who aim for perfection also tend to worry a great deal about making mistakes, even if the latter tends to hamper performance and renders the overall experience much less enjoyable. It creates fatigue and resistance. Perfectionism risks creating not just an excessively critical environment but one that, perversely, places a premium on cynicism. Cynicism is often perceived as indicative of smarts and cunning, even if it is rarely helpful. It is one of the curiosities of team life in some societies that we find the contemptuous also the more capable, even if useless for all practical purposes.

**Paranoia:** The smartest of team members can be surprisingly intuitive when making choices, presumably as a result of having been right so often in the past. As with perfectionism, this is a generalization and, as with any generalization, there are plenty of exceptions. In the workplace, high performers are often keenly aware of their worth to the team but also to the market for talent and might expect instant access to resources and the executive suite. To combine intelligence with the sort of deep-seated insecurities that fuel high performance, particularly within a highly competitive milieu, can breed paranoia. Intel's Andy Grove's autobiography likewise leaves little to the imagination. Success, he thought, breeds complacency, and complacency failure. As the title of his book suggests, only the paranoid survive.

**Self-Confidence** Despite often deep-seated insecurities, high performers are prone to overestimate the extent to which they are unique and contribute to team performance. These well-documented human traits are exacerbated in many of them. So, for example, most high school students see themselves as above average in intelligence; most business managers see themselves as more competent than average; 90 percent of motorists think themselves safer than average drivers, whereas 94 percent of university professors think themselves better than average teachers. And paradoxically, the bias of seeing ourselves as better than average causes us to see ourselves as less biased than average, too. As psychologist Daniel Gilbert points out, the tendency is not merely for us to see ourselves as more competent but as different from others, too. For example, while people may see themselves as more generous than average, they also tend to see themselves as more selfish than average.

That too much self-confidence risks reducing a team to less than the sum of its individual parts is also evident in American football. As former San Francisco 49ers Head Coach Bill Walsh explains: There is another side [to ego] that can wreck a team or an organization. That is being distracted by your own importance. It can come from your insecurity in working with others. It can be the need to draw attention to yourself in the public arena. It can be a feeling that others are a threat to your own territory. These are all negative manifestations of ego, and if you are not alert to them, you get diverted and your work becomes diffused. Ego in these cases makes people insensitive to how they work with others and ends up interfering with the real goal



of any group efforts. What few seem to realize is that those we work with are often far more perceptive of being underestimated than we think they are. And, as a general rule, people resent being underestimated, particularly by those they work with every day. Equally, our relative lack of ability in many areas of life also makes us less likely to recognize when we are incompetent.

**Team Dynamics** Are teams really more than the sum of their parts? The sobering evidence suggests that teams rarely produce synergies, with a string of academic studies finding that individuals clearly outperform teams. How then can teams create value? Theoretically, of course, much like any form of human organization: by reducing the costs of coordinating between individuals and by combining resources or skill sets. Teams do not usually create value by getting the best resources their money can buy but, rather, by combining resources into something of which the value exceeds the economic cost.



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So, how do you get the best from star performers? Or, if not the best, then how can you mitigate any negative impact they have on the teams they join? Rather than treating the Bobby Fischers of this world as solo performers, you should surround them with high-quality colleagues. The point is to create a so-called “Matthew effect,” a term from sociology meaning, essentially, the rich get richer, while the poor get poorer: stars will attract other stars or help create future stars.

The ability to gel a group of individual high performers into something greater than the sum of its parts may need to come from within. If so, this raises an interesting conundrum: are there competencies beyond individual technical

technically the most demanding environments?

So how did those who are technically passable and also likable stack up against colleagues who are far more competent but unpleasant to be around? The analysis suggests that if someone is strongly disliked, it is almost irrelevant whether or not he is competent. By contrast, if someone is liked, her colleagues will seek out every bit of competence she has to offer, meaning that a little likability has far more mileage than competence in making someone a desirable team member. Even if someone is competent, those around him may feel reluctant to reveal their vulnerabilities if he intimidates, belittles their contributions, or never pays

qualities that can significantly enhance the performance of a team? For instance, can social or emotional intelligence (despite difficulties of measurement) help raise performance levels in even

any attention to them. Add to this the suggestion that corporate clients are by and large unable to identify slight differences in ability (in that they are unlikely to tell the difference between an employment lawyer being 94 percent or 98 percent competent), social competence would appear to win out over its technical counterpart.

We could argue that the more important the task, the more weight is placed on competence. If, God forbid, you suffer from a heart condition, chances are that you’d much prefer to be seen by the country’s best cardiologist than by a socially more gifted but technically less competent colleague. If so, you might be surprised to learn that physicians are more likely to persist with a difficult diagnosis (including yours) when they like their patients. Conversely, they will likely settle for a standard diagnosis when they do not. And they make up their minds about us as quickly as we do about them. ■

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*In Aikido we say that the solution may lie at the heart of the problem or the energy of the attack may be its own resolution. We say this because there is an aikido movement that epitomizes this quality of turning towards and facing. It's called irimi and translates as "centering". When an irimi technique is called for we train ourselves to move directly into the heart of the attack or situation.... We move towards this incoming energy, whether it be a physical attacker or a verbal tirade in order to experience it at its most essential place and from there work with it freshly and creatively..... First we observe ourselves, then we look at our fear and resistance, and from there we begin to work directly with the situation as it is. This is not a process of overexciting ourselves or creating a needless problem, but a way of being with ourselves in an open and intelligent way..... When we no longer run from what we fear there becomes the possibility of being responsible for our projections of aggression, ignorance and fear. This is not an indulgence in our psychology but a practical way of recognizing how fear shows up in our bodies and our thinking and not having to be victim of it.*

– Richard Strozzi Heckler,

*Holding the Center: Sanctuary in a Time of Confusion: Writings on Place, Community and Body*

# Trauma: Bending Time and Bending the Self

by Dr. Mike Stadter, Mobius Senior Expert

Trauma is more than an intensely stressful event or experience. Trauma is an overwhelming experience, inescapable and inevitably mutative. It goes beyond the person's sense of what is normal or expectable and overwhelms the person's coping capacities. It affects the person both physiologically and psychologically with each person responding in his/her own unique way. What is traumatic for one person may not be traumatic for another. Traumatic causes can include physical or sexual abuse, violence, physical illness, physical injury and loss of a loved one. It can involve natural disasters such as hurricanes or floods and well as large scale manmade events such as wars and acts of terrorism.

Trauma puts the person at risk for a broad range of psychological disorders and social problems (Lazar, 2010). While frequently trauma is thought of as arising from single events or from a series of events it can also arise from on-going experiences such as a child being raised by a chronically and deeply depressed mother, an adult suffering from constant pain or a spouse experiencing unremitting emotional abuse. In these cases, a traumatic atmosphere or relationship becomes "normal". For further reading on trauma beyond this very brief overview, I recommend Horowitz (1999), Scharff and Scharff (1994), Solomon and Seigel (2003) and Wilson, Friedman and Lindy (2001).

## Styles of Traumatic Response

The signature responses to trauma are hyperarousal and dissociation or a mixture of the two. Each has a very

different underlying neurobiology. Hyperarousal is a persistent fear state involving an activation of the sympathetic nervous system. It includes increased heart rate and blood pressure, increase in muscle tone and hypervigilance. It activates the person for fight or flight. Dissociation is a disengagement from the external world and parts of the internal world. It can be considered to be on a continuum ranging from mild and transitory (daydreaming) to severe (loss of memory and consciousness). The parasympathetic nervous system is prominent and heart rate and blood pressure decrease. There is a release of endogenous opioids which calm the person and alter the perception of reality and time. These endogenous opioids also influence the dissociative responses of freezing and surrender. The surrender response is sometimes referred to as floppy immobility (Courtois, 2005) to capture the hyper-relaxed appearance of the person during a traumatic experience.

Both hyperaroused and dissociative responses often produce a sensitization of neural response patterns. The intense psychophysiological response may subsequently occur when the person is presented with either a conscious or unconscious reminder of the trauma or with an intense but actually neutral stimulus, such as a loud noise (van der Kolk, 2003). Both hyperarousal and dissociation can cause a disintegration of psychological functioning. The hyperaroused person can be so distracted by the hyperactivated state as to be unable to attend to much else. The dissociated person's state is by definition fragmented: disengagement from the external world and/or splitting off painful affects, memories

and parts of self (see also chapters 5 and 9). A key goal of psychotherapy is to promote psychological integration.

A useful distinction can be made between simple PTSD and complex PTSD (Herman, 1997). Simple PTSD is a response to a single traumatic event while complex PTSD arises from multiple or protracted traumatic experience and there is research to support the psychological differences between these two versions (Krupnick et al., 2004). Cumulative trauma and childhood abuse both increase the risk of subsequent adult complex PTSD responses (Schottenbauer, Glass, Arnkoff & Gray, 2008). Sometimes described as "PTSD of the self", chronic PTSD or disorders of extreme stress not otherwise specified (DESNOS), complex PTSD often involves more pervasive impairment including changes in affect regulation, attention, self perception, sense of meaning, relationships, and somatization (van der Kolk, 2003). For example, victims



Dr. Mike Stadter, an expert on working with trauma, serves as a Mobius Senior Expert. He supports our transformational leadership faculty with professional development and advances our coaching and facilitation practice through his scholarship on working with trauma and its aftermath. We are proud to have this relationship and to include Mike in our practice. Although the excerpt that follows is written for psychotherapists much of its wisdom is useful background for facilitators and coaches on the psychological symptoms of trauma.

of repeated sexual abuse in childhood were found to have more problems in relationships than those suffering from only a single traumatic event (Clas- sen, Field, Koopman, Nevill-Manning & Spiegel, 2001). Herman's opinion (1997) is that many patients with a diagnosis of borderline personality disorder are suffering from complex PTSD arising from prolonged trauma. She argued that framing their problem as a personality disorder is not only stigmatizing and inaccurate but it can impede treatment.

### Trauma and Basic Temporal Functions

Trauma injures the individual in a multitude of ways and disruption of the person's time sense is particularly damaging. Stolorow (2003, p. 158) noted that the disruption of "the unifying thread of temporality" is so central that it disrupts the sense of self. Herman (1999) found that temporal distortions are very common among victims of confinement. Trauma frequently creates epochal moments (Chapter 7) which fragment the experience of time, self and relationships. We do see many time sense distortions in non-traumatized patients but alterations can be especially strong in the aftermath of trauma. Using Ornstein's (1969) work on perceptual time functions, Terr

(1984) described how trauma can disrupt all four of the major elements of temporal functioning which are crucial for basic orientation and psychological regulation: short time sense, duration, simultaneity/succession and temporal perspective.

### Short Time Sense

This involves very brief, momentary durations and rhythms. Terr noted that most traumatized patients do not spontaneously report such phenomena and they may not register in explicit memory. "Yet awareness of the beat of the heart, of the in and out of breathing, of hunger, or of the need to eliminate are reminders of life, of living – and as such they serve as reassurances during traumatic events" (1984, p. 638). For instance, traumatized patients may rhythmically rock, sing songs to themselves, or count to endure a traumatic event and to keep from disintegrating. Such activities have a basic internal clock function that measures the passage of time and gives the victim a time-near sensory focus helpful in coping with the overwhelming experience. This short time sense can mute or blunt the impact of the disturbing traumatic elements. It is also useful to think of these behaviors as stabilizing the self through regression to autistic-contiguous functioning (chapter 10). In this

primitive mode of experience, dissolution of self is the predominant anxiety. To ward that off, the person organizes self through a focus on sensory experience. That return to the basic awareness of rhythms, skin surface and bodily functions affirms the existence of self and helps the traumatized individual to not "fall apart". Similarly, at times in therapy we help disorganized patients "pull themselves together" by time-near interventions (e.g., "We have 5 more minutes"; "What will you do with yourself for the next 2 hours?").

### Duration

Trauma commonly distorts the perception of the speed of time and how long an event lasted. This time-near perception can involve accelerated or decelerated time. People who have suffered a sudden, brief traumatic event such as a car crash frequently report that time seemed to go in slow motion and it was hard to believe that all that they experienced had occurred in just a few seconds. On the other hand, Terr noted that some people trapped for prolonged periods (e.g., miners, skiers in an avalanche) often report that the time passed much faster than normal. Patients who have been sexually abused over an extended time may remember it as having gone on for a much longer or shorter period than



had actually occurred. These temporal accelerations and decelerations may function to help the individual bear the trauma. For example, the slow motion perception of a car accident permits the experience of taking in the traumatic event more slowly. The warping of the experience of duration can also intensify the damage.

### Simultaneity and Succession

Two basic temporal perceptions are simultaneity and succession: whether events occurred at the same time or whether events occurred before or after other events. Traumatized patients may distort whether the trauma occurred before, during, or after another important event. These twists of memory can become important in the patient's narrative and may either aid containment of the damage from the trauma or intensify it. The distortions can also be prominent in later non-traumatic experiences.

Additionally, the intrusion of past, present and future can break down sequencing. Individuals may be going about their daily business and a stimulus evokes an intrusive thought from the past that is experienced with the force of it happening in the present. Sarah, 55, who had been repeatedly sexually abused in childhood, was walking to my office when she absent-mindedly noticed a plastic chain draped to keep people from walking on a grass plot. The chain reminded her of a particular time in her childhood which, in turn, suddenly threw her into a flashback of a childhood sexual trauma at that time. Much of the session was spent with her viscerally re-living that abusive event. Her connection with the present became very time-far as evidenced by her surprise as we approached the end of the session. On the other hand the future can intrude on the present as well. Anxious patients can become so para-

lyzed by their fear of future catastrophes that they cannot live in the present.

### Temporal Perspective

This refers to the change in the perception of the future in victims of trauma and is often, "time foreshortening" (Terr, 1984, p. 658). Following trauma, the patient may expect a smaller future -- a shorter life, few job prospects, no marriage or little joy. Terr quoted a patient two years after suffering a traumatic loss as saying, "Now I simply exist -- one day at a time" (p. 659). This is a time-near state. As I wrote this, three traumatized patients immediately came to mind who are afraid to, or unable to, have fantasies about their futures. They are mired in the time-near experience of the present and the time-far intrusion of the past into the present. In their experience, they have no future.

On the other hand, some trauma patients develop a transcendent or expansive time-far view of the future. This may involve a religious or philosophical belief -- that now they are destined for greatness, "God's will be done" or that they will be reincarnated into a better life.

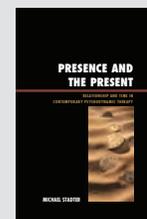
### Trauma and Frozen Time

As part of the complex effects of splitting and dissociation, the traumatic memory may be frozen and unchanging and a part of the self associated with it is frozen and unable to develop. Davies and Frawley (1992), in describing survivors of incest, wrote of the child part of the patient being frozen in time and isolated from the rest of the personality. Such patients continue to think, feel and act as they had in their lives at the time of the trauma. Van der Kolk (1996) reported that despite the evidence of frequent distortions in the memory of trauma victims, they consistently claim that their memories

and perceptions are *exact* representations of sensations at the time of the trauma. Consider that this belief in the accuracy of these declarative memories serves as an obsessional defense giving the impression of certainty and control.

