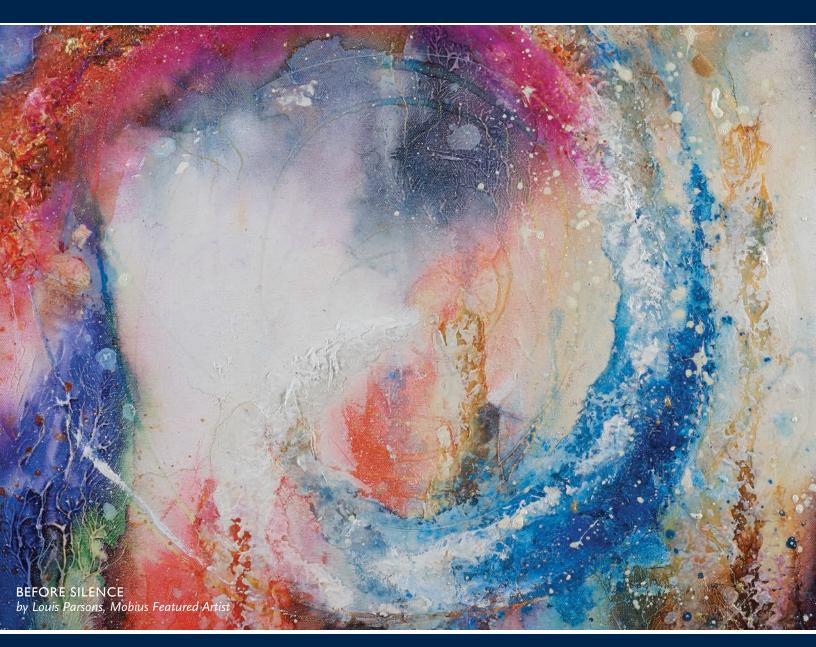
where best practice meets next practice

# THE MOBIUS STRIP

2024





MOBIUS EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP U.S. +1 781-237-1362 info@mobiusleadership.com www.mobiusleadership.com





Amy Elizabeth Fox
Co-Founder and CEO of
Mobius Executive Leadership

#### Dear Friends:

Welcome to our transformational leadership magazine the *Mobius Strip* where we feature book excerpts and other fresh thought leadership from across our global community of experts, including several of the keynote speakers who will join us at the seventh Annual Gathering of the Next Practice Institute in November.

Many of the pioneering voices in this edition refer to one another in their writings as significant sources of influence. Common themes surface throughout: the urgent need to slow down to source the highest forms of wisdom and leadership; the need for a deep sense of fellowship and belonging; and the need for courageous action to help melt stuck patterns and ways of being — in our teams, our organizations, and ourselves, and in their most costly expressions in the world.

We are delighted to include book excerpts from NPI keynote speakers Professor Alison Taylor, Futurist Cecily Sommers, and the author and performance coach Owen Eastwood. We also showcase a new white paper from Mobius Transformational Faculty member Robin Alfred, an article on the power of archetypes in C-suite vertical development from Mobius Principal Thomas Halbeisen, a piece recently published in *Forbes* from

Mobius Executive Coach Matt Smith, and the transcript of my conversation with Scott J. Allen on what it takes for leaders to become performance-ready.

Finally, we are honored to include artwork from Mobius Expressive Artists Jim McManus and Louis Parsons. Art, and all forms of beauty, provides vital nourishment for the heart and soul, which refills the well of joy and inspiration that makes our contributions to change sustainable.

We welcome you to share the digital version of the magazine with friends and colleagues. It is available on our website under the Next Practice Institute. NPI operates at the nexus of "best practice" in such areas as organizational development, culture change, adaptive leadership – and "next practice" in neuroscience, somatics, energy work, music, yoga, and other expressive and devotional arts. Together we are creating a global community of practice devoted to the craft of transforming people into stronger leaders, building a more just and sustainable world, and restoring the cultural fabric. In addition to the Annual Gathering, we offer other programs throughout the year which are included in the Leadership and Practitioner Development section at the back of the magazine.

As many of you may know, we conceived of NPI as a multi-year process in which practitioners – including coaches, facilitators, HR professionals, and executives leading change, would immerse themselves in tributaries of deep practitioner development and the perennial wisdom of contemplative and devotional practices. Much of our curriculum is built on the relational skills required for us to become instruments of insight and growth for the executives we serve and the organizations they lead.

As a reminder, we invite you, your colleagues, and your teams to join us virtually for the free live stream on our Facebook page of the keynote presentations throughout the week of November 11, 2024. The recordings of which will remain on our page for later viewing.

We hope you enjoy this edition and look forward to our continued journey together.

Warmest best

Army Elizabeth Fox

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This edition highlights recent scholarship from Next Practice Institute Faculty, along with other important selected readings in our field.

#### **FEATURED ARTIST: LOUIS PARSONS**

Mobius Expressive Artist Louis Parsons passionately believes there is an emerging art movement, which he terms "The Soul Renaissance." Through his talks, workshops and art – including his work with executives attending Mobius programs, Louis unlocks our ability to see the unique symphony of light that resides inside all of us. He brings simplicity and clarity to empower people to find greater energy in their lives.

His commissioned art can be found all over the world. For the last six years he has been the Guest Artist for The Four Seasons, Kuda Huraa, Maldives.

When he isn't painting, Louis loves to surf and scuba dive, seeking inspiration from all the colour and vibrancy under the waves. He lives in Cheltenham at the foot of the Cotswold Hills with his beautiful wife and family.





## SAVE THE DATE

2025
Next Practice Institute Annual Gathering

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 19 FRIDAY, OCTOBER 24, 2025

Boston, MA

Details to Come

For more information, please email NPI@mobiusleadership.com

HIGHER

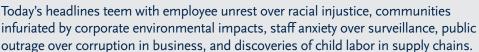
DO THE RIGHT THING IN

ALISON TAYLOR

# **Higher Ground**

### How Business Can Do the Right Thing in a Turbulent World

A book excerpt by Alison Taylor, Keynote speaker at the 2024 Next Practice Institute





NYU Stern ethics professor Alison Taylor argues that amid stakeholder demands and transparency pressures, we can no longer treat ethics as merely a legal and reputational defense mechanism. Leaders at Davos and the Business Roundtable have called for a new corporate responsibility paradigm, but organizations struggle to implement these ideas in an atmosphere of heightened expectations and intense suspicion. Offering stories and examples from years working in anticorruption and advising companies on ethics, Taylor brings this complex, risky environment alive to provide a blueprint for how leaders can rethink and reshape their practices. How can CEOs cut through the noise to set robust environmental and social priorities? When should they speak out on contentious social and political issues—and how? What does it really take to build a healthy organizational culture? How are we to approach corporate values when society itself is so divided?

In the foreword Jonathan Haidt writes, "unlike me, Alison worked for twenty-five years as a consultant to multinational companies, helping them to improve their operations and reduce risk in everything from sustainability and human rights to corruption and compliance. She is no ivory tower egghead; she knows how messy, confusing, and seemingly impossible it often seems on the ground, even when a company is trying to do the right thing. You'll get no airy lectures on ethics in this book. You'll get sympathy, great stories about real successes and failures, and deep insights into how to navigate these challenges today, when everything is so much harder than it was just ten years ago."

Higher Ground shows leaders how business can navigate this messy paradigm shift, build trust, and achieve long-term strategic advantage in a turbulent world.



For 2024, Higher Ground was selected as one of sixteen books that offer the "most compelling and enjoyable insight" into business issues by the Financial Times & Schroders.

#### INTRODUCTION

#### An excerpt

The idea that corporations might step up and do the right thing sounds so appealing. Corporations are powerful actors in society, and their decisions matter profoundly to everyone. In the classroom, I hear every day from students who want to work for and buy from companies whose values align with theirs.

But responding to these calls brings unwelcome scrutiny and unexpected turns. So how is any leader to proceed? There is no capsule answer, no magic pill to help you understand what it now takes to establish and maintain a good, trusted business. In writing this book, I intend to explore and map the warrens and

dead ends that can confound the best-intentioned executives, and then outline ways for you to guide your organization to higher ground.

You will come to regard "purpose" in a fresh light. Purpose can prove useful in a practical sense, but only if it goes beyond common win-win framing. It can— and must be— deployed

as much more than a marketing gimmick. You will learn to weigh your company's potential impacts on human beings before and after you make significant moves. You will discover that comprehending the myriad ways in which your company affects the world can bring your business a far more solid foundation than basing decisions on risk and reputation.

To start with, the scope and range of issues that a business leader must track and respond to has expanded dramatically. For example, in 2014, a teenager named Michael Brown was fatally wounded by a police officer and left on the street for hours in Ferguson, Missouri. While this sparked some of the earliest #BlackLivesMatter protests, corporate leaders at the time saw no reason to speak up on a divisive and distressing issue that bore little direct connection to running a business. On social and political controversies, the default position was to stay neutral and avoid taking a stand. As Michael

Jordan had quipped in the 1990s: "Republicans buy sneakers, too."

That neutral middle ground crumbled in just seven years. During the early months of the Covid-19 pandemic, George Floyd was publicly murdered by officer Derek Chauvin in Minneapolis, and corporate America abruptly faced a broad reckoning over its commitment to social justice and the amelioration of systemic racism. Leaders of companies including Reddit and CrossFit resigned to make room for more diverse leaders, and the CEOs of many of the largest businesses in the United States signaled commitments to diversity, equity, and inclusion by issuing impassioned personal statements on injustice.

That was an astonishing departure. During the late twentieth century, we had settled for several decades on a clear vision of the scope and limits of the corporation's responsibilities: focus on shareholder value and don't break the law. In 1970, Milton Friedman crafted a compelling case for how and why the logic

of business is simply to maximize profit. Morality is the domain of humans, he argued, not corporations. Business leaders are the agents of shareholders and should not misuse investor capital to pursue social priorities or political agendas. A proper leader should maximize a corporation's self-interest while working within the rules of the game, which are set by governments. When corporations pursue economic gain, they help spread individual choice, freedom, and prosperity. That's the best they can do for everyone.

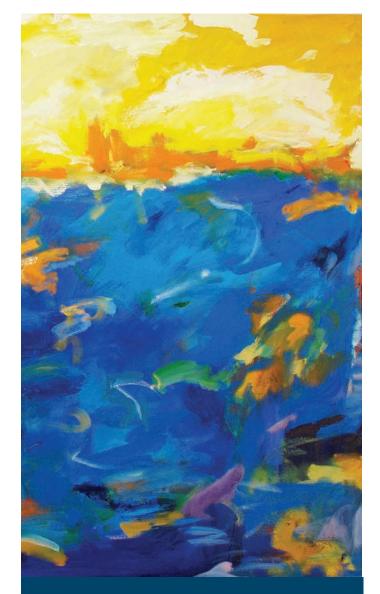
In line with this vision, "business ethics" was implicitly equated with legal compliance and treated as the responsibility of lawyers, auditors, and human resource teams. These functions were charged with protecting corporate value from legal incursions, reputational scandals, and fines.

I spent more than a decade helping to build and secure these defenses. I conducted due diligence, investigated fraud and corruption, and designed and implemented compliance programs. This sounds dry and technical, but the reality was messy, often

surreal. I've been pressured by bankers to rewrite due diligence reports so they could greenlight lucrative deals with controversial oligarchs. I've watched senior leadership teams mull over which prospective scapegoat might best take the hit for their knowing involvement in fraud. I've stepped away from a Christmas dinner in London to attend to frightened anti-corruption investigators stranded in a remote stretch of northern Mexico after their armed driver absconded with the car. I've advised companies on coping with human rights abuses committed by their private security forces, revelations of child labor surfacing in their supply chains, and surveillance by hostile host governments. Again and again, I saw that legal compliance is not always a good proxy for business ethics. Culture and leadership matter.

In search of greater insights on how companies might wield a more positive impact in society, I then made my way into the emerging field of "corporate sustainability." Like Alice in Alice Through the Looking Glass, I encountered an unfamiliar realm festooned with impenetrable buzzwords. I learned how to advocate for social impact, regeneration, value chains, sustainable development goals, net zero, the triple bottom line, inclusive economies, resource stewardship, community engagement, and climate justice. Again, I found that inspiring terms are no match for the disorder of real life. I have made the business case for sustainability to powerful executives all over the world— as their eyes glazed over. I've watched companies lose sight of core principles in their zeal to capitalize on the financial upsides of ESG. I've heard sustainability leaders exaggerate their public commitments while privately dismissing their effectiveness. I've seen committed CEOs exit and their promising sustainability programs collapse. I've helped companies respond to shareholder resolutions inspired by community protests as far afield as Pakistan and as close as Pennsylvania. I've advised them on cleaning up the damage after employees leaked sensitive internal information on social media.

I've never come across a company that gets everything right, and I cannot name good or bad businesses— only better and worse ones. In real life, organizations evolve constantly. Even more important, they tend to build expertise by responding to friction.



A prime challenge in seeking to grasp your company's impact is that the people most affected by your decisions may lack the voice, capacity, or recourse to influence you. Advocates for sustainability and human rights tend to recommend engagement with vulnerable groups without fully appreciating the burden it places on those parties.

HORIZON II By Jim McManus, Mobius featured artist

Activists target the best performers as well as the worst, and an absence of criticism isn't necessarily a reassuring sign. Anyone who has spent time working on responsible, ethical business knows the neat winwin arguments we're expected to push; these often stymie open discussion of strategies and approaches that are actually effective. In fact, I've found that

#### How Business Became a Tangle of Traps

In Chapter 2, Taylor critically examines "the common clichés, myths, and misunderstandings about responsible business that confuse and paralyze us. They carry unintended, troubling, even dangerous consequences. By making some simple adjustments, you can avoid the booby traps."

- Companies Can Balance the Interests of Their Stakeholders
- Environmental and Social Responsibility Is Always Good for the Bottom Line
- Business Ethics Is a Simple Matter: Just Don't Break the Law
- · Business Ethics Is an Oxymoron
- Responsible Business Isn't about Politics
- Transparency Drives Accountability
- Becoming an Ethical Company Is Just a Case of Removing the Bad Apples
- It's All about Tone at the Top; Ethical Leaders Ensure an Ethical Business
- We Should Have Zero Tolerance for Unethical Behavior
- Employees Should Have the Courage to Speak Up about What's Right
- Employees Should Bring Their Whole Selves to Work; Jobs Should Align with Personal Values

some of the best ideas are generated in controversial sectors, by companies facing existential challenges as they strive to recover from serious mistakes.

It made sense for a long time to treat branding, culture, sustainability, risk, and ethics as separate disciplines that required distinct approaches. But internal teams can't afford to pursue misaligned agendas for long in a digitally paced world. Any company lacking rigorous internal coordination will soon look disjointed and hypocritical.

Even then, it's no small task to implement a globally consistent approach to doing the right thing, and it's getting harder by the year. Our personal values reflect culture, upbringing, religion, politics—even our genes. Contemporary society is so fragmented (both within and among countries and cultures) that the very concepts of capitalism and democracy are being contested. Nonetheless, calls for businesses to intervene in high-stakes questions of worldwide import keep getting louder. Such crises as climate change, Covid-19, and geopolitical turmoil continually spotlight a glaring lack of consensus on how far companies should pursue efforts to address systemic societal and environmental challenges. It's easy to say companies should register a positive impact and help society flourish, or listen to stakeholders and balance their interests. The devil lurks in how.

Even with the best will in the world, it's challenging for any business leader to judge when to directly address a stakeholder concern, when the government might be better placed to step in, and when a business can— and should— compensate for governmental weakness or failure. These questions are not addressed by the standard corporate frameworks of compliance, ESG, or sustainability. And because academic approaches to business ethics are grounded in moral philosophy, they can seem impractical, even contradictory. And I have yet to attend a meeting where executives debate whether it's better to apply a utilitarian or a deontological framework to a decision.

Amid so much confusion and risk, corporations find themselves in a tense, ambiguous position. They bear much responsibility— both direct and indirect—for our complex array of tax cuts, deregulation, and influence peddling. At the same time, they have global reach and are more trusted and responsive to public

pressure than many nation states. Survey after survey shows that the public prefers business to take the lead on social change rather than await government initiatives.

Business faces such pressure because of its scale—and society's dire needs. For example, a 2022 article in the *MIT Sloan Management Review* argued: "As social justice issues move to center stage in the political sphere, the stakeholder rubber has hit the strategy road." But saying that business must intervene simply because we're desperate offers no coherent argument for how business should try to solve societal problems, or how far it should go.

CEOs struggle to respond to such inchoate demands, for good reason. It's impossible to be all things to all people for long, and people change their minds. Understandably, companies default to bland statements that are hard to tell apart. Research at MIT found that most companies cite from three to seven values, with two-thirds of them avowing a commitment to "integrity." A previous study found that corporate values statements converge around integrity, teamwork, and innovation.

Since pledging integrity won't get you very far in this mistrustful era, how is your company to navigate the swamps of our contradictory expectations? Where's a solid path to higher ground? A well-marked one leads back to Milton Friedman's shareholder value, but how would today's consumers greet a company's declaration that making a profit is its sole mission?

Instead, companies are expected to balance conflicting stakeholder interests and demands; to follow clear global principles while adapting to local conditions and cultures; to solve societal problems while maintaining shareholder value; and to be transparent and authentic, with no empty talk or inconsistencies. Whether or not you personally believe in the emerging story of stakeholder capitalism, you and your team face these pressures. Any failure to at least assess them can carry swift and devastating consequences.

In rethinking ethical business, then, let's start by acknowledging that no business is a black box or a singular, self-interested personality that can be protected from political, social, and environmental pressures by a nexus of contracts. Once-reliable demarcations between internal and external issues have blurred. In our daily, lived experience, any company is an open social system that sits within—and relies on—economic, political, social, and environmental networks to survive and thrive.