### Trauma and Bringing Back the Past

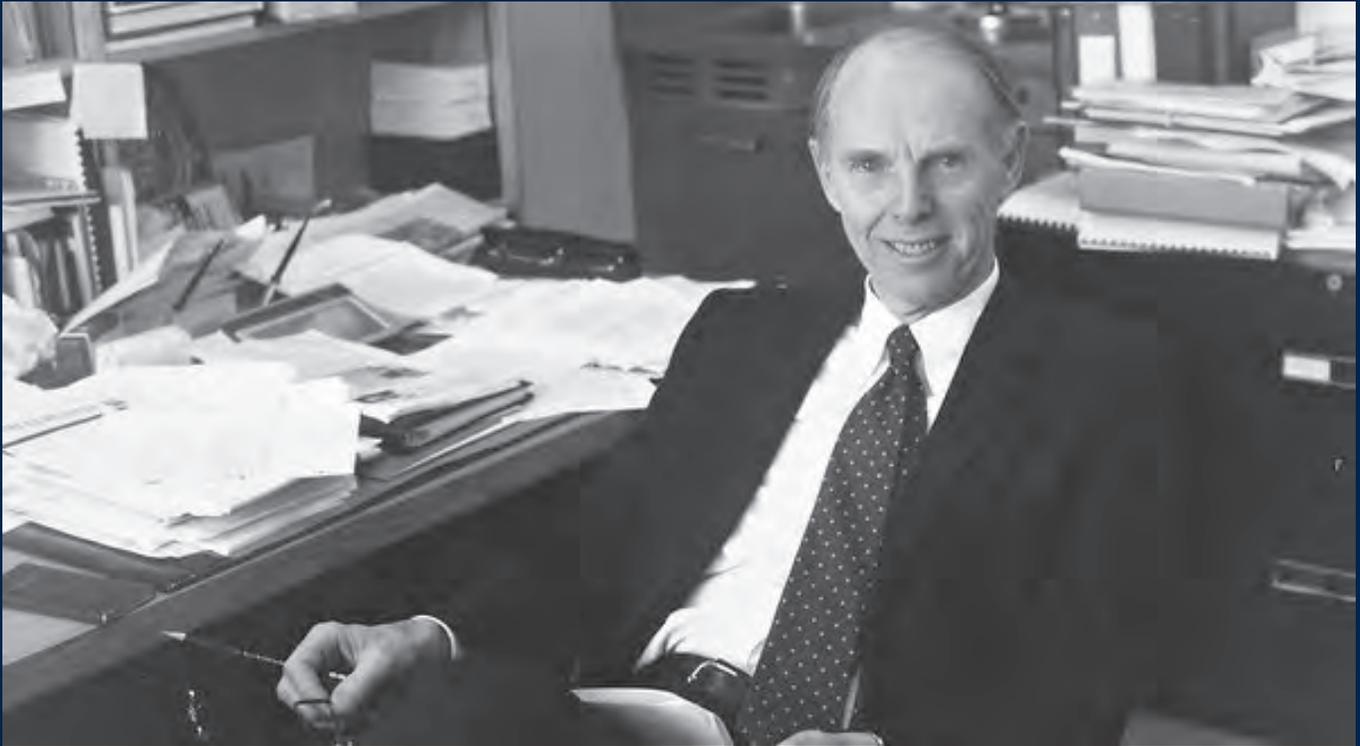
Traumatized patients often are obsessed with the desire to return to a time prior to the trauma. For instance, they may be haunted with thoughts and longings for the time before the rape or the death of the spouse. The pre-trauma time may be idealized, making it larger than life. Such a passionate desire for the time-far of the past is a way to manage the overwhelming experience of post-traumatic life. Shakespeare (1989) dramatized such a state of mind with Richard II's lament, "Oh call back yesterday, bid time return" -- (*Richard II* 3.2). We might think of this as investing temporal hope in the wrong direction -- in the past rather than in the future. There is a saying that, to move forward, "You have to give up the hope of a better yesterday." ■



**ABOUT THE BOOK** *Presence and the Present: Relationship and Time in Contemporary Psychodynamic Therapy* offers salient points learned from the author's forty years of practice and teaching, and

applies psychodynamic psychotherapy to the contemporary practice climate. Emphasizing the therapeutic relationship and the dimension of time, it grounds the discussion in clinical application. Including more than fifty vignettes and four extended case presentations, the author deconstructs successful interchanges as well as errors. This book is part of the Library of Object Relations Series.

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# Roger Fisher

1922-2012

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FOUNDER, HARVARD NEGOTIATION PROJECT

TEACHER, MENTOR AND PEACE MAKER

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*May His Memory Be a Blessing*

# ARTS & LEADERSHIP



# The Voice of Great Leadership: Evoking the Power of Authentic Presence

By Claude Stein, Mobius Transformational Faculty

## Courage and Change

It is July 2000. I'm sitting at a piano in central Europe at the invitation of an engineering firm with 60+ billion Euros in revenue, working with their senior management team, asking them to take risks to free their most authentic voice.

They are in a difficult situation. Their stock is depressed and they have hired a new head of training to redesign their leadership programs. He has invited me to come and do a program using singing to "get them to feel something below their noses" - to be more emotional, more passionate, more real. At first there is resistance. I quickly take failure off the table, inviting them to sing poorly ... and to sing loudly. There is some laughter and we begin with a simple warm-up. Soon they volunteer lyrics that articulate the qualities of great leadership. By the second evening, they're belting out favorite tunes. By the third day, someone has found a guitar and remarks "we haven't felt this much camaraderie since we were youths." The group as a whole becomes visibly more alive and engaged in their daily programs. Their spirits are higher and they have become optimistic. Finally, at the end of the week they take to a stage to accept their completion certificates. But suddenly the celebration comes

to a halt. The manager of operations in one of their largest countries grabs the microphone: "We must revisit our plans and build our nuclear plants further away from populated areas. It's not safe enough." He reminds the group that the firm's vision explicitly states that they maintain "the highest commitment to ethical and responsible actions."

I was utterly amazed at the risk he took to confront the group like that: upending such an enormous project during the final celebration. Freeing his singing voice with mission driven lyrics and emotion had awakened a profound voice of responsibility and leadership.

Later that night, when I got back to my room, I thought about the courage each of them showed when they dropped their guard and sang from the heart, even though their voices were untrained and their corporate culture constrained. I thought about the necessity of taking brave and uncharted risks to move forward authentically - and how finding one's true voice can change the world.

## Music and Methodology

What happened during those five days of what I call "Natural Singing," that is, singing with a more authentic intention, was remarkable. There were exercises and songs with no requirement to sing well. Little by little you could see the fears melt in the absence of criticism and feel the quality of presence and connection evolve. I used call and response exercises to both reframe the challenges and give voice to the positive values they had articulated on day

one. These are exercises where I sing out a relevant phrase and the group echoes it. The very short, single line affirmations, set amid well-chosen tonalities on the piano, got them back in touch with their corporate mission and unleashed powerful qualities. The words they sang gave voice to concepts of encouragement, pride, respect, innovation and accountability. Some lines were defiant, some humorous, some had a blues feel and some were uplifting anthems. I worked until people were clearly touched by the words they were singing.

Then, I began individual coaching. I helped each person identify a core message which, when cultivated, gave far greater meaning to their words. There were dramatic shifts in dynamics, confidence and charisma. The group became fascinated and fully engaged with each other's growth as they witnessed new aliveness, spontaneous gestures and compelling stage presence unfolding right in front of them. The room was filled with smiles and applause amidst the triumphant breakthroughs. I had encouraged them to move beyond fear of judgment, to step outside the box and allow their full voice to be heard. They were re-connecting with what fueled their passion in the first place.

## The Power of Vulnerability

Imagine the skeptical reaction of senior management teams when they find out they have been taken away from their desks in order to sing in front of each other! When clients discover I use singing as a tool for accelerating the growth of leader-





Knowing the quality of great leadership that each individual wants to bring forth, I can compose a simple line of song to sing, and frame it with an evocative context at the piano.

ship and personal presence, I often hear things like “You’re not going to make *me* sing, are you? I’m TONE-DEAF!” and “What does this have to do with the bottom line?” Often there is a look of panic. Dr. Robert Lengel, founder of the Center for Professional Excellence, told me he believes these programs can present more risk than high ropes courses. This is because singing is so personally revealing – and our voices are so closely tied to our self-image that when we sing solo in public, we are vulnerable. We are vulnerable, but with the potential to be enormously powerful.

Singing easily touches our emotions. This is precisely what makes it such a good tool to call forth authentic leadership. We can become real, take risks and open our mouths: connecting thoughts, hearts and stance. By taking risks and being real we motivate others and create change. We become stronger leaders. But, furthermore, as groups rally in support of one another they also create a wonderful culture of empowerment. A culture that encourages each and every person in the room to rise up with a strong voice. Whether we sing or provide the option of speaking is up to the corporate leader who is sponsoring the program. But whichever mode of expression, we move to a much deeper level of communication and engagement.

### The Technology of Authenticity

Although we are using voice and music as a tool, many people quickly

forget that we are singing any note, any key, as a way to tap into feelings, presence and right brain activity - and not to become good performers. They fall into the trap of striving to sing well. And this is how our authenticity and power gets derailed. We can hear the notes go off key when we are too self-conscious. This ego and fear driven agenda of wanting to do well hijacks our original intention and fullest possibilities. Some of this is survival instinct: to achieve success and avoid failure, shame and embarrassment. We do this even at the potential cost of losing our authentic selves. But it can also be a defense mechanism that conceals our true selves.

Authenticity stems from a re-energized connection with our original desire – something I like to call a “core” intention. You could define it as the change you would like to bring. In Natural Singing, it is the intention that justifies the lyric and organically drives the dynamics of self-expression: tone, volume, pacing, inflection, eye contact and gestures. These are the things that inspire trust, inform presence, create engagement and a successful presentation of one’s message.

Let me give you an example: Someone wants to sing a lullaby to their child but can’t/won’t, because they don’t think they have a good voice or the right words. Their primary agenda has become sounding “good.” But the original change they wanted to bring was an expression of peace, gentleness and safety to the child. If they stayed with that more authentic

intention, every note they sang, no matter in or out of tune, would bring those heartfelt qualities forth.

### Finding Core Intention

A client of mine from a Fortune 500 firm wanted to sell a multi-million dollar website to the state of Nebraska. She had been through presentation coaching courses all of her career. Here she was, with a small stack of index cards in hand and a tried and true method of triangulating all of her language towards the benefits of her value proposition. She was using an approach that was formulaic, that curtailed the richness of her authenticity. After five minutes of some persistent detective work I discovered the core reason she loved what she was doing was that she believed in her heart that “computers bring us all closer together.” I asked her to be convincing, to persuade with a whisper, then speak and then sing this core belief while I played the piano. Then we launched into the prepared presentation.

In the end she went to that meeting with only one index card sitting on her podium: “Computers bring us all closer together.” This acted as the driver of her energy, her spirit, the dynamics of her voice, her comfort and confidence and interestingly enough, her knowledge capital. The comment from her boss was “That was the most articulate you have ever been.” The presentation was a success and the sale went through. When we are true to our most authentic intention, comfortable being seen and unafraid to support our

words with genuine emotion, we become far more persuasive and charismatic.

### Storytelling

I was coaching a leadership team at N.A.S.A. to improve their ability to tell the N.A.S.A. story. Not just the story of scientific discoveries, moon landings or the exploration of Mars, but rather the unequivocally relevant story of benefits reaped here on Earth: fire retardant uniforms for firefighters, advanced imaging for early cancer detection and cat scans, cutting edge solar panel technologies. The list goes on and on and yet it's not the story that is often heard when we talk about the benefits of investing in space exploration. Members of the leadership team took the stage with their memorized presentations. One by one, I asked each of them again and again what really excited them about why they were there and what got them into science.

Then, by cultivating the energy of that inspiration and seeding it through their prepared language, each person became compelling and got spontaneous positive feedback. Their spirit was felt. They were better storytellers because they were THEMSELVES. They were in the moment. Emotional. Connected. Real. The common feedback was how people got to really know each other. The room was filled with the pride they took in their noble achieve-

ments and the excitement of being pioneers at the leading frontiers of space exploration.

### Passion and Presence

Several years ago I had the privilege to coach a congressman on his floor speech in the House of Representatives. He had been successful in gaining compensation for victims of Agent Orange and now was looking to do the same for Gulf War Syndrome victims. Sadly, he had been suffering from Parkinson's disease. His voice was debilitated and not projecting with much resonance or volume. It was time to call in his original motivation: the core intention. The reason that he was so passionate in the service of these ailing veterans was that he had an enormous sense of duty and was himself at one time on the battlefield. After some digging, tears came into his eyes as he exclaimed, "We all have blood on our hands."

The results of embedding this passion into his speech as subtext brought fire into his voice, conviction into his body and as a result he deeply impacted his audience. Votes were influenced. He came alive bringing forth the change he wanted to see in the room.

### Reconnecting to Mission

These stories highlight a theme in which corporate, community and personal mission are interwoven and elevated. At the leadership academy

of a world-renowned hospital, we begin with the basics of vocal physiology and some exercises to warm up, build confidence and project. I give tips for correcting nasality, shrillness, softness, breathiness, monotones, memorization, etc. Then, we focus the authentic intention, aligning with the hospital's mission statement: "... to deliver the very best health care in a safe, compassionate environment ...". As participants give their presentations, passion and personal presence emerge as they communicate facts and information. By day's end all are more relaxed and confident, engaged and re-energized.

At a telecommunications company with 55 million customers there were marketing research presentations with hundreds of data points. Dry as a bone right? Not after singing their true credo. When the speakers conveyed their honest desire to support their customers with the finest possible service, their words came to life. The senior VP in charge of the group said they were "the best presentations the team has ever given."

There was a manufacturing crisis at a major pharmaceutical company. Confidence had been shattered, trust broken. My colleague and I walked into a room filled with heavy energy. We asked the group to identify the key aspects of the company that they were proud of. Weaving those aspects into their presentations worked wonderfully. Smiles emerged and pacing picked up. Their speaking revealed



Neither a lofty degree of intelligence nor imagination nor both together go to the making of genius. Love, love, love, that is the soul of genius.

*-Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart*



their personalities and hope was restored.

At the 5th largest nuclear company, spirits were low as they were coming off some of the largest fines in history from the nuclear regulatory commission. All of their training had been geared towards identifying problems and possible dangers in such a high-risk environment. After coaching each executive in front of the group, I required all feedback to be positive. They refocused their listening on the improvement in each voice and presentation. By the end of the morning their excitement was palpable as they re-energized around their great skills and their sense of purpose. They re-engaged as individuals and as a team.

### Intention as a Driver

Why is this? Why does a core intention so influence tone, tempo, volume and presence? Why and how can it bring about such an organic, trustworthy and engaging flow?

Most speech and presentation coaches direct people from what I call the outside – in. “Drop your jaw.” “Speak from the diaphragm.” “Lower your pitch.” “Now, raise your pitch.” “Pause here.” “Do this with your hands.” “Emphasize that line.” “Find four friendly faces in the audience to look at.” “Choose different parts of the stage for fundamental points.” It’s your typical presentation coaching. But it’s only from the outside in.

I have coached at the Juilliard School, the New York Actors Institute, the National Speakers As-

sociation and worked with artists on every major record label. I also teach from the outside in. I can help you to stay hydrated longer, breathe from the diaphragm, create more resonance, better diction and increase projection. There are techniques to eliminate a monotone, to speak through a cold, to quiet a racing heart and to memorize a text. However, the effectiveness of all these techniques PALES in comparison to working from the inside - out.

Your primary intention is the key driver of the sound and dynamics of your voice. When there’s a crisis, we use better diction. When you need a cab in New York City, a loud voice comes out. When the umpire misses a call, ditto. You don’t stand there, thinking about dropping your thyroid cartilage (voice box), creating space in your pharynx (for resonance), trilling your lips or articulating your consonants. You just want the cab. You just want the kid to fall asleep with the lullaby.

Whether we choose to use whispering, speaking, or singing as a way to energize and bring emotion to our core intention (the change we wish to bring), once we do, we imbue our speaking voices with an exquisite variety of organic dynamics from the inside-out.

### Why Singing?

Singing is particularly effective as a tool for building presence. For the most part, words tend to derive meaning from their context. Language plus context yields meaning. Try saying the word “right” a few ways and you’ll see what I mean: “Yeah. Right. You want me to sing an operatic solo in perfect 18th century

Italian.” Or, “Riiiiiiight. I see what you’re saying.”

The secret lies in how music provides an enormous variety of contexts for meaning and how it triggers emotion. We have an endless assortment of rhythms and harmonies at work that put us in touch with our feelings and deeper meaning. Music accesses emotions and passion more readily and reliably than speaking which can often be purely informational and conceptual. As both head and heart align the results are inspiring. When we sing in front of others we are quite vulnerable, thus it provides the perfect opportunity for risk-taking, acceptance, group support and personal triumph.

I regularly teach a program for change leaders who are turbo-charging a large operational transformation at a chemical company. They sing about their aspirations for the organization but they also sing their own leadership song - sometimes bold, sometimes animated and sometimes terribly tender. The audience encourages each participant, taking the stage one at a time over the course of the evening to sing and receive coaching. This uncritical support creates the empowering space where people can emerge as stronger leaders. Each one becomes more open, more transparent and impactful with this permission from the group, the role modeling of their own senior leaders and some guidance from me. I am always touched by the joy and collective, humanistic possibility that is unleashed for the organization in these sessions. The voice holds the key to their full leadership presence.

### Whole Mind

Musical arrangements set evocative contexts for language. We have the discursive, concrete, conceptual

world of words (left brain), interacting with the feel, sound, expressive world of the music (right brain). So if a particular quality or message is challenging, I can support that expression by the way I play the piano (context) and offer a simple lyric in call and response style. Knowing the quality of great leadership that each individual wants to bring forth, I compose a simple line of song to sing and frame it with an evocative context at the piano. I also step in with some practice exercises. It takes a remarkably short time to get this kind of alignment going. Whether it is a small group or an interactive keynote with hundreds of people, these energetic shifts occur with amazing speed.