The uncomfortable truth is that the accepted terms "corporate responsibility" and "sustainability" often describe corporate efforts to offset prior damage wrought by core business models by offering sunny, distracting narratives. Indeed, amorphous, confusing jargon is not a bug, but rather a persistent feature of the business ethics landscape. In these unruly, transparent times, corporations must cater to a powerful appetite for accountability. This means, first, that corporations

A significant omission in much advice about how to engage stakeholders is that it pays little attention to who does the engaging— and on what topics. In the real world, "companies" don't engage "stakeholders." The procurement team interacts with suppliers, the business development team with customers, and so on. People interact with people. Not accounting for this can muddle important questions about who is tasked with representing the company and where their loyalties might lie. Your employees have independent agendas and opinions, and what they do will shape stakeholder perceptions in turn. (For this reason alone, it makes sense to treat employees as your most critical and impactful stakeholder group.)

must be more candid and realistic about problems they suggest they can take on. Second, business must

acknowledge that legal, political, regulatory institutions and should not be manipulated or undermined to serve corporate interests. These institutions exist to level the playing field for everyone, not least companies. Both goals could be achieved if leaders were to spend less time claiming to make the world better—and more time making their businesses better.

Purpose is unencumbered by the punitive, legalistic associations of ethics and compliance. In a single word, it conveys that meaning, impact, and values can act in mutually reinforcing ways.

This book's journey toward higher ground will feature both big-picture vistas and detailed practical tools.

In part I, "A Turbulent, Transparent World," chapter I will recount how we arrived at today's stressful status quo. In chapter 2, I'll review the tools currently at hand to help us traverse the thickets we face—and explain why we need fresh thinking and new equipment. Doing the right thing in this heated era is particularly challenging because values, impact, and culture cannot be considered in isolation; they interact incessantly to create positive or negative feedback loops.

In part 2, "Business Doing the Right Thing," we'll look from the inside out at a company's effects on the world, starting with a discussion of the frameworks

aimed at helping businesses manage and respond to stakeholder perceptions. In chapters 3 and 4, we

> will examine how companies can cogently consider common advice to balance stakeholder interests and set effective environmental and social priorities. enterprises of any size, it's hard for leaders to delegate these imperatives, and conflicting advice abounds. I will discuss how to reliably determine your priorities and find direction amid the noise.

Calls to balance stakeholder interests and consider external impacts do not intersect neatly with traditional legal compliance efforts. So, in chapter 5, I'll discuss what the evolution of anti-corruption strategies teaches us about the benefits— and limits— of compliance. If regulation can no longer serve as a North Star, where else can you find guidance? In chapter 6, I will describe why a company can more readily and reliably decide where and how to act in response to an enormous range of pressures if it bases its ethical commitments on its impact on human beings. Whatever our politics, religion, or values, everyone wants agency, bodily autonomy, dignity, and respect.

| Prioritize environmental and social issues with a relevance assessment |  |
|--|--|
| Step 1   | Identify the full landscape of relevant environmental and social issues.   |
| Step 2   | Consult friends, critics, and critical friends, both internally and externally.  |
| Step 3   | Prioritize ruthlessly. Identify strategic issues that are important to both internal and external stakeholders.                              |
| Step 4   | Determine when and how to act. Differentiate between risks, innovation opportunities, and impacts that might become risks if you do not act. |
| Step 5   | Embed priorities into corporate strategy.  |

#### **Prioritization matrix**



To complete this axis, consult your stakeholders on how you impact them.

Consider a corporate human rights impact assessment to more rigorously explore this question.

To complete this axis, start with ESG reporting standards to identify financially material issues. Speak to key leaders to prioritize which ones are critical for your strategy.

Indeed, a corporation's impacts on human beings constitute the very roots of its legal, operational, and reputational risks — even if how those risks might manifest is unpredictable. Those who wish business to pursue an ambitious societal agenda should agree that it's unwise to try to address everything at once. Those who wish to address the climate crisis should agree that technical, scientific messaging has had limited success, and that efforts anchored in human impact and behavior offer a more promising route to higher ground. I will establish that making your best effort to do no harm ought to take priority over involving your company in tangential popular causes.

This raises questions about how to manage impacts and risks that are partly or fully out of your direct control. In chapter 7, I will explore how to engage more effectively with the political process. As business has become more overtly political, it has fallen prey to undemocratic, partisan agendas, internal conflict, and unrealistic expectations. Any credible approach to responsible business must grapple with them. In chapter 8, I'll turn to the promise and peril of transparency, reflecting on

how demands for constant communication and disclosure can easily trap corporations in a reactive, paranoid mode.

In "Leading and Shaping the Future," the third and final part, we'll turn our gaze inside the organization to examine how societal shifts affect culture, leadership, oversight, and voice. In chapters 9 and 10, I will look at how novel pressures on business are transforming culture and leadership. In chapter 11, I'll discuss what this means for compliance, rules, and oversight. In chapter 12, I will review how speaking up by both employees and corporations has expanded and transformed— and what to do about it. In the conclusion, I'll explore what it really takes to implement corporate purpose and find a view from higher ground.

This book reflects my personal perspective and career experiences, but I haven't rested on them. From June 2021 through August 2023, I interviewed two hundred experts, practitioners, activists, executives, and academics around the world. Some of their candid views are quoted; many were shared with me off the record because the challenges we discussed are difficult to

It's challenging to embed environmental and social priorities into core business decisions. With their emphasis on reputational pressure rather than operational substance, companies tend to place environmental and social challenges, opportunities, and risks into a big bucket of sustainability "stuff."

acknowledge, even taboo. And while the book addresses leaders and readers everywhere, such issues as the availability of reproductive choice, corporate political funding, and the acceptability of ESG ratings are particularly volatile in the United States. Given the global reach and impacts of US-

based businesses and American culture, I will address certain of these matters in detail.

While researching this book, I was fascinated by how many experts told me they try to avoid using the word "ethics" at all because it sounds judgmental, punitive, and old-fashioned. While this is understandable, the further insistence of many commentators that ESG has nothing to do with being an ethical business also causes considerable confusion. So, when I use the word "ethics" in this book, I'll rely on a definition from the Ethics Centre in Sydney, Australia, which views ethics as a process of collective exploration: "the process of questioning, discovering and defending our values, principles and purpose."

Ascending tough terrain always requires focus, courage, and stamina. A company can neither separate from society nor solve every societal challenge it encounters. Shaping a better business will require that you exercise practical curiosity over your impacts on the world, muster your energy, respect your inherent limitations, and then help the vital systems you rely on to function better.

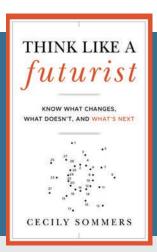


ALISON TAYLOR joined New York University Stern School of business as a clinical associate professor in January 2023. Her research focuses on the organizational dimension of corporate responsibility and business ethics. She has expertise in strategy, sustainability, political and social risk, culture and behavior, human rights, ethics and compliance, stakeholder engagement, anti corruption and professional responsibility. Alison's first book, Higher Ground, was published by Harvard Business Review Press in February 2024. Her previous work experience includes being a Managing Director at non-profit business network Business for Social Responsibility and a Senior Managing Director at Control Risks. She holds several advisory roles, including with sustainability non-profit Business for Social Responsibility, VentureESG, Pictet Group and KKR. Alison is also a member of the World Economic Forum Global Future Council on Good Governance, Alison received her Bachelor of Arts in Modern History from Balliol College, Oxford University, her MA in International Relations from the University of Chicago, and MA in Organizational Psychology from Columbia University.

### Think Like a Futurist

# Know What Changes, What Doesn't, and What's Next

A book excerpt by Cecily Sommers, Keynote speaker at the 2024 Next Practice Institute



Named "One of the Top 50 Female Futurists in the World" by *Forbes*, Cecily speaks and consults on the forces of change shaping business and society, and how to turn them into catalysts for strategy. She is a trusted guide and ally to executive teams charged with ambitious projects. She details her proprietary model of change, an end-to-end process that takes clients from the present to a detailed plan for the future in her 2012 book *Think Like A Futurist* which remains a highly relevant and much loved reference on the desks of many leaders.

Think Like a Futurist is a guide for applying foresight to strategy and innovation and has been translated into several languages, named "Top 25: What Corporate America is Reading" by the *Tribune Review*, and nominated for "Most Significant Futures Work in Methods and Practice" by the Association of Professional Futurists.

Noted as a "Fast 50 Reader's Favorite" by Fast Company, Cecily has also been recognized as a "Woman to Watch" by the Business Journal. She has been a regular contributor to NPR's All Things Considered and other media outlets and podcasts, where audiences appreciate her ability to make sense of where we are in this time in history.

#### INTRODUCTION

#### An excerpt

You are hardwired not to believe the future or even imagine it. According to brain-imaging research, the same neural networks we use to envision the future are also used to recall memories. That means that most of us can only imagine what we already know.

Considering that prediction is the primary function of the brain and the foundation of intelligence, this biological efficiency can be seriously limiting. Our neural networks want what they want: certainty. This is a benefit of our wiring: it helps us feel prepared for the future, in control and confident. In short, it nurtures our sense of stability. But the future could not care less about our biological comfort zone.

Were our brains wired differently, we would be more able to imagine the future as something other than a linear continuation of the past. The fact that we are biologically predisposed not to see what is coming is cold comfort. Just ask the thousands of autoworkers still looking for a job in Detroit, because their corporate leaders steered their companies into the future using the rearview mirror on a gas-guzzling SUV. Understanding our biology is not an excuse to accept it as destiny; it is an opportunity to push past our natural neural limits – in other words, to get unstuck.

This is what futurists do: we get people and organizations unstuck from what I call the Permanent Present, the natural bias for projecting current conditions out in the future.

Excerpted and adapted from Think Like a Futurist with permission from the author. ©2012. All rights reserved

A dancer for more than twenty years, I lived most of my life in a studio. Each day followed the same routine: ballet class in the morning, followed by afternoons spent making and rehearsing new works of choreography, culminating in a production, then back again to the barre. Even when I was faced with a bad performance, review, or injury, the drill continued: learn, create, produce; learn, create, produce. Our creativity was a structured process of perspiration.

I applied the same disciplined approach to innovative thinking in phase two of my professional life. Fascinated by the systems of the human body, I studied cadavers in anatomy class, I hung up my ballet shoes in my late twenties for a career as a chiropractor. Over the years, working with Western, Chinese, and homeopathic traditions, I realized that no system was in itself "right" and that I had to borrow from each to come up with a useful diagnosis. In the decade I spent teaching anatomy at the University of Illinois and Indiana University, I tried to instill the core lesson to my students: back away from ideology and look to see how the facts fit together; that is where the insight lies.

It is this quest for insight that has defined my career, from dancer to chiropractor to futurist. And as much as the experience and theoretical knowledge I have accumulated along the way has influenced how I think about strategy, it has also convinced me of four simple truths:

- I. The creative process can be taught to anyone
- 2. It be scaled for groups of all sizes
- 3. It follows a clear, replicable structure
- 4. Hard work, not magic or even the right DNA, is what wins the day

The question is, how?

The purpose of Think Like a Futurist is to close the gap between talking about the role of creativity and innovation in business and integrating them into standard business practices – in concrete terms that hold up no matter what New Economy gurus say we are experiencing: the Creative Economy, the Knowledge Economy, the Experience Economy, the Post-Industrial Economy, the Social-Capital Economy, the Information Economy, the Bottomup Economy, and on and on. Yes, thinking like a futurist is partly about seeing coming trends, but it also means transcending trends. To think like a futurist is to adopt a wide-angle perspective on any issue you face. You must develop your ability to step outside the particulars of your situation and ask, "How does this work?" Which is to say, before you can get practical, you have to get philosophical. That means you have to step back from the situation to frame your challenge in terms of who you are and where you're going; to understand the context of your challenge from a systems point of view, in regard to change in the environment, the human system, and the organizational system; to formulate what I call Best Questions that focus you on the real need; to expose yourself to new thinking and experiences; to formulate a vision; and, finally, to create a plan for action.

In *Think Like a Futurist*, I will show you how to integrate the hard-to-prove, hard-to-manage capacities of foresight and innovative thinking in three steps: Know, New, and Do.

- **KNOW** the social, economic, and environmental crises of our time spring from just four constant and predictable forces that always have, and always will, structure our world. The four forces of change are: *resources, technology, demographics,* and *governance*.
- **NEW** I call the problem-solving methodology I use to kick-start your futurist thinking the *Zone of Discovery*. It is based on the brain science related to learning and creativity, easily adapted for use in strategy and innovation, questions big and small, opportunities far and near.
- **DO** To work smarter, apply the 5 Percent Rule to align short and long-term projects. The rule is an approximate measure of investment of time, talent and money required to ensure that futurist thinking thrives in a business environment.

#### A Futurist's Habits of Mind

While brilliant ideas and smart strategies can shape your future, the limiting factor is often the human element. By adopting a Futurist's Habits of Mind, you can lead effectively in an ever-changing world.

More than a generalized mindset, we can use these four mantras to develop fluency in a way of being and seeing. These Four Habits of Mind are vertical hinges, and help become the calm in the center of any storm. As we practice them:



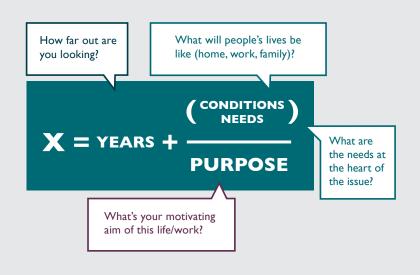
- We grow an inner stability in the face of a world that is quite unstable.
- We cultivate our ability to manage chaotic circumstances without becoming chaotic ourselves.
- We hone a heads-up perspective that moves us out of the weeds and into opportunity-mining.
- And, one moment at a time, we deepen our natural inclination toward wise decisions.

#### Solving for X – Investigating a White Space of Opportunity or Challenge

By defining and refining the various conditions, you create a clearer sense of what is possible, sensible, and doable.

When you're feeling stuck. Often when we're stuck, it simply means that we've come to the limit of our understanding, and we have to learn more. 'Solving for X' will show us a path of learning to make sense of your future's requirements and opportunities.

When what you're doing feels fuzzy. That fuzziness indicates there is something else to make sense of before you turn to action.



#### REMEMBERING THE FUTURE

#### **Excerpt from Chapter 6**

Whether the quest for deep understanding is intellectual or spiritual, it is the state of knowingness itself that fascinates futurists. Let's call it neural nirvana. Spiritual leaders across all time and space have used meditation, chanting, fasting, and many other rites to tap into this fertile territory. The futurist uses a different sort of ritual to unlock the creativity stuck between our conscious and unconscious minds. That in-between thinking is a key component in what neuroscientists qualify as intelligence: the ability to solve complex problems and make predictions about the future.

In a study published in the *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience*, Jeffrey M. Zacks, an associate professor of psychology at Washington University in St. Louis, focused on the midbrain dopamine system (MDS), a part of the human brain that dates

back to our earliest evolutionary phase and is used to provide signals to the rest of the brain when it is faced with unexpected events. To build a theory of prediction, Zacks's team used fMRIs to record the brain activity of participants watching a movie of everyday events, from washing clothes to building a LEGO model. The researchers stopped the film at different points, either in the middle of one of the activities or just before the next activity was set to begin—and asked the volunteers to predict what would come next. Ninety percent were able to predict the future when the film was paused in the middle of an activity, but fewer than 80 percent were able to make a prediction at the brink of something new. These moments of unpredicted change sparked primitive midbrain dopamine activity, indicating not only uncertainty in the participants but also anxiety about their uncertainty. As Zacks described it, "They are noting that a possible error is starting to happen, and that shakes their confidence. They're thinking, 'Do I really know what's going to happen next?'"

#### AN EXPONENTIAL MINDSET

In the 2023 edition of this magazine we featured an excerpt from the book *From Malthus to Mars* by futurist Lavs Tvede and former McKinsey partner and Mobius Friend Nicolai Nielsen, where they explain:

"Decades of research in cognitive psychology illustrate that the human mind prefers simple, linear relationships and struggles with thinking nonlinearly. And certainly it has a difficult time considering exponential development: even as we are well aware of exponential change in the past, we struggle imagining it continuing in the future.

Another one of our many biases is a linearity bias, where we assume that a change in one quantity produces a proportionate change in another. When one of these quantities is time, we believe that past trends will continue at the same rate in the future. Perhaps we make the trend grow slightly faster because we know that technology is improving, but this is often in the range of 10–20 percent increase over five to ten years, which can miss the mark drastically. Exponential changes can get to 10–100x increases or more, and as they do, they often create outcomes that are completely different from the present. For instance, a bundle of nerve cells in a worm enables it to move and react to its surroundings. But the much bigger bundle in human brains creates something materially different than just a faster worm. And whereas better battery performance for a while meant longer battery times for our phones, it eventually also meant efficient battery-driven cars, which was a whole new thing.

Rational argumentation and analysis will help you break things down and understand how the world works. This is important and needed. But it will never be enough to create something fantastically different and better. For this you need a possibility-focused mindset, which is bold, aspirational, curious, and asks questions such as *How might we?* What if? And Why couldn't we? In other words, you need a growth mindset."

Hence our hardwired inclination to get stuck in the Permanent Present. Zacks hopes to use his understanding of the neurology of predictive perception to help fight such diseases as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's. His theory that our ability to predict the future depends on the maintenance of a mental model of what is happening now reinforces the idea that we can easily imagine only what we already know. This helps explain why the future—whether it is represented by dinner coming out of a printer, cockroach robots, or just an old-fashioned natural

disaster—consistently catches us by surprise. Instead of regularly practicing foresight, most of us live in the Permanent Present. Letting go of past and future thoughts in order to live in the now may be a worthy spiritual goal of Eastern religions as well as countless self-help pop psychology books, but for business success, our brain's desire to stay in the Permanent Present does no good. We resist changing our thinking and behavior unless, or until, a crisis makes it necessary.

It is the job of the futurist to change that pattern. ■



**CECILY SOMMERS** – A renowned business futurist, Cecily helps leaders anticipate and steward transformational change. Kicking the futurist-as-guru paradigm to the curb, Cecily embeds foresight in leadership development programs, training clients to become their own best futurists. This is how organizations build the culture they need for the future they want.

As the strategist top global companies turn to, Cecily has led "Future of ..." projects in industries like energy, healthcare, pet ownership, retail, and leadership. She guides organizations through critical questions such as, "Which opportunities give us the most advantage?" and "How do we develop a change-ready culture?" Her work brings clarity and confidence to decision-making in an unpredictable world.

From JP Morgan Chase to Purina and Google, Cecily's clients value her ability to connect long-term possibilities with immediate business pressures. She also teaches in the internationally recognized graduate foresight program at the University of Houston, where she serves on its advisory board.

A two-time TEDx speaker and frequent keynote presenter at conferences, Cecily has been described as "catalytic and brilliant" for making complex issues simple and relatable. Dedicated to advancing change literacy in organizations, she created the "Lead Like a Futurist" program and is a certified Transformational Coach.



STORM SURGE by Jim McManus, Mobius Featured Artist

# OVERCOMING RESISTANCE TO CHANGE Adapted from Think Like a Futurist toolkit

Resistance to change isn't only an external force in your environment.

Sometimes the most difficult barriers to overcome are the ones in your own mind, the ones that start with But..., followed by a complaint, a justification, a rationalization, an excuse, or any assumption about your circumstances that keeps you from moving forward. Though *But...s* come in all shapes and sizes, what's so insidious about them is that they keep you thinking and playing small, undermine your commitments and, worst, let you off the hook for doing so.

The key to moving all those big *But...s* out of the way is, first, to identify the variety of ways they eat away at your commitment and wear you down. *But...s* generally reflect a decision or an action not yet made, so the best way to diffuse them is to call a *But... a But ...* when it appears, identify the underlying concern, then make a decision to take action in response to the situation.

#### For example:

- Finding Faulty (Blame) There's a defect in me (or them or the world) that is a permanent obstacle to progress. I have an idealized view of how I think things should be.
- Arguing with Reality (Denial) the argument version is accompanied by an earnest do-gooder intention to change yourself, someone else, or a situation. Again, the underlying belief is that there's something wrong, but it's followed by efforts to fix things. Trying harder is not a change. Doing something radically different is.
- Needing to know the Answer (Fear) a very common, though unconscious, stalling tactic that plays out in business environments. You might hear yourself taking up the devil's advocate position. You might feel uneasy and ask for more proof and measurement. The risk: being a squeaky wheel that likes to hand out "constructive criticism" or gets caught up in minutiae. All of these behaviors signal a fear of commitment...
- Focusing on Busyness (Avoidance) No doubt you are busy, but the question is, are you busy creating your future, or are you just busy? If busyness is a part of your identity, if you have a gnawing anxiety about what you feel you really should be spending your time on, or if you find it hard to turn down requests, chances are that you're allowing busyness to come between you and your future.
- Whining (Inaction) "It's too hard." "It's not fair." "I don't want to." [versus the more constructive "conscious whine" where you give yourself time to vent to move past it]
- Feeling Stuck (Resignation) Resignation has a fatalistic and cynical quality, a sense that you're stuck. Acceptance, in contrast, is about embracing situations and people as they are, with compassion; its hallmark is that your development and growth are not limited by your circumstances.

# **Belonging**The Ancient Code of Togetherness

A book excerpt by Owen Eastwood, Keynote speaker at the 2024 Next Practice Institute



#### **PROLOGUE**

#### An excerpt

On a biting autumn afternoon in 2019, in a room within the cloisters of Magdalen College, Oxford University, I met with Professor Robin Dunbar, one of the world's leading evolutionary psychologists.

Early in our meeting a powerful insight surfaced, to the surprise of both of us. Robin asked me to take him into the 'dressing room', so to speak, of a high-performing team today and describe how they might be organized and led. After I did this, Robin replied, 'That is in essence the same way hunter-gatherers set themselves up sixty thousand years ago.'

Robin took me back into *homo sapien's* evolutionary story and together we mapped primal human needs that still direct us today: our need to belong converted into an emotive identity story; our need for a shared purpose transformed into a vision of the future; our need for shared beliefs to be translated into a code of how to behave.

Another realisation dawned on me as I travelled home that day. Perhaps, without the distraction of our systems and technology and data, our ancestors understood better than us what makes some teams strong and others weak. After all, they only had each other to rely on. Maybe our ancestors had attempted to convey this knowledge to us but perhaps we'd stopped listening. We'd developed a conceit that we knew better than those before us.

As a result, maybe this super strength of our species is weakening before our eyes. Leaders having forgotten that their first role is to protect their people and that strong groups of *homo sapiens* form when we focus on what we share rather than what divides us.

Over most of our history as a species such mistakes would have been catastrophic. Without our superstrength ability to form strong groups we would have been destined to extinction well before now.

I began to see that wrapped in the stories and spiritual ideas passed down to us were practical lessons drawn from thousands of years of experience. These stories and ideas disclose how to build strong teams and are weighted with emotion to make them durable.

As our communities and teams become increasingly diverse this wisdom has never been more precious.

In the pages that follow, I identify the aspects of teaming that gave *homo sapiens* a competitive advantage. We'll see how these critical elements evolved over time into needs hardwired into our biology and our psychology and how they remain central to who we are today.

We will then see how our ancestors, from all over our world, converted these insights into wisdom.

Finally, we will take a glimpse into the dressing rooms of high-performing teams today to see how

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these insights continue to underpin great leadership and successful groups of *homo sapiens*.

I have written this book as a tradesman, not as a philosopher. In the work I do, I always come back to the same question: What is the optimal environment for this group to perform to their best?

#### **STREAMS INTO A RIVER**

#### from Chapter I

I come from the south-west corner of the Pacific Ocean.

It is a place where the three most powerful words that can be uttered to you are 'you belong here.'

Over the span of eight hundred years my lines of ancestors, unknown to each other, voyaged across great seas to make their home on the islands where I was born.

Only one line of ancestors already lived within this ocean. The others lived on coastlines of another great ocean. They were pulled away from kin and ways they understood in search of a better life. All of them migrants who became people of this land.

The great chief and navigator Kupe was the first to discover the country where I was born. His crew, led to this new land by a vision, voyaged southwest across 1,700 miles of ocean from our spiritual homeland Hawaiki. With unfathomable skill, they then sailed back to that tiny dot of land in the central Pacific Ocean to share their discovery.

There followed a great fleet of migrating double-hulled vessels to settle these newly discovered islands. One of those sacred canoes, the *Takitimu*, carried my direct ancestor Tahu (after which my Maori tribe *Ngai Tahu* is named). They landed on the northern island and Tahu became the leader of these people. He voyaged down to the southern island in search of prized greenstone. On this journey he would name a mountain range the Takitimus, after our sacred canoe.

Hundreds of years later my mother, of Irish descent on both sides, her father a Daly, her mother a Casey, was born on a farm at the foot of those same Takitimu Mountains.

My first Irish ancestor to make a home in these islands, Patrick Daly, had exiled himself in the years following the Great Irish Famine in the 1840s. Half

of his village, Caherpierce, perished in the famine. Located on the Gaelic-speaking Dingle Peninsula in County Kerry, it was one of the most isolated and poorest parts of Ireland. Fleeing the spectre of starvation and typhus, motivated by fear and hope, my ancestor voyaged across two oceans in search of renewal. That hope justified the price of leaving forever the kin he was born into.

One of Patrick's brothers joined the exodus to North America.

A younger brother stayed at home, only to drown in a nearby river.

One hundred and sixty years later my mother and I visited this ancestral home on the Dingle Peninsula. It was the first time these lines of kin had seen and touched each other since the Great Famine. We ate at their table. We stitched together the past. My mother and I felt a deep sense of belonging to this place despite having never been there before. Prior to leaving, we visited the local church and walked around the gravestones. Staring back at us were the very same names inscribed into our own stones on the other side of the world.

Fate invited another ancestor from another land to our remote islands. One hundred years ago, my English ancestor, my grandfather, voyaged across three oceans to these islands. He had served in the Royal Navy in the First World War. After that war, the Royal Navy sent battle cruisers around the world to pay thanks to the 'colonies' who had shed their own blood for the cause. When this vessel made port at our coastal towns the local community put on dances for the visiting servicemen. At one such dance, my English grandfather would meet a descendant of Tahu, my grandmother Rose. They fell in love and my grandfather was granted a release from the Royal Navy to make his way in this new country. The Government gifted him land on the North Island, in the 'Bay of Plenty', on which to farm. There my father would be born, between a great economic depression and another great war.

All of these people, my ancestors, have their own origin story. They came with their own beliefs and sense of identity forged by the tribes they belonged to. But the world changed around them. They had to move, driven by a vision of something better.

In making a decision to come to this new land they accepted that life would not be the same. That they would exchange parts of their old identity for a new one that would, in turn, unlock a sense of belonging to this new place.

My ancestors understood that the differences they had with the people around them were eclipsed by the future they would share together.

I see each line of my ancestors as its own stream, with different points of origin and bends in their journeys, coming together to form a powerful river.

#### **WHAKAPAPA**

#### from Chapter I

A week before my sixth birthday my father died. He was forty-one. My mother, thirty-nine, was left to raise four children, aged twelve, ten, five and three.

Beyond the shock and suffering, something precious was broken. My father, an only child, was the direct link to our English and Maori ancestors. His elderly mother, my Nana Rose, lived over a thousand miles away to the north. Heartbroken herself, we would only see her every few years.

Over time, grief began to be accompanied by a sense of something stolen, a wrong that had been unjustly visited upon us. Someone who had been holding your hand had let go and it would take a very long time to grip onto that sense of belonging again.

This loss involved a violent breaking of a heritage we were born into. A sense of dislocation from a place I had never been, but where I knew I belonged.

As the years passed, a yearning to know more fed a determination to repair this broken chain.

When I was twelve, I wrote a letter to the office of *Ngai Tahu*, our Maori tribe. I asked them, in essence, *What do you know about who I am?* I didn't really expect a reply. But I got one. I don't retain the covering letter *Ngai Tahu* wrote back to me but I know what it said: *You belong*.

It welcomed me to my tribe. I was provided with a tribal registration number. Two documents were enclosed in the envelope. I have kept both. One was a formal record, with detailed information of my Maori genealogy. Highlighted were two matriarchs, cousins of each other, Pakinui and Tiaki Kaika, both alive in 1848. This 'legally' entitled myself and my siblings, and our children, to be classified as Maori under New Zealand law.

The other document, a scruffy single page, had no heading. It was a list of ancestors' names going back more than twenty generations. No dates, no commentary. One ancestor's name after the other down the page, finishing with my father at the bottom. The covering letter from my tribe referred to this as my 'whakapapa' (pronounced far-ka-pa-pa).

The first name, at the top of this page, was Paikea (pronounced pie-key-ah). In this one name, this one word, two worlds would collide.

Paikea was taught in schools as a mythical character, 'the whale rider' – a Maori legend. We learned that Paikea was the heir apparent to the godly Chief Uenuku, in our spiritual homeland of Hawaiki, and that his half-brother had taken him out to sea on a canoe to fish and there tried to kill him so that he could inherit the chiefdom for himself. Paikea had escaped this fate by jumping from the canoe and

In Maori culture, a word for leader is rangatira, which itself consists of two words – raranga, meaning to weave, and tira, meaning a group, so rangatira literally means 'to weave a group of people together.'



TIDEPOOL by Jim McManus, Mobius Featured Artist

calling a whale, who saved him and took him to safety all the way across the Pacific Ocean to the islands we now call home.

This piece of paper was boldly saying something different. It was telling me that Paikea was a real person who I was related to. On that list he took only one line, the same amount of space as my father.

After Paikea, came Tahu, from whom our tribe takes its name, who came to this land on the *Takitimu* canoe and named the mountains under which my mother was born.

The emptiness I carried with me slowly started to subside. I recall a feeling of euphoria upon reading this, a deep sense of belonging to something greater than myself.

Over time, I have come to understand whakapapa in this way:

Each of us are part of an unbreakable chain of people going back and forward in time. Back to our first ancestor at the beginning of time and into the future to the end of time. Each of us in this chain of people have our arms interlocked with those on either side of us. We are unbreakable. Together, immortal.

The sun rose in the east and shone on our first ancestor. Here is our origin story. Just as happens with each passing day, the sun slowly moves down this unbreakable chain of people. Each of us will have our time in the sun. But the sun is always moving. Moving towards the west, where it will finally settle.

When the sun shines on us we are alive, we are strong. For we have had passed down to us a culture that immerses us in deep belonging. We feel safe and respected. We share

beliefs and a sense of identity with those around us and this anchors us. We share a purpose with them. We share a vision of the future. We fit in here. Rituals and traditions tie us together. The experiences and wisdom of those who walked in the light before our time are passed on to us.

Whakapapa points a finger at us and tells us, You will not be judged by your money or celebrity or sense of self pride... you will be judged by what you did for our tribe.

When the sun is shining on us, we must be guardians of our tribe and of each other.

This is how I have come to understand whakapapa.

It is crucial to understand that *whakapapa*, like so many indigenous ideas, was gifted to us by our ancestors as a highly practical tool for us to deploy in our lives and work. It has been given to us so that we understand how to build strong tribes and strong teams.

Whakapapa is the starting point in my work with teams and leaders. It unlocks our sense of identity. If we inherit a legacy, we extract meaning from it. If we are beginning a new venture, then we shape our genesis story with intent. Our deeds will be an expression of the identity we build.

Having spoken about *whakapapa* around the world, I have come to understand that it is a universal idea. I received a powerful affirmation of this when I was invited to work with the Command Group of the NATO military alliance based in Mons, Belgium.

The Command Group comprises the four-star generals who oversee NATO's military operations. In 2012 this included the Supreme Allied Commander

for Europe Admiral Jim Stavridis from the US Navy, Deputy SACEUR General Sir Richard Shirreff of the British Army and Chief of Staff General Manfred Lange of the German Air Force.

As part of our work together we invoked whakapapa to reflect on previous NATO Command Groups: looking at the leadership challenges they faced when the sun shone on them and the legacies they ultimately left.

We began with the first ancestors and the genesis story. This revolved around the 1949 Treaty of Washington that formed the alliance, and the first Command Group which included General (later President) Dwight Eisenhower and his deputy, British General Bernard Montgomery. Then, through the decades, we reflected on each Command Group's 'time in the sun' and their legacy.

The generals then previewed their own legacy as the sixteenth leadership team and articulated this in writing. Sir Richard Shirreff reflected this exercise back to me:

'Whakapapa made a great impression on me. The notion of being part of an unbroken chain, those before us and those after us, with the sun shining on us in this moment. It particularly focused me on creating and setting conditions for success for those that would follow us.'

That sentiment towards whakapapa was reaffirmed the following year when I visited Mons and Admiral Stavridis' office. The centrepiece of the office is the oak desk of General (also later President) Ulysses S. Grant, which he had used during the American Civil War as leader of the Union Army. This was brought to Mons by first ancestor General Eisenhower when he took up his role. In the middle of the desk was Admiral Stavridis' computer, to the left of it a photo of his family and beside that the whakapapa legacy statement that he had written.

When I consider my other ancestral lines, they too have their own version of whakapapa. My Irish ancestral lines can be traced in the Leabhar na nGenealach (Book of Genealogies) written in the 1600s. My English ancestral lines can be pieced together before and after the Liber de Wintonia (Domesday Book) of 1086.

#### When We Feel Excluded

Our energy and focus are absorbed by the infinite calculations our brain has to make to navigate each social situation with our leaders and teammates. In every interaction we feel judged and pressure builds. This takes our focus away from the step-by-step process of preparing and performing at our best.

Our thinking capacity and ability to evaluate risk diminish

Our working memory is interrupted by the noise of negative belonging cues. We struggle to toggle between tasks. We may become more aggressive, though we are likely to target that at those we perceive as having lower status than us.

We may struggle to trust those around us as relationships feel transactional. We have a growing sense that others might not have our backs if things don't go well. We fear that what we disclose may be used against us.

A paradox plays out. We are preoccupied with fitting in and being accepted yet we become withdrawn. We minimise what we perceive as moments of vulnerability with others. We have decided that it's safer to stay in the shadows. We avoid speaking up, let alone taking any responsibility. We know this is detrimental to our learning and development, but we offset it by reducing our risk of exclusion. We become a poorer teammate – not because of a flaw in our character but because we feel unsafe and threatened.

We are in self-preservation mode and the fate of the team becomes a secondary consideration. Our mind prioritises what we need to do to survive here, over what the team needs to do to succeed.

Our identity is a fusion of stories, myth, genealogy and personalities that we step into.

Whilst ideas like *whakapapa* are highly practical tools for us to build strong teams, they also have a powerful spiritual dimension. They explicitly connect us to something greater than ourselves.

Whakapapa counters a universal anxiety in homo sapiens around our own impermanence and mortality. Russian novelist Vladimir Nabokov cues whakapapa itself in his dark reflection that: "Our existence is but a brief crack of light between two eternities of darkness."

Whakapapa offers a sense of immortality. Being able to attach ourselves to something permanent in our impermanent world. A sense of continuity and stability despite the evidence of constant change and chaos around us. It provides an antidote, a source of calm. Whakapapa holds out a hand to a world beyond this one. My friend Michael Gervais, a leading United States performance psychologist [puts it like this]: "Whakapapa encourages us to settle into the moment, locked into the people around us."

#### TWO WORLDS OF BELONGING

#### from Chapter I

It all started with the Industrial Revolution. In the north of England in the 1800s a radical shift emerged in the way humans worked. We moved from workers possessing multiple skills and dynamically performing multiple tasks, to production lines where rows of workers each performed a distinct role.