### The Result

Groups bond on a deep and common ground as we become more of who we really are. We have aligned our inner and outer message: head, heart and mission. Voices ring out effortlessly, fear-less-ly and honestly. Casual at times, poignant at times, but absolutely, undeniably real, authentic and inspiring. Spirits are lifted. Courage is fostered. Communication is clearer. Innovative ideas come out of the quiet person who is no longer captive to their shyness, or from the brusque speaker driven by ego who is no longer controlling and cut off. People risk being seen and heard. They are creative, highly competent, vulnerable and powerful. They become animated and excited about their work. They give more of themselves. They create stronger leaders around them. They have renewed confidence and their talents are better leveraged. And having evoked the power of authentic presence, they re-engage with the world, speaking with the voice of great leadership. ■



Claude Stein, Mobius Expressive Arts Faculty, is an internationally celebrated voice and performance coach with 32 years of experience. His VoiceLEADER programs have been offered in the U.S. House of Representatives and to senior management at Siemens, JPMorgan, Sprint, General Electric, N.A.S.A., Vistage International, Johnson & Johnson, Genzyme, The Hartford, Altria, the Center for Creative Leadership, Maersk Shipping, N.Y.U., PixelMEDIA, the MIT Sloan School of Management, The Conference Board, Zachry Construction, the Young President's Organization and the Women's Leadership Forum. He has been a main stage keynote speaker for the National Speakers Association, the International Coaches Federation, The Creative Problem Solving Institute, The Qualitative Research Consultants Organization, the Global Sufficiency Network and the California Workforce Association.

Claude is also a Multi-Platinum award winning voice coach whose private clients include artists on Atlantic, Island, Elektra, Sony, Virgin, Polygram, Warner Bros., R.C.A. and M.C.A. Records. His Natural Singer Workshops have been presented at the Juilliard School, the NYU Music Therapy Graduate Program, the Rubin Academy of Music and Dance in Jerusalem, the New York Open Center and The Actors Institute. Pro-Bono programs have been offered at Every Voice Counts for disadvantaged youth in Australia, the Mastery Foundation leadership forums for Arab and Israeli community activists and Catholic and Protestant community leaders in Belfast, Ireland, and the Global Sufficiency Summit.

The approach Claude developed blends easy-to-learn vocal skills with the secret techniques of professional performers who embody power, creativity and authenticity. It is an innovative and highly experiential method which engages both the right and left brain, and that quickly empowers both beginners and professionals alike. The results have received rave reviews from top industry experts in the fields of communication, healing, and creativity.

He is on the perennial faculty of the Massachusetts General Hospital Leadership Academy, the Center for Professional Excellence, the Omega Institute, Esalen, the New York Open Center, and the Kripalu Center for Yoga and Health. He studied composition and conducting at Bard College, vocal physiology with the Voice Foundation at Jefferson Medical College, performance coaching at The Actors Institute, and vocal technique with several of New York's premier opera and rock and roll instructors.

# Artful Leadership

by Michael Jones, Pianist, Leadership Expert and Mobius Expressive Arts Faculty

## A Third Way of Knowing

*Not all those who wander are lost.*  
– JR Tolkien

Robert M. Ingle, in an article in Scientific American entitled “Life in an Estuary” writes, “Life in an estuary may be rich but it is also almost inconceivably dangerous... twice each day the ebb and flow of the tide drastically alters the conditions of life, sometimes stranding whole populations to die.”

Leading in turbulent times is much like living at the moving edge of a salt marsh: survival requires extraordinary presence and adaptability, and flourishing requires something even more. As leaders today, we must be willing to suspend our dependence on past knowledge in favor of being fully alert to what is emerging before us. Yesterday’s route home is of little use when faced with the need to move more quickly than the tides. Only in being alert to new possibilities and dimensions may we navigate wisely, finding natural, unique, even unrepeatable ways of dealing with the challenges of leadership and governance.

The unpredictability of these sweeping changes suggests that, beyond both the cognitive and social sciences, we need a third way of knowing – what physicist David Bohm describes as ‘a subtle intelligence’ that seeks the wholeness behind all things, and invites into awareness whatever might normally seem vague, ambiguous or unclear. The root of subtle is *subtex*, which means ‘finely woven.’ This third way of knowing is at once refined, delicate and indefinable. It is a kind of intelligence that can hold in awareness the things that slip by us when we rely

too much on memory or past knowledge. It is also an intelligence that loves all that does not yet exist.

We need to understand this subtle intelligence not as a separate mental function, but rather as the source of an imaginative response to our world. As a kind of sense organ, the imagination reaches out and makes tentative contact with wholeness – that is, the things of an order larger than we can see directly – making visible that which is hidden, so as to begin to draw into awareness that which cannot yet be heard or seen.

More than almost any other faculty, the capacity to sense these almost indiscernible forces is essential to navigating our uncertain and changeable world. By developing this ability, we reawaken our relationship to our imagination, which makes available the twin gifts of intuition and inspiration. Together these serve as an effective counterpoint to the more usual mechanistic view of the world.

This is, of course, a skill-set that takes time to mature; it is not enough to summon our capacity for insight only when we are quiet or deeply engaged. In the time ahead, the most valuable leaders will be those who see what others don’t yet see and think what others are not yet thinking. Merely to say, “I didn’t see it coming,” is not an effective strategy for survival in the tides of change.

While not entirely common, these ideas are slowly taking root alongside the more conventional inventory of today’s leadership wisdom. I shared many of the ideas in this book with John, a consulting client and vice president of marketing and sales for a large international pharmaceuticals company, whom I met while working on

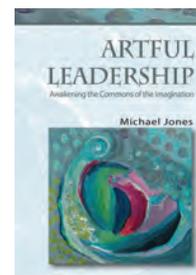
this manuscript. He knew the territory well from his own experience.

As he insightfully put it, “Things are changing so quickly now that if I already know where I am going, it is probably not worth getting there.” The creative conversations he and I had about this have infused much of this work.

On one of our frequent walks I asked John what he saw as the leading edge of leadership. “When I think of it,” he reflected, “truly outstanding leaders are not remembered largely for their professional, technical or cost-cutting skills, but for their wisdom, presence, intuition and artistry. These are the qualities that prepare them for making an organic response to critical situations.

Technical knowledge is important, but it is only part of the story; listening, getting a ‘feeling’ for things and engaging others in imagining possibilities, is the larger part of it. So much of a leader’s work today is not about playing the notes but listening for what’s emerging in the space between.”

This idea of ‘the space between’ brings to mind the words of Thomas Merton, who claimed, “There is in all things... a hidden wholeness.” The possibility that, just back of our human world, there exists a more-than-human sphere – an area of potential in the spaces between and around things – is an intriguing one. For John, it ran contrary to what he had been taught in business school. His curiosity about how we may engage a sense of wholeness to find this bridge between the visible and invisible was the starting point for many explorations. Often our



informal conversations took place over lunch, complemented by long walks in a lakeside park.

Our considerations were influenced by the elemental beauty of our surroundings; the sun, the wind, and the waves that washed along the shore served to balance our work. Our walks were a reminder not only that we share with the land a reciprocal arrangement of care, but also that what we were trying to be faithful to was not the examination of a set of finished facts, but to an unfolding story. It is a narrative that only makes sense when it is enlivened by the elemental presence of wind, water, sun, rain, trees and rocks. It is a story that could only be told while walking, for every gust of wind helped us to think as nature thinks – each moment evolving, organic, innovative and unique.

John spent what little free time he had reading and thinking about re-imagining leadership in the context of a world engaged in constant and disruptive change. The image of tidal marshes resonated very strongly with him. He believed the major challenges facing leaders today were not technical but transformational, based more in transforming situations than fixing them. He anticipated that leaders would need forums where they might explore the dimensions of their own subtle nature. This would include honest personal investigation of such questions as: Who am I really? Where is home? What is my relationship with beauty? Where do I go for inspiration? How can I serve the well-being of the whole?

As John and I talked over time, it became clear to both of us that there are two predominant leadership stories today. The first utilizes management sciences to ensure the integrity of organizational structures and processes and to develop the cognitive intelligence of

leaders. In order to build relationships, enhance communication skills and forge commitments, this journey has depended largely on the application of the social sciences.

“Yet,” as John pointed out, “even though these two approaches offer many benefits, management and social sciences alone aren’t going to help leaders like me who get overwhelmed by the pace of change.”

And so began another conversation. “It’s true,” I said. “As you have highlighted, for the things that really matter we often can’t know with absolute certainty where we are going until after we have arrived. By necessity our actions need to be spontaneous and improvised, and for that we need a third way of leadership. It needs to be grounded in a new form of intelligence – one based in what you might call an engaged imagination. This can help us ‘sense’ more deeply into the reality of our experience so we can draw into awareness whatever is unclear, clarify it and express it in a fresh and evocative way.”

“And,” John said, “for most of us leaders this is as unsettling as it is useful.” Despite his trepidation, John was excited to explore the possibility that the artist’s gifts of awareness and sensory ability might blend into the field of leadership. He was hungry for the kinds of ideas and experiences that would further nourish his own curiosity. Having earned his own MBA several years before, he already knew that leaders need to establish competence in the core areas of management, but he also saw that this in itself is not enough.

Like many executives, John made a distinction between managers and leaders. For him, the first is one who predominantly occupies an organizational role. The second, a true leader, is anyone who is committed to living

a complete life, regardless of organizational function. In this context, he considered such qualities as uniqueness, beauty, home, quality of place, and the ability to find one’s signature voice to be in the domain of leadership. He also believed that considerations about these areas need to be kept in the forefront of leadership thinking, not only because these explorations inspire leaders, but also because they inspire the communities and organizations they lead.

Like John, I see such meditations as a crucial part of a leader’s responsibility. I believe there is a growing need for new forms of social space that make possible the exploration of deeper questions – ones that bring together functional and social considerations with the aesthetic. Effective leaders need to be able to both create such spaces and participate in them. Also, leaders themselves must be committed to gaining a better understanding of their own needs and wants as they reflect on the inner core of their nature, and such considerations naturally lend themselves to this kind of work. Connecting this range of leadership function to a language of community and of the common good puts unique demands on leaders, particularly those who have largely defined their role more strictly in the context of strategic priorities and performance goals. This is why I always learned from my conversations with John. Like me, he was very passionate about these ideas and wanted to make visible in his own practice the underlying principles of this more ‘organic’ form of leadership. He also had a keen sense of the need for balance between the public and the personal self. He believed that the application of these principles was directly related to the development of the imagination, and particularly to those virtues of presence, gifts, beauty, grace

and voice that make up the realm of the imagination. He was convinced that leaders cannot truly engage in cultural or social change unless they have first re-imagined their own life and work.

“When I hear you describe the imagination’s influence I translate it into leadership language” John said “What you call gifts corresponds with qualities of identity, integrity and being true to one’s self; beauty corresponds to perception and adaptiveness, the ability to recognize one’s own home and make finely tuned adjustments quickly; grace is related to the emergence of shared meaning; and voice is the ability to know your own experience and articulate it clearly.”

“That’s a great translation,” I said, “and I’m sure you’ll find that the cross-over between artistic endeavour and leadership ability is a natural one.”

John was particularly intrigued by the idea that these aesthetic principles were grounded in ancient practices that contributed to the coherence, pattern and order of complex and successful communities for thousands of years. Given his background, John’s openness symbolizes a new stage in leadership and human development. For any true leader, it begins with an essential humility as we realize how much we don’t know. For John, the revelation of ‘not knowing’ was an ongoing struggle. As

he often commented, “I get paid for knowing, not for not knowing!”

Yet he recognized that these virtues live in the spaces between us, spaces that can never be adequately defined or known. He also sensed that they may be the source of deep reserves of energy that could revitalize our currentday organizations and communities. It was this openness to ‘not knowing’ that made him into the effective leader he was. It was also this acceptance of himself as a constant and curious learner that helped him acknowledge the process of becoming – and exploring the space between – not as a temporary condition but as a permanent state of being.

### The Space Between – Leadership and Personal Artistry: Reverence for the Moment

“When I think of this process of becoming,” John once said, “it seems to involve a shift of attention from goals and outcomes to means and processes – to reverence for each moment. Reverence opens the way to respect, and it is difficult to generate respect when your mind is set on a narrow set of goals.”

“Yes,” I said. “Years ago I attended a piano concert performed by Don Shirley. What I remember most were his first three notes. They had such a quality of attention to them. It is as if it had

taken him his whole life to arrive at this place and at this moment. In addition to the sound of the note itself I also heard in them a reverence for the audience, the auditorium, the other musicians – even the rainy weather outside. Often in the presence of a musician or speaker you feel ‘played to’ but he offered something more. We felt

held in a common field of appreciation, a moment to pause and listen and to find one another in a spirit of neutrality and openness.”

“For me, this is where the life of the leader and the artist intersect,” John said. “Leaders can learn a lot from artists about respect for the moment, of pausing and listening for the spaces between the notes. In leaders’ terms, it’s the space between the words. Sometimes leaders are so focused on outcomes that they can’t leave space to listen to other points of view; their mind is already made up. They know where they want to go and only want help to get there.”

“That’s what impressed me with that piano concert,” I said, “he wasn’t trying to get somewhere. Too often we miss the greater potential that attention to the moment might bring. If the more technically based form of leadership is built around realizing goals, the other, more artistic way is constructed around a series of moments in a flow of experience that leads towards a sense of wholeness and a less divided life. To find these moments we need to step off the path of our own habits and routines.”

“That’s true,” said John. “These moments build up through a precision of listening and seeing. I sense that this is a gradual awakening of attention – of bringing back from sleep such elemental aspects of the human experience as our relationship with nature, as well as with poetry, dance, music and the spoken word – that helps us awaken this inner perception.”

“And when we have that experience with art,” I said, “then we can grow out from it to bring a similar quality of attention in other things later on.”

What John had been outlining could be considered the pure expressions of reverence: times almost outside of time that serve to amplify the moment in a



way that helps us more deeply perceive and respect what is present. This is what these experiences teach us – how to be with that which we cannot define or fully understand.

As we shared these ideas I recalled the words of poet W.S. Merwin, who reminds us that: “If you can get one moment right, it will tell you the whole thing. And that’s true of your own life – each moment is absolutely separate and unique and it contains your entire life.” (Merwin, 2005: 39)

Merwin’s words also find an echo in those of Bob Dylan, who said, in explaining his being absorbed as a teenager in the music of Woody Guthrie, “You could listen to one of his songs and learn how to live.”

For leaders this means seeing ourselves as artists, where the first few actions taken are like the brush strokes of a painter – each carrying the destiny for all that will follow. Leaders who can shift their attention from goals to a respect for the unfolding of a moment will find within it a hologram revealing the pattern of the whole.

“What this means for me,” John said, “is that when I’m looking at something like a leaf, for example” – and he took hold of one in a tree nearby – “I can either analyse this object as inert and in its finished state or see it as continually coming into being.”

“Yes,” I said, “and by seeing it as a process rather than as a thing changes our relationship to it. It draws us into this more subtle intelligence because it is reciprocal. The only way we can know it is to also be known by it. As I suggested earlier, this intelligence is tuned to relationship. And it loves what does not yet exist. So we can analyse and make concrete our concept of the leaf, or we can participate with its continuous unfolding as something organic. In this way, its wholeness will become more and more visible to us

over time.” In this newfound awareness we may be more reluctant to impose our will on things and instead become curious to discover what the moment is trying to tell us. Engaging in the moment does not necessarily mean trying to change or even interpret or understand it. Acting organically begins by being with the other and sensing into the nature of what is there. For example, an artist’s sensibility will cause us to ask about a moment’s atmosphere, how alive it feels, what story it is telling, what we want from it, and what it wants from us. Inquiring into the nature of the moment invites responses that are quite different and more reciprocal than those that occur when we try to impose our will upon it.

John laughed.

“I initially came here expecting to talk over some business problems with you,” he said. “But I’m beginning to think that the root of these problems has to do with what you just said – too often I try to analyse and fix a situation without taking time for reverence – that is, to experience and participate in what it is trying to tell me.” John paused for a moment then said, “Maybe what we need are fewer planners and more ‘perceivers’ – leaders who can take in the full and immense complexity of events.”

### Living Into the Question

This was indeed at the root of John’s dilemma. His training had prepared him to plan, control, fix, measure, evaluate and problem-solve – skills well suited to the kinds of situations that arise in a more stable and predictable world. These very skills, however, kept him from being fully present to the space between, and to fully experience those valued moments that would bring him closer to a sense of being at home within himself and his world. This led John to ask, “How do we preserve these moments, when

there is such a pressure for executing planned action and meeting anticipated results?”

“By living in the question,” I answered.

“You’ll need to explain,” said John.

Successful artists understand what it means to ‘live in the question.’ As an improvisational pianist I have learned that when I am no longer ‘in the question’ – when I stop exploring and settle for what my memory has to offer – then the music stops as well. So to attend to the moment, artists devote as much of their attention to staying in the questions as they do to the mechanics of their craft. They realize that there is a holographic quality to the imagination. Again, if they can get one moment right; that is, if they can find the right phrasing or starting image, as Don Shirley did, then their perception for seeing the whole in a vital new way is heightened.

For example, an artist may ask, “Is what I am doing leading me to feeling more alive? Does it hold my interest and curiosity? Does it express beauty in a unique and original way? Does it lead me to feeling more nourished and engaged? Does it capture or express the moment in a way that feels right and true? And does it connect me in some way to a larger sense of the whole?” Such questions are answered more fully at the sensory level than the intellectual. Sculptor Henry Moore, in a conversation with poet Donald Hall, said this of life-guiding questions: “The secret of life is to have a question or task, something you devote your entire life to, something you bring everything to, every minute of the day of your whole life and the most important thing is – it must be something you cannot possibly do!” (Hall, 1993:54)

“To see my entire life in the context of a question,” John said, “is both profound and overwhelming.”