The role of management was to oversee this process and ensure each person performed their isolated task – and if they didn't, replace them with someone who would. If there was a production error, then the fault, or culprit, could be isolated and fixed.

A leading management voice at the turn of the twentieth century was American Frederick Winslow Taylor. Taylor wrote the highly influential *The Principles of Scientific Management* which espoused industrial efficiency. In his book Taylor declared: *In the past the man has been first; in the future the system must be first.* 

Lost in this transformation in the way we work was part of our humanity and I would argue we have yet to fully regain it.

Our ancient ancestors' wisdom on teams did not seem to fit into this new world of working. We became disconnected from each other. Our value became individualised. We became silos.

At the same time as we revolutionised working practices modern sport emerged. From the start, this production-line mindset infiltrated the coaching of sport. In football and baseball, it is no coincidence that today the coach is still known as 'the manager'.

The role of the production manager was to ensure the workplace was as efficient and productive as possible. That the technical pieces were in place, that the operation was organized, that each person performed a specific role, and all of this was statistically measured.

There is an inherent problem with this. Most high-performing team activities are nothing like linear production lines. Team performance is not an aggregation of individual tasks being completed. Our contribution is hugely influenced by the acts of others, such as an opponent actively seeking to disrupt us, and a range of random events beyond anyone's control.

Here, our ancient ancestors' wisdom is timeless. Success is dependent on the strength of the group under pressure. In order to stay strong, aligned and cohesive we have evolved needs that must be met – starting with our need to belong.

This production line mindset pervades working environments today. It is not just with management either. Stakeholders, media and the public look at performance in the same way. When results are not as desired there is a reflex that an individual deemed responsible be identified and replaced so that the illusory linear process of winning can be 'fixed'.

**OWEN EASTWOOD** is a New Zealand performance coach, and the author of the international best-seller *Belonging*. Owen coaches leaders on building healthy high performing team and organizational culture. In this work, he invokes ancient wisdom and rituals from his own cultural identity to connect individuals to a higher cause; each other; and their role in the team. Owen works with the European Ryder Cup team, Chelsea Football Club, the Bangalore cricket club in India and corporate leadership teams in the UK and US.

## **Emergent Leadership**

## Applying Contemporary Embodied Mysticism to Today's Challenges

A White Paper from Mobius Transformational Faculty member Robin Alfred



Mobius Transformational Faculty member Robin Alfred is a seasoned trainer, facilitator and organizational consultant who has extensive experience in facilitating personal discovery, depth work and collective group intelligence, enabling emergence and the manifestation of transformational fields.

In this white paper, he examines what mysticism might teach us about radical leadership – in how we navigate stress, approach obstacles, facilitate solutions, and hold space for the future to arise.

A paradox is only a

paradox at a certain level

of consciousness.

It has become something of a cliché to say that we face a polycrisis. Challenges surround us on all

fronts: war, refugee movements, climate change, loss of biodiversity, increased polarization, income inequality, water shortages, fake news and more. It is also something of a cliché to quote Einstein saying that we cannot solve the current problems we face

with the same level of consciousness that created them. The question arises: What does this really mean for us and for how we host and respond to the challenges within and around us? For me, it means delving deep into the timeless wisdom encoded for thousands of years in the mystical traditions that lie at the heart of all faiths.

Attempting to solve our current crises with what we might call 'horizontal' or relational awareness and the use of our five senses has become simply inadequate. We must tap into the deepest and highest resourcing, and the deepest and highest truth that is available

to us. That is what I mean by a contemporary and embodied mysticism. A mysticism that, while rooted

in tradition, is consistently and continuously being updated; and a mysticism that is embodied – not only a mental understanding and orientation to life, but something that we feel in our hearts and our bodies – in every cell in our beings. Embracing a contemporary

embodied mysticism is the only way to generate the radicality, deep love, compassion, and the embodied wisdom that we need at this time.

#### Context

For the past many years, consultants adopted a grading given by the US military to territory they were entering. Consultants said we lived in a VUCA world – that is Volatile, Uncertain Complex and Ambiguous. So it was and so we responded, seeking to render the world less volatile, more certain, less complex and one with greater clarity.

I was recently struck, however, by an article by futurist James Cascio, "Facing the Age of Chaos" in which he said we have moved from this context to a BANI world – one that is Brittle, Anxious, Nonlinear and Incomprehensible. Such a world, Cascio suggests, requires cultivating resilience and slack to reduce the fragility of Brittleness and increase the empathy and mindfulness that can host and ease our Anxiety. Non-linearity needs context and flexibility, while Incomprehensibility asks for transparency and intuition. Such qualities are found more in the right brain and in the emergence of our spiritual senses than in the left brain, the site of planning and control. Such qualities are more likely to be accessed and developed through a contemporary mysticism or what I might call emergent leadership.

#### What is Mysticism?

Dictionary definitions of mysticism tend to revolve around the search for and experience of unity with God. It is unsurprising, then, that the business world might shy away from the word. I would like to adopt a more practical, perhaps more prosaic, approach and suggest it includes the following elements:

• The search for the **deepest and highest truth available** to us at any time. We live in a world of relative truth. There is also an absolute truth which is, for the most part, beyond our

- awareness but that we can sometimes sense in moments of awe and wonder, experiences where we touch on the ultimate nature of reality, a sense of deep unity with all life forms, samadhi experiences of non-dualism. From such a place, an absolute truth might emanate. Mysticism, for me, is a quest for the highest approximation to that. We might call it the search for the highest relative truth available to us at any one time.
- Mysticism also allows us to understand how life works; how energy flows within us, between us and around us, and where inspiration is sourced from. As contemporary mystic Thomas Huebl says, an understanding of mysticism allows us to co-direct, with a higher intelligence, our own movie rather than simply finding ourselves as an actor within it. How many times do we wonder "Why is this happening to me? Or "How can this be happening again?" Mysticism does not promise answers to every circumstance we encounter, but it does start to provide a map of the territory and allow us to cultivate more awareness of dynamics we might be caught in, situations we encounter, and questions we carry. Mystical knowledge points us to a higher level of understanding and a wider perspective.



IN THE MIST II by Jim McManus, Mobius Featured Artist

 Lastly, I would say that mysticism allows us to embrace paradox. A paradox is only a paradox at a certain level of consciousness. Things that appear to be opposite and true at the same time can find resolution through mystical understanding: 'both and' rather than 'either or'.

In this article, I contrast what I call "classical" and "mystical" approaches to four frequently encountered aspects of a leadership journey; and then look at four common paradoxes that we may otherwise struggle to reconcile – each of which are essential to the radical leadership today's challenges require.

## Aspects of a Leadership Journey – from the classical and the mystical perspective

#### I. Stress

When talking about stress, it is important to distinguish two different generators:

- Evolutionary stress where I am growing into a new role, a new direction in life, and I experience some stress and anxiety, maybe nervousness, as I embrace the new.
- Shadow stress when a situation that I encounter shows me parts of myself that are not yet integrated and where I do not have enough inner spaciousness to hold the complexity of the situation that I encounter.

Either way, the stress may overpower too small a vessel.

Classically, we might say that the response to stress is to limit what is coming in. Delegate more. Say 'no' more frequently. Summon up warrior energy to set a boundary. Take some time off. Have a holiday. Or even go to the doctor who might sign you off sick.

From a mystical point of view, we might focus more on how we can expand the vessel. This means engaging in shadow work – taking time to integrate what remains unintegrated from our past and deepening our practice of presence to be able to onboard the unintegrated aspects of the past. When we expand the vessel through such practices, and by reaching out to others and forming collective vessels to host the more collective challenges that we face, we can hold and host more. Our vessel grows.

We are not meant to face situations alone. We are social beings and our tendency to feel *I must do this alone* reveals a trauma response of separation and isolation (often, a necessary and intelligent protective response at an earlier time in our life), rather than a mature and healthy expression of autonomy and of taking responsibility.

#### 2. Facilitation

Classically, facilitation might be seen as a set of tools. People speak of the 'Facilitator Tool Kit' and

Group coherence is a product of presence, shared intention and vulnerability.

such practices as the Art of Hosting, World Café, Open Space, Pro Action Café, and other useful and helpful processes for facilitating groups and harvesting collective wisdom. I have seen many facilitators work extremely effectively with these ... until they hit an edge.

The edge may be around facilitating intense conflict, polarization, or topics and feelings where the inner world of the facilitator is not spacious enough to host the reality, the complexity and the fragmentation of what participants are experiencing in the group. This is where an embodied mystical understanding can be helpful.

From a mystical point of view, we might say that facilitation is about conducting the energy flows in the group space or, as Thomas Huebl puts it, it is a dialogue with the higher organizing principle in the group. This implies that there is something that is "wanting to happen" in a group experience and that our job as facilitators is to be sensitive and aware of *that*. Writing 2000 years ago Chinese mystic Lao Tzu expressed it thus:

The Master allows things to happen.

She shapes events as they come.

She steps out of the way

And let's the Tao speak for itself.

In facilitation terms, I take this to mean that something is wanting to happen in a group experience and that, as facilitators, we need to meet that and shape it. It means paying attention to the inner condition of the facilitator. As Bill O'Brien, the former CEO of Hanover Insurance, wisely declared in the 1980s: "The success of an intervention depends on the interior condition of the intervener."

This means we must cleanse our vessel, our inner space, and fill it with self-awareness. When we are aware of our own fears and bias, we can meet a group with more confidence, becoming curious about everything that arises. Once we let go of the idea that the group needs to have a certain experience, that they must reach certain goals of the meeting, then we become more awake to what is actually waiting and wanting to emerge which is often more profound than any goal we might set. We are more interested in the health and coherence of the field, by which I mean

the atmosphere within which the group experience unfolds, than we are with getting to a specific and pre-defined outcome.

Group coherence is a product of presence, shared intention and vulnerability, and it starts with me, the facilitator. How coherent am I internally? How aligned are my thoughts, words and actions? How present am I? What is my intention? What is the appropriate vulnerability for me to show as a leader and facilitator in this space? From a place of selfawareness and inner alignment, I am able to ripple out a sense of safety and security into the group. I can notice whether the group feels close or far away. Whether it is represented within me or something external. I can tune into the next movement that wants to arise, noticing the in breath and the out breath of the group and its qualities of relatedness, grounded-ness and coherence. Such terrain is the habitat of the embodied and mystically informed facilitator, and invites a more emergent leadership.

#### 3. The Future

In everyday language, we say that yesterday is the past, today is the present and tomorrow is the future. We live in linear time and that is as far as we go.

However, from a mystical point of view, the future is what is fresh, alive, awake, and calling to us all the time. It is what we can sense on the horizon of our life or, in more organizational contexts, we express it as the capacity to "detect weak signals" or "look around corners" — something unshaped, out there, waiting for us and calling to us, a point that we are already journeying towards that arises in presence. Only in presence, do we onboard the past and access the future.

From a mystical point of view, the past is everything that is unintegrated. It is not yesterday. It is happening today because it is unintegrated and still having its effect on us now. The Holocaust did not only happen in the Second World War. It is happening today because it remains unintegrated experience that is still having its effect on us now. Everything that we do not integrate from the past drives us still. We might experience it as personal, ancestral or collective fields of trauma – when we behave in ways that we take as normal, but which are really adaptive responses to challenges we experienced in the past.

In presence, we can start to reflect on, digest and then integrate our past experiences so that they no longer run us. This clears a path through which the future can arrive more fluidly, and in a less filtered way, in our lives.

#### 4. Obstacles

When something is difficult in our life, we generally don't want it. We want to get rid of it, go round it, blast it out of the way or somehow remove it from our path. However, Lao Tzu suggests that

When the Master runs into a difficulty, she stops and gives herself to it. She doesn't cling to her own comfort; thus problems are no problem for her.

There is something useful and interesting in the obstacles we encounter. If we cultivate curiosity about them, ask ourselves why they are on our path and what it is we have to learn from them, seeing our difficulties as spiritual challenges rather than something to avoid, ignore or remove, we will learn and grow through the difficulties on our path. Lao Tzu also says that:

Every being in the universe is an expression of the Tao.
It springs into existence, unconscious, perfect, free, takes on a physical body, lets circumstances complete it.

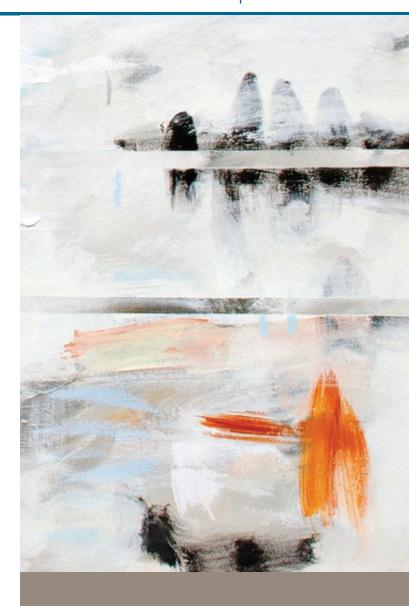
In other words, there is nothing wrong in what we encounter. There are no mistakes. There is a higher organizing principle that is conducting our life and giving us exactly the challenges and obstacles that we need to meet in order to learn, grow and develop.

#### **Paradoxes**

Here are four paradoxes that mysticism and emergent forms of leadership help us embrace:

#### I. Urgency and Slowing down

In times of urgency and crisis, paradoxically we often need to go slower. Quick responses are likely to come from a reactive place where younger, immature and unintegrated parts of us, may run the show. Having



The past is not yesterday.

It is happening today
because it remains unintegrated
experience that is still having
its effect on us now.

OUT OF THE PAST by Jim McManus, Mobius Featured Artist

time to reflect, digest and integrate our experience is more likely to generate an embodied response to a situation than a knee jerk reaction. Slowing

down requires spaciousness. How much time in a day are we still? Is our calendar so full and busy that we simply collapse into bed at the end of the day, or do we have some kind of self-reflective practice such as conducting a daily review, meditation or journalling to cultivate our self-awareness? A world full of *reactivity* requires the antidote – pockets of spaciousness to generate healthy, ethically aligned and purposeful *responses*.

# What you can plan is too small for you to live.

FROM ON WHAT TO
REMEMBER WHEN WAKING,
BY POET AND ASSOCIATE
FELLOW AT MOBIUS,
DAVID WHYTE

#### 2. Acceptance and Change

One of my early teachers, Eileen Caddy, a co-founder of the Findhorn Community in Northern Scotland, where I held a position of leadership for many years, used to have a favourite saying "All is very, very well." I would go to her railing about the injustices I saw in the world, or in the community, and countering that "all is far from well."

The role of the mystic is to embrace both realities. On a human level there is suffering that we want to bring our agency and compassion to. On that level all is far from well and there is much that needs to be done. However, if we do not learn to rest in a place of deep acceptance that the world is exactly as it is, if we don't meet that reality fully, which requires the slowing down mentioned above, we will move, as Otto Scharmer says, from the top left-hand side of the U to the top right hand side of the U, from problem to apparent solution, without descending into a place of listening for what really needs and wants to happen. We need to act from a deep presencing of the world as it is. As Lao Tzu says "The world is sacred, it cannot be improved." From that place, a natural, evolutionary impulse to make our contribution is more likely to arise.

#### 3. Surrender and Drive

We are born with a healthy drive to contribute. We experience that as our will, agency, passion, purpose.

At the same time, we must surrender and bow, with deep humility, to an understanding that we contribute what we can without an attachment to the outcome.

Deepak Chopra references the difference between *intention* and *desire*. Desire has the energy of an intense wanting of a certain outcome. It is as if I hold something in my closed fist – I will have this! Intention is something that I hold with an open palm. It is a direction that I intend to go in, but I also accept that life might take me on a different trajectory.

True intention is born in the meeting place of Thy Will and My Will. Something is coming (Thy Will) and there is also my agency,

my contribution, my drive (My Will) that wants to meet it. The deepest, and most ethically aligned intention is formed at that juncture.

The philosopher David Spangler states that intention alone will not manifest what we need unless it is a true intention that is aligned with the needs of the world.

I remember receiving very strong guidance in my early days in the Findhorn community, that I needed to step into the role of Chair of the Management Team. I really didn't want to do this, but it was very clear guidance from a source beyond my personality. I went to see Eileen Caddy and talked to her about both the guidance and my reluctance. She said to me, "Your job now, Robin, is to make Thy Will, Your Will as well. You can't reluctantly follow higher guidance. You must want it too."

#### 4. Structure and Emergence

As facilitators, as leaders, and in life, we are often dancing on the tightrope of structure and emergence. Structure is useful in framing what is happening, setting time boundaries and bringing clarity to decision making. It is good to notice where we might lean into structure as a means of providing a sense of safety and control when we might be nervous to open to the flow of life, not knowing where it will lead us.

In Reinventing Organizations, Frederic Laloux talks about abandoning five-year plans and financial blueprints, a command-and-control style of management, and moving to one that is about sensing and responding. This requires a sensitivity to what is wanting to emerge. As facilitators of a group, for example, we will need a certain degree of structure regarding starting and ending times, and the capacity to frame the processes, but we also need to stay awake to what is wanting to emerge. This means we need to ride the waves of discomfort experienced by people who require more structure, while providing a sufficient framing to allow them to settle into the emergence. As we get to know a group more and trust builds, there may be more permission for more emergence. Emergence is like a window of fresh air blowing into the space.

It is always needed, and dialoguing with the higher organizing principle that is manifesting in the group space will lead us to the right balance of structure and emergence.

#### Conclusion

We will not generate the wisdom, radicality and potency of contribution that we are called to make at this time, if we rely on structure, patterns of the past, existing knowledge, and what we can access from our fives senses in our relationships, the media and all that is tangible. But practical applications of a contemporary, embodied mysticism can generate the true nature and highest potential of the radical and emergent leadership that our Brittle, Anxious, Nonlinear, and Incomprehensible world is calling for.

**ROBIN ALFRED** worked as a trainer, educator and social work manager for 15 years in London, before moving to Scotland in 1995 where he founded the Findhorn Consultancy Service and then later, Open Circle Consulting. He has extensive experience of leading and developing groups and individuals across all sectors – corporate, public, and third sector.

For more than 25 years, Robin has facilitated groups of all sizes, from 6 – 600, in all sectors. He was a registered facilitator for the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and was part of the design and facilitation team for the 2013 UN Global Compact in New York. Robin is trained in a wide variety of approaches to personal and organizational development including: Appreciative Inquiry, the Frameworks for Change Coaching Process, Process Work, Spiral Dynamics and Tools for Corporate Transformation. His facilitation work draws on these processes as well as Open Space, World Café and other innovative processes to maximize the group's collective intelligence.

Robin's clients include BP, the National Health Service, ABN-AMRO Bank, RBS, Tasweeq Qatar, BAE Systems, UN, Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace, CDP, Weleda and the UK Cabinet Office. Robin also spent 15 years as an Associate with Olivier Mythodrama, working with Shakespearean stories and Jungian archetypal psychology to develop high level leadership in many of the world's major corporations.

Robin is a Senior Student of contemporary mystic, Thomas Huebl. He offers coaching and trainings in Trauma-informed Leadership and the Art of Facilitating Transformational Fields. He also serves as a Mobius Transformational Faculty Member and joined us in October 2022 to guide a week-long, highly experiential track on Leading from the Future at the Annual Gathering of the Next Practice Institute.

"The French philosopher Camus used to tell himself quietly to live to the point of tears, not as a call for maudlin sentimentality, but as an invitation to the deep privilege of belonging, and the way belonging affects us, shapes us and breaks our heart at a fundamental level."

Associate Fellow at Mobius, the poet David Whyte

# Systems Thinking Leverages Change

A recent Bridgeway Partners Blog by Mobius Senior Expert and NPI Faculty member David Peter Stroh



David Peter Stroh, Founder & Principal at Bridgeway Partners, is devoted to effecting lasting change within mission-centered leaders and organizations. Author of the best-selling book Systems Thinking for Social Change: A Practical Guide to Solving Complex Problems, Avoiding Unintended Consequences, and Achieving Lasting Results (2015), David co-founded with Peter Senge one of the first firms to apply systems thinking to learning organizations. He joins the Next Practice Institute faculty in 2024 to lead an immersive learning track in systems change.

Systems thinking

motivates people to

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of their own actions.

Systems thinking helps people achieve sustainable, breakthrough change in four ways that are distinct from conventional approaches. It shifts the bases for people's: I. Motivation to change; 2. Willingness to collaborate; 3. Ability to focus limited resources; and 4. Commitment to continuous learning.

I. Motivation to Change

Conventional approaches to change stimulate motivation through some combination of aspiration and fear. Aspiration points to the desirability of a better future. Fear seeks to steer us away from a future we want to avoid. While both can be powerful motivators, they miss a critical

catalyst – our responsibility, however unintentional, for where we are now.

As Peter Senge pointed out in *The Fifth Discipline*, "The building of a shared vision lacks a critical underpinning if practiced without systems thinking. The problem lies not in shared visions themselves

so long as they are developed carefully. The problem lies in our reactive orientation to current reality." When people fail to see their responsibility for their present circumstances, they I) tend to assume that their primary work is to change others in the system

 not themselves, and 2) promote solutions that optimize their part of the system – not the system as a whole.

Systems thinking motivates people to change because it shows them how the problems they face result from the unintended consequences of their own actions. It empowers them to change because they discover that the greatest control they have over the system is

through their own intentions, thinking, and behavior.

#### 2. Willingness to Collaborate

The typical call to collaboration is based on obligation or faith – people are supposed to work together because doing so leads to better results. However,

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when efforts at collaboration lead to finger-pointing or apparently irreconcilable differences of opinion, obligation and faith tend to be replaced by frustration and even cynicism.

Helping people think systemically gives them a stronger basis for collaboration because they uncover how they collectively create the unsatisfying results they experience. More specifically, they discover how solutions that work for them in the short-term can make it more difficult for others to succeed, and vice versa. They learn that they are all in the same boat, and the only way to design a boat that works for all of them is to collaborate on a more effective design.

#### 3. Ability to Focus Limited Resources

"When it rains, it pours." Often, the problem people face is that they have too many problems. Moreover, they have too few resources to address all the problems. The common solution in this case is to do as much as they can as fast as they can. This usually leads to overwhelm, confusing and ever-shifting priorities, and eventually burnout.

By contrast, systems thinking operates under the premise that many presenting problems are symptomatic of a relatively few underlying causes or leverage points. It shows people how their problems are interconnected and sourced by a common set of root causes. As a result, it guides them to identify and focus on the *fewest* changes they can make that are likely to produce the *greatest* improvement in systemwide performance over time.

#### 4. Commitment to Continuous Learning

Because people do not see how they unwittingly contribute to the problems they face, they also do not see their responsibility for learning about the impacts of their solutions. They often believe that learning is important – for others who are the sources of their problems in the first place.

Systems thinking stimulates people to engage in their own continuous learning for several reasons. First, it helps them take responsibility for the problems as well as the solutions. Second, it illuminates the inherent complexity in systems and tendency for even the most well-intended actions to have unintended consequences. Third, inherent uncertainties and changing conditions inevitably require them to take in new information and adjust their assumptions and actions over time.

In summary, systems thinking is a powerful catalyst for change. The principles and tools of systems thinking deepen people's motivation to change, their willingness to collaborate with each other, their ability to focus limited resources, and their commitment to continuous learning.

"In the next 20 to 50 years, we won't have to use terms like 'systems thinking.' We can just call it 'thinking,' because real thinking is about seeing the reality you're in the midst of, which naturally entails appreciating the interconnectedness of things."

Peter Senge
Author of *The Fifth Discipline* and a Mobius Senior Expert

# REFLECTIONS FROM THE ARTIST LOUIS PARSONS

What I want more than anything is for someone who looks at my work to truly feel the power and unique presence of their own soul. I have tried to express that through combinations of color, light, elements, forms, and structures that inspire us to see ourselves differently.

Looking at "The Soul Notes," I wanted to explore phases of human creative expression and how these are expressed through different stages of the creative process—such as reflection, the coalescing of ideas, and their crystallization.



"The Human Story Collection" looks at stages of life, stages of authentic leadership, and paradigm shifts that have taken place in our collective human story. But mostly, I wanted to create artworks that help us see how truly magnificent and privileged it is to be human.

Currently, the themes of Consciousness, Light, and Pattern continue to inspire and uplift me into newer artworks, such as "Centered in the Living Kingdom," which considers the roots and branches of our existence—our roots being our past and our depths of being, and our branches being the outward expressions of our lives that we can be proud of.

"The Alchemy Collection" explores what it means to embody the elements and what happens when these combine in both other people and ourselves. We all know fiery and passionate people in our lives, and we also know those who are calm and go with the flow. When these traits we identify in the world around us become the living elements of our own thinking, being, and experience, we go through an alchemical shift in understanding what it means to be truly alive.

My signature artwork, known as a "SoulScape," is a personally commissioned work of art inspired by the idea that each person has a perfect work of art within them. I create art based on the unique essence of a person, something that will inspire them to lean into their full authenticity for decades to come. In these artworks, I invite you to consider "what is it that makes you feel truly alive?" and as you share that with me, I create your very own personal "Soul Portrait." These are an utter joy and a real honour to create.

Louis Parsons | Artist | www.louisparsons.com

### REFLECTIONS FROM THE ARTIST

# **LOUIS PARSONS**

In my SoulScaping workshops with Mobius Executive Leadership, we explore with leaders their creativity and have them paint their own sense of purpose. We reflect on moments that made us feel truly alive—to unlock their co-creativity, imagination, and widest potential contribution to the world. I have had the honor of working with executives from around the world, opening conversations about their unique soul qualities. Whether it is fierce attention, inspiration in action, or harmonizing complex parts, we all possess powerful qualities. By acknowledging and nurturing them, we can make the world a more beautiful, vibrant place to live.











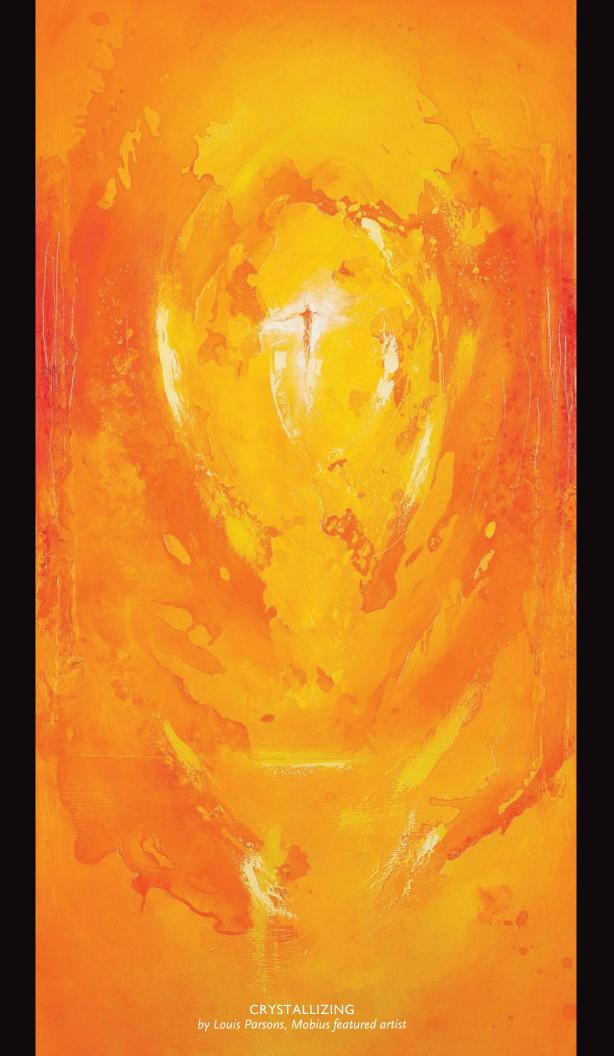
















# CEO Development The Power of Archetypes

By Thomas Halbeisen, Senior Practitioner and Principal at Mobius Executive Leadership



In an earlier article *Crossing The Threshold: How New CEOs Prepare Themselves for the Journey Ahead* (2022), I discussed how stepping into the CEO role entails a more radical shift than can be fully anticipated and what new CEOs can do to equip themselves for it. For example, new CEOs must accept a certain amount of loss – of the sources of energy they might have enjoyed in their former role, of some of the autonomy and indeed relative anonymity they no longer possess. In the work of preparing new CEOs, I also introduced the notion of working with archetypes. Already seasoned and highly successful leaders must find the capacity to become even larger, ever-more influential versions of themselves. How do they stretch themselves further to tap the full breadth and depth of their leadership repertoire? Archetypes can offer an excellent entry point.

This article features a CEO and several C-suite clients considered potential CEO candidates by their organizations. Working with archetypes proved instrumental in accelerating their advanced development. Part of the potency of archetypes might be best explained with this insight from the spiritual teacher and Mobius Master Transformational Faculty member Thomas Huebl: "Complexity is simplicity in the right container."

#### Resistance and the Jewel of Insight

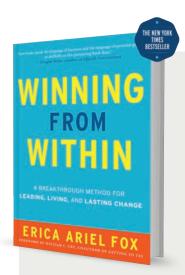
In coaching and counseling senior executives, archetypes help unravel the way in which a client may be blocked from accessing essential aspects of leadership. In most cases finding the right archetype, one that resonates with the person, helps unlock the full capacity of the leader.

Occasionally, however, insights hide within the archetype that a client resists. Within that aversion

lies a nugget that captures a deeper hope or fear that prevents the client from stepping into and fully owning an aspect of their leadership role.

For example, one of my clients, a fifty-year old executive stepped up from a senior position in a division onto the company's executive team. He was considered a potential CEO a few years out and it was his first time on a top team. He had responsibility for a multi-billion dollar business, and now, for the first time, he "wore a corporate hat" too, where he needed to attend to the performance of the whole enterprise. In developing a company-wide perspective, he had to reconcile decisions that made sense for the whole, but not for part of the business for which he had immediate responsibility. He wanted to find better ways to communicate these kinds of decisions to his leadership teams. Also, he wanted to work on his gravitas.

He had read the New York Times bestseller Winning from Within by our Chief Thought Leader



#### "Your life is not like a quest; it is a quest." – ERICA ARIEL FOX

Leaders at the most senior levels possess an exceptional toolkit and repertoire. They already have all the skills they might learn on the job, in business school or training courses along the way. They have decades of tried and tested experience. Many of them have a clear sense of their personal mission, values, and principles of leading successfully. The challenge, then, becomes how to flex beyond the capabilities that have served them so well. And, why? Because today's senior leaders — be they CEOs or C-level executives, or Chairs — face extraordinary challenges that call for a level of mastery previously unknown.

To develop advanced levels of leadership, Mobius Executive Leadership helps clients to explore how their unique assemblage of models, practices and assumptions limit their leadership, and invite them to expand these to include other – at times even competing – frames and approaches. This is a huge and wide-ranging ask, particularly for senior leaders who struggle to question ways of leading that have obviously worked well for them.

The developmental journey from here typically involves starting to engage with previously shut-down parts or parts thought irrelevant or unwelcome in the professional context. For example, the Lover archetype from the Winning from Within® leadership model has proven the most neglected of the "Big Four" archetypes (the Dreamer, the Thinker, the Warrior, and the Lover) that senior leaders display. Activating these neglected parts of themselves offers the leader a new way of being in the job – they learn to act differently even in how they apply a tried and tested toolkit. While archetypes contain gifts for us all on our journey to deepen our self-awareness, self-leadership and our ability to make our unique contribution to the communities we serve, they are particularly powerful for accomplished leaders who must tap ever-deeper wells of their potential.

Archetypes evoke classic, theme-rich characters that appear universally across cultures and history – so much so that we immediately and intuitively recognize them: for example, the King, the Maiden, the Sage, the Heroine and the Villain. The number of archetypes unfolds into the seemingly endless. For example, the acclaimed mythologist Joseph Campbell, heavily influenced by Carl Jung, wrote of *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Author and educator Carole S. Pearson created an influential twelve-archetype model. A pantheon of characters, archetypes appear in literature, mythology, religions, film – in all forms of human story and meaning-making. What makes them archetypal or universally recognizable as true, is the focus on the core differentiating qualities each character possesses. What makes them so powerful is the way in which they act as inner guides for deep undertakings. In the context of leadership development, rather than consider thousands of possible patterns, it is more instructive to work with a powerful few – including an archetype's finer qualities and shadow sides. In the Winning from Within® leadership model, Erica Ariel Fox offers us "the Big Four," along with three transformational archetypes: The Lookout, the Captain, and the Voyager.

Erica Ariel Fox, which sets out a seven-archetype leadership model. He regarded himself as a strong "Dreamer." Sometimes too strong. When trying to convince colleagues, often he reflected afterwards that his Dreamer, the visionary part of him, had been too inflated. He was aware of the feedback that sometimes he did not listen to the ideas or concerns of his team. Also, given his enthusiasm and ability to generate many ideas, he often struck colleagues as "bubbly" – an excitable nerd, rather than a commanding presence

who was ready to commit to a way forward for now, rather than continuously entertain all the possibilities.

When he came to me, he wanted to work on his "Warrior" – another archetype from the *Winning from Within*® model. Even though he did not like to rely on authoritative

power, the truth was that when he got impatient with resistance to his ideas, from those with less vision and ambition, occasionally he was too quick to "just call the shots" despite his aspiration to remain inclusive. The way he swung from contagious enthusiasm to a dictatorial style confused people and it hampered his credibility.

In one conversation, I suggested we work with the King archetype to which he replied, "Honestly, I struggle with the idea of acting like a king. It feels like I am putting myself above everyone else. It feels aloof and detached."

"What about the King as someone in service of the greater good?" I asked. "Being responsible for all 'your peoples' (all employees, all stakeholders); making sure you and the executive team ground your decisions in a wisdom that serves the company's purpose. As Peter Drucker famously said, 'Management is doing things right; leadership is doing the right things.'

Beyond serving the greater good, there is also the kingly notion of *creating order* – addressing misbehavior, making sure that not only do results matter but how people achieve those. The King who is unambiguous, clear, and assertive. In Robert Moore's and Doug Gillette's work, there is also the element of the *King's blessing*, how you, as a leader, enable others

to take ownership for their part of the business.

My client conceded, "So, the King is about how I carry out my duty of leading a big business, dealing with having nobody 'above me' and engage with my stakeholders in a compelling way."

"Right," I said.

"That sounds like a true statesman who devotes his energy to serving the nation or the whole of the territory," he said. So, we swapped out the title King for Statesman. I asked him to delve further into what

aspects of that archetype he shied from. He said that he did not want to show up as too dominant, that he was "a strong believer in democratic decision making and did not want to simply overrule others, make unilateral decisions irrespective of their input." I reminded him that, ironically, this is the very

- THOMAS MOORE

"The basic contribution one

can make to one's community

is not to add to the general

unconsciousness of the time."

move he reverted to when under pressure.

As we considered the shadow side of the archetype, we talked about the deflated Statesman as a weakling, a ruler who leaves things in limbo, and who cannot connect with his people because of his own suffering and ineptitude. But it was the opposite shadow side – that of the inflated tyrant, someone who rules harshly and refuses to honor other people's experience or input that haunted my client. I asked what memories this tendency brought up for him.

His grandfather ruled the family with a strong and often brutal hand. "It always seemed to me he put his interest first, neglecting my grandmother and what his children wanted. When I was promoted to team leader, my first leadership job, I tried to avoid any aspect of that. And I got a lot of positive feedback for my inclusive approach."