“It helps if we begin with finding a path to the question and following it,” I replied. “That is, we may begin with a sense of the whole, knowing that often it is not very clear. Instead it may be fuzzy and vague, more like a feeling, sensation or impression. Beginning with this awareness deepens our relationship with the question. It nurtures an inquiring state of mind.”

“I notice you have used the word sense instead of thought – what’s your reason for that?” John asked.

“Whatever we hold in our intellect probably started as sensation. Artists by necessity need to be masters in this range, because they are always working with the unknown. To find their way, artists must pay attention in each moment. And while there may be an overall sense of the whole, the artist’s central focus is on making infinite aesthetic choices as to how to proceed slowly, step by step, towards something that feels right – something that, through conscious awareness, is being made more coherent and whole. But it is only after you have taken the first step that you find the next.”

“So let me be clear about what you mean,” John said. “You’re saying that the space between only exists in the moment. It cannot be planned in advance.”

“That’s right.”

“This would suggest a new vision for leaders,” John said. “As I think of this way of seeing things, I believe that it offers a more accurate reading of the needs of the situation than a plan or prescription that has been formulated in advance.”

“Yes,” I said, “It gives us a suppleness of mind, and with it, the ability to make very finely-tuned adjustments, each instantaneously calibrated to the moment – something we will need in order to meet a world that is changing so quickly. This approach also helps us

suspend the need for judgment or certainty. Instead we can hold back, pause and wonder.”

John reflected for a moment. “I believe that would mean we need to become servants to the question rather than masters over it. To be reverent is to serve the moment, to be open to its changing form, isn’t it?”

“Yes!” I laughed.

“This is a great distinction. To be ‘master over the question’ likely suggests that we think we already have the answer and just need to bring others around to it. It directs our attention to the solution rather than the inquiry. But to be a servant to the question... well, that suggests being willing to live deeply into the uncertainty of the question itself, doesn’t it? When we can be tentative and fluid with the question rather than absolutely certain and fixed in our response, we discover a field large enough to wander in. It also teaches us something about being vulnerable in that we cannot control where the question will lead us.”

“That’s it!” John said. “It’s exactly what I’ve been thinking lately. This letting go, allowing something other – a question, a momentary impulse, something unexpected that seems outside the habitual. It’s what brings us closer to the power of creation. All this, despite the fact that as leaders, we are so impatient with questions and seek closure through quick, serviceable answers!”

As we continued to walk and talk together I was pleased to notice how easily John and I were setting a template for our conversations. The root of conversation is ‘convers’, which means, ‘to turn together’. The ideas we had been exploring about attending to the moment and living into the larger questions were helping us to recover the very attention needed to re-imagine the place of leadership. It was apparent

to both of us that these insights would not come ready-made. Instead, the reality we were exploring was as fluid and ephemeral as the beauty of the scenery at the periphery of our attention, drifting in and out of our awareness. Much of it would be easily missed if we were not attentive to impressions that were floating in the spaces between.

“I find it reassuring,” John said, his eyes brightening, “to know that we innately possess the capacity of awareness to navigate the unknown. But unlike the other intelligences – managerial and social-science based – I have the impression that this subtle intelligence, because it is a property of the imagination, will not tell us what to do and therefore remains little understood.”

“Yes,” I replied. “And at the same time it is vital. If we cannot look and listen well – that is, if we don’t try to see things whole – then we begin to disown ourselves.”

John shook his head. “This happens so much at work. People will not own the authority of their own experience. They are always looking out to see what others think and try to match their thinking to that. It’s as if they don’t trust themselves, as if they are not at home in their own skins. People have so much to offer but there must be something we do that inhibits them from speaking out.”

“I wonder, if the beginning question we need to ask is, ‘Where is home and how do we find our way there?’” I said.

## Finding Our Way Home

In the absence of a sense of belonging, including a sense of home in corporate culture, as organizational issues have grown in complexity, most of us fail to grow in presence to adequately meet the underlying needs of today’s situations. Too often, instead of slowing down to reflect and gain a deeper perspective from our own direct exper-

rience, we get busier. When we adopt the common belief that any action is better than no action, we accelerate the cycle of cause and effect, which leads to solutions that often prove, in hindsight, to have been based on an historical perspective that is reflexive and overly simplistic.

“I believe the question of home has everything to do with what you said about looking, listening, and feeling what is alive in us in each moment.” John said. “This is what brings us closer to ‘home,’ and I think it is what you mean by listening. We cannot listen well unless we are ‘at home’ and present with ourselves.”

“Yes,” I said. “I also wonder if most leadership failure can be attributed, not to a lack of knowledge or resources, but rather to a failure of presence. Despite the proliferation of theoretical concepts, models, knowledge and technology, we have not developed the corresponding imaginative capacities to see the overall pattern.”

“I agree,” John said. “But when we get so far off track, how do we find our way back?”

I think home is a unique place for each of us and we recognize it when we are there. I remember a beautiful line from a Robert Frost poem:

*“Home is the place where, when you have to go there,  
They have to take you in.”*

Our conversation had opened the possibility that we would need to shift our focus from problem solving to problem discovering. When we frame issues in the context of finding the right questions, it slows our impulse to action and invites a renewed focus on creating a home for the question – that is, of actually taking the question in. These kinds of questions engage the imagination and serve as powerful attractors, drawing insights that are often beyond what we could foresee.

In this sense, a leader’s greatest asset is not technical knowledge but rather the commitment and curiosity to ask the kinds of questions that invite others to suspend what is familiar in order to see and hear with fresh eyes and ears.

“This curiosity cannot be trained into us, can it?” John wondered aloud.

“You’re right,” I replied. “It is already in us and needs only to be evoked.”

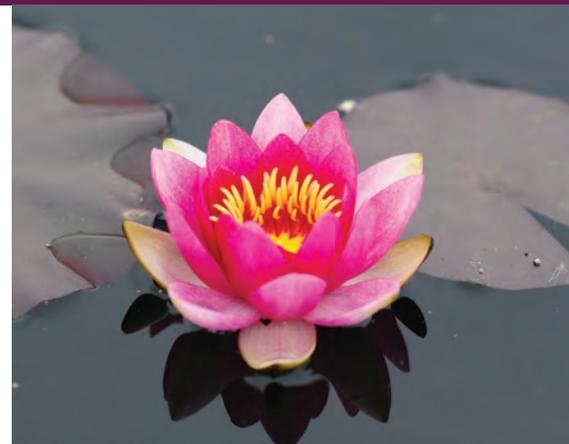
“I can see how it unfolds naturally when we are able to bring to the forefront questions that awaken those virtues you spoke of earlier: of presence, gifts, beauty, grace, and voice. But these are different from the virtues we commonly speak of, such as honesty, justice, courage and truth. What makes these so unique and important now?”

“They represent the common meeting-place of the imagination,” I said.

“They awaken our senses and that subtle intelligence. And they bring to light the innate artistry that was such a cohesive element for ancient cultures for thousands of years.”

“The purpose now is not so much to educate leaders as ‘artists,’ but more to help them find something that engages reverence in the way that music does for a musician or words for a poet. Beauty and grace both do that. It gives them a chance to read the world afresh and see it in its full complexity. It is these aesthetic qualities that offer tangible nourishment to the imagination.” John completed my thought: “And the imagination is marginalized when the only lenses we use to measure value are statistics and facts – and, of course, the economic benefits.”

“The irony is that it is precisely when these aesthetic qualities are needed most that they are most often overlooked.” I said. “This happens in school curricula for example, and in other ways. The development of the imagination represents the next



frontier in leadership development. It holds the key to navigating complexity because, as a home for the senses, it expands our attention so that we may more fully comprehend the full complexity of unfolding events.”

John reminded me how difficult it is in his world to measure the value of such an approach.

“Acts of the imagination tend to be messy, evocative and nonlinear,” he said. “Even though I agree that the managerial and social sciences don’t offer a vocabulary for creating a home for our gifts or discovering how to belong in the world, neither does that make it easy to engage others in something that does not yield immediate results.”

“It’s clear to me that the imagination needs multiple points of interest.” He added. “To recognize these points, we need to encourage others to see and speak in their own unique way.” John paused. “Having said that, however, I work in an environment where everyone is compartmentalized. They stay very close to others who think the same way they do. It’s becoming increasingly difficult for us to step out of our tribal affiliations and meet in the middle.”

“This may help explain why authentic curiosity is difficult to achieve,” I said. “By definition, curiosity challenges us to release the old and leads us towards the fresh and the new. Specifically, it is naturally

responsive to what spontaneously arises in the flow of our direct experience. At first, this will most likely yield only an ephemeral impression: a moment found in nature; a tug at our heart in response to something spoken that is real and true. This is where we find one another. As Merwin once noted, it is by being open to these moments that we realize they are unique and also hold certain things in common at the same time.”

“Ah yes,” John said. “And so we begin to fulfill what we always wanted but did not know how to ask for. My own longing has not necessarily been for a greater measure of understanding, but rather to be gripped by life; to experience something that feels authentic and true.”

We walked on for a while in silence,

listening to the rustle of the wind in the pines overhead.

“And this is what happens in what you’ve called the commons, isn’t it?” John said. “It makes the spaces between visible. And it’s what we are missing. I’m seeing it now as the opportunity to pause and listen, to be reverent and respectful – maybe even find home. What was that you said? The world will have to take me in.”

“In a manner of speaking, yes,” I said. “And in so doing you may also be a part of an experience that offers the possibility for greater depth, discovery and surprise.”

### Following Our Attractions

“It is this hunger for something more that has attracted me to these conversations,” John said. “But I always

thought it had more to do with actions than with being. I have come to realize that the very words that had once been my touchstones – targets, performance, efficiency, solutions, results, breakthroughs – are now beginning to suffocate me.”

At the same time, John acknowledged the difficulty in breaking free of these habitual ways of being. “The proliferation of knowledge and technology for its own sake has put many of us in a trance,” he said. “In my organization, language creates our reality, and that language originated in the Industrial Revolution. So we are still being informed through language that was most relevant to a world that existed 300 years ago. There is no language for being stewards of the imagination.”

For many analytical processes, the skills of managerial planning and the allure of performance measurement are the waters we swim in. As John so often asked when we first met, “If I wasn’t managing people in order to meet performance goals, what would I do?”

Even as we struggle to apply our well-hewn skills to a world that is in constant flux, we need to recognize the need for something more. Leaders must learn to move further upstream. When unanticipated events dramatically affect even the most certain plans, we need to see action in the context of the quality of our collective gifts, strengths and self-knowledge – and better understand the atmosphere, or soil, in which they can best grow. In other words, the journey to wholeness begins with a renewed commitment to following what attracts us, even if it seems like nonsense and impossible to explain. Following these paths may become critical in formative times when we must bring into awareness – and eventually into reality – something that was not there a moment before. ■



Michael Jones is a Juno nominated pianist and composer whose fifteen recordings of original piano compositions have served as a benchmark for contemporary instrumental music. He is also a widely recognized leadership educator, speaker and award winning writer who has published three books on leadership and creative practice including *Creating an Imaginative Life*, *Artful Leadership: Awakening the Commons of the Imagination* and *the Soul of Place: Transforming Leadership Through Nature, Art and Community*. He is a uniquely gifted story-teller and widely recognized for how he integrates his music in his work with leaders on creativity and innovation.

Michael has presented at TedX Burlington, The MIT Sloan School Innovation Period, Banff Centre Leadership Development, Quaker Foods and PepsiCo Global Nutrition Group, Tamarack Collaborating Communities Institute, Health Nexus, The Creative Problem Solving Institute and The Proctor and Gamble Global Innovation Group among many others.

He has also been engaged in long-term projects as a Senior Associate with the MIT Dialogue Project, as a consultant with the Leadership For Transformation Dialogues at the Fetzer Institute and as a core faculty for the four-week Executive Creative Leadership Series and EMBA programs at the University of Texas San Antonio.

Michael has led programs on The Foundations of Dialogue and the Art of Thinking Together and has facilitated transformative conversations with a variety of groups including Quaker Foods and PepsiCo Global Nutrition Group as well as dialogues on re- envisioning our future with a variety of community boards and leadership teams.

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# Moving Performance

by Ben Hines, Founder, Moving Performance, A Mobius Alliance Partner

*Music plays a significant part in all of our lives, whether we know it or not. Ben Hines, founder of Moving Performance, an organization pioneering the use of music in people development, shares his thoughts below on how music can make a shift in performance in businesses and organizations today.*

Throughout the auditorium, the bankers were moved to tears through the emotional power of what they had just experienced. These were tears of appreciation, accomplishment, and the deep realization that new possibilities had just opened up before them. The catalyst for creating this experience was my intuitive hunch that music could unlock a powerful communication for the group. I took a gamble and it worked. The result was not only a highlight for the conference, but subsequently the launch of Moving Performance, a training organization committed to improving business through the power of music.

The challenges that block the best in business are emotional, not rational. The programmes we've been developing at Moving Performance break open these blockages and release new learning. We use the power of music to do this. Top leadership raise their game through an immersion experience in brilliant performance, teams catch a vision for greatness when sitting amongst a world class collaborative ensemble, struggling employees shift their mindset when the issues faced in a change situation are given voice. The key is not merely the music, but how we've developed creative approaches to link the power of music and music

performance to effective business learning.

Here's the story of how we got to this place, and what we've been learning.

In 2004 I was a senior member of the product management team in the African business of Barclays Bank. I managed the product portfolios and was responsible for bringing to market new and innovative propositions for the Bank's retail and business customers across the continent. At that time, I attended a three-day leadership conference for the top 150 leaders from the business. Delegates attended from all over Africa. Half way through the conference we were divided into 6 teams of 25 people and told to write a play on the customer lifecycle. Each team contributed to a six-part drama documenting the sequence of turning a bad customer experience into a good customer experience. My team was given the part of the "turn around". The activity was to be competitive and the winning team would be announced for the best performance.

Having been around groups of

business people trying to act before, I figured that the majority of "plays" would be at best amusing and at worst embarrassing. Wanting to win the challenge, I suggested that rather than stage a "play" where all 25 of us would inevitably be trying to get our turn on the stage, why not make a real impact and do something altogether on the stage? Why didn't we sing a song?

After some discussion, some creative song writing, and much rehearsal, the end result looked like this: Stage lights down, our group of 25 people huddled together in a scrum on stage. Silence in the auditorium. Then through the PA system came the haunting hummed tune of the hymn *Amazing Grace*, sung by a lady from Zimbabwe who had a beautiful soulful gospel voice. You could hear a pin drop.

The second verse continued with hummed harmony from several of us, and some finger clicking to get a rhythm going. Then the Zimbabwean lady started to sing the lyrics to our new song, *Amazing Change*. The



words hit the conference theme perfectly. Three more verses followed each building up with more and more energy, passion and volume. Meanwhile, the stage lights started to increase, our scrum opened up like a flower and by the end this group of 25 bankers were a full-on arms-in-the-air gospel choir belting out *Amazing Change* from their hearts.

It was stunning. The audience was moved to tears - they could not believe their colleagues had just achieved what they did. The choir had just achieved something that most thought impossible - new possibilities opened up to them. For myself, it was the start of something very special - it sowed the seed that music can make a real impact and difference in organizations. Of course, we won the competition hands down!

So how and why does music make an impact in business?

Here are 3 examples of how music is effective in organizations.

1. It is the most emotive art form, and as such everyone responds to it. If used skillfully, it becomes an enabler for people to start to engage with the deeper, more emotive issues in the workplace.
2. As a metaphor for performance, team work and leadership, music

contains a wealth of useful insights for performance in the workplace, especially when demonstrated with world-class ensembles.

3. As a practical activity, music making becomes an excellent role-play for challenging situations in team performance, leadership and stepping outside one's comfort zone.

## 1 Music is the most emotive art form

Most organizations I come across share that the biggest challenges they face are around executing change, innovating ahead of the curve and inspiring their people. All organizations need to change, be that a result of growth, decline, external pressure, re-organization, or implementing a new strategy. The rational reasons for change are relatively straightforward; the hardest thing is getting the organization to *want* to change. And this is an emotional issue.

Organizations tend to communicate change by explaining the rationale. They do this well. People understand that sales need to increase, costs need to go down, or the operation needs to become more efficient. And yet many leaders wonder why change is so difficult to bring about.

The problem is that for many, they

just don't *want* to change. They are not happy with the change; they don't like to move away from what they know. It makes them feel uncomfortable. There is nothing intrinsically wrong in this, it is just our survival instinct kicking in - it is safer to go with what you know when the future looks uncertain. Yet many leaders and organizations fail to address this in their employees.

Music can make a difference here.