At what cost? I wondered. So, I asked, "How might you have abandoned certain leadership capacities that you need now? What might you need to let go of, to fully step into this new job – at the top of the house?"

His strong desire to grow the business and to make everyone a winner would remain one of my client's huge gifts as a leader, and by accessing the positive aspects of the Statesman, he shifted where he placed his attention and how he communicated his decisions.

Over the course of our sessions, my client invested more time with his team on the longer-term implications for corporate strategies. He spent more time fielding questions about the enterprise-logic. These conversations equipped his team to provide the same context, the same rationale to their direct reports. Soon, engagement scores within that part of the business began to soar. The clear communication style he adopted made him a key player on the top team, able to simplify and convey complex initiatives. His new practice of teasing out people's previously unspoken misgivings or questions made him more collaborative and ultimately, innovative. He used his Dreamer to share corporate visions powerfully, demonstrating to others how their contributions fit into the larger picture - way beyond his division. The Statesman had crystallized, then simplified, how to stretch his capability to step powerfully into his now much larger position.

#### **Reframe Your Superpowers**

In a very different case, another client needed to own what she had become known for. Alexandra was promoted to a senior executive role as part of a bank's global leadership team. Like the previous example, she had been identified as a potential CEO candidate. She was running an important and successful part of the business that represented approximately forty percent of the company's revenue and profit. A year into the job she was doing great. However, she suffered from a sense of "being the nice person" on the executive team, the one with the ear of employees. She was also the only woman on that team.

On one hand, colleagues appreciated the insight she possessed into the mood and morale across the company. They thanked her for "the soft stuff" (their wording) of which they admitted they knew much less. But given that she was running her business incredibly well, achieving outstanding numbers, it irked Alexandra that colleagues emphasized her empathetic abilities rather than her commercial accomplishment.

She believed in her way of leading – having an open door, spending time with her co-workers, being close with her direct reports and understanding their needs, hopes, and desires. Showing compassion and understanding was not only important for her, she felt it was an integral aspect of leading others. She didn't want to give that up, but at the same time resented the "soft stuff" label and what it implied.



The Ruler in its different guises, for example as a King, Queen, Tyrant, and Emperor is one of the most common archetypes to examine when working with potential CEOs. As Carole S. Pearson writes,

"In classical myth, the health of the kingdom reflected the health of the King or Queen. When the Ruler was wounded, the kingdom became a wasteland. To heal the kingdom, it was necessary for a hero to undertake a quest, find a sacred object, and return to heal or replace the Ruler. Our world reflects many of the classic symptoms of the wasteland kingdom: famine, environmental damage to the natural world, economic uncertainty, rampant injustice, personal despair and alienation, and the threat of war and annihilation. Our 'kingdoms' reflect the state of our collective souls, not just those of our leaders. This is a time in human history when heroism is greatly needed. Like heroes of old, we aid restoring life, health, fecundity to the kingdom as a side benefit of taking our own journeys, finding our own destinies, and giving our unique gifts. Collectively, as we contribute our part, the kingdom is transformed." (1991)

After a coaching session in her office one morning, we went downstairs to the cafeteria to grab a coffee. It was a beautiful, sunny day and we decided to sit outside. As she sat down, she appeared relaxed and present, composed but not stiff. In that moment she struck me as possessing all the grace and dignity of the "Sovereign" but it was as if she was more like an "Apprenticing Queen." What if she more fully owned her natural powers?

As I shared this observation with her, she looked puzzled. We started to explore the Queen archetype with public and historic figures. When we met again a few weeks later she had watched the first season of the Netflix series "The Crown" and had collected images of famous queens she admired. The exercise helped her reframe "I am empathetic" to "Great leaders are empathetic." Her compassion for and deep understanding of people had been a critical component of her success and the outperformance of the business she led.

Instead of feeling sensitive about her reputation, she felt reinvigorated. Less shy of her tendency to empathize, she challenged colleagues the next time she heard the phrase "soft stuff" – correcting them with the observation that actually wasn't it the hard stuff?

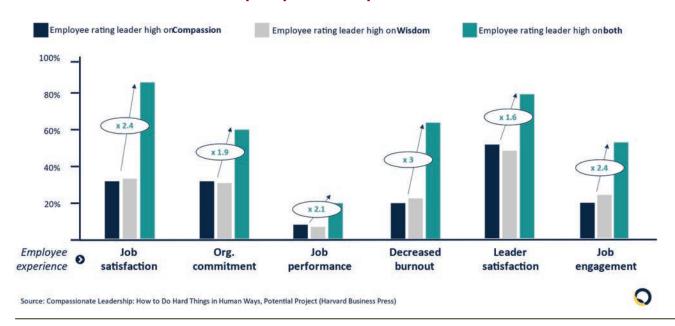
This example illustrates an important lesson. The transformative moment was about her owning the Queen she already was. It was less about changing behavior than her perspective. It was also not about stretching herself further, except in displaying more certainty and confidence. It was about perceiving her superpower for what it was. Soon Alexandra commanded more attention in top team meetings, less push back. She needed fewer words to make her case.

Stepping fully into her Queen, she could hold and eventually dissolve the tension between performance and the care and respect she had for her people. Indeed, in the research undertaken by many others, including our alliance partner, Potential Project, Rasmus Hougaard and Jacqueline Carter have proven exactly this – the most successful leaders do "hard things in a human way." And in doing so they can expect increased job satisfaction among those they lead, less burnout, more engagement, and yes – significantly higher performance.

#### The Body Knows More than the Mind

Many business leaders have grown up in a professional environment that shuns bringing their heart to work. Despite the recent popularization of the notion of

#### Your leadership impact multiplies with wisdom and care



vulnerability, the classic "business persona" has been incentivized to be anything but.

One of my CEO clients wanted to be able to connect better to the Chair and members of his top team. He was receiving feedback that people didn't relate to him as a person. They found him too brusque and impatient. They found it hard to establish a rapport, get a sense of his values and, as a result, they didn't necessarily trust him. He was struggling to get key stakeholders onboard for an ambitious new vision for the business.

My initial response was to introduce somatic practices designed to get him to access the way he holds experiences in his body. I suggested a centering

Archetypes can

catalyze major

breakthroughs.

exercise. I led him through a tenminute meditative routine I had been doing for years and used with other clients to great effect. At the time I was convinced it was almost a magic bullet. He saw it as a worthwhile experiment, but claimed he got little out of it. I was

humbled and initially felt embarrassed. I realized I had not been attuned to what he needed versus what might work for myself or others.

Over the course of our time together we realized other physical approaches worked better for him. I introduced the seven archetypes of the Mature Masculine from van der Kroon's work. We met in a big workshop space where I had brought poster sized images of the Magician, the Jester, the Wise man, the King, the Warrior, the Lover and the Wild man. I asked him to choose several he wanted to work on that day. We laid the images out on the floor. One by one, he stepped, literally, into each archetype.

This somatic exercise gave him a way to explore how each archetype felt in his body. He noticed some were easy for him to access. He stepped on the Warrior image, closed his eyes, immediately nodded, saying something like "I know this place." This archetype connotes forward movement, fast decision-making, driving action, protecting his team, defining boundaries, honoring his values. All this was very familiar to him as an energy he tapped every day. Many in his immediate environment would say he over-used his Warrior.

The Wise Man was harder for him to step into. We talked about examples in mythology, movies,

paintings, literature, and from his own life. Out of the seven archetypes we explored, this one proved the most difficult for him to access. Maybe he lacked role models, maybe he had a bad experience that made him associate the archetype with the dark side of being too much of the guru, maybe he associates it with becoming old. It remains part of his inner development to hold this question and to know that it has something to impart about his path forward.

When he stepped into the Jester archetype, however, he said "Wow, I'm shaking – this one is charged. This is how I feel around my old friends from university. They always tell me the truth. They don't care about my career, how successful I am, or

how much money I make. They simply tell me how they see me as a friend and as a human being. One or two of them are so straight talking that sometimes it feels like being hit between the eyes." This noticing brought a couple of insights to him. He treasured the direct

approach, without detours, no sugar-coating. We explored how he honored that in his job and how he lived it on a day-to-day basis. One of the upsides was that colleagues rarely perceived him as political and routinely commented that he comes across authentic. On the other hand, he could be too brutal, impatient seeming, leaving no room for another perspective – a classic CEO shortcoming that we might view as understandable, but which comes at significant cost.

He realized that his friends and he had an implicit agreement about the way they interacted with each other. Clearly, that agreement was not in place with his colleagues. He had carried over a style that worked well for him in his private life (straight-talking) into an environment where he had not yet established that level of goodwill and trust.

The intensity of his own experience as he stepped into the Jester archetype helped him appreciate how intensely the Chair and others might experience him. We reflected on how he could dial down this aspect of his interactions with others. As we did that, he could template the felt sense in his body – which felt great – not just as an insight, but as a tangible-feeling blueprint for how to adjust his behaviour.

#### **Working with Masculine Archetypes**

In addition to the archetypes that form the Winning from Within® methodology, those found in the work of Robert Moore and Douglas Gillette and in Ton van der Kroon on the masculine archetypes also offer a range of insightful starting points in my work with CEOs.





While it remains the case that (too) many CEOs are men, in every case exploring masculine and feminine archetypes provides deep insights. Everyone has access to both. Given the society in which many CEOs operate, often there is an imbalance where leaders lean too far into unhealthy masculine models. Part of our work involves unearthing healthier archetypically "male" ways of being in their leadership capacities e.g., balancing execution with reflection and re-introducing more of the typically under-developed feminine e.g., emergent, holistic approaches.

Moore and Gillette refer to four archetypes: King, Warrior, Magician, Lover (1990). They describe the dysfunctional shadow systems of the four archetypes they work with. For example, the Magician in his fullness has a shadow as detached manipulator. Van der Kroon, in *The Return of the King: The Renaissance of Masculinity*, works with seven archetypes: Savage, Saint, Warrior, Lover, Joker, Magician, and King.

In Your Body is Your Brain, Amanda Blake writes: "We tend to dismiss our sensations, urges, hunches and gut feelings as unimportant or unreliable. We treat our bodies as vehicles to get to the next meeting, objects to polish for the next party or machines that we hire an expert to fix. Rarely do we consider that our bodies might have wisdom worth listening for." Through working with archetypes, my client had found a path into his somatic wisdom.

#### **Finding the Catalyst**

Finally, in a fourth case, Marcos, a C-level executive of a global industrial player, wanted to make the next professional step in his career. Marcos was considered a shooting star, getting very senior roles early in his life. Only in his early forties, he could already look back at an amazing career. He hoped that he would eventually become a CEO. I noticed this wish had the quality of a vague desire. He could not tell me what sort of organization or challenges he wanted to take on.

I asked him to put together a lifeline, mapping the turning points in this life that he believed got him to where he is now and reflecting on how he felt about the different domains of his life from being a child to today. As part of this exercise, he told me how

having a sick brother when he was young shaped his household. His brother died when he was twenty. But for all the years of his childhood, the family energy was caught up in fighting for resources to help the sick child, for the attention they needed from the medical community, and in resisting a tragedy that proved inevitable.

Marcos picked up that energy: fighting for improvement, taking every chance, pursuing every promising and not so promising opportunity was his natural response to anything that felt like an uncontrollable situation. *Push through* was the dominant approach he had been exposed to as a child and teenager. Pushing through at life and, later, at work was what he had known how to do.

We started to wonder if showing up as a relentless Warrior was his way to honor his brother's fight for life. I said to him, "I wonder how committed you are to fighting battles you cannot win. If you released that energy and used it differently, what might it transform into?"

He came back to me a month later and said the exploration had dissolved a block he had not seen before. He visited his brother's grave. Later, he had extensive conversations with his parents. He realized

Archetypes possess a mysterious alchemy that helps unleash the largest version of what and who we are capable of becoming.

STRATA-LET IV by Jim McManus, Mobius Featured Artist

his powerful Warrior had not been in service to a good cause. He began the work of saving his Warrior for the right type of problem and to pay much more attention to the joys of chaos, to the sense of genuine adventure, to the conditions he would have to create to invite transformational possibility. He engaged his team in a new way and invested in developing a successor.

Most importantly, Marcos started re-engaging with activities that bring him joy rather than progress. Amongst other things, he picked up sculpturing again which he had fancied as child but dropped as a "useless" activity as a young man. He started exploring the idea of working in areas outside his industry, which he had not considered previously, potentially finding ways to create more impact in society. He started to understand his life as a quest for meaning rather than success. This, in turn, means Marcos is more likely to become a CEO with an ambition nobler than accumulating more power.

While archetypes remain one of many tools we use to develop leaders, their magic lies in the way they can catalyze major breakthroughs. Archetypes give us an intuitive, easy-to-grasp form of practice. We know what it means to step into our Warrior or to let go of being the controlling Tyrant. In this way, archetypes show leaders how to be more of what they need to be, and to let go of what no longer serves them. Archetypes possess a mysterious alchemy that helps unleash the largest version of what and who we are capable of becoming.

THOMAS HALBEISEN is a leadership advisor, management consultant, and a Principal at Mobius Executive Leadership. He coaches CEOs in their transition and over the course of their tenure. He has over 20 years of consulting experience in leadership development and transformational culture change – including accompanying companies and top teams in change processes; leadership development programs; re-organization and organizational development. Prior to joining Mobius, Thomas was an Expert Associate Partner at McKinsey & Company, Zürich and co-leader of the global initiative, McKinsey Leadership Development.

## **Forbes**

## The Urgent Call For More Human Leaders

by Matthew Smith, Mobius Executive Coach and Forbes Contributor



While the business press tends to focus attention on macro strategic forces such as AI, geopolitics, and climate change, one of the biggest trends among experts in leadership development today is perhaps surprisingly a focus on building deeper, more "human" capacities. The call for leaders to embrace their humanity is not new. Next year will mark the

thirtieth anniversary of Daniel Goleman's book Emotional Intelligence, which popularized competencies such as selfregulation, empathy, and social skills as critical to leadership More success. recently, however, many leading thinkers on leadership development have suggested the need for leaders to undertake even more profound internal work that in prior years was seen more as the domain of psychotherapy or even spirituality.

In their most recent global study of CEOs, Egon Zehnder, an executive search and leadership advisory firm, found that 80% of CEOs felt the need to embark on a "dual journey" of personal and organizational transformation, up from 26% only three years prior, a jump that they called the "most striking finding" in their research. Their research highlights the importance of senior leaders slowing down, listening more, and exploring their blind spots

with humility, which may seem counterintuitive in the face of the ever-increasing pace of change and strategic complexity they face.

Earlier this month, four senior partners at McKinsey published *The Journey of Leadership: How CEOs Learn to Lead from the Inside Out,* which makes an even more explicit argument for deepening the focus on the

human side of leadership. The book synthesizes trends and lessons from over 500 CEOs who have attended McKinsey's Bower Forum, which the authors describe as a "unique laboratory" for exploring the challenges that senior leaders face and how the most successful among them have flourished.

Kurt Strovink, one of the authors, notes that one of the surprising elements from the Bower Forum CEO discussions was the

prevalence of topics related to what he calls the "personal and emotional side of how to lead." Strovink observed that "almost 60% of the challenges raised were not business issues, but human-centric questions of how to operate with their teams, boards, families, and themselves." This led the authors to focus on "leading from the inside out" as their core framework for successful leaders.

Leading from the inside out asks a leader to embody practices that call them to slow down, ask deep questions, open their hearts, and inhabit a very different rhythm than the hyperdrive most leaders live in.

AMY ELIZABETH FOX

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#### **LEADING FROM THE INSIDE OUT**

Strovink insisted that the focus on more deeply human, inside-out leadership was not divorced from the strategic context, but rather was a direct consequence of the challenges that modern CEOs face. Strovink said, "Complexity is increasing. At the CEO level there used to be five or six big things that you were worried about. Now there are a dozen. The premium on balance and the emotional conditioning to do that well has gone up."

Amy Elizabeth Fox, the co-founder of Mobius Executive Leadership and an expert on vertical development, makes a similar connection between the inner journey and the ability to thrive in complexity. Fox said, "Leaders with a strong inner core are more grounded and fluid. They are far better placed to guide an organization through the vast complexity and adaptive demands of the moment."

The McKinsey authors describe a range of skills that the inside-out leader exhibits, including humility, vulnerability, selflessness, and resilience. Lest one mistakes this collection of traits as "soft," they also note that the inner journey taken by these leaders imbues them with the confidence to make bold choices and stand up for what they believe is right. Strovink says that striking this balance of being "both bold and empowering" is one of the hallmarks of inside-out leaders: "It is amazing how much comes from their ability to govern themselves and create space within themselves to handle extra stresses and pressures."

In a similar vein, Potential Project, a global research and leadership development firm with a focus on developing "human leaders," describes the key task of leadership as "doing hard things in a human way." Their Human Leader Compass describes a set of leadership mindsets and skills linked to awareness, compassion, and wisdom that leaders should develop to enhance their effectiveness.

## STEPS ON THE JOURNEY TOWARD HUMAN LEADERSHIP

Both Fox and the McKinsey authors describe leadership as a journey and an exploration that requires both humility and curiosity. Fox said, "In leading from the inside out, executives turn meaningful attention to self-exploration and self-

development. This enables them to understand their own emotions and habits, explore their core beliefs and values, and cultivate greater stillness and equanimity."

Ramesh Srinivasan, another of the McKinsey co-authors, stresses both the importance and the challenge of embarking on this learning journey. "People usually don't come and share feedback and tell leaders the truth," Srinivasan said. "Holding up the mirror and helping people deeply reflect on tough issues is not easy." Leaders must intentionally lower the barriers to receiving this deeper, more personal feedback and cultivate both "truth tellers" and a community of peers with whom they can open up and share challenges.

Srinivasan's advice to those beginning their career is to start this process early by working on the muscles of humility and curiosity — "ask a lot of questions, be curious, and exercise the obligation to dissent" — and by remembering that learning is a lifelong journey with no end. "As Gandhi said, 'Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever."

Perhaps the most poignant piece of advice is the one that many leaders will find the hardest to accept: the need to slow down. Fox said that "leading from the inside out asks a leader to embody practices that call them to slowing down, asking deep questions, opening their hearts, and inhabiting a very different rhythm than the hyperdrive most leaders live in." If the experts are to be believed, those leaders who do manage to achieve this different rhythm will be rewarded — and perhaps achieve a more sustainable and balanced life in the process.

MATTHEW SMITH is an executive coach who works with senior leaders and their teams to raise their ambitions and achieve new levels of performance and professional growth. He was formerly a Partner, Chief of Staff, and Chief Learning Officer at McKinsey and Company. He has written on topics ranging from the importance of sleep to setting effective development goals. He has a BA in Government from Harvard University and a Masters in Human Resources from Cornell University. He is based with his family in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

## Performance-Ready

A Conversation about Leadership Development

between Amy Elizabeth Fox, MA and Scott J. Allen





In June 2024 Scott J. Allen, host of the podcast Phronesis: Practical Wisdom for Leaders invited Mobius Executive Leadership Co-Founder and CEO Amy Elizabeth Fox to discuss leadership development on his show. You can listen to their 30-minute conversation by visiting the link noted in the source below. This interview is based on that transcript and offers an introduction to the leadership development work we do at Mobius and the principles that underpin our approach to performance-readiness.

#### Scott J. Allen

Today I have a wonderful new friend that I am excited to have a conversation with, Amy Elizabeth Fox. Amy is a co-founder and CEO of Mobius Executive Leadership, a premier transformational leadership firm. She is an expert in vertical development, regularly conducting immersive, transformational programs for senior leaders for the last twenty years. She is also a pioneer in introducing trauma-informed coaching and consulting into the domain of leadership development.

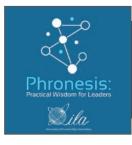
I want to say a little bit about her firm. As a leading professional services firm, Mobius is an incredibly unique organization. Here are just a few statements they offer which struck me: "We draw on a rich intellectual heritage and infuse our programs with a unique experiential learning approach. Our network of transformational practitioners is supported by

affiliations with renowned thought leaders, senior experts in the field, and a consortium of alliance partners. Our core body of work includes seminal models from adaptive leadership, organizational learning, innovation, adult development, leading in complexity, neuroplasticity, teaming and team dynamics. We operate at the nexus of best practice across organizational development, culture change and leadership – and next practice in psychology, mythology, Shadow Work, somatics, meditation and the expressive arts.

This sounds absolutely incredible. Thank you for being here today, Amy.

#### **Amy Elizabeth Fox**

Such a delight to be with you.



#### TO LISTEN

https://practicalwisdom.buzzsprout.com/979897/15308796-amy-elizabeth-fox-performance-ready

#### Scott

Could you share a little bit more about you. What is not in your bio, for example? What should listeners know about you?

#### **Amy**

Perhaps two things – the first is that I had the great privilege of starting my career in the late 1980s, at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York. I spent ten years working under the then Dean Morton and Paul Gorman. In that process, I had the honor of helping Carl Sagan and then Senator Gore launch a religious response to the environmental crisis, which, over time, became the founding of an organization called the National Religious Partnership for the Environment. That experience gave me an extraordinary apprenticeship into how you can help a group of people across a wide diversity of perspectives, viewpoints and values come together on behalf of a common cause.

I think that model of coalition building, or of ecosystem engagement, very much informs the way I have shaped Mobius as a global network of practitioners with very porous boundaries, as a consortium of practice with other organizations that traditionally might be seen as our competitors. Instead, we operate as collaborators. That early training in multidisciplinary projects really shaped how I work and who I am.

Perhaps the second thing to add to that is I have had a long and deep healing path myself, which is why I became interested in studying psychology and why I became interested in leadership development, because I think the most cutting-edge work in leadership development is also a healing function.

#### Scott

Let's talk a little bit about Mobius – what is the source of that name?

#### **Amy**

Well, as you may well know, it is a reference to a German mathematical concept, the Möbius strip – a strip of paper that rotates so that the inside becomes the outside, and the outside becomes the inside. It rotates that way infinitely. This is a nod to the connection between doing deep, inner, vertical development and being effective and high performing on the external dimension. It is also a nod to the infinite power that connects all of us. Finally, the company was founded by two sisters, which is a very feminine orientation, and German mathematics seemed like a good counterbalance to that! So those are the reasons why we chose Mobius.

#### Scott

I love that, a good counterbalance. I love the interdisciplinary way that you have designed your organization, that you are doing this work across multiple ways of knowing. Could you talk about traumainformed coaching? I don't know that we have had that conversation on this podcast. So maybe bring listeners into that space and its connection to leader development.

#### **Amy**

Of course. I'll start by putting the topic inside the canon of how we think about vertical development. Senior, seminal thought leaders over the last many years have pointed to the degree to which our lens, our frame, our



IN THE MIST I by Jim McManus, Mobius Featured Artist

mindset, shapes what we perceive and how we interpret what we perceive, the meaning-making that we do, the sort of logic train we live inside. So, the most potent object of intervention is that perception. If you wanted to change someone's behavior, it was not effective or sustainable to say, I think it would be better if you replace behavior A with behavior B. First, you had to understand the underlying loyalties, assumptions, emotions and needs that were driving or shaping behavior A to seem like the optimal behavior. As you helped people integrate the less functional dimensions of their habits, then a new behavior would become the naturally arising option.

A different way of saying that is, for the last twenty-five years, people have already been doing work that is directed to or guided to some of the deeper, more unconscious terrain that shapes our actions and our experience of the world. There has also been a very strong move inside the world of coaching towards ontology and neurobiology and somatics. All of this starts to lead us to thinking about the leader's deeper patterns and perceptions as the instrument of intervention.

Trauma-informed consulting means that as we have done that work, we have started to have a real reverence and understanding of the enormous influence that multi-generational, untreated trauma has on people's fear, for example, or their reactivity or sensitivity. In preparing for a deeper leadership program, we do a trauma screening – a trauma interview for participants joining these immersive programs. In doing that I have come to understand that there is hardly anybody whose life has not been touched, if not in their own personal life narrative, then in the generations before

them, their parents' life narrative, their grandparents' life narrative, by significant hardship, by things that are hard to integrate, hard to metabolize emotionally. What that means is that unprocessed emotion, unprocessed memory, continues to walk with a leader as unconscious habits and unconscious beliefs and in some cases, inner vows. For example, I won't be like my father, who was abusive. If you choose to disown anger, the strength and power that comes from a certain kind of warrior-like ferocity, because you saw it abused in your childhood, then it gets very hard to be effective as a leader, guiding others, inspiring others, directing others, because you do not have access to that vitality or life force. You could say to somebody, you should make more ambitious goals, or you should a have more bold leadership style, but if there is a deep agreement inside their psyche not to do that, then that advice will not work.

More and more, coaches and leadership development professionals realize that at the very least, we need to understand the deep roots of these derailers, the deep antecedents to why people are behaving in ways that do not serve them.

If you can go an extra step and be an agent of helping leaders to look at and metabolize trauma properly, that is even better. What I mean by traumainformed, or what my teacher, Thomas Huebl, and I mean by that is you understand how to see the presenting problem in its depths.

#### Scott

Let's say I had parents who were divorced, and that was a pretty traumatic experience in my life. It was about a

As children, many leaders had a role in their family as a sort of a hero, rescuer, and they became used to being hyper responsible. As organizations ask leaders to devote their life to leading organizations, the organization, in return, must be committed to that person's well-being and wholeness which includes their family.

three-year process, sophomore, junior, senior year of my high school years. It was very challenging for everybody involved. Now I carry that forward. I carry that forward in a number of ways, and then you put me in a position of authority, and there may be some blind spots that I have, there may be some things that I bring to that position, and if I have not done that healing work, if I have not explored some of these deep issues, I might struggle with different elements of the job. Is that accurate? Is that one way of contextualizing this for listeners?

#### **Amy**

Yes, that is a very practical way to express it and without asking you to overexpose how it lives in you now, one could imagine different byproducts of your experience. You could have, for example, decided it is not safe to bond because relationships dissolve, and so you operate with siloed and isolated leadership behaviors. You could have decided it is too vulnerable *not* to have a connection, and so instead, you care-take everybody, and you never give them critical feedback because you do not want them to leave. There could be multiple different expressions. It is not obvious what the lingering effect of that divorce experience might be on you as a leader, but equally, it would be naive to think there isn't one. That is the connection between life narrative and leadership.

#### Scott

That's wonderfully helpful.

#### Amy

So many leaders, early in their lives, were put into roles that were precocious to their age. Many, many leaders had a role in their family as a sort of a hero, rescuer, and they became used to being hyper responsible. They became used to being really effective. They got used to being in charge, often from a very young age, which is heartbreaking in terms of the dimensions of their

childhood that they missed. But that child naturally grows up to lead others and to make stuff happen and to be very effective, and often the thing they were getting rewarded for in childhood was achievement. That pattern of external referencing and validation and going to the next goal post gets very entrenched in such a leader, and that aspect of it can be wonderful. Often in our programs, we have some of the most successful people on the planet.

However, at some point in the life cycle of their leadership, they are going to hit a wall where reaching yet another accolade or another appointment or another raise, another piece of security is not going to be very satisfying. That is an extremely pregnant moment. Suddenly, in adult development terms, they have the potential for moving from a *socialized mind* that is taking its guidance and its choices from what society commends, to an internally referenced *self-authoring* mindset in which they can choose from deep inside their own values, their own sense of purpose, their own calling, what they want to do and how they want to contribute. It is a beautiful process to watch, because then tons of life force runs back into the river.

#### **Scott**

A guest who has been on this podcast several times, Jonathan Reams, has a quote, he says "leaders create the weather." You put someone in a position of authority who maybe hasn't spent time doing some of that work, and it can be a difficult place if that individual isn't prepared, if that individual is not present, if that individual isn't self-aware. I love how you think about this. My undergraduate degree was in family systems theory, so I have a very deep appreciation for how you are looking at this from multiple dimensions. I'm interested because you are working with people all over the world. We are now post-pandemic. We are moving back into "normalcy". What are you seeing out in the field that leaders are experiencing?

#### **Amy**

There are some emerging trends post-pandemic that were always there, but now have more of the foreground of leaders' attention. The first one is just the level of complexity people are facing and the pace of change. Almost always, on an opening night of a program, if you have a group full of senior executives, they will talk about the disruption of AI, the disruption of the multi generations in the workforce, the level of transformation and churn that is going on inside their organizations, and how people are change-challenged. Just to make a connection back to the first part of our conversation, my dear friend Zander Grashow is a world expert on adaptive leadership. He says people are not afraid of change.

They are afraid of perceived loss. So, one of the things I try to think about is, how can leaders tell a story of change in the context of conservation, of what is being preserved, what is being valued, what in the history is being honored? So that people have a context in which their psyche can

relax and feel like there is a stream of continuity that sits alongside the stream of change. That is the first thing, and as you said, so beautifully, if the leader is the weather, how can we make sure there are not storm clouds everywhere? Which is to say, how can we help to lower the level of perceived loss by greater degrees of transparency, greater degrees of shared risk, greater degrees of generosity and caring and solidarity within teams.

We are trying to create much more of what Professor Amy Edmondson would call psychologically safe environments, trust-based environments. We often use exercises that help people to get to know each other in a much more personal way as a vehicle for creating that kind of fabric of caring and mutual nurturing. What I have discovered is that for many leaders there is a willingness to drop the historic divide between personal and professional and to blur the lines enough that they can start to really get to know each other in a meaningful way and invest in each other's success. That is one of the things that Bob Kegan and Lisa Lahey tell us drives a

"deliberately developmental organization." People must feel like there is co-investment in each other's success, a willingness to mentor and guide and give feedback and coaching and to see feedback as the gift that it is.

#### Scott

Leaders must be

intentional around

the practices that now

are critical to being in

performance-ready shape.

As you highlight some of the complexity, this is where the dots start connecting. If we can agree on the fact the leaders are immersed in a context with greater and greater levels of complexity ... the multi-generational workforce, work-from-home, or if we consider employment law becoming more and more complex depending where you are in the world, it is fascinating what is swirling around these individual leaders. And if we are navigating complexity, it would seem to me

that, from a Snowden and

it is just our best guess. And if we don't have a team that has psychological safety, and everyone is sitting there quietly, not disagreeing with the authority figure, leaving the meeting and then saying to one another, well, this is going to be a train wreck, and not saying that in the meeting, the leader is literally flying blind. They are in trouble. They do not have a full awareness to truly work the problem and come up with the best experiments.

Boone standpoint [a reference to their Cynefin model], we are in a space where it is about our best guess moving forward, we are experimenting, and we are trying to learn quickly and figure out what is going to work in this new context and how we can move forward, but

#### **Amy**

Now we are going full circle to earlier in my career. I had the wonderful privilege through my relationship with my sister Erica Ariel Fox, who for many years has been a Lecturer at Harvard Law School, to teach their work on Difficult Conversations. As you have just said, I started to get really sensitized to the degree to which the key conversations in the boardroom are happening at the water cooler. There is so many conversations, and particularly the one you pointed to Scott, which involves a willingness to dissent with my leader, a willingness to hold a divergent perspective, even a willingness to be persuaded versus being sealed off from learning ... those shifts, while they sound skill based, and they are, to some degree, skill based, are also about cultivating a curiosity and an intellectual flexibility and a dialog among the team so that the conversations can be surfaced and you get real collective intelligence.

As you said, if the picture is more complex than one person can see, the right answer has to exist in the we-space, not in the individual expert. Those

skills, the metacognition, skills of learning, of dialog, of collaboration at the level of ideation and experimentation, but also the ability to sense and intuit and to use a more innate gut intelligence, and not just an analytic intelligence, become more important as the picture gets more intricate and you have to be able to differentiate the signal from the noise. That

is more of a right-brain capacity than it is a left-brain capacity. Leaders are starting to get really interested in tapping into multifaceted intelligence and beginning to understand that what got them here will not get them through the next phase of their leadership.

#### **Scott**

Yes, and if they have interesting relationships with authority, then as soon as things get a little bit chaotic, for example during lock down, they do not necessarily create that place of psychological safety. Then they are making decisions in a vacuum, and that is a bad place to be, especially in this new context where you cannot know, you cannot see everything, and it is always your best guess. I suppose that has always been the way with strategy. It has always been, well, we think these are the three places to play in the market. This is our best guess. But again, there is an awful lot of strategies that did not work over the course of the years.

#### **Amy**

I love what you are saying, too, Scott. Amy Edmondson would say that one of the most critical skills now is asking high quality questions. That is a very different orientation than most leaders were groomed on, where

they were meant to be the Knower and the Doer. Now, the most essential skill is to be the antenna that's constantly receives new information and synthesizes it and iterates it. I think that's very exciting.

#### Scott

If the picture is more

complex than one

person can see, the right

answer has to exist in

the we-space, not in the

individual expert.

This is something I have been reflecting on quite a bit. I did some work with an organization, a nonprofit in my community, last year, and it just came into my head and

out of my mouth in the session — I looked at the executive director and said "you must go to bed with thousands of questions." A real challenge for these leaders is to see what are the right four or five questions. Because you could choose to work on hundreds of questions, on too much of the list. Some leaders do. If they are not disciplined in what are the four or five right questions that we need

to be working as a team. And then secondly, do we have the psychological safety in the space to have the real conversation where people's voices are heard. I might not get my way, you might not get your way, we are going to co-create a path forward with our best guess. But to your point, to get that collective intelligence, to benefit from that safety, we need the right questions too.

#### **Amy**

I love that. If I may say something perhaps more avant-garde, one then asks oneself the question, what practices cultivate my ability to sort out what to attend to? In my experience, that is about creating a kind of inner spaciousness and quiet or stillness, whether it is through contemplative practices, expressive arts, time in nature, time for reflection and journaling there are many experiential exercises you can do that allow that kind of intuitive intelligence to rise up to the surface and guide you to the right questions. Part of what we do in our leadership programs is slow people down, because at the speed of information and the speed of exertion that we are living in, that intuition becomes harder to access. When you help people to take a breath and exhale and actually do things that quiet their mind, then they have that

*a-ha* moment in the shower, or they have that sort of immediate clarity that only becomes possible when you slow down.

#### Scott

I always think of Ray Dalio saying something to the effect that he credits Transcendental Meditation with a lot of his success, a couple times a day. Twenty minutes, and he'll sing that from the mountaintop that meditation was helpful in his development of Bridgewater.

#### **Amy**

Bridgewater is one of the companies that Robert Kegan and Lisa Lahey feature in their book *An Everyone Culture* in part because Ray has had such a significant commitment to building that mindfulness practice into the fabric of the organization. At Mobius we have the wonderful privilege of a partnership with our colleagues, Marty Boroson and Carmel Moore at One Moment Company, who offer very short meditative practices on their website that people can download and engage in for just one minute a day. It is not time consuming, but it is a significant cognitive downshift that allows for the kind of pattern recognition that you are pointing to ... that becomes more available to an executive. There is simply no way to tell the forest from the trees, now, without that.

#### **Scott**

What else are you seeing? I mean this is so much fun, but what else is present for you as you work with executives?

#### **Amy**

The other thing that has my attention and my heart is the chronic exhaustion and the burnout that people coming into our programs are reporting. The time-scarcity in their lives, a very significant lack of white space, the physical challenges that stem from the health effects of being overextended and exhausted. Sometimes I think if the leadership program does nothing except give them a chance to rest, we have already done a good thing, because when people are exhausted, it is very hard to be inspired or inspiring. It is very hard for them to believe that the world could

meaningfully change or to undertake an audacious ambition together. It also lowers the accessibility of their heart, so people come in more walled-off and guarded because they are tired and they do not have anything more to give. Leaders need to really think about practices for soul nourishment.

When you see participants go through a session where we ask how could others support you emotionally? We extend their vocabulary of relational needs and requests. You could ask somebody to teach you something. You could ask somebody to walk in nature with you. You could ask somebody to acknowledge your growth. You could ask somebody to celebrate an important occasion. You could ask somebody to share their wisdom. There are many, many ways to build a fabric of interdependence inside of a team and inside of an organization that I think are neglected at great cost.

In a world in which people are giving so much and they are plugged in so comprehensively, white space and also friendship – these become a priority, they become urgent in this context.

#### Scott

For people in positions of authority, it can be incredibly lonely. I love how you are communicating this. It is a question of how are you going to, in some ways, arm yourself in a healthy way? And that takes some design, and that takes some foresight, and that takes talking about Transcendental Meditation as just one tool you might use. There are probably seven or eight tools that you are not accessing, tapping into and prioritizing. You are getting up each day. You are in charge of creating the weather patterns, and yet you are beat down. Well then, you are going to miss a lot of opportunities to create something wonderful. It is going to be dark and stormy. It is going to be a whirlwind. It is going to be a dust storm. It becomes too hard to attend to others if you have not been attended to ... so I love how you frame that, because with all of that complexity, it is no longer a two Martini lunch that will do it.

#### **Amy**

Yes, and, of course, the two Martini lunches were also problematic in their own way. But yes, as far as I can understand, talking to leaders, they really feel themselves as constantly in the hamster wheel of effort and new information and a bombardment of demand, and you have people getting hundreds of emails in a day. My dear friend Srini Pillay, who is a neuroscientist, talks about the switch costs of moving from one kind of task to another, or one kind of cognitive conversation to another. The brain gets tired. These are not just emotional needs. These are really intellectual needs, cognitive needs, mental clarity needs. Going forward, leaders must be intentional around the self-care practices that maybe could have been neglected in an earlier time, but now are critical to being in performance-ready shape.

#### Scott

I love that phrasing, performance-ready shape. If you think of a world-class athlete, they have a team of individuals helping them be performance-ready.

Is there anything else that you want to highlight before we wind down? You mentioned avant garde. Is there anything else that might take us by surprise. It seems to me you are really seven years ahead of the rest of us.

#### **Amy**

I don't know how ahead I am, but I do have a sense that the future includes a lot more professional intimacy. I could say that. So one of the things we have been doing is inviting a single leader to meet with transformational coaches for two days on their own. Sometimes we do it for the leader and the spouse. We have also had the privilege to do it for families, both the leader and their parents, or the leader and their children. To think about the family unit as part of the unit of leadership development, is a bit avant garde I suppose. But of course, everything that is occurring in the family has an influence on the inner weather of that leader, and everything that can heal or integrate or repair the family elevates that leader to have more open space, freedom of mind, to be creative and effective in life. We cannot disconnect those things anymore, and have all of that relegated to somebody's personal journey. As organizations ask leaders to devote their life to leading organizations, the organization, in return, must be committed to that person's well-being and wholeness which includes their family. So that is an important focus of our work.

The other thing I would mention, just in case leadership practitioners are listening to us right now, is that once a year we host an Annual Gathering of what we call our Next Practice Institute, the professional development arm of Mobius. It's a week-long event. It happens in November of this year on Cape Cod. We have seven or eight immersive learning tracks that operate all week. Twice a day, we have presentations from various senior experts and thought leaders, many drawn from our friends at Harvard University. In the evenings, we have cello and poetry and theater and wonderful expressive arts performances. It is a week of fun and friendship and global community, and it is really a catalytic week of learning. So, if somebody's looking for their next step in terms of how they lead others or how they coach and consult, please consider coming to join us at one of our Annual Gatherings. We would love to have you.

#### Scott

Thank you so much for this conversation. This has been absolutely wonderful, and I just have great respect for the work that you are doing and the sense-making of how do we best support leaders. I sometimes phrase my mission as how do we better prepare people to serve in these really gnarly roles? They are just so challenging. How do we better prepare them, whether it is to your point, from a mental standpoint, from a physical standpoint, from any number of different ways, how do we better prepare people to serve in these roles? You are at the forefront of this and I think it's wonderful.

#### **Amy**

I love what you said. It is really about holistic readiness.

#### Scott

Yes. It is no longer just you were the CFO, so now you're ready.

I always end these conversations by asking what has caught your attention in recent times? What have you been listening to, or reading or streaming? It could have something to do with what we have just discussed. It could have nothing to do with what we have just discussed, but maybe something listeners might be interested in that has caught your attention.

#### **Amy**

Well, I am a biased fan of my sister's wonderful book, Winning from Within. In teaching her archetype model in business for last 20 years, I have seen how meaningful and how accessible it is as a way for helping people carve their own path of development. Otherwise, I've been streaming Bridgerton. I feel like I so often deal with the heavy parts of life, doing trauma-informed work, that on occasion, I really need some mind candy. Shonda Rhimes is my hero for that

#### Scott

We all need a little bit of a mindless, entertainment to shut down the mind.

#### **Amy**

And, of course, romance and love.

#### Scott

I hope we can do this again. Amy, I really appreciate your time. I know that listeners have got a lot out of this conversation. I have really enjoyed getting to know you a little bit better. Until we speak again, thank you so much for the work that you do in the world.

#### **Amy**

Thank you, Scott, and everybody for listening. ■



You may wish to follow <u>Scott J. Allen</u> and <u>Amy Elizabeth Fox</u> on LinkedIn where both regularly publish podcasts and thought pieces on advances in leadership development



Since 2005 **AMY ELIZABETH FOX** has served as one of the founders and Chief Executive Officer of Mobius Executive Leadership, a global transformational leadership firm. For the last twenty years she has served as a leadership and culture change advisor to eminent professional services firms and Fortune 500 companies and has facilitated immersive executive development programs for senior leaders.

Mobius offers top team intervention, business mediation, executive coaching and transformational leadership programs all aimed at unlocking potential and building deeper trust, intimacy and connection within a company's top tier. Mobius also sponsors a professional development arm for maturing transformational practitioners called the Next Practice Institute.

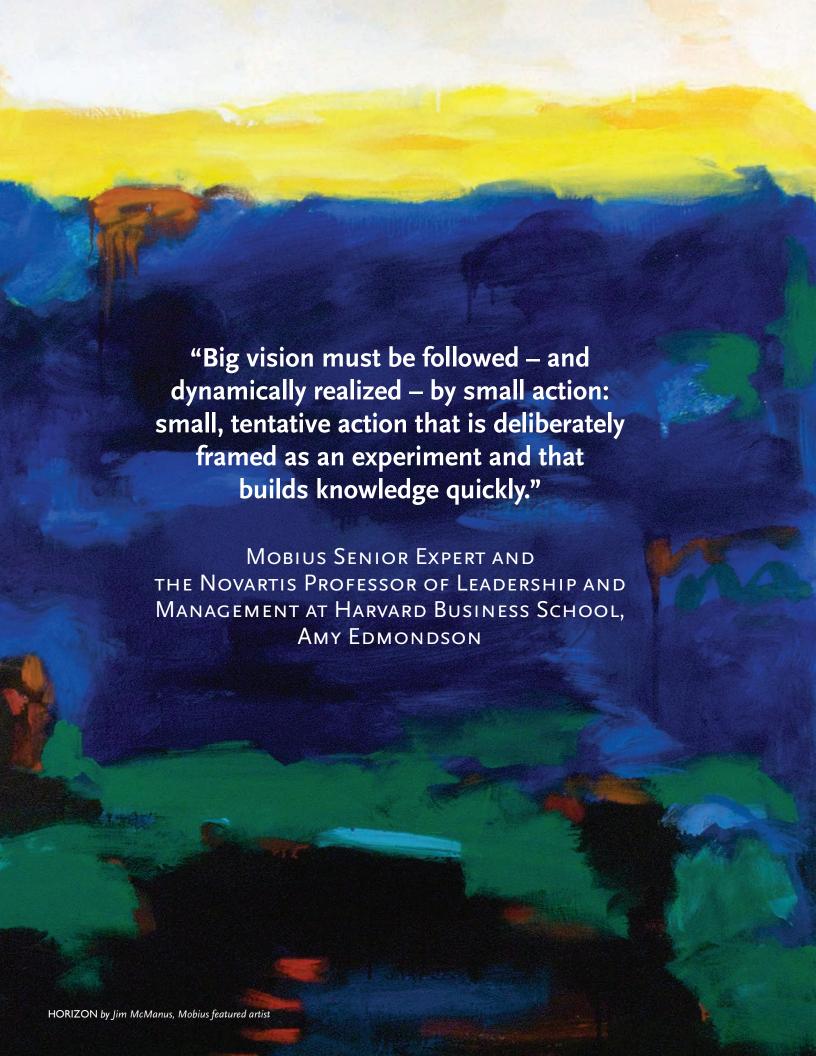
Since 2013 Mobius has had the privilege of partnering with the premier leadership advisory firm, Egon Zehnder, together offering sessions for leaders from around the world. Amy serves as the lead faculty for the quarterly Executive Discovery program offered jointly to C-suite leaders. Amy is also guest faculty for African Leadership Institute's Desmond Tutu Fellows program at Oxford. She has a Masters in Counseling from Lesley College and a BA in Psychology from Wesleyan University.



**SCOTT J. ALLEN** is a speaker, academic, author, and podcaster who empowers people and organizations to build stellar leaders. He is an award-winning educator passionate about working with people at all levels and across industries. He spent 18 years as a professor of management, and his areas of expertise include leadership, leader development, the future of work, and executive communication.

Scott has published more than 60 peer-reviewed articles and book chapters. He is the co-author of The Little Book of Leadership Development (2011), and the textbook Discovering Leadership: Designing Your Success (2023).

He is also hosts Phronesis: Practical Wisdom for Leaders, ranked among the world's top 2.5% of podcasts. Scott frequently serves as a keynote speaker. In addition, he consults, facilitates workshops, and leads retreats across industries. He co-founded the Collegiate Leadership Competition and served as the board chair. He also served on the board of the International Leadership Association, Association of Leadership Educators, and Management and Organizational Behavior Teaching Society. He was named an ILA Fellow by the International Leadership Association in 2021.



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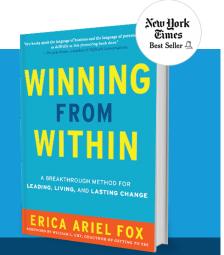
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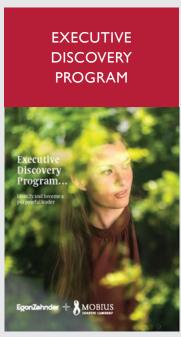


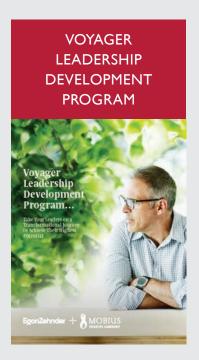
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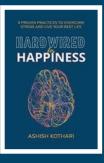
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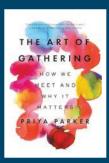


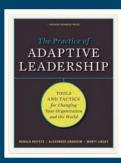
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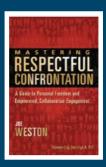
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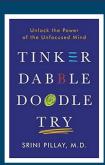
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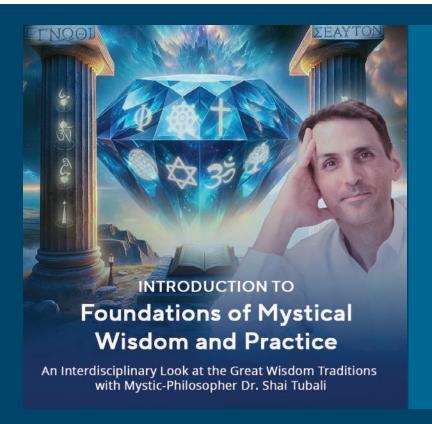


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Tubali's numerous books have appeared internationally for the past three decades in 12 languages. His most prominent writings have been published by major publishers, and two have won awards in the United States and Israel. Several of his books have become bestsellers, inspiring tens of thousands on their inner journeys of mental, emotional, and spiritual evolution.



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with Carmel Moore and Martin Boroson Next cohort begins Jan 16 2025 Group Size Limited to Ensure Personal Attention



#### Find Time For What Matters

True leaders do not accept rampant email, back-to-back zooms, unproductive meetings, pervasive distraction, and split focus. They hold strong, stated, visible intentions about their time and create razor-sharp alignment with others. They encourage and model spending time on deep, rewarding work, and they find time for the rest of their life.

#### **Enter TimeFraming®...**

TimeFraming enables you to develop rocket-fuelled clarity about how you use your time. No matter how busy you think you are, with TimeFraming you can find time for what matters. You can create spacious days that enable you to truly lead. You can reconnect with what gives you joy and find time for that. And you can transform your calendar from an 'undifferentiated wall of time' into a colorful and full-bodied expression of what you most want.

#### We'll help you:

- Figure out what's causing your chronic over-commitment.
- Identify activities and behaviors that give you the most leverage.
- Optimize time for joyful absorption and flow.
- Build the conditions that will make your new habits stick.
- Empower your people to work in a healthier, more sustainable way.

**Next Course: January 2025 (Online)** 

\* All Sessions: 2.30 - 5.30 UKT \*

Week 1, Jan 16: TimeFraming® for Individuals

Week 2, Jan 23: Group Coaching and

**Implementation** 

Week 3, Jan 30: TimeFraming® for Teams

Week 4, Feb 6: Group Coaching and Implementation

#### **ADVANCED MASTERCLASS**

Systemic Wisdom and Constellations with Horses

MARCH 24 - 28 | 2025

MANORHOEVE BELGIUM

Refine and deepen your systemic intuition and expand your range of systemic and constellation work, learning from the wisest systemic teachers: horses.

#### THE FACILITATORS

MIEKE JACOBS is a Mobius Transformational Faculty member and the co-author of Emergent: The Power of Systemic Intelligence to Navigate the Complexity of M&A (2019).

She has more than twenty years of global operations and industry experience and seven years in top team facilitation and leadership development. She has consulted and facilitated multinational corporations and executive teams in all major industries.

She has a deep interest in people's quests and in organizational systemic dynamics and has acquired skills and certifications in: NLP, Personal Mastery, Coaching, Systemic Coaching, Neuroscience and Affective Psychology, Somatics, Trauma Informed Facilitation, and Energy Mastery. She applies insights from these methodologies in her transformational work with leaders, teams and organizations.

Mieke is a thought leader, writer, author of two books, a poet and a sculptor. She has a life-long connection with horses and is studying the Power of the Herd in Arizona with Linda Kohanov (author of *Tao of Equus* and other titles).

VEERLE VANDENDRIESSCHE is the driving force behind Ehwaz and an expert in Systemic Therapy and Equine-Assisted Family Constellations. With over twenty years of experience in guiding groups and individuals, she has combined her expertise with her passion for horses since 2016. Serving as a facilitator for training programs in Belgium, Veerle teaches leaders, trainers and coaches how to tap into their full potential while embracing their innate sensitivity.

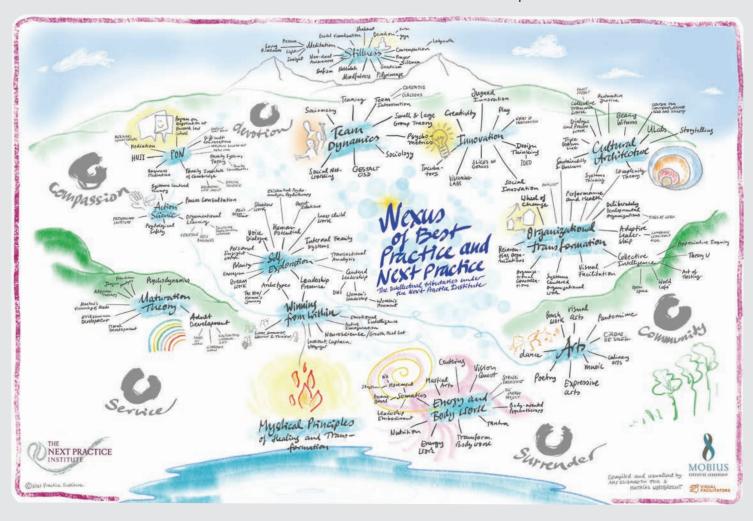
With a background of eighteen years in Somatic Work, Veerle developed a remarkable ability to read both human and equine body language. An esteemed educator in Constellations and Systemic work, she illuminates the hidden forces that shape our relationships, our organizations and communities, incorporating the unique presence of horses into her transformative practices.

Veerle facilitates powerful interactions between humans and horses, allowing participants to explore and resolve systemic challenges through the intuitive and sensitive nature of these magnificent animals.



#### **NEXT PRACTICE MEETS BEST PRACTICE:**

The intellectual tributaries under Mobius Executive Leadership's Next Practice Institute



To receive our monthly newsletter, please fill out the form on the Mobius homepage footer: www.mobiusleadership.com

Connect and contribute to the dialogue by following Erica Ariel Fox, Amy Elizabeth Fox, and Mobius Executive Leadership









"Love and compassion are not tender but rather invincible powers of our being that channel tremendous cosmic waves.

They do not need a secure environment to be revealed; they can be expressed proudly and openly even in the most strident and noisy marketplace and in the face of strong opposing forces."

Mobius Master Transformational Faculty member Dr. Shai Tubali

#### THE MOBIUS STRIP | FALL 2024





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For more about the offerings of Mobius Executive Leadership please go to www.mobiusleadership.com.

To discuss bringing Mobius leadership programs, trainings or executive coaching to your organization please write <a href="mailto:john.Abbruzzese@mobiusleadership.com">John.Abbruzzese@mobiusleadership.com</a>

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