Back in the middle of the UK banking crisis, one of the banks bailed out by the Government asked me to speak at their management conference. The new leadership team had a vision for where to take the organization. Their challenge was the management population seemed "stuck" in the leftovers of two years of uncertainty, lost share portfolios, and continued negative press. They lacked enthusiasm and resolve to pursue the new vision. How could we help turn the mindset around?

It seemed to me that the organization was trying to implement their new vision in a rational way, whereas the people were responding emotionally. It was clear the new leadership team had not dared to ask the question of the organization "so how do you feel?"

Our solution was to access people's emotions through music. In the conference we started talking about music and the courage it takes to stand up and perform, and relating it to our own experience in the FS industry. Through various ice-breakers and activities designed to lower people's inhibitions, we played them a range of music and then asked them to discuss how the music made them feel. The fascinating thing was the diversity of people's responses. On listening to a clip from a Mahler symphony, one person said it made them





feel frightened, whereas another said it made them feel energized. We not only demonstrated that everyone has feelings (even bankers!), but that everyone feels differently to the same thing. By expanding this into a process of facilitated discussion on their corporate situation, the delegates started a song-writing process. They shared their journeys, and their positive and difficult emotions. We then brought them together in a grand performance.

The results were stunning. Firstly the lyrics were brilliant – they were powerful, they said it as it was. They were very real. They were also amusing. The process of song writing brought the team together, discussing for the first time things that really mattered. The moment of performance stretched them. They were taken outside their comfort zone, and yet all performed fantastically well.

Most important was the transaction that took place. In musical performance performers communicate to an audience, and the audience listens. For the first time this organization listened to itself, to how it really felt about itself, the situation they found themselves. They now had a common understanding – it was aired, and it was done so in an incredibly

creative and inspiring way.

Symbolically it drew a line in the sand. It was a cathartic moment, allowing the management to move on from the past and embrace the direction they were being led into. That organization has now successfully been re-privatized; they attribute the musical input in that conference has a significant step on their journey.

## 2 Music is a powerful metaphor

Leonard Bernstein, the composer, conductor and educator, said “the best way to know a *thing* is to understand it in a different discipline”. The idea of stepping back from your own context and into another to gain fresh insight or new ideas is a proven way to problem solve. The music metaphor gives a wealth of opportunity to explore business challenges in a dynamic and creative environment.

Using the symphony orchestra as a metaphor for organizational performance is one such example. Our leadership programme, Know the Score, takes business leaders into the heart of the world-renowned Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. The focus here shifts to the music making itself. How does this group of experts working in multi-functional teams create such consistently brilliant performance? We get inside the or-

chestra to experience first hand the dynamics of collaboration, leadership, communication, and support that happen in surprising ways hidden from a normal viewing audience.

For opening up insight into how complex teams operate, the orchestra has proven to be one of the best tools out there. For one thing, the whole team is right there on stage for the delegates to scrutinize. Any shifts in performance are immediately discernable. This aspect of immediate feedback and accessibility to the thinking of the orchestra members is fully exploited in our carefully crafted workshop programme. Delegates discover how communication happens within the orchestra to enable immediate change to happen simultaneously throughout the whole ensemble, how vision is translated from the composer’s notes and brought alive with powerful clarity, and what is actually going on when the conductor takes the podium.

In each workshop we open up more than 20 such areas for learning. And the key to powerful learning is that this is not merely a chalk talk, it’s live on stage. Experiential. Inspirational. Even those who don’t think they like classical music are awe struck when sitting on stage in the midst of a performance. The nature of music bypasses intellectual barriers.



The senses are awakened and the brain is activated on many levels. Delegates feel the pain of an ensemble playing out of tune. They know when it's put right. They sense the beauty of a soloist's contribution and note how the entire ensemble adjusts their performance to support that individual. Collaboration and synergy within a team takes on a whole new significance.

On their own, these are merely experiences. And learning from such an experience won't happen naturally. There is a difference between enjoying a concert and using an orchestra as a learning tool. We prepare delegates beforehand in order to focus their attention on their particular area of interest. We teach them how to use what they see, what they hear, and what they think throughout the workshop to capture key observations. We then lead them through a process to connect their observations to their workplace. The power of metaphor is that the delegates discover their own learning through this experience. When the learning comes from within, it sticks. They own it. We design the programme to open up each delegate's understanding about what brilliant performance is

all about and apply it to their own situation.

Our experience is that they get it. And can then see themselves and their team in a new light.

Through the immersion in the metaphor and understanding the inner workings of an orchestra there is a significant amount of insight, which if carefully and relevantly connected to the corporate world, can make a transformational change in the performance of individuals and organizations.

One team that went through the programme recently came from a leading global firm. They were already a high performing team, experts in their field. Yet they knew they needed a higher level of collaboration in how they worked together. They didn't need more information or analysis, they needed a dynamic and strategically creative space to re-envision how they could be a brilliant team. That is what we provided.

The orchestral session with this team was transformative. They were immersed in world-class performance, teamwork and leadership. In the afternoon application session we asked them to think of this experience as a yardstick, as though the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra was a 10/10 performing team, where did they see themselves? A gap was articulated, the issues and obstacles drawn out. The work then shifted to generating an action plan using our leadership tool "*Six Keys to Brilliant Performance*". This thinking tool looks at a range of orchestral performance elements such as listening, balancing, leading, and empowering star performers, and applies these directly to the delegate's situation.

The team got hungry to see their own performance lifted; it gave them a common language and experience to reference brilliant performance;

they were inspired to learn about each other more, to listen more effectively, to balance their own role to those around them. They have new ideas for managing their key players – to empower and encourage in order to release new potential.

### 3 Music as an effective role-play

Music is usually considered an exclusive activity for "musical" people. As a result most people do not get involved in music making, even though most actively listen to it.

When we take a group of people into practical music making, they are usually out of their comfort zone – they are being stretched and as such are in a great place to reflect on why they feel uncomfortable and to learn about themselves.

Practical music making can include performing on instruments, playing on their own in front of people, playing in groups, composing music, singing, writing songs, listening and observing professional musicians.

One professional services firm we work with sought to develop the emotional intelligence awareness of their management. In particular, how they managed their personal impact to leverage client relationships.

We gave this group a challenge: to compose music that would be performed by a professional music quintet. Out of their comfort zone? You bet. And this was precisely why it proved to be so effective. They had to step in and produce results in an environment that they knew little about. They were dependent on a group of professionals who knew far more than they did. How would they manage their personal impact, and manage the range of emotions they had - from disbelief that the task

was possible to fear that they may be found out as someone who was not that confident?

Once engaged, the group came alive with creative ideas. We have developed a method for how a group like this can write music, but it requires clear communication with the musicians. At the end of the exercise the compositions were performed, and they were excellent.

The process highlighted key lessons for the group in how to handle themselves in an ambiguous environment, and how to work collaboratively with complete strangers who are professional at what they do. This scenario is not too different from professional services firms engaging a client and embarking on a project. Because the subject matter (creating music) is not directly relevant to their work, the delegates are freer to explore how they managed themselves in the process – they do not feel as exposed as if this was a technical role-play situation. As such they are free of irrelevant detail, and can focus on their personal behaviors and group dynamics.

### In Closing

We've found that music opens up possibilities for effective learning. One reason for this is that it so powerfully engages the whole person. Daniel Barenboim the acclaimed conductor and pianist, puts it this

Ben Hines is pioneering a new way to Learning and Development in organizations using the power of music. He combines his commercial leadership experience, built up over 12 years in the international financial and legal service industries, with his talent and passion for music. Working with leading organizations in the private and public sector, he is rapidly gaining a reputation for delivering change and results that last. He believes that in order for to bring lasting change in L&D programmes, it is vital to build an emotional connection between the learners and their objectives.

Moving Performance has recently launched a world-class leadership programme in partnership with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, which explores how business leaders can empower a multi-functional and diverse workforce to produce consistent world-class performance. Something a professional orchestra does all the time, and something businesses need to do far more often!

Ben has worked and lived in UK, South Africa and Kenya, and worked widely in USA, Africa and India. He lives in London with his wife Louise, and their four young children.

way: “The power of music lies in its ability to speak to all aspects of the human being – the animal, the emotional, the intellectual and the spiritual. Music teaches us, in short, that everything is connected”.

It's when the whole person is engaged that individuals and teams perform at their best, and this is the key to corporate success. Music is proving to be a fantastic medium to bring about this holistic learning; connecting people to their core and helping them discover how to apply this in the business world.

One of our recent delegates de-

scribed our workshop as the most amazing experience of their life. This is no longer a surprise to us, as many others have said the same thing. People want to learn, want to provide inspirational leadership and contribute to a high performing team. When they experience this first hand and gain insight into how they can do it themselves, something shifts inside them. Motivation is rekindled. Connecting this sort of experience with deeper learning focused on delivering value is what we are about. ■

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# Yes to the Mess, A Book Except

by Frank J. Barrett

Jazz players assume that no matter how incoherent or unpredictable the current situation appears, they'll find some positive pathway out, some creative possibility to uncover and explore. Without such a mindset (a bias toward positivity), they would have trouble performing at all because, by the very nature of the art form, they find themselves in the middle of messes all the time. Jazz musicians can't stop in the middle of a number to problem solve or put situations in order or say to other players, "I don't like those notes you played. They didn't match with what I had in mind, so let's go back and do it over." The major reason why improvisation works is that the musicians say an implicit yes to each other. Like the managers at Herman Miller who found ways to get rid of wasps and make honey, jazz musicians succeed because they have faith that whatever is happening has potential to lead in innovative directions

Because jazz improvisation borders on chaos and incoherence, it begs the question of how order emerges. Unlike other art forms and other forms of organized activity that attempt to rely on a predeveloped plan, improvisation is widely open to transformation, redirection, and unprecedented turns. Since we cannot rely on blueprints and can never know for certain where the music is going, we can only make guesses and anticipate possible paths based on what has already happened. As jazz critic Ted Gioia writes: "The improviser may be unable to look ahead at what he is going to play, but he can look behind at what he has just played;

thus each new musical phrase can be shaped with relation to what has gone before. He creates his form retrospectively [*italics added*]."

A jazz musician might begin by playing a virtual random series of notes, with little or no intention as to how it will unfold. These notes become the materials to shape and work out, like pieces of a puzzle. The improviser then begins to enter into a dialogue with the material: prior selections begin to fashion subsequent ones as themes are aligned and re-framed in relation to prior patterns.

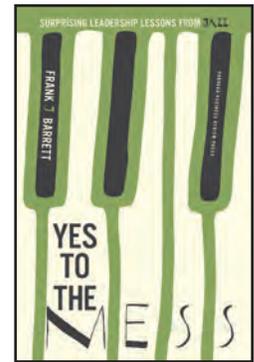
In a sense, jazz improvisation is much like bricolage, the art of using whatever is at hand. The anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss first coined the term bricolage; those who practice it are bricoleurs. They tinker with a myriad of disparate materials and put seemingly unrelated things together into some semblance of order. They are junk collectors who bring order out of chaos. Both bricoleurs and jazz musicians examine and query the raw materials available and then entice order, creating unique combinations as they work through their resource.

Similarly, the jazz improviser attends closely to what is happening, seeing the potential for embellishing on motifs, linking familiar with new utterances, and adjusting to unanticipated musical cues that reframe previous material. In this continual exchange, each interpretation has implications for where to proceed. Jazz improvisation involves constant attention to such musical "yes and..." cues. There's always an obligation to look back on what has happened and extend it.

Organizations tend to forget how much improvisation, bricolage, and retrospective

sense making managers need to complete daily tasks. In an effort to control outcomes and deskill tasks, managers often attempt to break complex jobs down into formal descriptions of work procedures that people can follow automatically. In a perfectly rational world, such strategy makes perfect sense, but that's rarely the way work actually gets done. Many, perhaps most, tasks in organizations are indeterminate, undertaken by people with limited foresight. To meet their duties, employees frequently need to apply their own resourcefulness, cleverness, and pragmatism. They play with various possibilities, recombining and reorganizing, to find solutions by relating the dilemma they face to the familiar context that preceded it. So it is with many jobs in organizations. They require bricolage— fumbling around, experimenting, and patching together an understanding of problems from bits and pieces of experience, improvising with the materials at hand. Few problems provide their own definitive solutions.

Although jazz players are best known for their soloing, jazz itself in the final analysis is an ongoing social accomplishment. Players are in a continual dialogue and exchange with one another. Improvisers enter a flow of ongoing invention, a combination of accents, cymbal crashes, and changing harmonic



patterns that interweave throughout the structure of the song. They are engaged with continual streams of activity: interpreting others' playing and anticipating based on harmonic patterns and rhythmic conventions, while simultaneously attempting to shape their own creations and relate them to what they have heard.

In order for jazz to work, players must develop a remarkable degree of empathic competence, a mutual orientation to one another's unfolding. They continually take one another's musical ideas into context as constraints and facilitations in guiding their musical choices. Here's what saxophonist Lee Konitz has to say about this interactive interplay and the challenges it constantly presents:

*I want to relate to the bass player and the piano player and the drummer, so that I know at any given moment what they are all doing. The goal is always to relate as fully as possible to every sound that everyone is making . . . but whew! It's very difficult for me to achieve. At different points, I will listen to any particular member of the group and relate to them as directly as possible in my solo.*

Players are continuously shaping their statements in anticipation of others' expectations, approximating and predicting what others might say based on what has already happened.

Traditional models of organization and group design feature static principles in which fluctuations and change are seen as disruptions to be controlled and avoided. Jazz bands are flexible, self-designed systems that seek a state of dynamic synchronization, a balance between order and disorder: a "built-in instability." In jazz, ongoing negotiation becomes very important when something in-

terrupts interactive coherence. Given the possibility of disorientation and miscalculations, players must be able to rely on one another to adjust, to amend direction. Drummer Max Roach recalls a performance of "Night in Tunisia" when Dizzy Gillespie and his fellow players lost the sense of a common beat.

*When the beat got turned around, it went for about 8 bars. In such a case, someone has to lay out. You can't fight it. Dizzy stopped first because he heard what was happening quicker than the rest of us, and he didn't know where "one" was. Then it was up to Ray Brown and Bishop and myself. One of us had to stop, so Bishop waved off. Then it was up to Ray Brown and myself to clear it up. Almost immediately, we found the common "one" and the others came back in without the public realizing what had happened.*

When the players do successfully achieve a mutual orientation to the beat, they develop what they call a "pocket," or what some refer to as "achieving a groove." Establishing a groove is the goal of every jazz performance. Groove refers to the dynamic interplay within an established beat. It occurs when the rhythm section "locks in" together, when members have a common sense of the beat and meter. Establishing a groove, however, is more than simply playing the correct notes. It involves a shared "feel" for the rhythmic thrust. Once a group shares this common rhythm, it begins to assume a momentum, as if having a life of its own separate from the individual members.

When musicians "hit the groove," they don't experience themselves as the source of that activity. This is ironic in a time when we put so much emphasis on autonomous skilled agents making rational, individual choices. When groups hit a groove



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they talk about it as if the source of this activity comes from somewhere else. They apply masterly skillful activity and yet remain radically open to the surrounding situation that is calling forth a response. Musicians often speak of such moments in sacred metaphors: the beauty, the ecstasy, the divine, the transcendent joy, the spiritual dimension associated with being carried by a force larger than themselves. They talk about these moments in language strikingly close to what has been described as an autotelic experience, or flow: a state of transcendence in which they are so absorbed in pursuit of the desired activity that they feel as if they are being carried away by a current, like being in a flow. Not surprisingly, when musicians are able to successfully connect with one an-

*...You are lost,  
tangled in the golden threads  
covered  
with turquoises,  
silent,  
or perhaps  
in your village,  
in your race,  
grain  
of corn spread out,  
seed  
of flag.  
Perhaps, perhaps now  
you are transmigrating  
and returning,  
coming to the end  
of the journey,  
so that someday  
you will see yourself in the center  
of your homeland,  
insurgent,  
alive,  
crystal of your crystal, fire in your fire,  
ray of purple stone.*

*Excerpt from Ode to Cesar Vallejo from Full  
Woman, Fleshly Apple, Hot Moon  
Selected Poems of Pablo Neruda*

other at this level and establish a groove, they often find themselves able to perform beyond their capacity. This dimension is perhaps the most elusive, if vital characteristic of jazz improvisation.

Pianist Fred Hersch recalls that playing with bassist Buster Williams inspired him to play differently:

*Buster made me play complex chords like Herbie Hancock sometimes plays—that I couldn't even sit down and figure out now. It's the effect of the moment and the effect of playing with Buster and really hearing everything, hearing all those figures.*

And Buster Williams recalls that when playing with Miles Davis, the music took on a life of its own.

*With Miles, it would get to the point where we followed the music rather than the music following us. We just followed the music wherever it wanted to go. We would start with a tune, but the way we played it, the music just naturally evolved.*

Imagine a self-organized flock of birds, wheeling this way and that. There's no single controller, and yet a discernible pattern emerges into the communal effect as a sort of natural art. That's really what jazz is at its best, something for all organizations to emulate. Wouldn't it be wonderful if leaders could create organizational cultures in which people are able to engage in skillful activity in the context of responsive others. The best leaders are not detached and predominantly analytic, although these are important skills to develop. The very best leaders know when it's important to be fully and passionately engaged in problems and situations, and for enhancing creativity and innovation, the crucial first step is an affirmative move.

This is what improvisational leaders do. They come at challenges from different angles, ask more searching questions, and are born communitarians. They're not going for easy answers or living off of old routines and stale phrases. Instead of focusing on obstacles (a form of negative self-monitoring), they create openings by asking questions that entertain possibilities. They're looking for the groove, the flow, knowing that like Sternin, it might carry them somewhere they never expected to go, somewhere they never imagined they could get to. Critically, too, improvisational leaders assume that the improv will work: that the mess is only a way station on the path to a worthwhile destination. The message here is powerful: start by asking positive questions; foster dialogues, not monologues; and you can change the whole situation, maybe even your life. ■

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# The Inner Game of Preparation

by Anne Gottlieb, Director, Mobius Presentation and Presence Practice, Actress/Director

When an actor walks into a room to audition, there are generally a few constants. There is nervousness. There is wanting of immediate approval and there is pretending not to want it. There is a changing story about power and who has it in the room and there is the material from the script. When I first began to work with business professionals on presentation skills, most especially in groups, I realized how very akin the process of preparing for a presentation can feel like the experience of preparing for an audition. So how do actors continue to show up for auditions when the ratio of rejection to acceptance is at best likely 9:1? The exploration of this from my own personal experience as a stage actor for the last twenty years as well as that of my colleagues proves to be exceptionally useful to those who are seeking to develop their sense of presence in public speaking contexts. Let me share some of these lessons.

For instance, as an actor, I have been taught to look for synchronicity and parallel process. We are mirrors of each other. Parallel process might be the way a difficulty that I am experiencing in the world is actually a mirror of what is happening inwardly. For example, I may think someone is judging me but it will not actually touch me unless it reflects in some way something I do inside myself. Synchronicity is an awareness of how one event, one tiny piece of information, or chance meeting can transform the timing and picture of one's direction or one's perspective. It is true that art mirrors life but in my case life usually mirrors art. I get a role in a production and then realize

a year later it is a forerunner to something I have yet to learn personally and usually the parallel process and synchronicity are far more intelligent in design than anything I could have anticipated. This same phenomenon often happens now with my coaching work with leaders.

I found myself in the last year working with an actor on his audition for Hamlet and subsequently his work on the role at the same time I was coaching a CEO on a presentation for her company where she was asking them to confront some very hard truths. What could they possibly have in common with each other? In short, almost everything and more precisely, Hamlet: Hamlet's wrestling with the question to be or not to be, his struggle to take action, to know who and what to trust, to forsake comfort for truth, not to mention, his little problem with ghosts.

I was asked at a college audition, "What is the first line of Hamlet? Not his first line but the very first line of the play?" Had I known then how brilliant the question was, I might have made a wiser choice and gone to that school. I didn't know the answer but have subsequently learned the lesson.

"Who's there?" Bernardo, a sentinel is on watch with Marcellus asks. They are protecting the castle walls of Denmark where Hamlet is the Prince and on two consecutive nights they have seen a ghost walk before them. This ghost is the exact image of Hamlet's very recently murdered father.

"Who's there?" the play begins.

And that is where we begin as well: the CEO, Leah, who knows she must name and deal directly with problems

that her company is reluctant to hear, and the actor, Don who has lost out on this part three times in the past, but can't live with himself if he doesn't try again. We are desperate, in the beginning, to jump to the end of the story, to skip over the messy process of finding out what we really want to say and to stave off the nervousness. As a response, actors want to memorize the lines. Presenters want to finalize the powerpoint. We tend to avoid the question, "Who's there?"

So when I ask Leah the question she says, "a bunch of people who



Anne Gottlieb serves as Director of Presentation and Presence work for Mobius. Her coaching experience spans a wide range of disciplines. She has worked with authors, lawyers, actors, teachers, nurses, therapists, computer specialists, and other professionals to enhance the originality, depth, and confidence of their speaking and presenting. In addition to her private practice, Anne has taught communication skills, acting, and voice in universities and professional studios throughout New England. She has also worked in professional theater for over 15 years as an actress, teacher, and director. Anne's diverse background has equipped her with a myriad of tools for helping clients surmount their obstacles and achieve their goals.

will want to complain and not take responsibility for what's happening? We cannot drown and we are drowning and pretending we didn't choose it. I can't do this alone. Nobody wants to hear this but they have to hear it." When I ask Don, he says "Maybe I am just somebody who thinks he can play Hamlet but maybe I am kidding myself? How many times do I need to do this? I should be more confident if I am going to audition for this, right?" Leah answers from her perspective who is *out* there and Don answers the question of who is *in* here. Both angles are necessary first steps and require time to sort out especially when the stakes are this high.

Many presenters who are faced with the kind of challenge that Leah faces take one of two paths either soften the blow to keep the company feeling safe and her feeling like she is not alone or, distance herself from that emotion, deliver a scolding rebuke to whip everybody into shape at the expense of potential allies and genuine buy-in from her colleagues. This is where the actor's process as well as Hamlet's is going to become very useful to Leah.

I ask her a series of questions about relationship or what I might call the *who*. There is also the *what*, which relates to our intention, the *why* which relates to our greater purpose and the *how*, which comprise the means, the tactics, that we will employ to communicate. I will focus on the *who* and the *what* which together allow the foundation for the speaker or actor to feel grounded. I ask Leah to answer the question who's there from the inner perspective. She feels she either needs to play the forceful task-master or the encouraging mother. I ask her to try on both roles, one at a time and to fully embody what she wants to say and not to worry about the exact

wording for now. The true meaning of rehearsal for an actor is not about getting it right. It's about making a choice, many choices without holding back and seeing what happens. I want Leah to practice making choices without the final result in mind but as

**One reason for this is attributable to the kinds of *thoughts* that are triggered by the possibility of public failure or public success. Knowing your material, creating a strong presentation is only part of the game. Knowing yourself is the other.**

a way to explore who she wants to be as a leader. It requires one to throw over their self-consciousness for the sake of growing and it is a prerequisite for learning, for art and for great leadership.

I also want her to become conscious not only of the role but of the "play" she is about to enter into with her company. She doesn't realize she has a huge amount of power despite the fact that the company is in crisis. Yes, Leah is delivering a speech but she is also beginning a conversation that will likely require months of time, rolling out new initiatives, trust and a great deal of teamwork. If she thinks of this as only a speech, she will miss the opportunity to engage her company in a very different kind of story and create a very different kind of script. Leah's tendency, when under pressure, was to default to either playing the encouraging mother or the bullying task-master with little in between. This was the beginning of her developing her range.

Upon further questioning, we

also realize together that Leah has already cast her company in the role of complainers, shirkers of responsibility, and people who will avoid crisis because its uncomfortable with a few exceptions. The next question becomes obvious to her. "Who might they be at their best in this situation?" This exploration for Leah was the beginning of her developing her depth and her creativity as a presenter and a leader.

As I work with Don on his audition, his challenge speaks to the heart of the question of confidence and vulnerability. People like Leah who are extremely confident presenters often want to find more range by bringing more dimensions to their strengths and finding new ones. For many people, including actors, a sense of confidence regardless of how skilled one is seems to fly out the window when they have to walk into an audition or for the business professional who is asked to present.

Don's answer to the question of who's there was "Maybe I am just somebody who thinks he can play Hamlet but maybe I am kidding myself?" I ask him. "Do you think Hamlet is confident?" And he says, "Hamlet is all over the place. He is confident one moment and then absolutely mired in self-doubt the next." "So would it be possible for you to put that awareness into the role instead of making the self-doubt about you? Is it possible you are already Hamlet?" I ask.

One of the finest plays in the history of the English language is about a soon to be leader who has a mess on his hands. He both lacks the confidence and capacity to fix things. The play is about the journey that Hamlet embarks upon inwardly and outwardly in thought, action and deed in order to come to some sense

of his own truth and readiness to act. He makes a lot of mistakes and false starts a long the way. Leah and Don are not in the life and death situation that Hamlet is in, but their nervous systems are already in a fight/flight/freeze response all the same. Why? For some, public speaking feels more frightening than the thought of death. For others, the fear feels more like adrenalin, excitement and there is a large continuum in between. One reason for this is attributable to the kinds of *thoughts* that are triggered by the possibility of public failure or public success. Knowing your material, creating a strong presentation is only part of the game. Knowing yourself is the other.

Hamlet can help us here. Not long after the start of the play. Hamlet actually sees the ghost of his father and the ghost tells him to avenge his untimely murder. Hamlet has never seen a ghost before. This despite the fact that they show up as regularly in Shakespeare plays as vampires appear on television shows these days. He is still a man who has just seen a ghost and it really messes with his head. First, he believes the ghost and starts to take action, then wonders if he is being tricked into something evil, then he starts to wonder if he is, in fact, crazy. In short, he doesn't know what to trust. This is a metaphor in the presence and presentation work for what happens to people often before they walk into a major presentation or an important audition. Their ghosts show up.

"The Ghost" is usually the voice inside ourselves that brings up self-doubt or fear. Ghosts also might push us to a challenge that feels overwhelming. It haunts us. I have worked with CEO's who cannot get the negative voice of their mothers

or fathers out of their heads. It may not ruin them when they are asked to present but they become contracted, simply less of what they can be when that ghost is not hanging around. Actors often have a version of some critic that has skewered them in the press and though they may not be conscious of it, sure enough, the image of that critic is in their head on opening night when the actual critics are out in the audience. In Don's case, his ghost was a version of himself as a bitter old man looking back on

**When the ghosts show up, it is a sign that an excellent opportunity is waiting in the wings to move to one's greater potential.**

his life with regret that he had never fully expressed his gifts. This is a legitimate fear but the problem with either indulging the ghost by giving into the fears or trying to push it out of the room is that it keeps coming back. These ghosts, in truth, often want to protect us or challenge us to go further but they have a funny way of showing it. When the ghosts show up, it is a sign that an excellent opportunity is waiting in the wings to move to one's greater potential.

Don's ghost sees Don as already defeated before he starts. "Why Bother? How many times do you need to do this? What if you fail again?" This is a common refrain for the ghosts of business professionals as well. Hamlet, like Don, does not know how to deal with his ghost but he spends the play figuring it out. When I bring this to Don's attention, something starts to open up. He realizes that he has an opportunity to bring this into the audition rather than be at the whim of it. His wanting to succeed is the same as Hamlet's own desires. His feeling of wanting to run and hide and wish the potential failure would

be over is also what Hamlet experiences. Rather than pushing away his vulnerability, Don makes it an asset. He finds confidence and excitement in bringing this aspect of humanity, vulnerability and volatility into the room through the material, through the speech, through Hamlet.

In working with Leah and Don, alternately, I see that Leah is struggling with how to work with her vulnerability as she prepares to face her company. She discovered from the role playing that she didn't want

to come across as too weak or too harsh. Neither felt truthful. Neither was satisfying. Instead of focusing on how *she* might come

across to her audience, I ask her to focus on where *the company* is vulnerable and where the *company* is strong. In Don's case, we are looking for the parallels in Hamlet. In Leah's case, we are looking for the parallels in her company. Don's job is to illuminate Hamlet's problems and the myriad ways he struggles with it. Leah's job is to shine a light on the problems of her company and begin to find new ways to collaborate. Through the reframing of the "who" question, Leah starts to see herself in the role of ally. She sees herself not only as an ally to a failing company but an ally and guide to the people who are resistant to looking at the issues. She comes to see that their resistance is their ghost. This reframing and shift inside allows Leah to integrate her strength with compassion in her presentation.

They have both answered the question of "who's there" thoroughly. They are experiencing more ease. They have their attention off of themselves and how they appear to others and on something about which they feel passionately. The next question

follows fast: *WHAT* is needed here?

For every public presentation it is different, but another way of asking the question is what perspective or inspiration or intelligence can I bring into the conversation? Where can I add value? What do I want these people to know, feel or do differently when they leave this room? For Leah, these questions help her determine what she wants to say, what points need to be made, what stories will illustrate those points. What visuals if any will assist her? Now that we have more sense of the relationship, I ask Leah to specify her intention. Often, when I ask a new client this question before we work through the question of “who’s there”, people will say “To get my point across, to make sure everyone has the same information.” This is not a strong intention because that could be accomplished through an email or memo. It greatly diminishes the possibility for rich exchange in the room and in short, it gives no pleasure to the speaker or audience. When the intention is not clearly defined or not bold enough, it leaves the speaker only with words on a page but rudderless in every other way. The beauty of public speaking is that it is *YOUR* intention that shapes the material. Hamlet has been played by thousands of actors, perhaps millions at this point. The plot is not spectacular. The language is well-known. It is how each new actor brings his or her special interpretation to the material that makes us want to see the play over and over again. It is the specificity of the intention and the fire that it sparks in the speaker that will bring nuance and inspiration to a play and to a public presentation.

Intention and passion combined create vibrancy in the presence of the speaker. Our passion can be

intellectual, emotional, spiritual, strategic, technical, artistic, relational and visionary to name a few. A strong *WHAT* or intention is the key to making a presentation come alive. As Leah leans into the questions, she realizes that her intention is to have her company wake up the challenges ahead, to know that they have the inner resources to deal with the issues ahead of them and to feel that she is with them 100%. Now her creative leadership mind takes over. Instead of entering into the presentation defended and blaming or hiding behind niceness, her intention be-

### **Intention and passion combined create vibrancy in the presence of the speaker.**

comes about empowering the whole company. This allows her to bring up the facts as well as roll out several ideas for short, intermediate and long range goals.

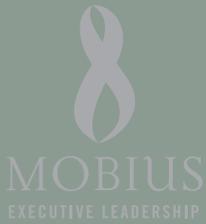
There are many other aspects to good auditioning and good presenting, not the least of which is knowing your material, honing one's speech down to its essential points, including stories and anecdotes to illuminate points, finding physical and vocal ease and power. The bigger game has to do with this illusive word, presence. I am often hired to help someone develop “executive presence.” The mistake is in believing it is an image which one can attain with a few tricks around eye contact and how to read notes and so forth. The mistake is in believing it can be put on like a suit. We know the difference inside ourselves so though we may be doing all the tricks that we were taught to look executive, the inner foundation isn't there. The ghosts show up. I am often asked to help someone be “more authentic” in their public presentations. There is a look of authenticity which might

resemble sincerity but it doesn't feel authentic and it is not free and it is definitely not powerful. We can feel that difference. Children can feel the difference. We are that sensitive even if we talk ourselves out of it.

The theatre is an empathic rather than sympathetic art. When the writing, acting, directing and design are working in harmony, the audience experiences the story rather than just thinks about it. When we say we are moved by some performance or someone's speech, that's literal. There is a psycho-physical connection which goes deeper than thought or emotion and all the way into our nervous system. When I work with clients for public presentation, I always ask them how they experience presence because presence only lives in the experiential realm. Our ideas or images of it don't matter. Generally, they respond by speaking of how someone's presence influences and affects them rather than an analytical definition of it. They have been touched, felt their minds expanded, awakened, stirred, lifted, blown away, set straight or impelled to take action. Public speaking is also a temporal and empathic art at its best regardless of how technical or complex the material. The inner preparation game is about bridging what is alive within the speaker through language, through empathy and imagination for the sake of liberating a deeper and more wholistic intelligence that is seeking to be mirrored in everyone of us.

*We defy augury; there's a special providence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be now, 'tis not to come; if it be not to come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will come: the readiness is all.*

Hamlet, Act V, Scene ii ■



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### Finding Connection

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Think of conversations in which you've felt deeply connected to the people around you. That sense of dynamic engagement is always available, whether you're addressing a single person or a crowded auditorium. As you develop an actor's ability to read an audience, you'll begin to respond adaptively to your listeners, maintaining their interest and attention. When you stay attuned to what's happening in each moment, any nervousness or self-consciousness will diminish, and both you and your audience can simply enjoy the process.

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# Jazz As a Metaphor for Knowledge Work

by Carl Stormer, Jazzcode AS, Oslo, Norway/Boston, MA, and Daniel Penrice, Cambridge, MA



In today's knowledge-intensive world, as organizations increasingly need to create "value from difference" rather than "value from sameness," work can no longer be organized and executed as it was in the era of command and control in the executive suite and mass production on the shop floor. Large, complex organizations and traditional planning are being challenged by small groups of people willing and able to make swift decisions and leverage technology to ensure a perfect match with a complex, ever-changing context. Outcomes at work have therefore become dependent on the quality of complex interactions—their speed as well as the ability of team members to make decisions on the fly based on interpretations of ambiguous data.<sup>1</sup> Knowledge workers must often discover what it is they are producing in the act of producing it, and in collaboration with others, rather than carrying out their own individual roles in a pre-conceived plan. For most organizations and industries today, creating a culture of collaboration in real time is where the major challenge lies.

The increased emphasis, in the work world, on complex interactions in real time has made the jazz ensemble—where work takes place in real time, every interaction is different, and each individual player's musicianship is valuable only in collaboration with others—a place to look for models of successful improvisation.<sup>2</sup> In everyday language, improvisation is often used to mean what we do when we are poorly prepared, when we "wing it." Yet most of us improvise all the time—in conversation, for example—in order to achieve the best possible outcome in situations whose outcome is not predictable. And more often than we may realize, we improvise successfully. Improvisation, in any case, is about creating and taking advantage of new opportunities for learning and experimenting. It is a process where operating without a rigid pre-conceived plan becomes an asset, not a liability. In jazz, it is also a *sine qua non*, and the guidelines jazz musicians use to achieve the best possible interactions—what we call the Jazzcode—can help reinforce something we are all born with and need to use at work: the ability to adjust to new situations and, working in collaboration with others, make good decisions in real time.

Since every live situation is unique, deciding what to do—the ultimate leadership decision, as opposed to deciding how to do something, which is a managerial one—cannot be done in advance or from behind the front lines. Decisions about what to do must be

made rapidly by the person or persons closest to the action, which is complex and constantly unfolding. As jazz musicians learn, however, even though you are never fully in control, you can still be in command. The Jazzcode offers guidance that can be used by both individuals and teams in order to improve their performance.

## The Individual Player: Being Yourself While Being With Others

In jazz, as in any work where the goal is to create value from difference, for an individual or a team to be "different" is an asset, not a liability. In today's work world, being yourself and putting a strong fingerprint on your work becomes more and more legitimate, and even necessary, as globalization and technology make it possible to leverage almost any expertise on a global scale. How, as an individual who works in teams, can you make the best use of the talent for improvisation that almost everyone possesses by being yourself in the moment? By being *prepared, present, always learning, and open with others*.

1 McKinsey Quarterly 4/2005: «The Next Revolution in Interactions»

2 The analogies between jazz practice and topics such as innovation and leadership have been explored in books including *Jamming: The Art and Discipline of Business Creativity* (1997) by John Kao and, more recently, *Yes to the Mess: Surprising Leadership Lessons from Jazz* (2012) by Frank Barrett. Both employ the jazz metaphor in fairly general ways, whereas we believe that there are lessons about knowledge work to be learned from a more detailed account of jazz practice and closer analogies than either Kao or Barrett draw. See also HBS Case 609-050: "Miles Davis: Kind of Blue" (2008) by Carl Stormer and Robert D. Austin.

## Preparation

How can we prepare ourselves to be good improvisers? Good jazz musicians spend their entire professional lives preparing not only for each performance but for their every interaction with other musicians by really knowing their own instrument and role, by fully understanding the context in which they will be playing and the other players, and, of course, practicing. No great jazz musician, however talented, has ever been born knowing how to improvise (although the truly great ones might seem as if they had). Preparation for improvising might seem like an oxymoron but definitely is not.

The first component of the preparation required to become a skilled improviser in jazz is *knowing your instrument and its role* in an ensemble. This means, first of all, that you must achieve a level of mastery so that the technical aspects of playing your instrument, no matter how complex, become second nature, which allows you to concentrate on the *what* rather than the *how* when you are playing. For a musician, knowing your instrument in this way involves being able to play notes, scales, and chords, vary your tempo and rhythm, and so forth; for knowledge work, the tools and techniques you must master include language (oral and written), listening and organizational skills, and concepts and quantitative skills that are fundamental to your area of expertise. Mastery of these tools allows you to apply them focus on applying them to the unique, real-time context in which you are working. When you are in the middle of a jazz performance, you don't have time to think about execution—all your energy is focused on what you should play, which requires you to pay attention to what the other members of your group are playing. It

also requires you to understand your instrument's role in the group—the bass and drums, for example, which constitute what is called the rhythm section in a jazz ensemble, each have a function in the group that is different than that of the other instruments.

If, in the midst of a jazz performance, you were to think about how to play, you would lose part of your mental capacity and your ability to fully *understand the context* in which you are playing would be lost. For jazz musicians, part of preparation for interactions and performances involves knowing jazz history and tradition so as to be able to use it to expressive effect and, especially, knowing the musicians with whom one is playing. When Red Garland played his last solo with Miles Davis (on the 1958 album *Milestones*), his improvisation consisted of playing Miles's solo from a Charlie Parker recording done ten years earlier; Garland had memorized the solo on Parker's song "Now's the Time" and placed it in another tune as a farewell to Miles. In business, understanding the context might mean knowing your clients'—or your co-workers'—histories, values, preferences, strengths and weaknesses, possible reactions, and so on, as well as the dynamics of a marketplace.

Needless to say, in addition to knowing their instruments and understanding the context in which they play, great jazz musicians—like all musicians—prepare by *practicing*. Serious musicians spend time practicing every day. At the beginning they seek to master the basics. Later their strategy will vary. Some will spend less time with their instrument and more time listening to and really understanding the music, the tradition, and the choices made by other players. Some choose to practice what they are already really good at while others look for weak spots and work on those. One common

thread among experienced musicians is that they will come back to the basics of the instrument: how to get a beautiful tone, how to control the dynamic range, how to phrase in a musical way, and how to make musical choices that allow them to play to their strengths.

In business, practicing might mean becoming intimately knowledgeable about subject matter. Carl found this kind of practicing to be helpful both when working in sales and consulting at IBM and when running a startup. Going over the subject matter of a meeting in his head, memorizing definitions, rehearsing different answers before a presentation or meeting, or just talking about a subject—all these are ways of practicing as musicians do. When Carl was running a startup, [www.studentuniverse.com](http://www.studentuniverse.com), he and his business partner would spend one or two hours every day for four years talking about strategy and deals. By probing their subject matter very thoroughly, they were able to see opportunities where nobody else saw them and negotiate deals more favorable than one would have thought possible for a company this size. Carl applied much of the same approach to learning business as he did to learning music, always practicing using new software, improving his skills at financial modeling, checking out new technology, trying to understand the business models of competitors.



### Presence in the moment

To survive in situations involving complex interactions and decisions in real time—whether in a jazz group or in other kinds of organizations—we need to be present in the moment where the action is taking place. Speed requires full attention; with higher speed comes a greater need to concentrate our attention on the unfolding environment. Presence—the most important asset in a knowledge organization—is poorly often managed. We try to be present in too many places at the same time, are unable to shield ourselves from interruptions, and don't really know what it takes to be fully present in the moment (perhaps, in part, because work designed to produce “value from sameness” placed less of a premium on presence, and in part because modern technology, which enabling so much more communication than was once possible, also functions as a giant distraction machine). Yet, presence is required to interpret complex situations. As the importance and frequency of complex interactions increase, so does the importance of optimizing presence. Presence is the feedback mechanism that makes it possible for us to interact with our external environment. Without presence and active listening, even the best jazz musicians would be irrelevant and without ability to create value.

Presence is what all good musicians have in common. By “presence” here I mean not only the ability to listen but also to be totally engaged with the situation they are in, to be “lost in the moment.”

We have all been completely lost in the moment at many times in our lives. This is what happens when we go participate in a sport like skiing or tennis, have sex, or engage in any interaction where something is at stake. We direct our full mental capacity at

the unfolding situation in order to make sure we are able to understand and respond to what is going on. Deep concentration in dynamic settings is something humans enjoy and we do it quite naturally—so naturally that often we don't notice how concentrated we are until after the fact.

Conversely, distraction or a lack of mental capacity can prevent us from being present in the moment. This happens if we become too preoccupied with our own execution (which is why, as we have seen, it is necessary to master one's own instrument and role), or if we worry too much or too little. In live situations, mental capacity can become divided between a management and a leadership layer. It is almost as if you have two voices in your head. The manager is preoccupied with your execution and role, concerned about recognition and criticism—in short, internally focused and in constant dialogue with itself. The leader in you, by contrast, is concerned with what is taking place in the external environment and how well you are fitting your contribution to the context. In order to clear more mental space for the leader we need to reduce the scope of operations for the manager, we need to do three things: simplify the work, create a feeling of safety ourselves and others, and become fully engaged. Some of this we can do for ourselves, although those others who help create the conditions under which teams work can also play their own role in helping team members to be fully present.

Since improvisation in jazz is such a complex task, jazz musicians help themselves and their fellow musicians manage this complexity by *simplifying* their tasks. For example, a musician will play fewer notes to lessen the difficulty inherent in the task of, say, four or five musicians all listening to one another and respond-

ing in the moment to what others are playing. In ordinary conversation, we make the task of listening and responding in real time to an interlocutor by using only our “active” vocabulary. At work, we can find ways to make our jobs easier by, for example, giving ourselves more time to do a certain task, doing a smaller part of the task, allowing ourselves to be sloppy whenever possible, and minimizing structures and processes.

Since the manager's voice inside us also worries about risks, we can reduce the scope of the manager's influence if we can *make ourselves and those we work with feel safer*. We do this for ourselves partly by achieving the mastery that allows us to play our instruments without thinking about the how of playing. We can also add to our own and our teammates' feelings of safety by cultivating their trust in us and ours in them. Members of a jazz group learn, for example, that it is critical to give one another positive feedback and act with integrity. To give a negative example, when the great bassist Charles Mingus, on the title track of the album *Money Jungle* that he made with Duke Ellington and Max Roach, defiantly played the same note over and over again—prompting Ellington to respond on the piano by angrily mimicking Mingus' playing—his violation of the trust of his fellow musicians dragged down the quality of the whole group's performance.

It is not enough, however, for members of a team—whether it is a jazz group or a work team—to feel safe in order to play well together—they must also *be fully engaged*. On “Money Jungle,” Mingus shows his lack of engagement by deliberately provoking Ellington—for reasons that are totally opaque to the listener—thereby damaging the entire group's efforts. Some of the reasons

knowledge workers may be less than fully engaged while working in teams may include boredom (if the task has been simplified too much) or feelings that one's efforts and contributions are not being recognized. While an individual or team member has some control over his or her own level of engagement (by being adequately or inadequately prepared, for example), those who are responsible for creating the conditions under which teams work in an organization can also take steps to foster engagement, as we will see below.

### Learning and renewal

The best jazz musicians constantly learn and renew themselves through a long career. Every performance represents a chance to try something new because every interaction is unique. It is not unusual for musicians to peak late in their careers, perhaps because the most important qualifications are not muscle power and speed but an ability to place their contributions in context in a way that provides maximum impact.

It is not paradoxical to say that improvisation—the ability to delay decisions and place an action in time in such a way that you get the best possible fit with the context and your own intent—can be learned. It is learned through imitation, careful analysis of performances, and constant practice and experimentation. This is true, of course, not only of jazz musicians but of all improvisers; this is how we learn language, manners, and organizational culture. In jazz as in many other complex activities, however, there is always a new horizon beyond which one can go, and the best performers constantly seek to do this. In order to ensure renewal, they will continually look for sources of inspiration outside their own domains. The great saxophonist

John Coltrane listened to ethnic music, and Miles Davis listened to classical. Henry Ford got the idea for an assembly line by observing a meat factory in Chicago.<sup>3</sup> When I worked at IBM as a consultant, some of our best work was done when we were able to transfer lessons from one industry to another, as when we taught telephone companies about variable pricing of inventory-based goods in the airline industry. Sometimes the best way to get better at what you do is to try something else besides what you do, to put yourself in a context where you must learn what someone else knows and you do not.

### Openness

Openness is an important trait for creating trust and fostering innovation in complex interactions. Openness in this context means both the willingness to share freely of one's own knowledge and insight without filtering, and receptiveness to new ideas presented by others.

One of the most important principles in improvisation is to not stop the flow. You can make a lot of mistakes that might go undetected in live music (and other real-time situations) but there is one thing you must never do: stop playing. Thus the most important principle in jazz improvisation, in addition to attentive listening is that you cannot reject an idea. If someone in the group makes a leadership decision you have to follow it. If you don't, you are making yourself more important than the music. In jazz, everything that happens must be embraced; once you do embrace what has happened, you can influence it and allow it to influence you. In organizational life, this translates into saying "Yes, *and...*" instead of blocking the other person's idea by saying "No," or half-accepting it by saying "Yes, but..."

If the participants in a complex interaction are to make autonomous decisions and yet build on one another's decisions in order to achieve a goal, they must have access to the same information. This is why listening attentively is so critical: if the players in a jazz band can't hear one another they will not be able to play together. This is true in other settings where members of a group must make decisions in real time. When the Norwegian police arrived at Utoya on July 22, 2011, while a massacre was taking place on a nearby island, they were unable to act because they did not have the necessary information; as a result, they waited passively for thirty minutes while the carnage took place.<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile, local residents were rescuing wounded youths from the ice-cold water using their own boats; they did not have a central command, but they could hear the shooting, understood what was going on, and, following their instincts, were able to act much faster than did the police.

### Group Improvisation: Making Collaboration Happen

While individuals work on acquiring the attributes and skills—preparedness, presence, learning, and openness—that enable them to work successfully in teams, teams themselves, and those who are responsible to building and leading them, can also make collaboration by designing it in certain ways. The key principles here, which grow out of the attributes of skilled individual improvisers, are fundamental to successful improvisation in jazz. These principles are small teams with complementary roles, shared references, and empowerment.

<sup>3</sup> Lecture at Schibsted ASA in Norway (2008).

<sup>4</sup> NOU 2012:14: Rapport fra 22. juli kommisjonen.



### Small teams with complementary roles

It is nearly impossible to improvise in large groups. The history of jazz shows that most innovation has taken place in small groups: for example, the Charlie Parker/Dizzie Gillespie Quintet, the John Coltrane Quartet, the two Miles Davis quintets, the Bill Evans Trio, and the Modern Jazz Quartet. Even in larger groups, the most interesting musical pieces have often been created when only a subset of the entire group interacts. The same phenomenon can also be observed in settings such as dinner parties: if you have more than four or five guests, chances are that the party will break up into parallel conversations. In order to keep one conversation going, jazz groups have found that less is more. If you have more than four players participating in a conversation, then you might want to plan parts of what is taking place. Moreover, in order for members of a group to collaborate, they must have distinct, complementary roles. A saxophonist, pianist, bass player, and drummer can have a conversation. Four drummers will become engaged in a battle.

There are other reasons why a small group will achieve the best improvisations. A small group is flexible; has less complexity; can more easily establish trust; ensures visibility for all its members; and enforces fewer compromises of the

kind that can undermine the integrity of the work.

**Flexibility.** In a small group, it is easier to make decisions because it is easy to be heard and fairly easy to voice dissent. In that sense, a quartet is a more robust unit than a trio because you can have two against two, whereas in a trio, any dissent will involve two against one. Crucially, it is also easier to organize small teams and for them to change plans in midstream.

**Less complexity.** Not only can four players fit in a car and share a pizza but the coordination costs are acceptable. As you add more people, you are also increasing coordination costs exponentially. You might get 20% more input by adding a fifth player, but the scheduling constraints and overall complexity increase by a factor of five. Most people can't keep track of more than five to seven simultaneous stimuli. Add a fifth player or team member to a group of four and it becomes almost impossible for everyone to keep track of all interactions and their own role at the same time—the success of many jazz quintets notwithstanding.<sup>5</sup>

**Easier to establish trust.** It is easier to establish trust in a small group because the greater transparency tends to prevent hidden agendas. A small group also makes it much harder to keep secrets and mask lack of competency, while making it more important for each member to carry his or her own weight.

**Ensures visibility.** In a smaller group, not only can everyone can keep track of the interactions but there is room for everyone to play a solo. When there is room for everyone to speak and be heard, everyone can also receive praise and recognition for their contributions. In jazz, small group players usually love their jobs, while players in large or-

chestras often hate theirs—perhaps because they are not heard or seen as individuals.

**Fewer compromises.** Creative decisions are often not well handled by larger groups, which often adopt a consensus approach to creativity leads to dilution of the original idea. In general, the standardized processes that large groups are tempted to adopt can become the antithesis of improvisation and decrease the likelihood that the final result will be new and fresh.

### Shared References

Shared references are essential to the art of jazz improvisation. If Carl is playing the drums and the bass player throws in a quotation from a well-known tune like “Salt Peanuts,” his recognizing the reference will enable him to pick up his idea and respond to it immediately. In any group, shared references are a handy way to avoid having to explain the context and the rules of engagement. Finding shared references is also a rapid way to build trust, create excitement, and explain a goal. In that sense, shared references save work. Anything the team agrees to before the performance or project can be considered shared references—for example, language, symbols, standards, anything that will reduce ambiguity (but that may also limit freedom as the situation unfolds). Organizations often exist in order to develop shared references that give the company a competitive advantage. Shared references such as values can be difficult to develop across organizational boundaries.

In general, shared references may be of three kinds: references to the past, the present, or the future. Shared references may be to past per-

5 Miller, G. A. (1956). “The magical number seven, plus or minus two: Some limits on our capacity for processing information.” *Psychological Review* 63

formances, established processes, or traditions. Shared references in the present might include a sense of pacing or what in music is called tempo. When teams share a sense of purpose or have an aligned vision they possess shared references to the future that are a must for a fast-moving team.

### Empowerment

“If I had known what you should play, I would not have hired the world’s best saxophonist,” Miles Davis once said to John Coltrane when Coltrane asked him he wanted his sax player to play.

In order for a small team to interact effectively, all of its members must be empowered individually, and the team empowered within the organization, to make decisions and solve problems. In the US Marines, teams are never told how to accomplish a mission, only what the mission is. Often, the person closest to the context is the person best equipped to decide. When Thorleif Thorleifsson and Borge Ousland sailed around the North Pole in a 32-foot trimaran, their rule for delegating decisions was simple: the one with the most knowledge decides. In expert teams, the players on the ground might not have the most subject matter expertise, but they have the best understanding of the context. Subject matter expertise, as we have seen, is worthless without contextual understanding. And when the context changes rapidly, the team must be empowered to figure out what to do. In order for them to do this and have the maximum impact, in turn, they must have a complete understanding of their purpose and a willingness to always think holistically about the task at hand. Or as jazz musicians would say it, the music comes first.

Although jazz, like the other arts, has often been discussed in terms

that exalt genius and mystify the process of artistic creation, there are really no mysteries in jazz other than the magic of skilled practitioners working together in real time. Their presence in the moment is what unites them—provided they have the same understanding of the musical context and what they are trying to accomplish together, and confidence in their ability to accomplish it. Experienced musicians are comfortable making decisions even when lacking perfect information or certainty about

what will result. They have learned to be themselves while being with others and, in so doing, to create something that none of them could do by themselves. What enables them to do all this is ultimately not genius, although jazz has had its share of geniuses. The more telling factor in the performance of even the greatest jazz groups—as well as high-performing teams in organizations of all kinds—is a code that anyone doing complex work in teams can learn and follow to achieve higher performance. ■



Carl Størmer (pronounced "Sturmer") is a consultant and public speaker and the founding principal of JazzCode AS, a consulting firm specializing in improvisational collaboration and structured communication in high-performance teams. JazzCode offers class-room training in structured communication, talks about innovation, creativity in business and collaboration. Størmer often brings in musicians to illustrate how jazz musicians collaborate in real-time and to draw the parallels for professional teams. Mr. Størmer has presented his JazzCode concept with leading musicians for large and small groups at leading companies such as IBM, Oracle, KPMG, Pricewaterhouse Coopers, Kraft Foods, Novartis, McKinsey & Company, Statoil, Hydro, Telenor, Schibsted, and executive leadership programs at business schools including Insead, London Business School, Copenhagen Business and others. In 2008 he co-wrote a case about Miles Davis for Harvard Business School. Before he started JazzCode Carl was the Sr. VP of marketing at Norwegian Airshuttle, one of Europe's largest low-cost carriers which he helped take public. Carl was the founder and executive vice president of StudentUniverse Inc., the leading U.S. online student travel agency. Before founding StudentUniverse, Carl worked in sales and consulting for IBM Global Services. Mr. Størmer spent four years designing databases for the law-firm Weill, Gotschal & Manges in New York, founded "the Real Thing", Norway's most popular jazz groups and worked as a professional jazz musician in New York and Norway for many years. Since 2007 he has released five CD's for Jazzcode. Carl is based in Boston, MA and in Oslo, Norway. He can be reached at (707) 676-3883 or [carl.stormer@jazzcode.com](mailto:carl.stormer@jazzcode.com).



Daniel Penrice is a business writer based in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

# At the Intersection of Art and Ideas

by Jerry McGrath, Director of Innovation and Program Partnerships at the Banff Leadership Centre, a Mobius Alliance Partner

## Leaders make a difference.

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Leadership Development is situated in "nature's perfect setting" – Banff National Park, and is a part of the world's largest arts and creativity incubator, The Banff Centre. Our unique design signature applies a blend of arts and nature inspired experiential learning, mountain culture, and leadership and management development not offered anywhere else.

The Banff Centre is Canada's only learning centre dedicated to the arts, leadership development and mountain culture. We serve the needs of accomplished artists, business and community leaders, and members of the global mountain community through programs designed to enrich professional practice beyond the

realm of traditional education. New art and ideas are born at The Banff Centre every day. We support Canada's finest artists. We convene Canada's top leaders. The Centre is also home to a world-class conference facility. The convergence of our resources, multidisciplinary programming and spectacular physical location affords an inspirational learning experience. Creative excellence is our hallmark.

With over 59 years of experience, Leadership Development at The Banff Centre provides a wide range of innovative leadership programming which incorporates applied creativity and hands-on learning experiences. To meet the emerging leadership challenges of our diverse clientele, we continually make advances in our program design. Numerous collaborations provide Leadership Development with a clear and unique advantage: we design leading edge program experiences that reinforce practical workplace applications, reflect shifts in external contexts and invite personal and organizational transformation.

Leadership Development is globally recognized as the place for applied creativity and creative leadership development. The Banff Centre affords personal reflection and discovery to help leaders make sense of their personal and professional journey. We make a difference in the lives of the people, organizations, and the communities we serve.

The Banff Centre is where leaders learn:

- Creative Leadership – The development of a

leader's capacity for human resourcefulness to think and act beyond boundaries, in service of achieving more than was imagined.

- Applied Creativity – The development of a leader's capacity for the generation of creative ideas and innovative solutions, and the ability to transform these into meaningful results.

Leadership Development at The Banff Centre was Canada's first institution dedicated to the professional development of leaders and managers. Today we are Canada's leader in the development of hands-on, practical leadership behaviours, delivering over 70 programs annually to over 2,000 managers and executives from a variety of sectors.

## Why the Arts?

There is growing evidence that the way innovation works in the Western world is shifting. An industrial economy built on increased productivity, engineered improvements, and predictable returns on assets has different creative requirements than an emerging economy built on knowledge flows, systems of value, and



The Kinneer Centre for Creativity & Innovation at The Banff Centre. Photo: Donald Lee, The Banff Centre.

## 2012 PROGRAMMING

**Leading in the Middle:**

5 days: September 23 – September 28, 2012

**Centered Leadership: When Remarkable Women Lead:**

4 days: October 1 – October 5, 2012

**Leading Teams for High Performance:**

5 days: October 14 – October 19, 2012

**Coaching for Performance:**

5 days: October 28 – November 2, 2012

**Leading Strategically:**

6 days: November 4 – November 10, 2012

**Building Accountability:**

5 days: November 11 – November 16, 2012

**Customized Programs**

interdisciplinary collaboration. There is a significant change in economic performance underway that needs to be mirrored by a significant change in the creative activities of organizations.

The emerging economy requires creativity and increased connectedness within and across organizational boundaries to effectively manage complexity and growing competitive pressure. The best way to understand creativity is as a product of a network of relationships rather than as individual moments of brilliance. Modern enterprise innovators are embedded within networks of relationships that support a specific type and direction of creative activity. Innovators approach problem finding and problem solving from the perspective of their own internal strengths.

We believe that leaders must have direct and meaningful interaction with other domains concerned with creativity but with different assumptions, tools and perspectives for true breakthroughs to occur. Competitive advantage is centered on creating

value and defining appropriate forms for carrying value and the artistic process is particularly well suited for both of these tasks.

Creativity sessions have been a mainstay in Leadership Development programs for a number of years, primarily as a unique complement to the traditional training regime and outdoor experiences. Over time we have learned a great deal about what works, and what doesn't. We have been encouraged by the emergence of a number of artistic methods as pedagogical tools for developing basic leadership competencies and are now leveraging arts-based methods to inform larger questions of organizational design and function. All of our work leverages diverse approaches to solving problems, and our ability to tap into the world's largest arts incubator remains a competitive advantage.

**Open Enrolment Programs**

We pioneer creative ways of developing leaders who thrive when faced with the demands of the 21st Century. Through our unique learning processes inspired by art and nature, participants learn how to generate ideas, explore possibilities, and make them real with meaningful results.

Leadership Development at The



Banff Centre can design and deliver customized leadership development solutions to align with your organization's vision, mission, values, and culture. Banff Centre custom clients benefit from our ongoing leadership research, experienced facilitators, and innovative resources that can create organizational capacity in areas such as:

- Building your next generation of leaders
- Developing your organization's current leadership talent pool
- Strategic thinking and problem-solving
- Leading complex change
- Enhancing cultures of accountability
- Building performance measures

Our needs assessment and design approach are also unique.

**The Design Studio**

The purpose of the Design Studio is to bring together stakeholders, diverse representatives from a potential client, faculty and other thought leaders to collaboratively participate in problem finding and problem solving to address organizational needs. The diversity of the group allows for the available solution set to grow and for new opportunities to emerge. Underpinning this activity is the deep exploration of ways in which arts and nature inspired learning can inform new programs, products, and services in Leadership Development.

The Design Studio is distinguished by its interdisciplinary approach to the generation of new knowledge (applied research) and in the development of unique learning processes (arts/nature based) as a means to advance the practice of leader and leadership development.

Following this process, we col-

laborate with partners to co-create a focused program or service that delivers sustainable and positive impacts. We are a proven partner in custom-designed programming that aligns with developmental needs, pace of change, business environment and culture.

### Coming in 2013: Disrupt + Engage

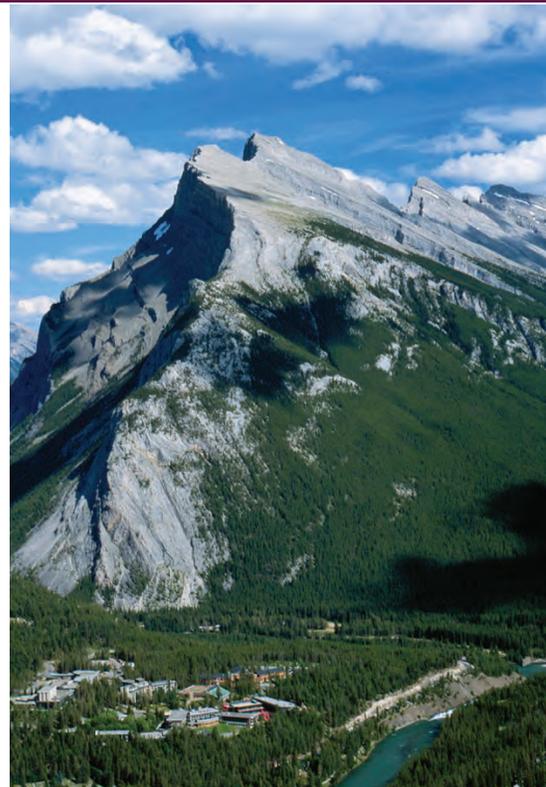
Leaders across sectors recognize the need to question long-held assumptions about business as usual and to engage new communities to discover new sources of value. Disrupt and Engage represent two new streams of programming that equip emerging and high potential leaders with opportunities to practice new behav-

iours to generate breakthrough ideas and inspire a community to execute on a new future.

Starting Spring of 2013, short and highly experiential experiences will animate core ideas and processes for disrupting the status quo and enabling leaders to operate across boundaries and categories to achieve lasting success. ■

#### For more information contact:

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*Giving and receiving love has the power to emancipate us from the confines of victimhood and prevent us from being limited by our suffering. Both our power and our sense of worth can be deeply renewed by love and being loved. However as soon as we discover that loving can involve being hurt we often find it more appealing to close our hearts. But it is not typically hurt that seals our hearts but rather the stories we create about feeling hurt. We employ the excessively permeable boundaries of childhood allowing the actions of others to define us. So when someone does or says something that hurts us we create the story that we are not lovable or deserving of better treatment. Most of us don't know how to be hurt. Learning how to be hurt does not mean being impervious to the emotional blows we receive along the way. Immunity would likely close our hearts. Becoming more creative with the stories of our pain gives us resilience and deepens our capacity to feel hurt. When our stories depict the hurtful actions of others, then they are statements about their motivations, beliefs and values...It is common to think that if we are feeling hurt, then somebody in our story is a bad person. Either we are deserving of such treatment or the perpetrator of the hurt is simply a nasty human being. I call these compassionless stories. We can feel hurt without betraying our essential value and simply remain good people who feel hurt.*

–Paul Dunion, *Dare to Grow Up: Learn to Become Who You Are Meant to Be*

## MOBIUS EXPRESSIVE ARTS FACULTY AND ALLIANCE PARTNERS



**Anne Gottlieb**  
Director, Presentation &  
Presence



**Samuel Bartussek**  
Pantomime



**Gwen Gordon**  
Creativity & Innovation



**Michael Jones**  
Pianist



**Priya Parker**  
Creativity & Innovation



**Claude Stein**  
Vocal Coach



**Diana Theodores**  
Presentation & Presence

**Michael Jones**  
PIANOSCAPES

just add water



**The Banff Centre**  
inspiring **creativity**

CARL STORMER'S  
**JAZZCODE™**

**M O V I N G P E R F O R M A N C E**



# Seriously.

## A movie about PLAY



Take cutting edge science, add some compelling stories then a promiscuous red ball, an irrepressible Labrador Retriever, some surprising cameos, a flying bug and a former Muppet maker and you get... Seriously! Our future depends on Play, a creative documentary that turns the work ethic on its head and opens our eyes and hearts to the critical importance of play in every area of life.

The film is the trailer for a movement to unleash the genius, creativity, joy, life-force, and resilience that come with a play-centered life.

### **GET SERIOUSLY! KICKSTARTED!**

On September 4th, The film's director, Gwen Gordon, and her pug, Garbanzo will be camping out inside the video screen, Occupying Kickstarter until they raise \$25,000. Your contribution can save them years of chiropractic adjustments and help make an important film possible.

[www.seriouslythemovie.com](http://www.seriouslythemovie.com)

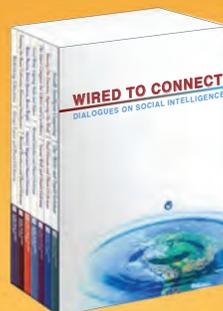
# WiredToConnect

## wired to connect: dialogues on social intelligence

Deepen your understanding of Social and Emotional Intelligence. Daniel Goleman hosts this informative series of talks with luminaries in psychology, neuroscience, leadership and more.

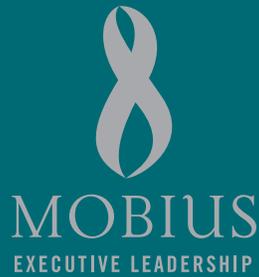


Available individually and as a box set at: [morethansound.net](http://morethansound.net)



**Generous BULK DISCOUNTS** available for Mobius Community.  
Contact Mike Sjostedt ([mike@morethansound.net](mailto:mike@morethansound.net))  
for more information.

[www.morethansound.net](http://www.morethansound.net)



Mobius is proud to include Expressive Arts Elements in all of its Transformational Leadership programs. Our leadership programs include content on Leading Self, Leading Others, Leading Teams and Managing Change. Focused on cultivating adaptive leadership skills these highly experiential programs help people learn to lead in ambiguity and uncertainty from a stance of centeredness, hope and courage.

For information on our transformational leadership programs for emerging leaders, women leaders and change catalysts please send a note to [info@Mobiusleadership.com](mailto:info@Mobiusleadership.com).

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Many of Our Expressive Arts Faculty Offer Half Day and Full Day Programs in their content including:

**Anne Gottlieb**

**Claude Stein**

**Diana Theodores**

**Priya Parker**

**Michael Jones**

**Gwen Gordon**

**Carl Stormer**

**Samuel Bartussek**

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For information on their transformational leadership offerings please send a note to [info@Mobiusleadership.com](mailto:info@Mobiusleadership.com) or call 781-237-1362.



*"We learn that the highest is present to the soul of man, that the dread universal essence, which is not wisdom, or love, or beauty, or power, but all in one, and each entirely, is that for which all things exist, and that by which they are; that spirit creates; that behind nature, throughout nature, spirit is present; one and not compound, it does not act upon us from without, that is, in space and time, but spiritually, or through ourselves: therefore, that spirit, that is, the Supreme Being, does not build up nature around us, but puts it forth through us, as the life of the tree puts forth new branches and leaves through the pores of the old. As a plant upon the earth, so a man rests upon the bosom of God; he is nourished by unfailing fountains, and draws, at his need, inexhaustible power. Who can set bounds to the possibilities of man? Once inhale the upper air, being admitted to behold the absolute natures of justice and truth, and we learn that man has access to the entire mind of the Creator, is himself the creator in the finite."*

*—Ralph Waldo Emerson*

**Photography by Mitch Davidowitz**

**For further information, please contact Mitch at [www.maxartphoto.com](http://www.maxartphoto.com)**

For more about the offerings of Mobius Executive Leadership please go to [www.mobiusleadership.com](http://www.mobiusleadership.com).

Back Issues of the *Mobius Strip* in Resource Section of website.

To discuss bringing Mobius leadership programs, trainings or executive coaching to your organization please write [Karyn.Saganic@MobiusLeadership.com](mailto:Karyn.Saganic@MobiusLeadership.com).



**MOBIUS**  
EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP