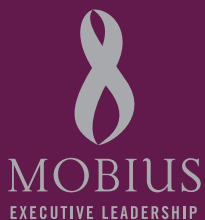
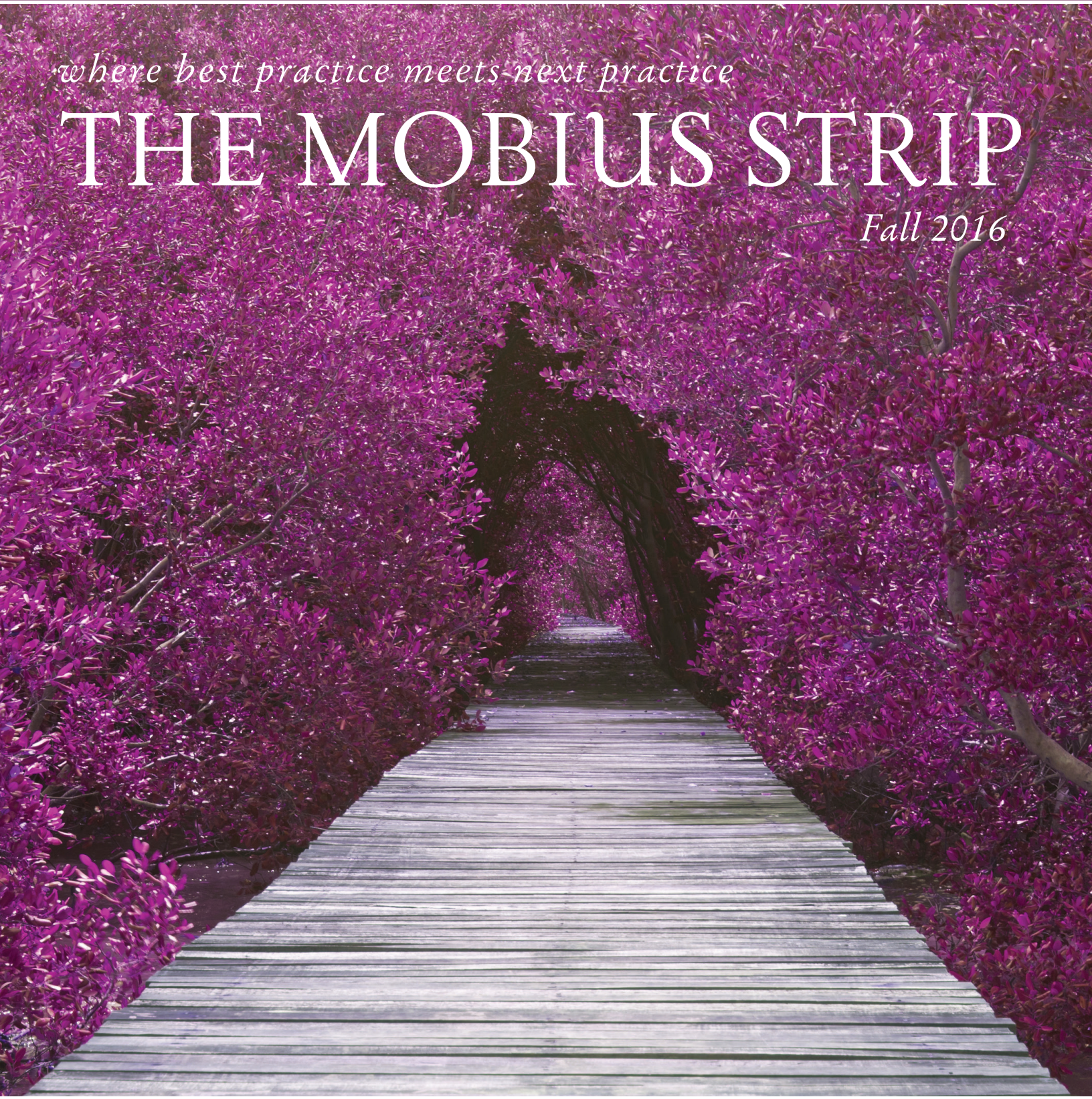


A PUBLICATION FOR LEADERSHIP PROFESSIONALS

*where best practice meets next practice*

# THE MOBIUS STRIP

*Fall 2016*



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Dear Friends:

I am delighted to share this special issue of our transformational leadership magazine, the *Mobius Strip*, created for our Inaugural Summer Gathering. This global practitioner event, held over the summer, officially launched the new arm of our organization, The Next Practice Institute.

The Next Practice Institute (NPI) sponsors transformational training programs for our practitioners, partners, and clients. These programs operate at the nexus of “best practice” in such areas as organizational development, culture change, and adaptive leadership and “next practice” in neuroscience, somatics, energy work, music, yoga, and other expressive/devotional arts. The purpose of these offerings is to create a global community devoted to the craft of transformational leadership and to help build a discourse and evolve professional standards for our field.

Our Summer Gathering brought together business leaders, human resources and organizational development professionals, strategy and search consultants, and practitioners (including coaches, mediators, interventionists, and facilitators) for a week of renewal, learning, inspiration, and practice.

This special edition of our magazine captures some of the thought leadership that was offered during the summer program. Herein you will find articles from each of the senior practitioners who guided the immersive learning tracks: Mobius Senior Expert Robert Gass on transformational consulting; Mobius Transformational Leadership Faculty Jen Cohen on somatic coaching; Alexander Caillet and Mobius Facilitator Amy Yeager on team development interventions. We also feature pieces from many of the Mobius Senior Experts who offered keynote presentations. These included Amy Edmondson from Harvard Business School; Srini Pillay from Harvard Medical School; Zafer Achi, former Director at McKinsey & Company; and Jennifer Garvey Berger, author of *Simple Habits for Complex Times*. During the program, we also had the opportunity to hear from our very special guest Otto Scharmer, Senior Lecturer at MIT and co-founder of the Presencing Institute. Within the Summer Gathering section, we are delighted to include a selection of blog posts and articles from Mobius President and Co-Founder, Erica Ariel Fox and a short piece on the teachings of modern day mystic Thomas Huebl, who spent an afternoon with us during the program.

In Next Practice Related readings we feature work from colleagues exploring “next practice” topics including an excerpt from *Shakti Leadership* by Nilima Bhat and Raj Sisodia; articles about working with attention and mindfulness from Mobius Transformational Leadership Faculty members Marty Boroson and Nicholas Janni, and the bestselling author, Edward Hallowell.

Finally, the complete online issue also includes, as always, Selected Leadership Readings, where we gather excerpts of forthcoming books from Harvard Publishing as well as those books recently generated by members of our Mobius community. In this issue we are particularly honored to feature the latest book by Mobius Senior Experts and close friends Bob Kegan and Lisa Lahey on their work on *Deliberately Developmental Organizations* and a piece celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the breakthrough book *The Fifth Discipline* by Mobius Senior Expert Peter Senge. We also highly recommend pieces we’ve included from other prominent thought leaders and practitioners: Adam Kahane; Peter Stroh; Mobius Transformational Leadership Faculty members Nadja Taranczewski and Marcia Wieder; Nick Morgan; Christian Madsbjerg and Mikkel Rasmussen; Mobius Executive Coach Andrea Zintz and Jane Firth; Michael Gelb and Mobius Senior Expert Caroline Webb. The beautiful artwork showcased in both the online and print edition is from Marie-Jehanne MacMahon.

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

Warmest best,

Amy



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*This is a special print edition. To access the complete magazine, including the Selected Leadership Readings highlighted in our cover note, visit the Thought Leadership section of [www.mobiusleadership.com](http://www.mobiusleadership.com).*

## FEATURED ARTIST **MARIE-JEHANNE MACMAHON**

The "ink works" art on display throughout this edition is by Marie-Jehanne MacMahon. Her work creates a visual space where thoughts dissolve allowing the mind to wander. Marie-Jehanne is deeply inspired by travel and indigenous people – their relationship with nature and understanding of rhythms and cycles. Marie-Jehanne currently resides in Ireland. For more information contact [mj197404@gmail.com](mailto:mj197404@gmail.com)



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“We all need someone to look at us. We can be divided into four categories according to the kind of look we wish to live under. The first category longs for the look of an infinite number of anonymous eyes, in other words, for the look of the public. The second category is made up of people who have a vital need to be looked at by many known eyes. They are the tireless hosts of cocktail parties and dinners. They are happier than the people in the first category, who, when they lose their public, have the feeling that the lights have gone out in the room of their lives. This happens to nearly all of them sooner or later. People in the second category, on the other hand, can always come up with the eyes they need. Then there is the third category, the category of people who need to be constantly before the eyes of the person they love. Their situation is as dangerous as the situation of people in the first category. One day the eyes of their beloved will close, and the room will go dark. And finally there is the fourth category, the rarest, the category of people who live in the imaginary eyes of those who are not present. They are the dreamers.”

— FROM THE NOVEL *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, MILAN KUNDERA



Summer  
Gathering:  
Next Practice  
Institute Faculty  
and Speakers

# The Work of Transformational Consulting

by Mobius Senior Expert, Robert Gass

Organizations are complex systems. Most change efforts focus on only one element of the system. Perhaps we are seeking to reorganize reporting relationships, create more teamwork, build a new strategic plan, increase accountability, reorganize a department, install a new performance management system, or improve communication.

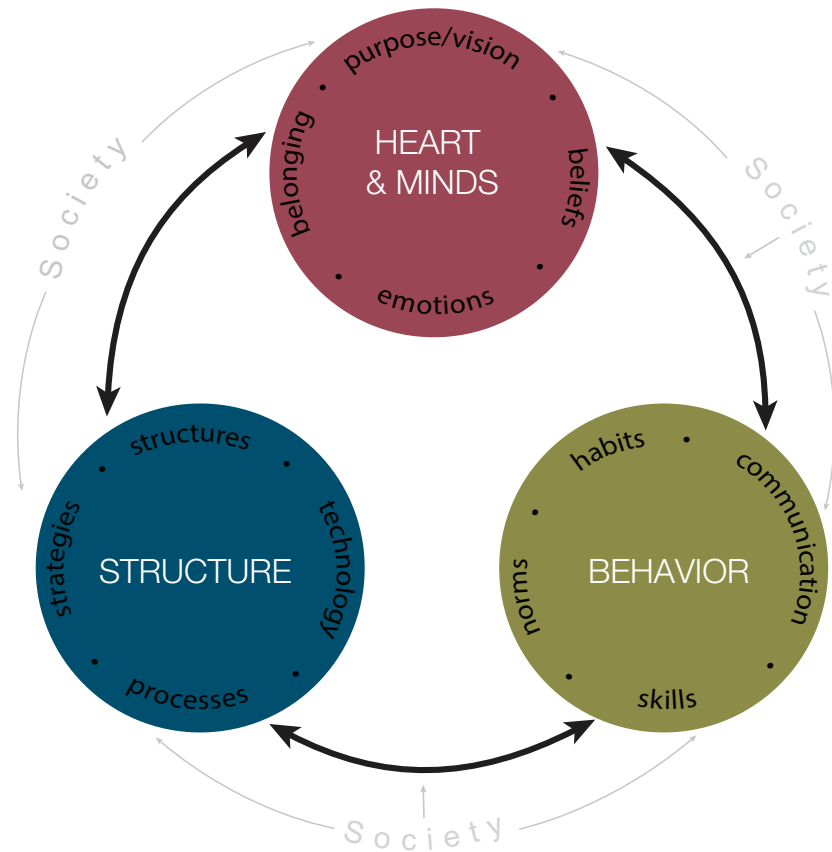
The problem is that the piece of the organizational system we are trying to change is completely interconnected and interdependent with other parts of the system. All too often, we see well-intended changes that fail to achieve the desired results:

- An attempt to implement an improved performance appraisal system gains little traction due to staff's underlying lack of trust in management.
- A strategic planning process yields poor results due to an unresolved lack of alignment around the vision for the organization.
- A structural reorganization gets stuck due to competition among senior managers.
- Repeated attempts to reconcile what seems like interpersonal mistrust between several key staff fail due to an unaddressed lack of clarity in their roles and overlapping organizational mandates.
- An effort to improve accountability breaks down due to a general lack of cultural competency leading to miscommunication, confused expectations, unintentional slights, and hurt feelings among different social groups.
- An initiative to build team spirit and cooperation is undermined by failing to change the nature of work plans which continue to focus on individual performance.

Without a systemic approach, we often see what appears to be progress, perhaps even breakthroughs, only to watch the “changes” erode as things revert back to their original conditions. We have failed to address the organization as an interconnected, interdependent system. Dimensions of the organization are being left unattended. This is a failure to address organizations as interconnected, interdependent systems.

**“Were it possible for us to see further than our knowledge reaches, and yet a little way beyond the outworks of our divinings, perhaps we could endure our sadnesses with greater confidence than our joys. For they are the moments when something new has entered into us, something unknown; our feelings grow mute in shy perplexity, everything in us withdraws, a stillness comes, and the new, which no one knows, stands in the midst of it and is silent.”**

– Rainer Maria Rilke, Letter to a Young Poet



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## THE WHEEL OF CHANGE

The Wheel of Change is a model for transforming organizations. It is a systemic approach to change: one that deals with the various structures and processes of organizations while equally attending to the human beings that give it life and energy.

To create real change within an organization, we must work in an integrated way with the three major domains that comprise every organizational system:

### Hearts & Minds

The full range of what people think and feel: their motivations, beliefs, emotions, perceptions.

### Behavior

What human beings actually do: their words and deeds, the actual choices they make to speak or not speak, to act or not to act, their habits.

### Structure

The organizational structures, systems, and processes through which work gets done.

These three domains continually reinforce each other, which is why organizational systems tend to resist change. However, through a transformational approach we can: 1) identify and address the critical elements in each of the three domains of organizational life; 2) create a virtuous cycle in which changes in one domain evoke and reinforce change in the other two domains.

### Working with Hearts & Minds

Transforming organizations requires people to transform. The change process must skillfully engage with people, their hopes and fears, their thoughts, perceptions, beliefs, and assumptions about reality. In the domain of Hearts & Minds this might look like:

- People joining in common cause around a compelling vision for change.
- Commitment (not compliance) in order to generate energy and personal responsibility for making change.
- Developing shared understanding of what's required to make change happen.

- The unleashing of creativity, new ideas, and innovation.
- Examining and shifting underlying beliefs that may limit the change process.
- Addressing issues of mistrust or interpersonal tensions that may be in the way of the change process.
- Surfacing and addressing doubts and fears that inhibit people from making their full contribution.
- A feeling of team, of belonging that inspires people to stand together and pull together.

### Behavior

The second domain is Behavior. Changing the way people think and feel is critical, but not sufficient for transformation. Organizational change requires that the people who work there need to actually act differently. Transformation in Behavior might look like the following:

- New expectations are clearly articulated and formalized (sometimes called Team Agreements or Rules of the Road).
- People understand exactly what's required of them.
- Implementing new behaviors becomes an organizational priority.
- A significant increase in open and honest communication.
- Creating a feedback-rich environment to support behavior change.
- Standards of accountability are raised and enforced.
- Formal and informal processes are adopted to practice and develop new habits.
- There is support for developing needed new skills through formal training, professional or peer coaching, mentoring, or self-study with web-

based support (technical skills, self-management and interpersonal skills).

- The inevitable mistakes that attend developing new habits and skills are not only tolerated, they are welcomed.

### Structure

The third domain is Structure. Organizational structures are the way organizational resources are harnessed to do the work. They are foundational to organizational life and have enormous impact on both Hearts & Minds and Behavior. For example:

- Low staff morale or pervasive feelings of not being appreciated may stem from poor personnel policies.
- Lack of accountability may stem from a poorly designed performance management system.

A transformative approach to working in the domain of Structure might include an orientation to strategy that emphasizes the following:

- Strategic thinking over fixed strategic plans.
- Planning for the unplanned.
- Innovation and breakthrough thinking; a willingness to challenge basic assumptions.
- Clarity and transparency regarding allocation of power and decision-making.
- Organizational design that emphasizes greater distribution of power, more nimbleness, and greater adaptability, and that promotes multi-dimensional connectivity rather than top-down or static organizational structures.
- Flexibility while not only maintaining but increasing accountability (a worthy challenge!).

**“To create real change within an organization, we must work in an integrated way with the three major domains that comprise every organizational system.”**

## Seven Qualities of the Transformational Practitioner

QUALITY	PRINCIPLES	A KEY PRACTICE
<b>Presence – being awake and fully attentive</b>	Being present is a meta-skill that allows us to more fully access all our other gifts and capacities in order to serve and respond to our clients more skillfully. Simply showing up centered, clear, and attentive in the client system is itself an intervention.	Center yourself with breathwork. Then connect to your personal purpose. Why do I do this work? What is meaningful about this client and the work we are doing together? What do I hope to accomplish?
<b>Love – the compassionate acceptance of others</b>	This is not a fleeting emotion, but a discipline. Love is an intrinsically healing force. When people feel accepted for who they are, they open up, like plants turning towards the sun. In this field of acceptance, deep, transformative interactions can occur without triggering defensiveness.	Loving Kindness Meditation. The practice of directing thoughts of loving kindness and compassion to yourself and then to your client.
<b>Authenticity – genuineness, expressing with words and deeds what is genuine for you</b>	In order to be honest and transparent with others, we must first know ourselves. As transformational agents, we must continually invest in developing our own self-awareness. When we are incongruent – when our words don’t match what we’re feeling inside – others can feel it.	Imagine your client, speak aloud your judgments of them. Work with what surfaces. Ask yourself what is this really about? What do I need to bring to the client?
<b>Healing – adopting a strengths-based approach</b>	Remember this phrase: “ <i>We become as we are beheld.</i> ” As organizational healers we expand our scope beyond fixing organizational problems. It is our job to treat the whole system, in the same way that a holistic physician looks at the whole person, not just one ailing body part.	Visualize the organization as a living system. Identify the most powerful and positive centers of energy. Ask: what might be done to make even greater use of this power? Visualize this happening. See the positive impact.
<b>Service – adopting the role of the dedicated servant</b>	One of the disciplines of servant leadership is staying mindful of our own unconscious agendas and unmet needs that may compete with our dedication to this work (such as needing to take the credit or wanting the client to like us).	Ask what are all the things you are currently doing to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Support internal leadership in taking ownership of the change process?</li> <li>2. Build client capacity for transformational leadership?</li> <li>3. Minimize client dependency on you?</li> </ol>
<b>Letting Go – don’t get attached to what you planned</b>	There are a lot of ways for groups to get from point A to point B. Don’t get attached to your way. Things rarely go according to plan. “ <i>In preparing for battle I have always found that plans are useless, but planning is indispensable.</i> ” – General Dwight D. Eisenhower	Notice each and every time you make a statement with any degree of certainty, then question it. If you claim, “The best option is X,” then practice saying after that “unless it isn’t!”
<b>Partnership – you cannot carry the work alone</b>	Transformational work demands partnership with our clients and frequently other practitioners. “The time of the lone wolf is over. Gather yourselves!” – Elders of the Hopi Nation, Oraibi, Arizona.	Conduct a partnership audit including asking yourself “Where in my life can I go for reality checks and professional input?”

- Understanding and cultivation of an organization's core competencies in order to help maximize institutional advantages and maintain strategic focus.
- Greater attention and discipline to work processes such as planning, decision making, how meetings are run, program evaluation, hiring, member engagement, and performance management.
- While making changes to structure, maintain acute attention to the human dynamics at play to ensure full engagement and ownership of the intended changes by all stakeholders.
- An orientation of continuous quality improvement to organizational functioning.

The Wheel of Change can be applied equally well to organizational change of any scope and scale – from smaller, more discrete change projects to renewing, reigniting, or reinventing entire institutions. It is a model that can help to ensure that investing in organizational change will yield transformative and sustainable results.

### THE ROLE OF THE TRANSFORMATIONAL CONSULTANT

Transformational consultants are catalysts for the leaders and the organizations for whom they consult. Those of us who undertake this role must understand that who we are and how we show up with our clients are primary success factors in supporting Organizational Transformation. All consultants strive to be competent, but the nature of Organizational Transformation places exceptional demands on change agents with respect to our “being” as well as our “doing.”

The essence of the transformative approach is captured in the well-known phrase of Gandhi, “Be the change.” This becomes the mantra of the transformational consultant. How do I show up in client

systems as the embodiment of transformation – present, clear, compassionate, authentic, courageous? How do I “be the change” in a way that activates transformation in all those with whom I come in contact?

If we are to engage in doing transformational work with others, we need to commit to our own transformation. Our capacity to more consistently manifest the seven qualities captured in the table on page 9 can be cultivated through conscious practice, and should be seen as fundamental to our professional development. This commitment to self-awareness and personal mastery must be a core discipline for the transformational practitioner. ■



**ROBERT GASS, ED.D.**, is a Mobius Senior Expert and a leading authority in large-scale culture change. For over 30 years, Robert has been known for pioneering work in leadership development and organizational transformation. Holding a doctorate in Organizational Psychology from Harvard, Robert's work synthesizes a diverse background in social change, humanistic psychology, organizational behavior, the arts, and spirituality. He is the former President of ARC International, a global consulting company specializing in transformational change with corporations such as The Gap, Chase Bank, and General Motors. Although still engaged with global CEOs, for the last 12 years Robert has dedicated himself to serving those working for social change. Co-founder of the Rockwood Leadership Institute, Robert has trained more than a thousand social justice, environmental, and human rights leaders. For the last six years, Robert has also provided executive coaching and team building with top leaders in the White House. Robert is also a well-known recording artist and performing musician specializing in sacred chant.

# Understanding Team Development Practices

Adapted from the forthcoming book *Transforming Team Performance*

by Alexander Caillet and Mobius Facilitator Amy Yeager

After reading the results of the Finance division's portion of the company's annual employee survey, Renata – CFO of the organization and head of this division – knows she needs to call in an external professional to work with her Senior Leadership Team. For the second year in a row, the survey results show low employee engagement and morale. Ratings of the Senior Leadership Team are even lower than the prior year. While Renata knows that the team is struggling and needs help to transform its performance, she's not at all clear on what type of help they need. Should they engage in team building? Facilitation? Training? Or some other type of team-focused work? Without clarity on these options and what they can deliver, she's unsure whether real transformation is even possible.

Many clients I encounter who have challenges with their teams find themselves in a similar predicament. One of the first steps in most of my team engagements is highlighting the boundaries between various possible ways of working with teams. In particular, I often need to clarify the distinctions between team building, team facilitation, team consulting, team training, and team coaching. Each of these professional practices has value, and each is appropriate in certain circumstances. What's important is being clear at any given moment about

what it is that you're doing and what outcome you can reasonably expect to accomplish with that approach.

The outcome that Renata is looking for – transforming team performance – requires that the team does more than acquire useful tools, learn new ideas or skills, or achieve specific short-term results. True transformation means developing and maintaining fundamentally new patterns of behavior and ways of working that produce sustainable long-term improvements in team cohesion, effectiveness, and performance – leading to specific, measurable results of clear value to the team and the organization.

I will argue that when transformation is the goal, an integrated approach to team development that incorporates team coaching offers unmatched potential to guide the team where it needs to go. Team coaching is not sufficient on its own; in fact, I've never conducted an engagement where all I did was coach the team. However, as a core methodology – supported by other interventions that provide the basic tools, skills, and methods necessary for teamwork – it constitutes the “killer app”<sup>\*</sup> driving the team's success.

So what exactly is team coaching, and what sets it apart? My favorite definition was developed by a participant in a recent team coaching workshop: “Real work, real time, real results.” Here's what that means:

**Real work,  
real time,  
real results**

<sup>\*</sup> In a technological context, a “killer application” or “killer app” is a program that makes the technology in which it's embedded (such as a particular software platform or gaming system) much more valuable, to the point where it's a decisive factor in consumers' buying decisions. Likewise, I will argue that team coaching constitutes the core value of a transformative team engagement, and can be considered an indispensable component for any team seeking sustainable, long-term results.

- **Real work.** Team coaching takes place, for the most part, in the context of real meetings and work sessions, rather than in specially scheduled sessions focused on simulations, games, or exercises.
- **Real time.** The coach jumps in with live, real-time interventions. These interventions (called “moves,” as in chess moves) challenge the team and individual team members to notice how they’re operating right at that moment, as well as how these patterns of interaction are affecting their performance. In response, the team makes specific adjustments – again, in real time – to either build on their strengths or improve on areas of weakness.
- **Real results.** The adjustments the team makes are motivated by and directed toward achieving concrete results of importance to the team and the organization. Any process changes adopted by the team (e.g., decreasing interruptions, improving participatory decision making, or engaging in difficult conversations) are valued for their contribution to the team’s cohesiveness and effectiveness – and, ultimately, performance and results – rather than being pursued as ends in themselves.

A final defining feature of team coaching is the role of the coach, which is deliberately lower in profile than that of a consultant or facilitator. All meetings and work sessions in which team coaching occurs are fully owned by the team leader and members, not by the coach. The

coach acts as a guide, supporting the leader in leadership and the members in membership. When the team achieves transformation, it’s their victory, and they’re fully empowered to move forward on their own.

Other methodologies for working with teams share various features in common with team coaching. However, as I’ll describe, they all differ in at least one or two crucial ways. Keep in mind that throughout these descriptions, what I’m addressing is the “pure” form of each discipline. In practice, most team engagements include a blend of at least two different approaches. At the end of this article, I’ll describe how a combination of professional practices could be used to help Renata and her Senior Leadership Team.

**TEAM FACILITATION.** Let’s start by considering team facilitation. As the term suggests, facilitation helps to make a meeting or other team interaction run more smoothly. The facilitator is accountable for guiding the team through a specified method, process, or tool. This can make a big difference in a team’s ability to get work done, make decisions, resolve conflicts, or achieve other results that they’ve had difficulty attaining on their own. The team depends on the facilitator to take them through the necessary steps to achieve their intended outcomes.

Much of the work that I’ve seen described as team coaching is actually a form of facilitation. Like team coaching, facilitation focuses on real work, in real time, and leads to real-time adjustments in team members’ behaviors and ways of working. However, unlike a team coach, the facilitator takes up a leadership role,



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providing active direction and guidance. Team members may work together successfully within the structured approach the facilitator provides, but they don't always get practice creating and maintaining such approaches themselves. And they often have limited opportunity to fail – to get caught up in the habitual, unconstructive patterns of behavior and ways of working that get them into trouble when they're on their own. As a result, they miss out on a chance to confront those patterns and transform them to achieve sustainable, long-term change. Until they develop the skills to move forward on their own, they remain reliant upon external facilitation.

Facilitation can be very useful in achieving short-term results and modeling effective meeting management. Practitioners of team coaching should be skilled in this way of working, and should be prepared to shift into “facilitator mode” whenever the need arises. The key is to be clear about when and why this practice is appropriate, and to not expect transformative results from a facilitated process.

**TEAM TRAINING.** Another useful approach to working with teams is training. Team members learn and practice skills through demonstrations, exercises, and simulations. While they may bring in real work issues to practice with, the primary focus is on developing new skills, rather than achieving results. After they develop a skill in the training context, they then work to apply it in their real work conditions.

As with facilitation, training requires the practitioner

to take up a leadership role. The trainer acts as the expert – imparting knowledge to the participants, leading them through a learning curriculum, and giving constructive feedback on their performance.

I frequently incorporate training into team engagements, but only in small doses, and only when I need to introduce a specific tool for the team to focus on. In each training session, I present just one directly relevant tool that can be put into practice immediately. Often, teams find it surprisingly challenging to use even one new tool in an effective, consistent way. It takes follow-up team coaching to solidify the newly learned behaviors.

**TEAM BUILDING.** There are a variety of different approaches to “building” stronger, more cohesive teams. (In fact, team coaching can be considered one of these.) The type of team building I'm referring to here is focused on strengthening team spirit and cohesion and deepening personal connections and trust. The stereotypical scenario is a team going off-site to a workshop filled with exercises, simulations, and games that are indirectly related to actual work.

I hope it's obvious that such methods differ substantially from the team coaching focus on real work, in real time, for real results. This is not to say they're not useful. Often, team members enjoy these activities, feel a sense of team spirit, and leave with more positive attitudes toward each other. On its own, however, team building is often insufficient to generate significant, sustainable improvements in work performance. When



## TEAM DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES

	TEAM FACILITATION	TEAM TRAINING	TEAM BUILDING	TEAM CONSULTING	TEAM COACHING
<b>Approach</b>	Active guidance and leadership of a specified method, process, or tool during a planned meeting or work session	Learning curriculum delivered through reading, teaching, and instructional exercises	Games, simulations, role-plays, and other structured group experiences delivered during special events	Assessment followed by recommendations and expert advisory support	Real-time interventions during regular team meetings and work sessions
<b>What It Sounds Like</b>	“The next step in this process is a brainstorm session. I will remind you of the guidelines and lead you through it.”	“Now that you’ve learned about team-based decision making, split up into pairs and discuss how decisions are made in your teams.”	“Everyone grab a blindfold, a piece of rope, and a rubber ball.”	“You’re missing some critical competencies on this team. I recommend you bring in at least one new member who can...”	“Over the past five minutes, what have you noticed about the team’s approach to making this decision? What would you like to do differently going forward?”
<b>Direct Outcomes</b>	Achievement of a specific team goal or deliverable	Increased knowledge and understanding of a given subject area; acquisition of new skills	Greater team spirit, cohesion, personal trust, and respect	Expertise and roadmap of what needs to be accomplished to achieve a desired outcome	Immediate improvements in awareness, skills, and effectiveness
<b>Team Performance Impact</b>	Encouraged by the progress they’ve made, the team leader and/or members may adopt useful facilitator behaviors	Practiced skills may be transferred over into real work situations	Team spirit, trust, and cohesion may have a positive impact on member interactions	Recommendations that the team can commit to and implement may have positive effects on their work	Positive changes in individual and team performance can be observed and reinforced right away

organizations devote considerable resources to this type of event, it's important for them to recognize that they're investing in interesting, engaging experiences that will require additional development work back in the office to ensure the learning is sustained.

**TEAM CONSULTING.** Similar to team building, the term consulting means different things to different people. Individuals who identify themselves as consultants may use any of the methodologies we've discussed so far, including team coaching. What's unique to consulting, as I'm defining it here, is that the practitioner gives expert interpretations and advice, and frequently completes specific pieces of work for the team. Consulting is directive, providing explicit guidance on what decisions a client should make or how they should resolve a particular problem (including recommendations of appropriate methods, tools, and best practices). Often this advice is based on formal and informal assessments of individual or group characteristics or behaviors.

Many transformative team engagements incorporate some consulting. Assessment tools can be invaluable in highlighting specific areas for improvement. And there are times when it's perfectly appropriate to simply suggest a solution or share best practices from our past experience. Again, we just need to be clear about the role we're in at any given time, and the value the client can expect to receive. While telling a team what to do may not build their capacity to solve their own problems, it can be extremely valuable in helping the team understand what they need to do and how they need to work in order to achieve what they want to achieve.

**PROCESS CONSULTATION.** One variant of consulting that bears a strong resemblance to team coaching is process consultation, which Edgar Schein defines as "a set of activities on the part of the consultant that help the client to perceive, understand, and act upon the process events that occur in the client's environment."<sup>1</sup> Schein takes care to distinguish process consultation from traditional "expert consultation." Like team coaching, process consultation is a collaborative practice designed to

empower clients to solve their own problems. The practitioner observes and gives feedback on how the group is working together, with the goal of improving effectiveness and efficiency.

Experienced process consultants may take more naturally to team coaching than individuals whose primary mode of working is facilitation or consulting based on expertise. In fact, team coaching can usefully be viewed as a variant of process consultation – one that engages at the level of the team, includes ongoing interactive feedback, and maintains a strong focus on results.

**PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER.** When planned and executed effectively, the professional practices of team facilitation, team training, team building, team consulting, and team coaching all complement and support each other. All five may be successfully incorporated into a single team engagement, or even a single team event. As practitioners we just need to be clear, with ourselves and with our clients, about what we're doing and why. The more practices we've mastered, the greater the variety of options we can offer.

Think back to Renata's Senior Leadership Team. Here's one possible structure for effectively integrating the five practices:

- **Team consulting:** A series of interviews with the team culminates in a report that highlights four main areas of concern: trust, decision making, mutual accountability, and meeting management. The practitioner works with the team to plan and design a series of three half-day and three full-day work sessions that will address these areas one by one. In each work session, she shares best practices and examples of how other teams have worked through similar issues.
- **Team training:** Each work session includes a mini-training on a tool or method related to the area of concern being addressed in that session.
- **Team facilitation:** For each tool or method that's taught, the practitioner facilitates a process in which the team applies what they've learned to real work issues.

- **Team coaching:** Following the training and facilitation, the practitioner observes the team in action doing real work while trying to use the new tool or method. Coaching interventions prompt the team to observe their own behavior and ways of working, assess their effectiveness, and make real-time changes to improve their performance and results. Repeated use of coaching interventions ensures these improvements will be sustained for the long term (this is the unique contribution of the killer app).
- **Team building:** At the end of each one of the three full days, the team has dinner together and engages in a fun social activity to help increase cohesion.

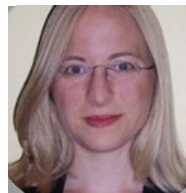
As Renata gains experience with each of these different practices, she'll be able to make more specific requests in the future – for instance, “We need to make sure this meeting is successful. Could you come and facilitate?” Or “The team is getting stuck on decision making. Could you provide training in consensus and then follow up with coaching?” This customized, “fit for purpose” approach will help ensure the team receives the types of support it needs to create sustainable improvements in its effectiveness and performance, and achieve results that are both real and impactful. ■



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**“If you feel safe in the area you're working in, you're not working in the right area. Always go in a little further into the water than you feel capable of being in. Go a little bit out of your depth. And when you don't feel that your feet are quite touching the bottom, you're just about in the right place to do something exciting.”**

**– DAVID BOWIE**

# Embodied Leadership and Somatics

A conversation with Mobius Transformational Leadership Faculty, Jen Cohen.



**Jennifer Cohen** is a member of the Mobius Transformational Leadership Faculty and a founding member of its Global Coaching Practice. She is also the founder of Seven Stone Leadership Group, a consulting consortium, where she teaches a unique model of leadership development and is pioneering work in moving organizations and individuals to a partnership model of living and leading. She is certified as a Master Coach by the Strozzi Institute for Learning and Mastery.

## Q What are some of the central ideas that underpin a somatic approach to leadership development?

In the West we've inherited what's called the Cartesian or dualistic worldview. As the French philosopher, scientist and mathematician, René Descartes, famously said "I think, therefore I am." The Scientific Revolution was a moment of the splitting out of body and mind and spirit. Mind was elevated. Body subjugated. Spirit disengaged. Prior to that in most cultures and for most of time, that separation didn't exist. This separation – the dualism of mind and body, and the rise of the scientific mind over the body – has made all sorts of amazing things happen, like brain surgery for example. But the cost of this dualistic consciousness is the myth of separation: that we are all individual and disconnected from each other and that parts of ourselves are separated. As a result of the Enlightenment, 'mind' became alienated from the body. So in addition to all of the beautiful science and other advancements in civilization this separation produced, it also caused a great deal of harm.

Somatics is an antidote to that harm. If we look at violence, for example, could you really rape and torture someone if you were associated into yourself, if you were really present, and not compartmentalized, disassociated, alienated and stuck in a story of righteousness and separation? There's a psychological

framework that goes with being able to conduct one's self in a violent manner.

The body is a context. It's not the only context that's shaping our lives, but it's one we can change. Somatics operates on the understanding that everything we experience, we experience through our body, and therefore to change how we are in the world and where we are going, we need to change our body.

## Q How do you work with a leader who needs to define her vision? Isn't that a more 'cognitive' task?

Somatics is not anti-cognitive. If you video-taped a week of client interactions there's a lot that happens in our offices which – while I don't want to say have nothing to do with the body, because in my map of reality, there is nothing that doesn't – but for idiomatic purposes, some of the work we do with clients has nothing to do with the body per se. Nobody's doing a somatic practice. There's talking. That's where we start: *Tell me what you think your vision is.*

From talking, the work surfaces. I might say: *Let's have you stand up and speak that vision with your arms extended. Or Let's have you walk and speak that vision. Or Let's have you pick the opposite vision from what you've just said.* I would then ask you to notice what each statement felt

like in the body – which of the two opposing visions resonated? Which one sounds like the truth, which one a lie? In this way we begin to marry language and body. That’s the ultimate aim of somatic coaching or embodied leadership: that there is a marriage of story and body. Mostly what you find is that the story is ahead of the body, and that the body wins.

Clients often say: *I know what I should be doing and I know where I want to go, but when I try to move towards it, it doesn’t work.* It doesn’t work because what’s embodied is the past and that’s what you can access. What’s not embodied is the future. You can taste and feel the future, but what you’re *organized* around – and this is how we talk in somatics – what you’re organized around is what you already know. That’s where your history and experience lie.

If for example, you and I are talking about your twenty years’ work experience, even though you may be in the process of reinventing your professional life, your voice and your energy hold onto *This is what I know.* You have to cross a chasm to create the new thing you want. There’s an aliveness and energy when you talk about your dream, but the organization and an integrity reside in continuing with the line of work you already know how to do. That’s not bad; it’s just how it is. We have to disrupt that integrity to create a new organization of self *and* a way of tolerating the disorganization. You have to be willing to stay disorganized for a period of time to let the new future happen. That’s incredibly frightening to an organism designed around homeostasis

Cells go for equilibrium and stability. That’s just what they do. That said, the capacity to stay with dis-equilibrium can be trained and in this world that we now live in, that’s a critical competency. It’s not just a nice idea. Because the ground underneath us is shifting, leaders must develop this ability to stay with discomfort in order to embody change.

I was speaking to an executive from a high potential program when she said: *We can’t make strategic plans*

*anymore. Every strategic plan we make, the entire thing blows up three months later.* Her industry is moving so fast and changing so quickly that three months out and the plan is defunct. There is no equilibrium. Yet human beings crave it. We demand it.

This is why we slip back into what is known, even when it no longer works. ‘The devil you know’ is a deeply biologically and psychologically true statement. We would prefer an organization (and by that, we mean something specific in somatic practice – we mean the way your body is organized, the shape of it, how you carry yourself) that will keep us suffering, to an unknown, disorganized state. For the most part, most of us, most of the time – none of this is true all of the time or nothing would be changing in the world and that’s far from the case.

## How do I close the chasm between where I am today and my vision?

To declare is the first step in creation. In somatic practice, when we declare we speak in a very specific way on purpose. We say “I am a commitment to”. In the example I’m thinking of, we were in a workshop practicing what we call ‘embodying declarations’. One of the participants said: *I am a commitment to being in a loving partnership.* Those of us who witnessed her declaration had an immediate reaction. We all felt this statement wasn’t ‘alive’ in her. We all felt this declaration wasn’t working. I asked her to try the opposite declaration: *I’m a commitment to being alone.* When she did, those of us watching her thought: *Yes!* That second declaration was more congruent.

So, the first step in closing the chasm is to witness the gap. Her vision was that she wants a relationship. Your vision is about this new business you’ve set up in Ireland. Then we examine what the person is actually

**“The Scientific Revolution was a moment of the splitting out of body and mind and spirit. Mind was elevated. Body subjugated. Spirit disengaged.”**

organized around. She's organized around historical training and what happened to her in life and in this case she was organized around *I'm a commitment to being alone*.

After we distinguish the gap, there are *many* steps we might take to close it. Some of them are narrative steps, they're about language. There are various maps available to understand this gap. There's 'Immunity to Change' maps, for example. We have many different ways to look at the master assessments we have, the narrative we live in. Different types of leadership development tools talk about them differently, but really they're all concerned with the same thing. We carry certain stories and those stories shape our world: our stories about what's possible; our stories about who we are; stories about life and whether it's trustworthy or not. All of those stories are feeding our capacity in the present moment to walk across the chasm. From *I'm a commitment to being alone* to *I'm a commitment to being in a loving partnership*. Or from your *20 years' career experience* to *I'm a commitment to my new business*.

There's narrative obstacles and then there is the question where does this woman's aloneness live in her body? Where does she feel it? What's the shape of the aloneness? She can take the shape of *I'm a commitment to being alone*? But can she take the shape of *I'm a commitment to a loving partnership*? Can she feel how uncomfortable that shape feels? What if she were to do or design one practice to shift her shape in the direction of the new one she's just articulated. That one practice might be to soften her shoulders and open up her chest when she's in conversation with others, rather than to hunch herself in the more closed position she's used to.

**Q** If someone carried the shape of the commitment to being alone, would she necessarily understand what to do with her body to get into the shape of 'I'm a commitment to a loving partnership'?

All that needs to be there is the willingness to experiment. She may not have any felt sense of the desired shape, but usually she has an imagination of it. What might that shape look like? Does she know anybody else who



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**“Cells go for equilibrium and stability. That’s just what they do. That said, the capacity to stay with dis-equilibrium can be trained and in this world that we now live in, that’s a critical competence. It’s not just a nice idea.”**

## “Two nervous systems walked into a room ...”

shapes like that? A teacher or a mentor? We map and template to each other.

When people practice public speaking, trainers might ask us to watch JFK's or Martin Luther King's speeches. They'll ask us take on the shape, the voice tone, the gestures of these examples – to actually inhabit the energetic template of that shape which is configured in a way that brings a certain kind of life forward. It doesn't matter whether it's the loving relationship example or your new career or whatever it might be, to learn a new way of being we must experiment.

**Q You speak of a 'window of tolerance'... that which we are able to stay present to before we move away or experience difficulty with a situation. Can you give us an example?**

Tolerate in this instance doesn't mean 'to put up with'. What we mean by 'tolerate' is to *be with*. We learn to stay with our bodily sensations when they are uncomfortable without needing to act out (be that shutting down, leaving the room, snapping at a child or laughing at a colleague.) We all have our own psychology, behaviors that press our buttons and trigger an urge to repeat our patterned response. In somatic work we need to widen that window of tolerance for staying with discomfort to create the space to learn new responses. We stop 'acting out' our past.

**Q When you train coaches you talk about limbic resonance, limbic regulation and limbic revision. What do these terms mean and why do they matter in coaching?**

They matter because you are a nervous system. And if you are a coach, then you bring your nervous system to

the coaching process. If you are an anything, you bring it with you. As I sometimes say to people: *You may be well dressed, but you're still a nervous system*. You are a nervous system before you are anything else. And that nervous system is of *influence* to other nervous systems. That's our design. It's the way that it is. You can become conscious of the condition of your nervous system and begin to use that part of the instrument that you are – or not. This is why it matters, because the work of the nervous system is happening anyway.

Limbic regulation is the way we affect other nervous systems. We're an open loop design. My physiology is designed to shift your physiology. When a mother picks up a crying baby, the baby stops crying. The contact – physiology to physiology – actually alters my biochemistry and yours.

This is why the condition of the leader matters. If I'm frantic and I walk into the team room, my nervous system sends a limbic message to all the other nervous systems in the room. The team goes on alert. I'm regulating their nervous systems whether I like it or not. I can bring dysregulation or I can bring the other nervous systems into harmony.

The potential of the coaching relationship – not just deeper therapeutic ones – is 'limbic revision'. This is the possibility that we can create new neural patterning. When people say: *I always go after the alcoholic. I've had three marriages and each one was to an alcoholic*, it's because our nervous systems create bonding patterns. If as a child, we were bonded to somebody who was chaotic and dysregulated, then despite our best intentions, we will probably go towards somebody in our later life who's also very dysregulated. The possibility in a relationship with a coach or conscious counsellor, a person who's using their whole instrument, is the possibility that my nervous system becomes a tool of revision and health for yours. You can start to pattern towards a nervous system that may feel very foreign to you, but is the future you want.

“We map and template to each other.”

“You may be well dressed, but you’re still a nervous system ...”

If you keep marrying alcoholics, it’s because your nervous system is patterned around that. This goes back to the equilibrium we spoke of earlier. We prefer the patterns we know even if they are incredibly painful to us – or part of us prefers them. The part that doesn’t is longing for something different. The part that doesn’t is the part that’s in the coach’s or the therapist’s office.

### **Q** What is the role of the coach or indeed the role of the leader in bringing into harmony other people’s limbic systems?

You might have had this experience yourself if you’re lucky enough to have someone in your life who, whenever you’re around them, evokes a calm or an empowered or a peaceful feeling in you. You may not be able to identify how or why their nervous system positively influences yours, but you can discern that it does. That’s limbic resonance and limbic regulation in action.

Going back to the example of the leader who brings panic into the room, if that leader wants to bring harmony – where they have a positive influence on the people in the room, how do they begin to do that?

The answer is this: Practice.

First we must ask: *who is it that I want to be?* We need to get conscious of the leader we want to be, not just the leading we want to do. *I want to be the person they come to; I want to be empowering; I want to be the rock for them.* There are many things we might want to be as a parent, as a leader, as an executive. To do this, we must become conscious and ask ourselves the question. Then we have to believe it’s cultivatable. Then we have to begin to align that intention with what we’re practicing. What we’re practicing at the level of breath, at the level

of compartment, at the level of shape, story.

For the most part, insight does not equal embodiment. People get feedback about their leadership style or attend a training program or read something that really makes them stop and think, but then cannot enact these insights without practice. It is practice that lives in the body. Always.

If you walk up to somebody with your arms crossed and your jaw set and then you say: *I’d like to have an intimate conversation with you.* Are you sure? Because what’s embodied is fight and protection, despite the fact that what you intended was openness and contact. In somatic coaching we work with expanding our window of tolerance for sensations in our bodies that may make us want to act out or shut down. We learn how to do this with breath work, awareness work, through mindfulness and sometimes through actual body work with healers. Our bodies need to unlearn some of our habituated muscular responses, so that we can start to relax and not hold so tightly in a certain pattern. That softening begins to produce a different set of assessments in other people – about your availability or your openness or trustworthiness.

Our lives are not our fault. But they are our responsibility. Not our fault, but ours to mold and shape and create. One of the main ways we do that is by examining and shifting the context that is our body. ■

Jen Cohen was interviewed by Mobius Chief Knowledge Officer, Nathalie Hourihan. Nathalie is a former global knowledge expert for McKinsey & Co. and has recently set up Wolf Knowledge Ltd ([www.thewolf.ie](http://www.thewolf.ie)). She is acting editor of the *Mobius Strip* and serves Mobius to capture and codify the firm’s deep body of work.

# On Being a Mystic in the Marketplace

From the teachings of modern day mystic, Thomas Huebl

In the spiritual traditions, there's a meditation practice where we become universal. And there's also a meditation practice where we become very specific. Stillness, presence, and emptiness are very universal. Attunement is very specific: I really mean you. I mean you, exactly the way you are.

Many spiritual practices, such as deep stillness and pure awareness, increase our awareness of the universal. In a deep state of meditation, I can sit for hours and it's just silent. There is no emotion arising. There is no thought arising, there's just awareness, like a magnetic presence. Resting in that deep state, I can host the world inside myself.

And then there are spiritual practices where we do not retreat to the cave or some other secluded place, where we remain in "the marketplace" and continue to participate in the culture around us. We embody spirit, embody awareness, infuse that awareness into the contemporary marketplace, into the culture, where this spiritual practice is the cultural impulse. It's a co-creative cultural impulse. We care for the world because we love the world. We care for the beautiful moments and we care for the difficult moments, because we are here.

That's a deep commitment. That's a deep commitment to be alive. I'm here when it's beautiful and I'm here when it's difficult. I'm committed to something bigger than pain and pleasure.

In the universal, I am expanded. But when I'm alive, I need to deal with daily life circumstances – I'm married, I have children, I have a job, I have responsibilities, there are people who are depending on my decisions – I really care for something, and I care because I want to make a contribution. I live in this culture and I want to give something to this culture. We all come with a certain intelligence and we all have something to offer.

And in that offering, you are unique and I am unique. Nobody will do your contribution and nobody will do mine. So when I talk to a person, there is a high level of specificity. I mean you, and that's a unique code, that's a unique place that you inhabit that is only yours. You

have a unique song. I have a unique song. We all have a unique song.

Being a mystic in the marketplace is about bringing that song to the world, rather than keeping it hidden or retreating to practice it.

We must learn how to be more prepared to face the marketplace of our time, and to basically erase one phrase out of our vocabulary. This one phrase is "And after that."

"And after that," I will have time to do my meditation.

"And after that," I will be more relaxed.

"And after that," I will be more conscious.

What if there is no after that? What if it is this moment that really counts? What if my love for life means there is no postponing of my experience? There is an arriving in the current moment.

My mind might say: "Oh, this situation is very mundane. Therefore, I don't have to be so present to it because I'm waiting for the next exciting thing." We're all excited by different things in our life, by things that energize us, by new projects, by new ideas, by new people, by many things that are great, and that's also perfect. But often we hear: "Oh, I have a very busy life. And then I have maybe 15 minutes or 20 minutes for my spiritual practice, to practice a way to bring more awareness into my daily life."

Imagine if my whole day becomes that practice because I'm a mystic in the marketplace. I am somebody that introduces more awareness, more consciousness, more compassion, more love, more intimacy, more clarity, more presence, into everyday relations, into everyday actions, so my life becomes an expression of my higher purpose.

Then my life is actually being transformed. Because if I know that every moment counts, if I know that my awakening, my inner practice literally happens now and not later, then it needs me now fully. Meditation, contemplation, all the contemplative arts basically teach us how to really be available in this current moment, in this current possibility, because that's the one that counts. ■



PLEASE JOIN US FOR AN INVITATION ONLY SESSION

# *Mystic in the Marketplace*

*Teachings on Mystical Principles as applied to  
Transformation, Healing and Cultural Evolution With Non-Dual Teacher Thomas Huebl*



*Please join us for a rare chance to study in depth and in person with mystical teacher Thomas Huebl.*

We will be inviting Mobius facilitators, trainers, coaches, mediators, and clients to spend this day and a half together exploring what mystical principles can teach us about the nature of transformation, deeper healing and the subtle competencies that underlie our personal mastery work within Mobius.

Many of us have had the chance to study with Thomas over the last two years, participating in his Timeless Wisdom two-year training or participating in his online courses on mystical principles, the mystical principles of healing or his foundational method called transparent communication. Those of us that have been able to engage the teaching, and participate in focused practice groups called Triads, have been very moved and found that the resonance to our client work is extensive.

We look forward to widening our circle of learning and practice with this event planned exclusively for the Mobius community.

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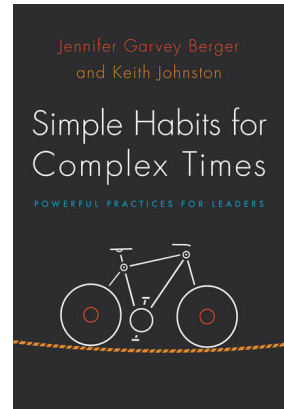
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*“When our deepest humanity becomes our highest possibility.”  
~ THOMAS HUEBL*

# Simple Habits for Complex Times

A book excerpt by Senior Mobius Expert, Jennifer Garvey Berger and Keith Johnston



If you've picked up this book, you've probably noticed that things in your world are a little more complex – maybe even a little more overwhelming – than you'd like. You might be finding that you have to balance the needs of more people than you did before and that there is more volatility of perspective than you used to notice. Or maybe you're finding that the pathway that used to look clear is murkier than you'd like. Or maybe you think you would be a better leader if you could just find a way to slow down all the changes in your team or organization or sector so that you could catch your breath.

We know what you mean. While we have taught leaders around the world and researched, read, and written about leadership, we have found that this rise in complexity, ambiguity, volatility, and uncertainty is not just lingering around the edges of our workdays: it's everywhere. Coping with these changes requires whole new ways of making sense of the world and of taking action to make a difference. Some of these new ways are about how we have conversations and learn from one another, others are about how we solve intractable problems, and still others are about how we plan for an unknowable future.

We have been motivated by many good books on complexity and on leadership that explain carefully how the world is changing, how our ways of understanding it are changing, and how leaders must change to be more effective. But once you're convinced that you need to be

different, what then? Leaders tell us they want to learn more about what can they do to begin to make these changes. What steps can they take? What equipment would help them on their journey? How might the pieces come together to enable them to thrive as leaders? We've spent the past decade trying to answer that question. Here's what we've found.

## THINKING ANEW

A leader, reflecting on the growing needs for a new way of being, offered his ideas about the leadership challenge he – and his people generally – faced. He explained to his stakeholders:

*The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate for the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise with the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew and act anew.*

You've probably faced a situation that made you think something like this, too – as Yolanda and Doug are thinking of their terrible situation. No matter how good leaders are, they find themselves dealing with problems – and opportunities – more difficult or complex than anything they've known before. Superb leaders have long known that they need to find ways to “think anew and act anew,” especially as their plates become “piled high with difficulty.” This challenge to think in new ways

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about a novel situation has been with leaders always, and each time, they have pushed at the edges of what we know in order to grow more capable of handling the challenges that seem impossible. Abraham Lincoln was speaking to more than just the US Congress about the “quiet past” and the “stormy present” in 1862. The truth is that leadership requires ways of thinking anew no matter what era you’re in; it’s probably true that the first Neolithic leaders were pushed to the edges of their capacities as farming and stone tools created conflict and opportunities for their people. Leadership by its very definition is about taking people and ideas to new places.

The problem for leaders today is that as the world changes so quickly, the future becomes far less predictable, the options become exponentially increased, and the way we need to think about those options shifts. Imagine if Lincoln had had to tweet about his plans (and his breakfast) as well as being Facebook friends with the senators on both sides of the aisle. Lincoln needed to make decisions with small amounts of aging information, a hard thing to do. Leaders today need to make decisions with endless amounts of emerging information, which might be even harder; it is certainly more complex, and it makes our need to “think anew” different from what it’s ever been before.

This is the rise of VUCA: volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity. You can hardly open a leadership book without this discussion, so we’ll speed by it (increasing the speed of change even in talking about the speed of change). We know that even though we generally live longer and in greater safety and have much more stuff than our parents and their parents, people and ideas and organizations are also more complex because there is much more information available and things are much more interconnected. We know it’s more uncertain because as those variables intersect, new possibilities get created. These are possibilities no one ever thought about in advance: they just emerged from the current context as one new idea bashed against

another new idea (or against an ancient one). You also know that those interconnections – of ideas, of people, of conflict and congruence – are more likely because there are so many more of us around. There are billions of us: more than twice as many people now than there were in the mid-1960s, and at least those people in the developed world consume vastly more resources. This increases our volatility at a global scale because now our planet is having to do things it has never done before, and there is no possible way to predict what happens next. It is also the case that many of the issues we face in

society, such as climate change, will affect communities over a very long term in unpredictable ways, even as organizations and news outlets still seem captured by the very short term, preferring black and white to ambiguous gray.

Our awareness of the fact that the world is changing irrevocably also puts pressure on the way we think about the present and the future. Serfs in the 1600s probably had something like a “Kids these days!” expression, but they didn’t look at their children and wonder what they would be when they grew up; even 50 years ago, there weren’t that many choices. One of our clients recounted her deep frustration in high school when her teacher asked whether she

wanted to be a nurse, a teacher, or a secretary. “I was so frustrated to have only three options – none interesting to me,” she told us. Less than 40 years later, Jennifer’s then 14-year-old daughter, Naomi, came home frustrated because the teacher told her that the job Naomi would do when she grew up had probably not been invented yet. “What does she expect me to do about that?” Naomi asked. “How can I prepare for something that doesn’t exist?” Indeed. This might in fact be the key leadership question of our time.

Abraham Lincoln faced a world of rising volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and change. And so did Franklin Delano Roosevelt. And so did Keith’s grandfather as he was making the decision to leave his home and travel around the world to New Zealand to begin a new life. So

**The good news  
is that there is a  
way to grow more  
able to handle the  
complexity in the  
world around us:  
three habits of  
mind help you  
grow more  
“complexity  
of mind.”**



© MJ MacMahon

**“You need chaos in  
your soul to give birth  
to a dancing star.”**

**– Nietzsche**

it would be easy to say that this is just part of the human condition and move on from there. In our work with leaders around the world and our work leading global initiatives ourselves, though, we’ve been convinced that the thing that is happening in the world now is unlike any other time that humans have ever faced before, and we’ve been convinced that the rules for leaders are different now. And there’s no handbook about how the rules have changed or how you need to change to meet these new requirements. We’re trying to change that with this book, which while not a handbook, is a kind of a guidebook to this new land and to the strange way things work here.

Here’s one of the most unsettling and distinctive features of this new land: it operates from a different set of choices, and because it is more untethered from the constraints of the past, it lives more in the set of options about what is possible rather than the set of options about what is probable. This sounds like an easy change that might be on a motivational poster: focus on the possible! It actually requires more than just attitude, though. A focus on the possible requires changes in the way we think, engage with others, and take action. Moving away from our own belief in a predictable world is a major effort indeed.

See, our minds love categorizing and learning from the past in order to keep us safe into the future. And that has been great for us. Without this capacity to predict and determine risks, we’d be just a stunted branch on the evolutionary tree. We carry with us a kind of a bell curve of possibilities, and depending on our background and knowledge (and, unfortunately, on what we ate for breakfast and which magazine headlines we happened to see as we waited in line at the grocery store), we are constantly making decisions about risk and reward. That internal judging system has done pretty well to protect and keep us for tens of thousands of years, but it’s beginning to short out now. And one of the key ways our system misfires is as it considers the difference between the probable and the possible.

Let’s take a few examples. We tend to make decisions based on what we think is most probable. In this way, our brains are like the actuary tables – judging the future by what we’ve seen happen in the past. We add new kitchens if we think it’s probable that the new kitchen will increase the value of the house in five years

when we sell it, or we do a wilder, more idiosyncratic renovation if we think it's probable that we'll stay in this house for decades into the future. We choose Aruba as our holiday destination from among the ones we think are most probable to make us happy (based on the criteria we've decided is best for us). We choose "be more customer centered" as a strategy for our division at work when we think it's probable that the old strategy constrains our growth and effectiveness and this new one is the most enabling of the future we want to create.

What we don't notice is that because we are using the past as a kind of measure of what's likely, we have sharply constrained the set of possibilities when we made our decisions. We didn't consider whether an earthquake would roll through our house, making our new kitchen (and indeed, the neighborhood) less attractive to potential buyers. We picked Aruba because it was so much more off the beaten path than Jamaica, but still we've had friends that have gone there. We didn't select Réunion in the Indian Ocean, because we'd never heard of it – it was possible but not probable. We choose the customer-focused strategy out of the ones that were relatively familiar to us because we can see the problem (we're too internal) and being more customer centered looks like the best way to solve it. It might be that our internal focus is a symptom of some entirely different problem (our remuneration system creates perverse incentives for us to manage internal politics rather than customer relationships), but we picked from what looked like the most probable a cause to us (or the probable cause that was most attractive to us). As you read, you might be thinking that it would take all of your time and be paralyzing if you had to

think about earthquakes and every tropical island in the entire world. You would never renovate anything, never lie on a white-sand beach again. We agree that these would be bad outcomes, and we're not suggesting that at all. You can carry on planning your holidays and your renovations as before, because the rise in complexity and holiday options is less material than the rise in options leaders need to consider in their work. If you choose an island that isn't as perfect as it possibly could have been, the difference is mostly irrelevant because you'll have a good time anyway (even if the sand is whiter, the water warmer, and the fish more beautiful somewhere else). But if you put your eggs in the "customer-centric" basket when really the thing that's about to change your industry is the new phone app that replaces you, the change is very material after all. Part of the battle is knowing when to let the rise in VUCA change the way you work and when to just simplify things. We'll help with that distinction as we go.

The future has always been unknown – the serf in the 1600s didn't know, Lincoln didn't know, your parents didn't know. As Marshall McLuhan said, "We drive into the future using only our rear view mirror." Because there's no way of knowing what's next (that's the uncertainty and volatility part), we are always walking forward with our hands out in the dark, waiting to bump in to things. And because things are changing, we have lost much of the ability to predict what will happen next from what has happened before, to pull out the memories from other dark rooms we have bumped through in the past. Complexity is about getting our heads around what is possible (because anything could happen) rather than what is probably going to happen



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(which is determined from what has happened before).

This shift – from trying to get your head around what is most likely to trying to get your head around what is in the field of possibilities – is much bigger than it sounds. As research has shown in study after study, our brains just don’t like this. Our general pattern is to prune and simplify. We need to work at it if we are going to create new patterns of behavior for thinking and acting in this new world. We need to talk to one another differently, gather information differently, and build strategies and plans for the future in new ways. We need new habits of mind that stretch and expand us to deal in more thoughtful ways with the complexity the world offers.

### HABITS OF MIND FOR COMPLEXITY TODAY AND A MORE COMPLEX TOMMORROW

All the leaders with whom we have worked have had some seriously impressive qualities. They are a smart bunch with good analytical facility and clear-mindedness. They are able to take apart problems and come up with solutions, quite quickly and often when the data are still emerging. They have been very good at the core business they are managing, whatever that might be. They have natural skills, and because both organizations and individuals know the power of continuous learning, many of them have been to additional schooling and/or have had coaching to help them get even better at the leadership tasks they face. And nearly all of them, when we finally put away all the barriers, admit that they are stressed and overwhelmed and concerned they’re not up to the task. They are overwhelmed by their email, by their growing and diverse stakeholders, by the impossible demands on their time, by the increasing scale and scope of the challenges they face. They do not all have a language about volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity, but they all have a felt reaction to it.

It’s probably true that they’re not up to the task; it’s totally possible that this task of leading in times as complex and volatile as today is a bigger stretch for us humans than anything else we’ve ever had to do. That’s the bad news. The good news is that there is a way to grow more able to handle the complexity in the world around us: three habits of mind that stretch your thinking capacity and help you grow more “complexity of mind.” The better news is that while growing that new capacity, you can

also be understanding your work and its demands in an entirely new way at the same time that you are creating new possibilities for those with whom you work. In other words, as you grow to be a better leader over time, you can also be a better leader right now.

This means as you exercise the habits using the tools and approaches in this book, you may find your thinking changed about key issues you struggle with at work. And as you’re solving difficult work problems, these habits are also an exercise routine for your mind; they stretch you and help you become more capable of dealing with complexity. Once they become your habits, they’ll expand the way you can think, and they’ll change your ability to deal with those things that are now overwhelming.

These habits of mind are deceptively simple:

- Asking different questions
- Taking multiple perspectives
- Seeing systems

So what makes them so powerful, and how can you benefit from that power? ■



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**KEITH JOHNSTON** works with senior teams on strategies and organizational development, in the corporate sector, in government, and in not-for-profit organizations. He designs and delivers leadership development programs and coaches senior leaders. Keith served for fifteen years as a senior leader in New Zealand’s Department of Conservation, culminating in five years as the General Manager Conservation Policy. He led the Department’s responses to the Cave Creek tragedy.

# How Technology Meets Our Psychological Needs

(and what this means for designing digital experiences)

by Mobius Senior Expert, Srinii Pillay, M.D.

An increasing amount of our everyday consumer experiences – whether as customers or employees – are going digital. This puts special pressure on artists and scientists to work together. It's frequently overlooked that technology represents the collaboration of these two disciplines – ones we have traditionally segregated. For example, people often think that aesthetics are restricted to works of art and that mathematical formulae carry only logical and specific meaning. However, a recent study<sup>1</sup> demonstrated that when people experience a mathematical formula as beautiful, it activates brain regions that overlap with activations found when experiencing sublime music. “Artistic” and “technical” people – often treated as fundamentally different inside organizations – may share more in common than is often assumed.

What is clear is that our demand for digital is surging and this calls for a tighter partnership between designers (those involved in the artistic dimensions of programs, apps, and games) and technical talent (those who conceptualize the algorithm design and programming).

To date, there are no identifiable models that help to foster this collaboration. As a result, many firms have to deal with incongruent efficiencies in one or the other of these teams. To help bridge this divide between technology and art, I propose a new model derived from insights related to human psychology and brain science. With this model, learning professionals and others involved in human capital development can guide the collaboration between art and science. First, though, we must examine the needs that technology fulfills. These

needs offer us a template for how we design things and, therefore, how the collaboration behind design might unfold.

## PSYCHOLOGICAL NEEDS THAT TECHNOLOGY FULFILLS

As a result of adopting and immersing ourselves in technology, we offload the work that our brains' internal electrical circuits previously performed. We continue to adopt technology, in part, because these external electrical circuits often perceive, remember and process information in ways that are far superior to how our brains work. In addition to these cognitive benefits, there are other psychological needs that technology fulfills:

- **Need for self-control:** We have a basic need for control<sup>2</sup> over our lives, whether that involves controlling ourselves or other people. Often referred to as “personal freedom,” this need for control is a high priority. Technology allows us to experience control by providing choices. By pressing a few buttons, you can learn what's happening in the world. By swiping your finger across a screen, you can find the to-do list you need. By clicking a number, you can see and talk to someone in another country.

When we have choices and exercise our control, this activates brain regions that increase feelings of reward<sup>3</sup> and self-preference.<sup>4</sup> When choices are taken away, this throws our brains into conflict<sup>5</sup> where brain activations give rise to negative feelings<sup>6</sup> such as anxiety and uncertainty.



- **Need for power:** Power<sup>7</sup> implies that you have the resources to reach your goals. We have a need for power because<sup>8</sup> it allows us to move confidently toward our goals. Of course, this is not black and white, and there are numerous other nuances. But one strong line of research indicates that a sense of personal power activates “approach” motivation whereas not having power activates “avoidance” motivations. Simply said, those with power do more. When you prime people with a sense of power (i.e., they are unaware you are doing this), it makes them more likely to approach a challenge or goal.

Having a sense of social power activates the left frontal<sup>9</sup> brain region – one associated with approach motivations. On the contrary, feeling ineffective activates the right frontal brain region. You avoid things.

Technology offers us a sense of power either implicitly through mechanisms of control, or more obviously, in being able to score points, accumulate rewards, or even buy things online. You may not be able to afford a car, but almost anyone with a credit card has enough purchasing power to shop online. Games also give you status and power by leveling up and being recognized by the gaming community.

- **Need for immersion:** When people are immersed<sup>10</sup> in a story or videogame, it affects the way they think and feel. Through simulation, people can begin to imagine<sup>11</sup> themselves in the actual product themselves. It allows them to suspend disbelief and more closely relate to the characters themselves.

They feel more present.<sup>12</sup>

Immersion unburdens a person from self-awareness. Action video games can help to get your brain unstuck as a result of stimulating brain change<sup>13</sup>. Being immersed in games can also activate brain regions involved in thought control<sup>14</sup>, allowing for more efficient multitasking known as supertasking.

Some games allow for first-person interaction as if you are the person you are controlling. In that way, you can identify with heroes<sup>15</sup>, boosting your own sense of self. A sense of flourishing<sup>16</sup> ensues.

- **Need for social connection:** We are motivated<sup>17</sup> to form social connections with others. This decreases our loneliness and increases our sense of perceived support. When we crave social connections, our brains become hypersensitive to thinking of close others. The reward center<sup>18</sup> activates. The more socially disconnected<sup>19</sup> we are, the lower our threshold is for identifying images as human faces that are alive, even when the features are only vaguely discernable. This makes us more likely to respond positively to animations.

Technology targets isolation in other ways, by offering games that couples can play together, or games that groups of people can play together as teams, offering positive brain activations for both types of individuals.

- **Need for eudaimonia:** Some people debate<sup>20</sup> the actual human need for self-actualization. This may in

part be due to the relative inaccessibility of the term. In reality, when you frame this as transcending the limits of the mind, or fulfilling one’s creative potential, the need seems more obvious. This psychology involves striving<sup>21</sup> for a more coherent self and wellbeing, becoming more creative<sup>22</sup>, and a sense of inner harmony<sup>23</sup>.

Studies of brains show that this state, sometimes referred to as eudaimonia, is greater in people who have larger insulae<sup>24</sup> in their brain (this area partly processes a sense of self), and also activates the brain’s reward system<sup>25</sup> (ventral striatum) than the simple hedonic pleasures of winning a video game.

Any technology<sup>26</sup> that can serve this function of providing a sense of meaning and purpose through any of the mechanisms above (e.g., social connection) will likely activate eudaimonia. For some of us this might involve downloading our Mind Files into Terasem’s database<sup>27</sup> so that we can merge with machines later in life and become immortal. For others, it may simply involve immersive experiences that allow us to remain

present. Either way, technology is capable of delivering these experiences.

**THE SPICE MODEL FOR BUILDING DIGITAL DEVICES®**

Based on the above psychological needs, any future digital creation could address one or all of the above functions. To simplify this, I have created a mnemonic: SPICE:

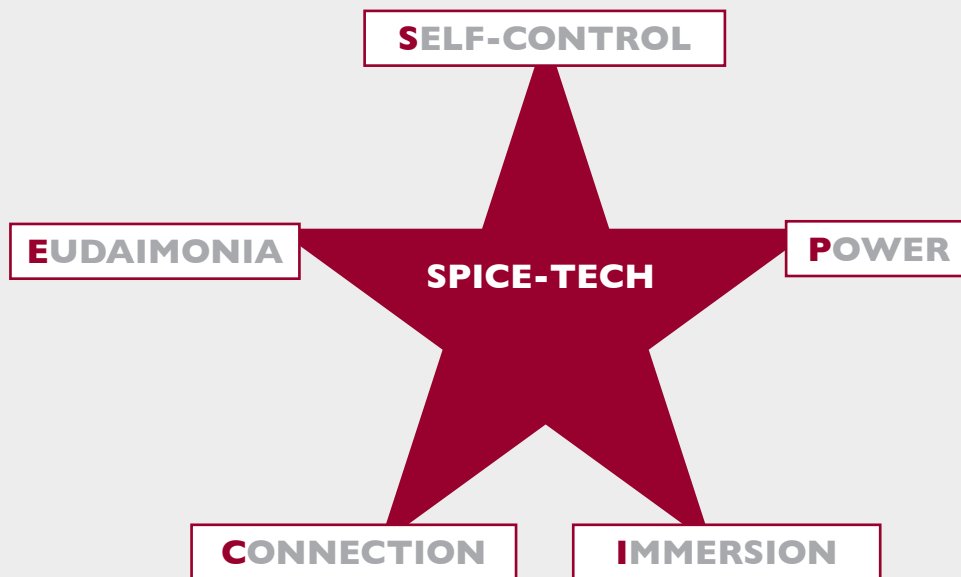
- S = Self-control**      **P = Power**      **I = Immersion**
- C = Connection**      **E = Eudaimonia.**

This model could be represented by a star model of how companies want to impact customers or employees in the digital space.

Each mini-triangle allows them to assess how much they aim to address this particular need. And the model helps to continually iterate and refine successive models to meet as many of our needs as possible.

These needs bear a striking resemblance to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs<sup>28</sup>, but this model differs

**The SPICE Model for Technology Development**



in some substantial ways: (1) Unlike Maslow's model, this model emphasizes that all needs are physiological. No function escapes the brain. (2) Maslow's needs are arranged in a hierarchy, suggesting that people progress in their needs. The SPICE model does not assume such a hierarchy, but instead that different people have different needs that they address at different points of their lives. For businesses, this must match the developmental trajectory of the target population. (3) The SPICE model takes into account inter-individual variation based on which needs have been completed. Once again, this must match the specific needs of the target population. (4) This model is meant to be a structural derivation from existing research without an intention to be "valid." For something to be valid, it has to be always true. The SPICE model assumes that the truth of consumer preference changes actively depending on multiple factors at any given time. (5) This model is especially intended to be used for conversations between design and programming experts, to enhance and structure the art-science collaboration.

### APPLYING THE SPICE MODEL

Here are some of the ways in which we can apply the SPICE model to guide the collaboration between artists and scientists.

► **SELF-CONTROL** A programmer who is designing an app will be exquisitely aware that the app needs to have some user specificity and that the user must feel in control of the app. This will lead to a feeling of relevance and vitality<sup>29</sup>. In this instance, users will have choices, for example, that allow them to feel more in control.

Art therapy<sup>30</sup>, on the other hand, can enhance self-control through encouraging self-expression. It is an expressive language<sup>31</sup> that transcends words.

So while a programmer may provide several options for choice, an artist could suggest that these choices be color coded, or that they be offered in a flow pattern. This kind of dialogue could be the beginning of a rich communication.

► **POWER:** Programmers can increase permissions as users evolve, allowing them to feel an escalating sense of power. They can acquire tools, privileges, partnerships,

## Using the SPICE Model as a Consultant

Consultants and executive coaches can help organizations achieve their goals using the SPICE model<sup>®</sup> by bringing together disparate design teams to foster collaboration:

- 1 Decide on the format for interaction (e.g., half-day, full-day, week-long workshop.)
- 2 Invite participants to have a concrete digital project on hand
- 3 Start with an unguided brainstorming session in which people have a chance to express their views and represent them in a shareable format such as flipcharts or PowerPoint
- 4 Introduce the SPICE model with vivid examples for each step, explaining the theoretical basis for the conversation
- 5 For each step, guide participants toward a set of characteristics that incorporate artistic and scientific points of view
- 6 Schedule a portion of the time together to collate all of this information and attach a timeline for development of version one the product
- 7 If you really want to kick it up a notch, invite external scientists and artists to join the teams in the design



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and other ways of gaining traction. But "status" is not the only way to accomplish this.

Art itself can confer power by allowing people to escape their actual existences<sup>32</sup>. It can give them safe havens to practice new skills. In addition, certain forms of art confer power because archetypes can impact the brain. Artists well versed in the themes that impact human psychology (e.g., maternal care, sexual orientation, and group power) can work with programmers to enhance the power landscape by bringing these archetypes into the story or experience.

► **IMMERSION:** Programmers typically create immersion through gaming<sup>12</sup>, creating a story through which a user must proceed in order to get to a goal.

Working with writers who are sensitive to fantasy, the nuances of story arc and character creation leads to more sophisticated and compelling stories. Psychologists and artists can work together to build profiles for avatars. Other scientists such as cognitive theorists<sup>33</sup> who are well versed in positive behavioral outcomes can weigh in on the design team's awareness of how to design reward systems.

► **CONNECTION:** Programmers can build interactive portals that allow for multiple people to play together at the same time. They can program for team formation, competition, cooperation, and forms of connection as well.

While we've all become sensitive to the power of virtual connection, there are other, far less obvious ways, to forge a sense of togetherness. Music<sup>34</sup> connects people with games and programs, and other forms of art can enhance the intensity of social reward that people experience.

► **EUDAIMONIA:** Here we might apply Carol Ryff's<sup>35</sup> definition of eudaimonia to programming: self-acceptance (individualization); autonomy (control mechanisms mentioned above); mastery (interacting with animals, trees, weather); personal growth (staging of games and rewards); positive relations with others (as in the "connection" section above); and purpose in life (self-improvement or "in the zone" activities).

These are all factors programmers can use to more deeply examine their constructions.

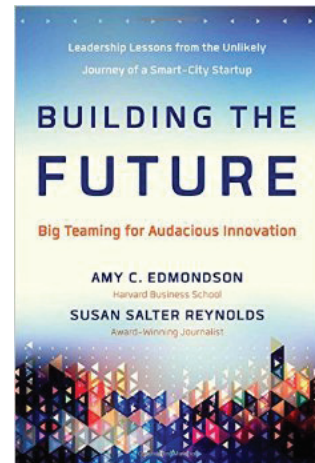
The SPICE model guides the creators on the technology and artistic development side to contemplate more deeply the emotional and technical elements that go into serving our psychological needs. Not only that, it gives artists and scientists and all of us who work with them a common language and framework to design the technology that is increasingly at the center of our human experience. ■



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# Building the Future

A book excerpt by Mobius Senior Expert, Amy Edmondson and Susan Salter Reynolds



**“There is nothing more difficult to take in hand, more perilous to conduct, or more uncertain in its success, than to take the lead in the introduction of a new order of things.”**

– Machiavelli, *The Prince*

**BUILDING THE FUTURE. TAKE A DEEP BREATH AND CONSIDER WHAT THIS** means, living in the twenty-first century. It doesn't mean the next iPhone, the next electric car, or even the first molecular teletransporter (à la *Star Trek*). These could all certainly qualify as life-changing, history-shaping innovations, but building the future does not mean building isolated products. The lone innovator bathed in cathode-ray green lights in his garage late at night designing the next amazing thing is not the protagonist of our story.

We are interested instead in innovations that constitute a new order of things – interacting elements that must work together and simply aren't worth much alone. When we talk about building the future, we're talking about bringing new complex systems into being. This book explains why this is so hard and what leaders can do to make it easier.

The very phrase *building the future* has two critical parts, the verb and the noun. *Building* captures the process of

constructing something, of putting pieces together into a new integrated whole. The noun, the *future*, is the target. Envisioning the future is only the first step toward building it. What's the next step? Read on.

You could say that with every step each of us takes, we are, in fact, building the future: each time we use resources carefully, each time we remember to turn out the lights, each time we choose a bicycle over a car. While it is certainly true that the future is always unfolding – arriving whether we actively pursue it or not – some pioneers glimpse technological or societal possibilities before the rest of us do, and they set out to make them happen. Building the future is about bringing a desired future into being *on purpose*.

Today we have the opportunity to build the future consciously and proactively. Building the future is by its nature audacious innovation. Inherently creative, building a desired future is fueled by vision and realized through experimentation. Our research focused on the built

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environment as a particularly timely and vital arena for future-building. We studied people from organizations in several industries that contribute to innovation in the built environment, and we learned that it requires intense collaboration and a particular kind of leadership. As we will see, future-building takes time – and failure is a necessary part of the journey.

### A NEW ORDER OF THINGS

Future-building is hard. When success requires introducing what Machiavelli, in the sixteenth century, called “a new order of things,” success is likely to be elusive. This is because bringing together diverse elements (technologies, plans, people, or organizations) to create a functioning whole presents countless ways for integration to break down. Teaming across disciplinary and industry boundaries is needed to respond to the spectacular challenges the world faces today, but it requires a new way of working, a new way of thinking, and a new way of being.

Future-building challenges are not limited to the built environment. The 2014 Ebola outbreak in West Africa was a terrifying example of a specific need for a novel systemic response, enacted by diverse organizations working together around the world. A response had to be designed on the fly under enormous pressure, while more and more people inside and outside Africa were diagnosed with the disease. Government, healthcare, university, and nonprofit organizations with varying priorities were forced to work together. President Barack Obama appointed Ron Klain as (the unfortunately titled) “Ebola czar” to help coordinate the diverse inputs of all of these groups. The idea, as reported (and hotly contested) at the time, was that the situation called for someone who could set priorities and get government agencies and private-sector organizations of all kinds to work together to innovate. Its success was also contested.

The 2010 rescue of 33 Chilean miners trapped beneath 2,000 feet of rock harder than granite was another such situation. Against all odds a magnificently coordinated and highly innovative rescue operation unfolded – knitting together the ideas and efforts of experts from multiple countries, industries, and sectors to produce a novel process and a remarkable outcome.<sup>1</sup> The leadership practices that allowed this success are remarkably similar to those we develop in this book.

In these examples crisis-motivated innovation required

cross-boundary collaboration. Other cases of future-building involve pioneers setting the forces of complex innovation in motion. Consider the emergence of the telecommunications system a century ago. It starts, of course, with the invention of a telephone, and before that its subcomponents – the mechanical acoustic devices for transmitting speech and music over a distance greater than that of normal human interaction. But to function in its intended way, the telephone required a complex infrastructure of components – wires, poles, monitors, switches, protocols, regulations, and more, extending over vast geographies – to be developed around it.

Sometimes future-building requires little in the way of technological innovation – just system building. When Fred Smith, CEO of FedEx, wrote a college term paper on the idea of an overnight-delivery service, he could not possibly have imagined – or single-handedly developed – all the moving parts that would be required to turn that vision into the \$27 billion company it is today. What he did imagine was “a completely different logistics system.”<sup>2</sup>

Working as a charter pilot, Smith could see the extent to which air travel was used to fly packages around, primarily for big companies like IBM and Xerox. The logistics, as reported by fellow pilots, were a nightmare. Airfreight at the time, Smith noticed, relied on passenger planes. What was needed was a whole new infrastructure that would take the logistical burden off passenger airlines and centralize it. He envisioned a nationwide clearinghouse and an integrated system of cars, trucks, and planes. His system required sophisticated information technology (IT) to allow unprecedented precision and a new way of tracking items as they moved around the world. For the service to function as intended, the tracking system would need handheld computers and machine-readable, sequentially numbered bar codes. It required obtaining new radio frequencies and designing new equipment for trucks. Government deregulation of the airlines in 1978 was the final piece of the puzzle, clearing FedEx for takeoff. Smith, leading the innovation journey that put all of these parts together, thus created a whole new order of things.

### WHAT IT TAKES TO BUILD THE FUTURE

Future-building is creative and iterative but not haphazard. It is interdisciplinary, and it takes leadership

**“While few would advocate for rigid organizational hierarchies anymore, understanding and practicing the new forms of leadership that enable complex, team-based, whole-system innovation is – we’ll say it again and again – challenging.”**

to bring it about. While few would advocate for rigid organizational hierarchies anymore, understanding and practicing the new forms of leadership that enable complex, team-based, whole-system innovation is – we’ll say it again and again – challenging. In this book we describe two basic requirements that entrepreneurs and leaders of mature organizations alike must embrace to build a sustainable future.

The first is a new kind of collaboration that spans more (and more diverse) groups than ever before. We call this *Big Teaming*. The second – essential to enabling the first – is leadership that blends big vision and small action to pursue *audacious innovation*. Big vision inspires, calling attention to what might be possible. But achieving big vision is never straightforward. It is essential to empower people to experiment with small action that might, with luck and skill, help bring the vision about. In the case study of a smart-city startup that runs throughout this book, the challenge of spanning industry boundaries looms large, while experimenting through small action proves both elusive and essential.

### **Big Teaming**

Many organizations have shifted to a new way of working that makes teaming and learning part of the job.<sup>3</sup> Prior work on teaming includes examples of people in crisis situations working together to surmount seemingly impossible, but finite, challenges. In such situations people often team up across geographical, social, and cultural boundaries to get the job done. Building the future takes teaming to the next level. The same fundamental principles apply, but the distances between players are greater than when we encourage cross-functional teamwork within a company. The boundaries

are more difficult to cross. Goals are more often at odds. And clashing professional cultures are likely to inhibit meaningful communication.

In this book we highlight both the challenges and the opportunities that lie in teaming across the cultural divides that separate people in different industries. To do this we first must explore how industry cultures differ, taking a deep dive, chapter by chapter, into five domains – information technology (chapter 3), real estate development (chapter 4), city government (chapter 5), architecture and construction (chapter 6), and the modern corporation (chapter 7). As we do so, we follow the ups and downs of a startup’s efforts to span these industry boundaries. In each chapter we supplement our field research with published sources to paint fuller portraits of the industry than our case study could provide on its own. We then take a look, in chapter 8, at why it’s difficult to collaborate across these worlds and what leaders can do to facilitate it. Chapter 9 updates our case study and concludes with ideas about how leaders can integrate big vision with small, smart action.

### **Leading Audacious Innovation**

Future-building leadership starts with imagination that fuels vision: ambitious, bold, creative vision informed by deep expertise in a relevant field and yet paradoxically open enough to adapt when needed. Such vision thus has three essential components; it’s bold, it’s meaningful, and it’s open to adaptation as more is learned.

*Big vision* must be followed – and dynamically realized – by *small action*: small, tentative action that is deliberately framed as an experiment and that builds knowledge quickly. This iterative process of action, feedback, and learning expects and tolerates failure on the way to success. It takes a particular leadership mind-set to



cope with the contradictory demands of envisioning and advocating audacious new possibilities while engaging in small, imperfect action, not to mention the contradictory demands of believing in one's own vision while enrolling a host of other experts to help transform that vision.

*Balancing the competing goals of influencing and innovating* is thus a new and essential leadership practice for future-building. When you're doing the new-new thing, it is easy to prioritize activities that build credibility in the external world, such as giving talks and building relationships with prestigious players in varied sectors.<sup>4</sup> This can mean that the actual work of the organization – the day-to-day work of innovating and developing products and people – takes a backseat to selling a story and building a reputation. The charisma and excitement that swirl around a pioneer's vision are critical for drawing people into the orbit, building a solid team, generating funds, and building the ecosystem of players it takes to realize that vision. But a leader's focus must encompass the outside and the inside, influencing (vision) and innovating (action). Through our multicultural journey across the various industries with which we came into close contact during our study, we offer some ideas about how to manage this tension.<sup>5</sup>

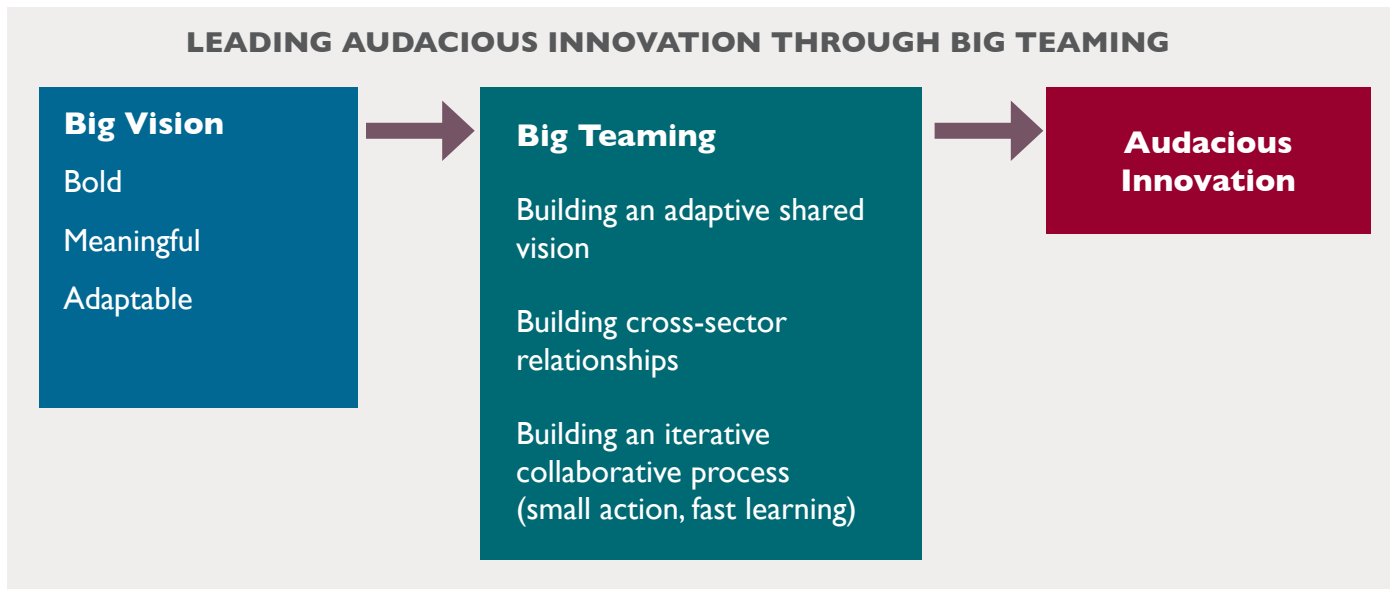
In sum this book proposes that *building the future* requires three crucial, ongoing activities: *building a shared vision that evolves as more is learned*, *building meaningful cross-sector relationships*, and *building an iterative collaborative process*. The diagram *Leading Audacious Innovation through Big Teaming* depicts these activities. To explain why they matter – and how to bring them about – we use a case study that highlights both the opportunities and the challenges of Big Teaming for audacious innovation.

## A CASE STUDY OF FUTURE-BUILDING

This book is our way of wrapping our minds around these enormous challenges by studying people who, one brick, one dollar, one sensor at a time, sit in meetings and in front of computer screens and occasionally get out to see a physical landscape in their efforts to create a new order of things. In fact, so much is new about these efforts that it can be hard for observers (and even for those involved) to know what to make of the promises, the expectations, and the progress along the way.

Our ideas are conveyed with the help of a longitudinal case study – a human story that reveals certain truths about managing complex innovations – supplemented by archival research on smart-city projects carried out by other organizations and by interviews with leading thinkers and practitioners in related fields. These additional sources help us set the context that gave rise to the founding of the small company at the center of our research: Living PlanIT. We watched the company grow and change, stumble and get back up, and reinvent itself. Sometimes we thought we could see the future of Living PlanIT alongside the Apples and Googles and Facebooks of the world. Other times we wondered whether Living PlanIT could navigate the seemingly insurmountable challenges ahead.

Living PlanIT was pursuing a bold vision. When we encountered the company, its scope – building a brand-new sustainable high-tech city from scratch to lead the way to building more such cities around the world – was breathtaking. The company struggled with doing anything small, anything partway. We learned of the team's conviction that being big was integral to their strategy. It seemed, sometimes, that it had to be all or nothing. But what might the company do to test its vision, develop



its strategies, and make steady progress toward the ultimate prize of building the future?

Whatever the long-term fate of Living PlanIT, we could not have chosen a better opportunity to learn what building the future truly involves. The company gave us a rare opportunity to glimpse a group of creative, hardworking people pursuing a dream. Intrigued by the promise of smart-city innovation, at times we suspended disbelief. To set the stage for our research, we start with some background on the urban built environment, drawing from the chorus of voices that has considered its challenges and opportunities.

**THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT**

To study how pioneers introduce a new order of things, we chose to focus on the built environment because of the opportunity it affords for audacious innovation. Long a laggard in the innovation landscape, the built environment today is suddenly again a target for change. Just as Renaissance visionaries like Leonardo da Vinci and Christopher Wren combined applied mathematics and philosophy to introduce revolutionary advances that transformed the size, span, and strength of buildings, modern-day visionaries are recognizing the potential to transform what we build – and how we build it – by leveraging advances in materials and information technologies. Buildings and cities, they argue, can be smarter, greener, more efficient, and more livable. And many have begun to believe that there are business

opportunities to be exploited in making them that way. Today, as we explain in chapter 2, these activities are called the smart-city industry.

The built environment refers to “the human-made surroundings that provide the setting for human activity, ranging in scale from buildings and parks or green space to neighborhoods and cities that can often include their supporting infrastructure, such as water supply or energy networks.”<sup>6</sup> Public health experts define the built environment as “the human-made space in which people live, work, and recreate on a day-to-day basis.” The term encompasses places and spaces created or modified by people, including buildings, parks, and transportation systems. In short the built environment comprises the complex systems that we inhabit and depend on in our daily lives.

Cities – collections of buildings, streets, parks, airports, offices, stores, transportation systems, and more – have become the target of future-building innovation across a surprising range of disciplines. Some innovations relate to retrofitting existing cities with smart technologies; others involve creating new cities from scratch.

What is a city? The dividing lines between cities, towns, and non-cities are difficult to draw. Wikipedia defines a city as a relatively large and permanent settlement. But how large? In Shanghai recently, a graduate student told us she was from a small town. Probing further, we learned that her hometown’s population was 400,000 – a large city in New England. For now we’ll have to be content

with understanding cities as locations, people, economic activity, and municipal entities combined. Cities today have become critical hotspots for innovation. How cities are built and managed matters far more than ever for the future of humanity.

But why hasn't the innovation happened faster?

This book shows that innovation in the built environment can be stymied by a lack of common language among the essential players. Industry expertise, jargon, values, time frames, and more form silos that make it hard to collaborate. People in real estate have their business models and priorities; people in construction have certain ways of planning and completing projects; mayors and others in city government have their priorities and time lines; and techies, long portrayed as social mavericks, have their expectations and frustrations, too.

Cities have always evolved – but gradually. The earliest cities were powered by human decisions and actions, with human and animal power the only source of energy. People transported water, grew food, built structures, and removed waste products as best they could with the help of their livestock. Later cities developed extensive mechanized supply systems – waterworks, sewer systems, power supplies, streetlights – that took over and managed critical urban inputs and outputs centrally, each with its own specialized workforce. Today more and more essential functions are digital in nature<sup>7</sup> – smart.

*Smart cities*, as defined by author Anthony Townsend, are “places where information technology is combined with infrastructure, architecture, everyday objects, and even our bodies to address social, economic, and environmental problems.”<sup>8</sup> With novelty comes a proliferation of terms, and this arena is no exception.<sup>9</sup> Whether cities are problems or solutions is a matter of some debate.

### **Cities as Problems, Cities as Solutions**

Historically, cities have gotten a bad rap. Cities are resource hogs. Higher average living standards in cities compared with rural areas translate into greater energy use and higher per capita carbon emissions. Cities are responsible for roughly 70 percent of all greenhouse gas emissions but house only half of the population.<sup>10</sup> The city as physical or moral cesspool is an engrained postindustrial image. Here urbanization and squalor

go hand in hand. In part this notion is a true depiction of rapid, unplanned growth. Vast population increases at the edges of so-called megacities give rise to health hazards, desperate places, shantytowns replete with environmental risks, and crime, often in the shadow of affluent suburbs. The *favelas* of Brazil provide vivid examples.

As many have noted, global urbanization brings a host of challenges. The UN *World Economic and Social Survey 2013: Sustainable Development Challenges* report calls for a “transformation of the energy system,” particularly in cities:

*To achieve this energy transformation together with food and nutrition security, sustainability of cities, and other development goals after 2015, large-scale investments will be needed. Such investments will require sufficient levels of supply of long-term financing, and they will have to be carried out both by public actors through increased public expenditure and by the private sector, which will depend critically on creating the right incentives for investments in sustainable development.*<sup>11</sup>

A recent study comparing data from 100 cities in 33 nations showed that cities without well-developed public transportation had dramatically higher levels of greenhouse gas emissions.<sup>12</sup> Denver, for example, weighed in with twice the greenhouse gas emissions per capita (21.5 tons) of New York City and even Shanghai.<sup>13</sup>

In his popular albeit controversial 2010 book, *Green Metropolis*, David Owen makes the case that cities are, in fact, an ecological way to live because they boast density, which means less driving compared with suburban communities.<sup>14</sup> Economist Edward Glaeser makes a similar point in *Triumph of the City*.<sup>15</sup> Both books fairly gush about the social, economic, and environmental virtues of cities.

A growing chorus of voices conjures the city as a sparkling solution to environmental ills, with images of silent transportation gliding along, energy-producing architecture in harmony with the environment, and landscaping both beautiful and edible. Open space, places to walk and play. Cafés everywhere. Green parks. Bicycles. The Emerald City.

Interest in smart sustainable cities has grown as people in different sectors investigate pieces of the urban



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population boom puzzle. The idea that humans are the problem, long a tenet of the environmental movement, has shifted a bit to make room for a vision of people as problem solvers.<sup>16</sup> Despite substantial differences in beliefs, strategies, principles, and methods, most agree that an explosion in the apparent need for cities offers a clear, if challenging, opportunity for getting it right, for building cities that are viable and dynamic, exciting and green, and hotbeds of innovation and efficiency.

Peter Calthorpe, a founder of the Congress of New Urbanism, an organization promoting sustainable, walkable, mixed-use urban communities, and the author of *Urbanism in the Age of Climate Change*, has written that “urbanism is the foundation for a low-carbon future,” and the most cost-effective solution to climate change, even more so than renewable energy.<sup>17</sup> Urbanism allows us to do more with less. Calthorpe’s eponymous urban design firm, Calthorpe Associates, was named one of the 25 “innovators on the cutting edge” by *Newsweek* for its work redefining models of growth in America. “Good urbanism,” Calthorpe maintains, is defined by “three basic principles”:

*One is human scale, which has to do with designing public spaces around the pedestrian rather than the car. Ironically, human scale can exist in incredibly dense places, like Manhattan, or in relatively low density places, like the historic centers of our rural towns. . . . Diversity is another key ingredient of urbanism . . . you have to have a range of uses mixed together, you can’t isolate housing and shopping and employment into separate zones. . . . You [also] need a diverse*

*population – you can’t isolate age groups, income groups, and family types. . . . The third principle, which wasn’t historically part of urbanism, is conservation and restoration.<sup>18</sup>*

These principles – human scale, diversity, and conservation – are not at odds with smart technologies but rather are complementary strategies for improving urban livability and resource use.

Meanwhile cities are widely recognized as engines for economic growth and innovation. Today only 600 urban centers generate about 60 percent of global gross domestic product (GDP). Tokyo, with its 35 million people and nearly \$1.2 trillion in economic output, ranks among the world’s top 15 economies, larger than the nations of India and Mexico. Cities encompass the largest and fastest-growing concentration of natural resource consumption and are, consequently, a logical place to focus sustainability efforts.

Taken together these perspectives – viewing cities as solutions that foster livability, sustainability, and innovation – have laid a foundation for smart-city innovation.

### **Smart Cities, Smart Buildings**

The late William J. Mitchell, professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and a leading thinker in the field of digital technology and urban studies, believed in the possibility of smart cities. Technologically networked urban environments could be superbly responsive to the needs of their inhabitants, he argued. Through information and communication

technology (ICT), combining hardware (embedded sensors in buildings and infrastructure that can detect activity of various types) and software (that stores and uses data), cities could provide customized services to inhabitants on demand, enhancing efficiency and livability. In Mitchell's vision networked smart cities would generate collective intelligence in communities. It would be easy to make better decisions – without ever having to sit around a table to debate them.

This vision may slowly be turning into reality. ICT systems are starting to be used in managing energy, transportation, and waste.<sup>19</sup> Smart-city advocates conceive of vast systems for collecting and analyzing big data on human behavior patterns – using networks of sensors and microcontrollers (tiny computer systems that combine processing, memory, and input/output devices) – to make cities more sustainable and more livable. Sensors detect activity, and microcontrollers analyze the data against targets and deliver output to users (through some linked device, like a smartphone) to influence their behavior. For example, consider how today's access to traffic data may lead you to choose a different route home. More-sophisticated systems could eventually control the car itself, leaving driver decisions out of it.

A target for innovation far less ambitious than driverless cars is the building itself. The use of sensors for operating and maintaining buildings is a strategy to minimize environmental harm and enrich the user experience. A 2011 McKinsey study on resource productivity placed improved building energy efficiency first of 130 opportunities. The report identified potential savings of almost \$700 billion by 2030, if we took advantage of new, improved, energy-efficient buildings.<sup>20</sup> According to the Center for Climate and Energy Solutions, buildings have been responsible for 38 percent of carbon emissions.<sup>21</sup> Leading experts around the world maintain that the potential to build environmentally sustainable buildings is vastly underrealized.

At nearly 3.4 percent of the US GDP, construction, already a large industry, is growing to accommodate

urban growth around the world. The industry, however, is fraught with waste and inefficiency.<sup>22</sup> Buildings are thus not only the largest opportunity for emission reductions but also the most cost-effective. In fact, of the cost-neutral reduction opportunities across all sectors identified by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 90 percent come from reduction measures in the building sector.<sup>23</sup> The potential to build and retrofit green buildings and infrastructure is thus enormous. Funding mechanisms, however, remain underdeveloped despite the promise of significant economic returns over time.<sup>24</sup>

In sum the need for innovation in the built environment is widely felt, and cities are a primary domain for that innovation.<sup>25</sup> The Internet has already transformed many businesses,<sup>26</sup> and today it seems only a matter of time before the physical landscape catches up.

Companies large and small have been developing technologies – including sensors, software, and data analytics – to make cities more environmentally sustainable, livable, and functional. For example, some explore systems to reduce energy consumption or manage traffic flows on city streets. Others develop integrated solutions to help city governments, like IBM Smarter Cities and Cisco Smart+Connected Communities. According to a 2011 Cisco news release, the aim was to “transform physical communities”; a smart-city approach encapsulated

“a new way of thinking about how communities are designed, built, managed, and renewed to achieve social, economic, and environmental sustainability.”<sup>27</sup> Large companies have the advantage of resources to fund the needed research and the pilot projects, but startups have the advantage of believing anything is possible. We talked to executives in both arenas and decided to focus on a startup to see how this might play out.

As we did so, every day it seemed a new innovation would enter the smart-city arena, some more outlandish than others. “The Smartest Cities Will Use People as Their Sensors: By networking individuals and their gadgets, urban apps will tell inhabitants what is happening

“*Big vision must be followed – and dynamically realized – by small action: small, tentative action that is deliberately framed as an experiment and that builds knowledge quickly.*”



all around them, in real time,” ran a headline in *Scientific American*.<sup>28</sup> Many had potential. For example, Trash Track, a Seattle-based innovation, reveals how garbage flows through and out of the city’s waste management system, identifying items traveling around the United States to legal and illegal dumps. The results uncovered ways to improve compliance and minimize carbon dioxide emissions by transporting waste more efficiently. Real-Time Copenhagen generates data about shifting traffic and pollution patterns, as well as where nightlife is unfolding. “As Sea Levels Rise, Dutch See Floating Cities” ran the headline to a New York Times story about Dutch architects investigating the possibility of a floating Holland.<sup>29</sup> There seemed to be no end to human inventiveness.

Sobering realities and exciting possibilities co-exist in an uneasy partnership in this space, but there is no question that assessing the earth’s resources against humanity’s growing needs poses an immense opportunity for audacious innovation.

### **A PERFECT STORM**

While smart-technology innovations around the globe percolate, two intertwined megatrends have laid the foundation for their eventual use. One trend is growing awareness of threats to the sustainability of the earth’s natural environment. The second is the rapid rise in the number of people moving into and living in cities. Combined, these large-scale shifts create a perfect storm for urban innovation.

#### **Megatrend One: Climate Change**

News of floods, earthquakes, tsunamis, famine, chronic disease, toxic waste, nuclear winter, and species extinctions have become too frequent to count. Epic storms with human names – Katrina, Sandy, Haiyan (in the Philippines) – increasingly terrify and devastate. A 2010 article in *Scientific American*, darkly titled “How Much Is Left? The Limits of Earth’s Resources,” presented a long and frightening list of concerns: glacier melt (in some places more than a half meter per year); oil scarcity (by 2050 we will have used all but 10 percent of the earth’s available oil); freshwater scarcity (by 2025 renewable water reserves may drop below 500 cubic meters per person per year, considered the minimum for a functioning society); and even mass extinction (biologists warn of

**“There is no question that assessing the earth’s resources against humanity’s growing needs poses an immense opportunity for audacious innovation.”**

events on par with those that killed the dinosaurs).<sup>30</sup> Climate change threatens to alter everything about our lives, from agriculture and food supplies to productivity and the frequency of extreme weather events. The *Scientific American* article also estimated that even coal, long thought inexhaustible, would dwindle to nothing by 2072, given the current rates of extraction.

Our ability to feed ourselves in the future has been increasingly revealed as precarious. Even today roughly 925 million people are hungry. And the number is growing; the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) warned that by 2080, 600 million additional people could be at risk of hunger as a direct result of climate change.<sup>31</sup> In addition to those who face starvation, many more will be chronically malnourished. The *Scientific American* report predicted that counteracting the ill effects of climate change on nutrition would cost more than \$7 billion per year by 2050, while the FAO and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development warned that the direct impacts of climate disruptions on food production patterns would lead to more "extreme volatility events on international food commodities markets."<sup>32</sup>

Ecological footprint analysis, introduced in a 1992

University of British Columbia doctoral dissertation, compares human demand on nature with the biosphere's ability to regenerate resources and provide services.<sup>33</sup> It does this by assessing the biologically productive land and marine area required to produce the resources a population consumes and absorb the corresponding waste using prevailing technology. The WWF (formerly known as the World Wildlife Fund), a proponent of this approach, claims that the human footprint already has exceeded the biocapacity (the available supply of natural resources) of the planet by 20 percent.<sup>34</sup> Yet, as readers well know, the earth's population continues to rise. The United Nations (UN) estimates that the global population will grow from 6.5 billion in 2010 to 8.5 billion in 2050.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, the average standard of living across the globe, which translates into greater per capita resource consumption, has also risen steadily. Clearly, with more people consuming more, the ecological footprint problem is exacerbated.

### **Megatrend Two: Urbanization**

We are fast becoming an urban planet. With 180,000 new people moving into cities each day, the twenty-first century is the era of urbanization. In 2008 the

## **FIVE LEADERSHIP LESSONS FOR BUILDING THE FUTURE: A PREVIEW**

### **Lesson 1: Start with Big Vision**

Building the future starts with a bold and meaningful vision – but with a twist: the vision must be open and big enough to evolve as a result of others' input and with the emerging insights derived from new experiences.

### **Lesson 2: Foster Big Teaming**

Building the future requires teamwork that bridges industry cultures – which takes empathy and skill.

### **Lesson 3: Celebrate Mavericks**

Future-building gets a boost from successful, credible experts who glimpse new possibilities and help shift the conversation in an industry.

### **Lesson 4: Embrace Small Action**

Building the future is an iterative learning process – a series of small actions that help realize the evolving big vision.

### **Lesson 5: Balance Influence and Innovation**

Building the future requires leaders to balance influencing (selling the vision) and innovating (developing the vision through small smart action).

world reached an invisible but profound milestone: half of its population was living in cities, for the first time in history.<sup>36</sup> By 2050, according to UN estimates, 70 percent of the world's population will live in cities.<sup>37</sup>

Many of these cities have yet to be built. China's announcement in spring 2013 of plans to move 250 million people into cities over the next 15 years sent ripples through the blogosphere.<sup>38</sup> Some estimate a need for more than 10,000 new cities by 2050 to house an anticipated 3 billion new urban inhabitants. Such estimates represent a massive construction project.

Should this construction occur in the same way as it did in the creation of today's existing cities? Logically, given environmental challenges, technological advances, and the relative speed of the growth in urbanization, this would not be the best approach. Letting cities merely evolve, as in centuries past, is likely to lead to sprawling slums and suburbs, excessive use of personal cars, divergent economic opportunities, inadequate infrastructure, and a lack of open space. Coming up with better-designed and more coordinated alternatives, however, requires collaborative innovation on an unprecedented scale.

The specter of uncontrolled growth, marginalized slums, health issues, and social unrest in megacities with populations of more than 10 million also looms large. By 2013 Tokyo, New York, Mexico City, and Shanghai had populations in excess of 20 million. *The Endless City*, published in 2007, with its sequel, *Living in the Endless City* (2011), showcased writings by architects, mayors, urban planners, policy makers, and others on concerns about physical growth in cities and on how to improve the quality of life in megacities.<sup>39</sup> Some expressed a faith in technology to solve social and physical problems associated with growth; others put faith in visionary leadership.

Cities are places of modernity and opportunity. Nonetheless not all of tomorrow's new urbanites will relocate voluntarily. In his October 2011 speech on World Habitat Day, Dr. Joan Clos, executive director of the UN Human Settlements Programme, warned that by 2050 we can expect more than 200 million environmental refugees from the effects of floods, drought, overheating, and other climate-related disasters. Left to chance,

urbanization is unlikely to proceed optimally for both the environment and the residents.

Adding 2 billion people to the planet is like adding two Chinas to the number of people alive today. Leaving aside for now the issue of whether forecasts are destiny, it is clear that large numbers of people will need food, water, and other resources on a planet that, as noted, already faces stretched resources. Leading scientists in climate-related fields have argued that human activity is already shaping climate and the web of life.

Together these megatrends call for innovation that is no less significant than a third era in the history of cities,<sup>40</sup> no less than a new order of things. *How can leaders today – armed with ambitious visions and complex, fallible technologies and organizations – help bring this about?* The rest of this book explores this question. See *Five Leadership Lessons for Building the Future: A Preview* for a summary of the lessons that unfold in the chapters ahead. ■



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characterized by uncertainty and ambiguity. She has also studied the role of psychological safety in teamwork and innovation. Before her academic career, she was Director of Research at Pecos River Learning Centers, where she worked with founder and CEO Larry Wilson to design change programs in large companies. In the early 1980s, she worked as Chief Engineer for architect/inventor Buckminster Fuller, and innovation in the built environment remains an area of enduring interest and passion.

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## WINNING FROM WITHIN: SELECTED WRITINGS

by Mobius President and Co-Founder, Erica Ariel Fox

Psychology Today

## Tapping Into Inner Wisdom

By Kathy Kramer, Ph.D. in conversation with Erica Ariel Fox,  
Mobius President and Co-Founder, author of *Winning from Within*



This piece originally appeared in *Psychology Today* <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/lead-positive/201603/tapping-inner-wisdom-and-other-ways-lead-positive>

**A**fter only five minutes into the interview, it was clear to me that Erica Ariel Fox was doing transformative work to change the way leaders lead. After the interview, she told me that using the Hero's Leadership Journey framework to tell the story of her career was a transformative experience for her. It helped her to see new patterns and experience her journey as an actually lived story. From this new perspective, she saw that she had been more competent at dealing with each phase of her career than she had thought she was. This is the power of the Heroic Leadership Journey framework. As you read Erica Ariel Fox's story, think about how you too can

use this valuable framework to develop a new appreciation for the work you have put in to get where you are.

Erica Ariel Fox, the "premier mythologist of modern business leadership," developed the *Winning From Within*™ Method, which teaches people to negotiate effectively with themselves in order to deal successfully with other people. Her first book, based on her methodology, is a *New York Times* best seller. Erica is Co-Founder and President of *Mobius Executive Leadership*, where she works with Fortune 500 companies to help senior executives develop their leadership capabilities.

**Q** You've gone to school at some of our greatest institutions and you have a very strong presence in the marketplace. What would you say has been your mighty cause? What is it that has gotten you to where you are?

What a lovely question. I've chosen to stand on a bridge – or create a bridge and stand on it – between very senior business leaders and the universe of self-discovery and self-transformation. This universe has many streams including philosophy, neuroscience, psychology, a range of wisdom traditions, many different contemplative practices, because there's an enormous need in the business world for people to figure out what makes them tick, how to understand themselves on the inside.

There's an incredible wealth of wisdom in the personal development world but those two worlds [business and personal development] really don't meet.

Most senior leaders don't go to retreats. They don't see a therapist unless their marriage is in trouble. They don't read self-help books. They don't know how to access a lot of that wisdom. And I have had one foot in each of those worlds for most of my life. So I feel called to tap into that body of wisdom and serve as a translator.

Even if I gave some of my favorite [personal development] books to my clients, they wouldn't understand them because the books aren't written in a language that resonates with their life experience. So I see myself as translating in a lot of ways so that people who are making enormously important decisions that impact the lives of millions of people can do so from a place of self-understanding and centeredness and become more grounded in their leadership. That's my sense of purpose.

And the impact that I see myself having is quite moving, actually. I see very senior leaders coming from some of the most traditional institutions in the world taking enormous risks to open up, to be vulnerable with each

**WINNING FROM WITHIN: SELECTED WRITINGS**  
 by Mobius President and Co-Founder, Erica Ariel Fox

other, to experiment with different learning modalities in the hopes of polishing the stone of their own hearts, of their own deeper wisdom. And then when they do it they are so joyful and so liberated and so much more powerful as leaders. Watching those results happen over and over fuels me to keep going.

These highly successful people who run large

companies that affect the lives of millions of people, how do you reach them? What is it that they seem to be looking for? Or what are they responding to when they hear it from you?

These are professionals who are far along in their career – they’re not high potentials, they are CEOs leading large initiatives. They’ve been around the block. They’ve done the conventional leadership programs. They’ve gone to executive education workshops at fancy universities for a week. They’ve done all of that and nonetheless because of the pace of change today, because of the level of disruption, these people are telling me: “I used to wonder if my job would still be here in five years and now I wonder if my industry will be here in five years...”

So there’s a high level of uncertainty and fear and the sense of “I’m just in over my head. I can barely cope with what I’m trying to do and there’s this cloud hovering over me all of the time knowing I can predict nothing. I can control nothing. Even though I learned command and control what I see now is that actually I control nothing. And I don’t know – I’m spinning.”


This is the kind of thing they say in private corners: “I don’t know what the hell is going on and I don’t feel confident anymore in what I had learned before that worked before. It doesn’t work now and it’s certainly not going to work in the future because of the massive disruption in the world.” They’re asking: “Who out there has something to give me that would enable me to cope and eventually thrive and lead in the new world which we’re in already?”

**Q How do you speak about your value proposition so that they will want to give it a chance?**

In a world that is re-inventing itself, you can’t stand still. You need to re-invent yourself, too. Otherwise you’ll get left behind. If you invest in your capability as a leader, dig deep, and find resources for flexibility, adaptability, and balance that you’ll need to succeed in the new world.

And the key is that the fundamental resource that you can count on, that you’re going to have to draw on, lives inside of you. It’s your capacity, your inner wisdom,

## Your Inner Negotiators




**DREAMER**  
Possibilities




**Lookout**  
Perception



**THINKER**  
Perspectives




**Captain**  
Presence



**LOVER**  
People



**Voyager**  
Path



**WARRIOR**  
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your inner source for making wise decisions in a very uncertain, constantly changing, ambiguous environment.

Whatever you've learned until now is not going to be enough for you to lead in that environment. So what you can do is come spend a week with us, and using "winning from within" methodology, develop your capacities to deal with complexity, to deal with uncertainties, to deal with constant change. We can teach people how to find the resources within themselves that can help them thrive in a changing world.

I've heard you say people can go through life on autopilot, but these people know that they can't because they're hitting walls. They're asking, "If I want to be really purposeful and conscious and not on autopilot, what would that look like?" And we say, "Great, come spend a week with us and when you leave you will understand how to lead with your eyes open, not on autopilot."

**Q So do you have a set of provocations? How would you describe at a high level the full-immersion week? Is it a kind of a simulation that people enter?**

It's very much of a path, actually, based on Joseph Campbell's "Hero's Journey." There's a period of arriving at the beginning. They need to leave the "ordinary world." We tell them, "Today and tomorrow we're just 'arriving' because you have to switch gears from your day-to-day mind of answering emails, doing tasks, being in touch with people." We give them a day or so to really let that go quiet.

We have other tools for helping people to "cross the threshold," like not allowing phone calls or emailing while they're at the program. We're in touch with all of their assistants and they can be reached in an emergency. But we say to them, "Think about the thousands of people who depend on you. What do you owe them more than committing to be the best possible leader you can be? You're investing in being the best possible CEO. And so for a few days you're not answering their emails. Isn't that worth it?"

There's also no alcohol, which departs from their "ordinary world" experience of meeting at the bar to hang out in the evenings. There are no phones. There's

no distraction, no numbing yourself out. There's just being with yourself. And by the end people don't want to turn their phones back on.

In the core of the experience is what Campbell called "initiation" or "transformation." So that period in the middle can feel messy. We hold up a mirror to people so they can see their own patterns of behavior, emotion, and thought that have been with them for decades. Our job is to help them see those things, name them, see how they get in their own way. That can be painful and, of course, stormy, because we're engaging with people's shadow material.

We use Jungian archetypes to support the clients to re-write their personal myths, to discover an expanded story of who they are and who they can become. At this point they move into the exhilaration of working through those things and practicing new ways of seeing, new ways of behaving. What if you thought about it totally differently? Again – one of your sweet spots, Kathy – what if you had a totally different view for thinking and seeing and noticing and naming and you understood you could relate to people in a completely different way? What if you could access all the different parts of you, and you related to them in ways that support, rather than thwart, your vision for your life?

By the time they're ready to cross the threshold back to the ordinary world, they are visibly changed, more free, more compassionate, more centered. And without a doubt they have gained rewards to bring back with them.

I think what is different about what we're doing is that a lot of leadership courses operate on a level of knowledge and skills: "We're going to give you some models and frameworks and practice behavior and maybe give a nod to self-awareness," they say. But they never define "the self," and they never explain what they mean by "awareness."

Our methodology starts with giving people a map of the self with seven points. We use archetypes so people can drop easily into the universal energy of these parts of who they are. Four points on the map are parts of the self that operate in the world – the Dreamer, Lover, Thinker, and Warrior – and three more parts that operate in yourself – the Lookout, Captain, and Voyager.

In the program we help people to really feel all of those parts, to experience it all first-hand, inside themselves.

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by Mobius President and Co-Founder, Erica Ariel Fox

That’s how they really come alive. That’s how they’re going to thrive in a VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity) world, by actually experiencing everything that’s already going on inside them anyway. In some of the courses we distinguish the small “s” of the smaller self from the big “S” of the larger “Self.” We follow each group and go where they want to go.

Then at the end we resurface and prepare people for “The Return.” They’re going back to work. They’re going back to their families who haven’t been in this immersion. So there is a part at the end of getting ready to return to the ordinary world. It’s a deep immersion that provides a whole new way of seeing themselves and the world around them. Many people find the experience life-changing. They do need some guidance on how to re-enter their day-to-day lives.





I felt so clearly called to it that although there were naysayers I just didn’t listen to them. And there’s an upside and a downside to that.

My background is in conflict resolution and that was my focus. That’s what I teach at Harvard Law School. And between 2000 and 2001 both of my parents passed away. And then September 11, 2001 happened. So I felt from a personal perspective, and also vocationally, an enormous wakeup call. There was my own mortality but also the feeling of what are we missing? If people are just flying planes into buildings killing thousands of people, we’re missing something in conflict resolution. Something big.

I took a year off after my father passed away. I was 31 years old, an early time to say I’m going to step out and think about what my unique purpose is, what’s my contribution, what’s my call. And that’s when I began to sense this opportunity to create this bridge between these worlds.

Against extreme odds I created a center at Harvard looking at this intersection of mindfulness, wisdom traditions, and philosophy with contemporary leadership, negotiation, and conflict theory. In time we brought in neuroscience, too. I think it came together partially

**Q When you first started this work, did you have any self-doubt? Were there any people saying to you, “Are you crazy? This doesn’t sound like it’s going to fly.”**

The Big Four	 DREAMER	 THINKER	 LOVER	 WARRIOR
	<b>Strength</b>	Creativity	Clarity	Compassion
<b>Provides</b>	Direction	Reflection	Connection	Protection
<b>Power Source</b>	Intuition	Reason	Emotion	Willpower
<b>Skills for</b>	Innovation	Analysis	Relationship	Accomplishment
<b>Business Analogy</b>	CEO	CFO or General Counsel	CHRO	COO

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because my mentor at the law school felt bad for me, thinking “Poor Erica, she’s been through so much and if she wants to do this, great.” I think he was being kind, hoping this was a little hobby that would make me happy. He probably thought it wouldn’t go anywhere, since this was early days when even “mindfulness” sounded way out there to a lot of people.

With his blessing and support from other faculty, we launched the Harvard Negotiation Insight Initiative (HNII), which I then led and grew over five years. The program gained international attention, developed compelling new theories, and established a global community of professional seekers. I had found my place.

However, that project didn’t end well. And I think I should have been able to anticipate that doing something so unconventional at such a traditional place would have required more nuance – my situation was more delicate than I noticed. I was just riding high. I had a passion and a vision and I wasn’t paying attention to the optics.

We taught meditation, so I was having lawyers and judges and executives sitting on the floor at Harvard Law School. Actually, I didn’t have people sitting on the floor, I had them sitting on very expensive meditation cushions, and those are not the same thing. But to the eyes of a person who is used to a more traditional world, it’s kind of shocking to think one of their faculty is having people come and then sit on the floor. So I should have had more caution, but I was really a little blinded by my dream to be honest.

**Q Well, in this part of your story you are really talking about three phases of the heroic journey all at once. You’re talking about the Resistance that you didn’t have and about the Call that so inspired you, not in a way of hubris or any self-aggrandizement, but true passion. You’re also talking about how you Crossed the Threshold so that you could realize that dream.**

Well, to be fair, Kathy, I think it was largely passion along with a significant dose of self-aggrandizement.

I do feel when I look back that I was going to be the person who is going to do this. Not because I wanted

people to think I was great. It wasn’t like I wanted people to know Erica did this. It wasn’t the Fox Center for Conflict Resolution. But I do think I have much more humility now.

I have much more humility now that I’m aiming to help. I’m aiming to serve. I’m one of many teachers in the world who are trying to bring about this evolution with senior leaders. I’m not the only person. I’m probably not the best person.

I’m one of many people doing something that I do think is quite important and I do think I’m good at it and I’m very able to help people. But at that time I think I felt like I am THE person to do this, and that wasn’t entirely healthy.

**Q I would call it the same thing many of your CEOs probably bring with them: dogged determination and self-reliance. The thinking that: If not me, who? If not now, when? And that actually does propel many very important innovations, disruptions. I think you are a disruptive positive force.**

**And so, yes, early on being able to muster the courage, the energy, the foresight, it can have that shadow or negative edge. But it looks like you Crossed the Threshold, right? You overcame some kind of Resistance. You just put it in time out and you Crossed the Threshold.**

It actually didn’t take courage. People would say to me all of the time, “Wow, you’re so courageous. I mean you’re so out there. What you’re doing is so unconventional.” But at the time it was the fuel of feeling truly called. It didn’t feel scary. It didn’t feel brave. It felt like, I have identified that this is the reason I came to this earth. This is my life purpose, my unique contribution. I’m the person – I was born to do this and I’m going to do it and it wasn’t scary.

I didn’t feel courageous. I just felt like clearly this is my life path and purpose so let’s do it. And it was a joy. It was absolutely a joy and I didn’t feel scared. I wish I had felt a little more scared but I really didn’t. I felt like I’m called to do this and I’m doing it. And I agree with you I think a lot of leaders feel like that. ■

WINNING FROM WITHIN: SELECTED WRITINGS  
by Mobius President and Co-Founder, Erica Ariel Fox

 fluencer

# The Future of Leadership: In the Age of Disruption, Disrupt Yourself

This piece originally appeared on LinkedIn at <https://www.linkedin.com/in/ericaarielfox>



I'm at the hospital today. Testing the density of my bones. Again.

Lots of people grapple with the loss of bone density later in life, typically after 75 years of age. That's osteoporosis. Trouble is, I'm only 46.

Turns out I was born with a genetic condition akin to osteoporosis, a related but less severe form of bone density loss. So, like my older counterparts, my skeletal integrity is compromised. That means my bones are prone to fracture with even very little pressure. When the condition erupts into a "bone crisis," I can break a bone during routine activities, like walking down the hallway, or opening a bottle. Thankfully this extreme kind of bone crisis happened only once in my life. And it's unlikely to happen again, because I'm now on medicine that's quite good at preventing such unpleasantness.

Still, here I am, laying on a scanning machine at Massachusetts General Hospital. A place I've visited many times before. And will again. Because inner fragility is serious business.

## Leaders are Fragile, Too

My "industry" is leadership, and the state of leaders today is like the state of my skeleton, without the medical diagnosis. Their inner stability is compromised, leaving them vulnerable to crack under pressure. While the world falls apart around them, the internal structures of many leaders is dangerously fragile. Strong bones provide support inside the body. Leaders also need a strong internal constitution to keep them going. That's why the most frequent advice I give to leaders is this: *You win in the new game of leadership by strengthening what's inside of you.*

Paradoxically, inner strength for leaders in the new world requires flexibility and adaptability, not inelasticity. To stay with our metaphor, bone formation

doesn't create unyielding rigidity. Bone is a living tissue, constantly renewed by cells that break down and cells that replace them. Reinvention is what healthy insides do. In the physical body, and in individual leaders, too.

*The No. 1 imperative in my industry today is to learn the inner path of leadership, what I've called "winning from within."*

That means that as the world transforms all around you, you need to change, too. Think about it. Uber is upending taxis. Hotels lose ground daily to Airbnb. Google threatens to replace everyone, even automakers if they scale the self-driving car. What happens to industries that fail to innovate in these times?

To stay competitive and thrive in today's world, companies need to release expectations from the past. To open themselves to entirely new mindsets about what their brand means. To let their very identity evolve. *The same is true for you.* At the core of my work with people is helping them to ask "who am I?" and "who can I become?" Then together we use "winning from within" methodology to discover new answers.

## Re-build your inner order

*In the Age of Disruption, the new game requires leaders to disrupt their inner order. As the world reinvents itself, the only way to win is to reinvent yourself, too.*

I advise CEOs to embrace this principle: no business can stay a leader in its field without reinvention, and the same is true of individual leaders. If you continue to function according to past expectations, you will fail.

The inner "order" or "structure" I'm talking about is the story you tell yourself about who you are. Your personal myth. In roles of influence, that story becomes your leadership myth as well. In my work with top teams, I've called each leader a "Voyager," because, to paraphrase Deepak Chopra, your life is not *like* a quest;

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it is a quest. Releasing old myths that no longer serve you, and replacing them with a new, more expansive story about who you are, is the process of “reinventing” yourself.

Consider two leaders with powerful personal myths. The first is Steve Jobs, who throughout his life and career maintained a singular leadership identity. He was a genius innovator, driven entrepreneur, severely lacking in people skills. Every movie you see or book you read about Jobs will paint you that picture.

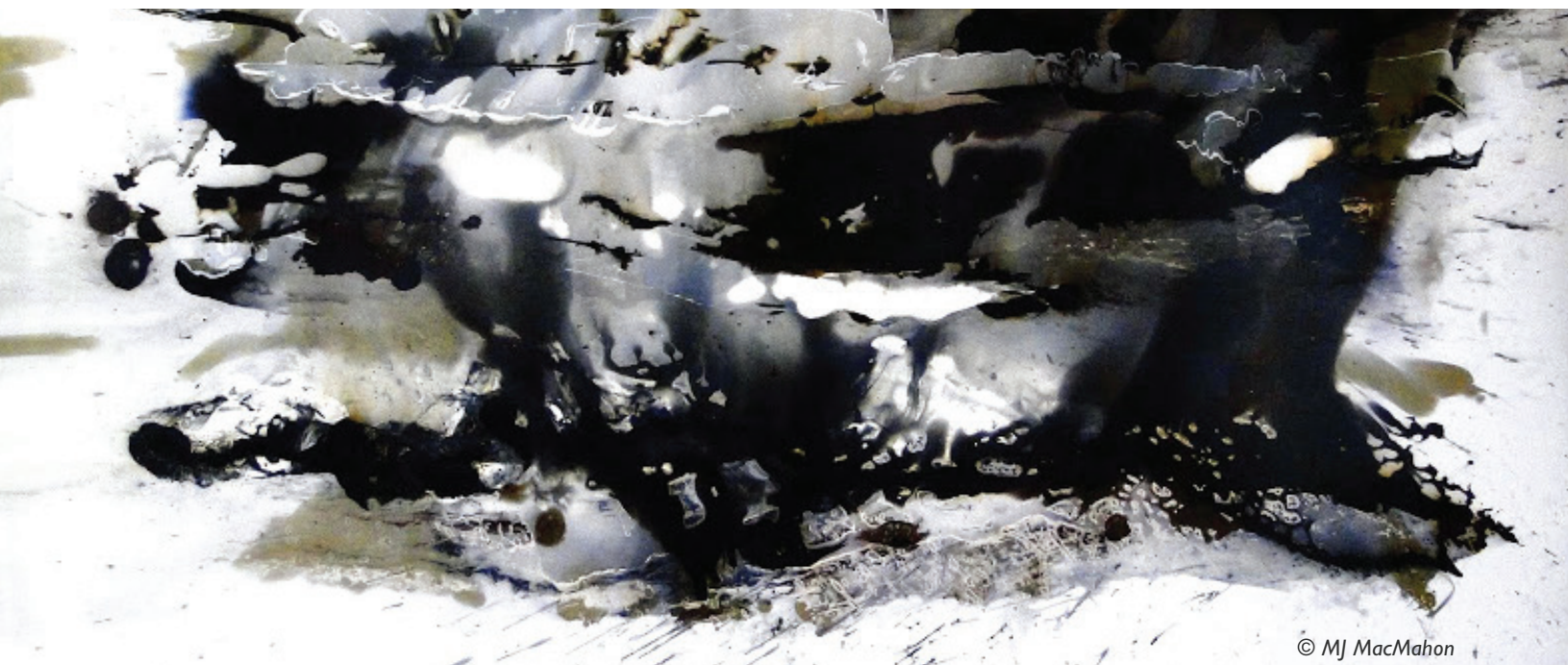
Contrast that with Angela Merkel. For a long time she was the Iron Lady, insisting on austerity, holding the tough line with Greece. She seemed well on her way to joining the leadership myth lineage of Margaret Thatcher and Golda Meir. Then, the summer of 2015 brought epic human migration. Tens of thousands of people in motion, heading straight for the European continent.

In this crisis, a new Angela Merkel appeared. A leader of compassion. Calling on her neighbors to take emergency action as a duty of care for fellow human beings in distress. Where was the cold-hearted rationalist? The tough negotiator holding her ground over the Eurozone? In this moment, Angela Merkel allowed her leadership myth to evolve. To expand. She is still a fighter, strong and determined. But she became a humanitarian, too.

Revising your personal myth fortifies your inner structure to thrive in a new environment. In my work with senior leaders, I’ve found that understanding *all of who they are* – the revealed parts and the concealed parts – provides that powerful inner lattice to keep them on their feet, while at the same time allowing new parts of them to emerge.

This process is not without risk. Chancellor Merkel recently lost ground to the AfD party, whose platform opposed her on refugees. Yet in the end, all real leadership – like life – involves risk. In today’s world, the bigger risk is refusing to evolve. As “Voyagers” we stand on more solid ground when we allow ourselves to grow. Then we can respond to the challenges of the rapidly changing world in new, creative ways.

Unless we practice this inner innovation, human beings see what we expect to see, think what we expect to think, feel what we expect to feel, and do what we always do. But holding tight to expectations, built on the inner structure of our past, we are too fragile. We will break, and fall. In these times of massive change, we need leaders who embrace the complexity and emerging possibility of the world, and meet it with the full power of the complexity and emerging possibility within themselves. That is the disruption and reinvention “from within” that will take us into the future. ■



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# Trump Trumpets Total Disregard for Values in Leadership

This piece originally appeared on LinkedIn at <https://www.linkedin.com/in/ericaarielfox>

I happen to be in Miami this week, so I watched last night's Republican debate with a special "local" interest. Like many people, I've been shocked when Donald Trump says something that disregards the basic dignity of a large group of human beings. A dazzling new low for Presidential politics. Yet as a leadership adviser to C-suite executives, I was still taken aback last night. Like his previous racist, sexist, triumphalist, and isolationist comments, his message about values in business leadership last night was dead wrong.

In discussing the H-1B visa program, Trump said without ambivalence that the program he's used for years is "very, very bad for workers" and "shouldn't be allowed." Why then does he use it? He told us last night in no uncertain terms, because "I'm a businessman, and I have to do what I have to do."

No, Mr. Trump. That is not how good business works. It's not how genuine leadership works. And it is far, far from a vision for how to make America "great again."

On the contrary, it reinforces the worst stereotypes of business tycoons who are out for themselves and nothing else. Perhaps Mr. Trump didn't get the memo on Corporate Social Responsibility? Or the nearly universal evolution from corporate "diversity" programs to the broader, more inclusive, "diversity and inclusion" programs? Perhaps he missed the entire movement on the "triple bottom line?" He definitely missed the protocol that people running for President of the United States shouldn't do things they personally believe are bad for Americans because, well, they can.

**Here's the bottom line: business today is not just about the bottom line. Great leaders don't take action they believe is wrong just because it's legal. Like command-and-control, that's an old style of leadership, and a retired mindset of business, whose time has come and gone.**

## Great CEOs Deliver Shareholder Value with Values

As a portrait in contrast, consider the leadership of Aetna's CEO, Mark Bertolini, who raised the wages of his lowest-paid workers above the minimum wage. Bertolini had learned that many of his low-wage workers were on public assistance, such as food stamps, or Medicaid for their children. In an interview last year, Bertolini said he was shocked "that we as a thriving organization, as a successful company, a Fortune 100 company, should have people that were living like that among the ranks of our employees."

The CEO of one of America's largest health insurance companies said he saw a potential economic upside, but his main motive was to fix something he saw as plainly unfair. As he told the interviewer, "for us it is as much – probably, for me personally, more – a moral argument than it is a financial one."

While Bertolini is outstanding in his leadership, he is not alone. Think of Paul Polman, CEO of Unilever, who consistently takes a stand for the duty of big business to help tackle the world's most pressing challenges. He has vowed to prove, and has demonstrated, that this stance doesn't compromise Unilever's competitiveness or performance. Or Pepsi CEO Indra Nooyi, who boldly spoke out against the contribution of her own industry, and her company, to the public health epidemic of obesity. Her initiatives to sell healthier snacks reflect her sense of where her market is going, to be sure. But the scale of reducing sugar, sodium, and saturated fats in her products is not only because millennials reject them. She's spoken eloquently about why people running a business need to consider their impact on society. In a dialogue at a Fortune's Most Powerful Women Conference she said the global economic meltdown happened because "capitalism lost its conscience." She gave Pepsi the motto "performance with purpose," and she means it.

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by Mobius President and Co-Founder, Erica Ariel Fox

### What Business Leaders Actually “Have To Do”

Last night Donald Trump boasted many times that he’s the best candidate to fix laws that hurt workers because he’s used them for years to exploit workers. So he knows them better than anyone. Trump believes this moral relativism is “a great deal” because it’s legal. Because he’s a businessman.

Not so fast.

I spend a lot of time with business people who value following the law. But fulfilling this requirement

is not their only value. My clients lead some of the most successful global businesses on earth. And they would tell you what I’m telling you: leadership comes with responsibility, to create value while leading with values. Your mandate is to deliver performance for your shareholders, and the society in which you live and lead is a shareholder. You should not do things you see as “very, very bad” because you can. Indeed, this approach is actually what business leaders “have to do.” ■

 influencer

## VW’s Losing Mindset About Winning

This piece originally appeared on LinkedIn at <https://www.linkedin.com/in/ericarielfox>

All of our actions reflect the mindset behind them. The way we think and feel, and how we see the world, drive our behavior. This axiom is inescapable.

The bad news for Volkswagen is that a limited mindset, one that’s distorted or terribly out-of-touch, can point people to do things they absolutely shouldn’t do.

The good news, for all of us, is that leaders can update their mindsets, including their understanding of “winning.” When they do that, they foster entirely different choices by the people who work for them. In turn, they create very different results.

### Winning By Any Means Necessary

No matter how you slice it, the consequences for VW of its malignant behavior are disastrous: financially, legally, politically, or morally. They’re topping Enron for the worst case of corporate fraud in recent memory, in part because their strategy had so many scandalous elements.

It’s hard enough to imagine how they embraced a scheme to trick US emissions tests while pouring pollutants of up to 40 times the legal limit into the air. It strains the imagination to the breaking point that all the while, their marketing campaign promoted them as the “green” car with “Clean Diesel.”

### What on earth were they thinking??

In short, they wanted to win. That’s a fairly standard goal for a business, of course. And a good one. But how you define “winning” makes all the difference in how your people work to achieve it.

In VW’s case, the mindset around winning was an outdated, narrow understanding of business success. They wanted to best Toyota as the leading carmaker in the world. To do that, they needed to penetrate the American market. They did both. Indeed, last year was VW’s most profitable. They made it to number one, with short-term profit maximization achieved. According to that mindset, they won.

In the end, this is a Pyrrhic victory for the ages: a win inflicting so much harm on the victor that it’s actually a defeat. Lawsuits, penalties, a shattered reputation, criminal charges, a CEO resigned in shame, you name it.

And the damage is hardly reserved for them alone. By disregarding the harm their “win” could bring to others, leaders at VW wrought havoc all around them. In addition to the body blows to the company itself, the damaging ripple effects of their “winning strategy” will be measurable for years. Perhaps worst of all in the health and welfare of the air-breathing public.

The real scorecard brings us to a very different

### WINNING FROM WITHIN: SELECTED WRITINGS

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conclusion: “Winning By Any Means Necessary” is a mindset whose time has come – and gone.

#### Changing Behavior Requires Changing Mindsets

For many of us, it’s hard to digest the scale of this betrayal. We can’t believe VW would violate US laws in such an extreme and intentional way. We can’t stomach their knowingly pumping toxins into the atmosphere while the rest of the world organizes to tackle climate change. We can’t make sense of their seeming appreciation of customer loyalty while they were secretly violating that trust in the most egregious and nefarious way.

There is a hard truth at the root of this mystery. At the end of the day, there is no compliance rule, no regulation, and even no moral imperative, that can hold if the mindset in place is not supporting it. That explains at least part of what went so very wrong here.

This principle also tells us something about what needs to change, both in VW and in many businesses that share their mindset about winning. It’s not accomplished by replacing the CEO. It’s not done by inflicting the pain of a slashed stock price. The change we need to prevent something like this from happening again comes from a transformation in the mindset of leaders, who then embed their new values and worldview throughout the organization.

Leading wisely and living well requires a different understanding of what it means to win. A mindset that says successful leaders tap into something bigger than

themselves and take honorable action that considers the common good. In this worldview, winning means creating results that are profitable and sustainable, attained through fair play. It means extending your circle of concern beyond yourself or just those immediately around you, to a felt sense of broad, mutual responsibility to care about each other’s safety and well-being. In this mindset, breaking laws to dump poison into the air would make no sense, because we’d understand that since we are part of nature, doing catastrophic damage to our environment would be far, far from “winning.”

VW's appalling behavior reveals a disturbing mindset underneath. Any business with a similar, outdated set of values around winning should heed their warning call. You can set your culture in the right direction by taking a hard look at the beliefs that drive your executive decisions and collective action. Then do the real work of transforming problematic mindsets and embedding new ones. This guides you toward a kind of winning that is the true measure of success. ■

**ERICA ARIEL FOX** is the President and Co-Founder of Mobius Executive Leadership. She is a leadership expert and the *New York Times* Best-selling author of *Winning From Within: A Breakthrough Method for Leading, Living, and Lasting Change*. She advises executives and other senior leaders on personal and organizational transformation.

“You are an aperture through which  
the universe is looking at and exploring itself.”

– Alan Watts



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# VUCA, Mindfulness, and Beyond

By Mobius Transformational Leadership Faculty Member, Nicholas Janni

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## Overview

*The value of mindfulness is well documented and supported by a rapidly growing body of research and neuroscience. In this paper I will write about how and why mindfulness is so important and what lies beyond it.*

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### I. VUCA and mindfulness

The organizational world has coined the term VUCA to describe the increasingly challenging environments in which we operate. VUCA – volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity.

Almost all the senior leaders I work with worldwide are experiencing unprecedented levels of stress in these challenges, and I think the main reason for this is quite simple.

Starting in our early years of education the left-brain, rational/analytical/linear part of us is given increasing prominence until, for the great majority of executives and organizations, it becomes the predominant way of navigating the world.

As Einstein so presciently said:

*“The rational mind is a faithful servant, the intuitive mind is a sacred gift. We have created a society which honours the servant and has forgotten the gift.”*

The servant has "served" very well indeed, but in the face of VUCA our rational mind, with its inbuilt need to control and structure, feels increasingly helpless, and this is not a pleasant experience. The part of us that loves clarity and certainty prefers to make things as predictable as possible, and above all wants to feel in control. This is like living on an island in the middle of a torrential river that is bursting all its riverbanks.

So, do we flounder helplessly and painfully as we desperately try to shore up the riverbanks, or is there a new possibility, we might even say a new necessity? Might it be possible to find some kind of stillness at the center of the storm?

Approximately 2,500 years ago humans made an important discovery. We found that through paying attention in a more deliberate and practiced way, deeper states of consciousness could be awakened.

Every culture throughout recorded history has developed contemplative practices that incorporate this discovery. The inner sanctums of these traditions have always attracted only a very small minority of devotees, as worldly interests remain far more compelling. Yet, here we are in 2016 witnessing a quite unprecedented uptake of mindfulness and meditation practices, right at the heart of our business, health and education sectors. Practices that five years ago would have been considered marginal, insubstantial and quite possibly irrelevant have found their way into mainstream daily life.

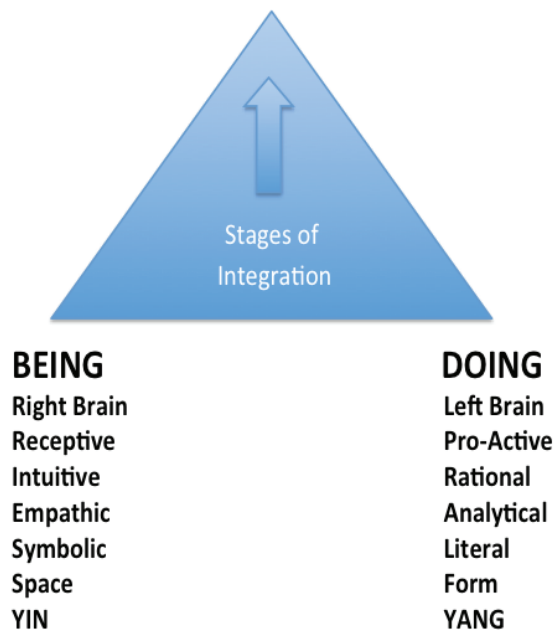
One thing is certain – the rational mind alone will never be the vehicle that takes us into a deeper stillness. This does not lie within its competency sphere. We need a bigger picture of who we are.

We have two fundamentally different yet complimentary sides or modalities within us. I call them Being and Doing. Each of these has a series of capacities and competencies.

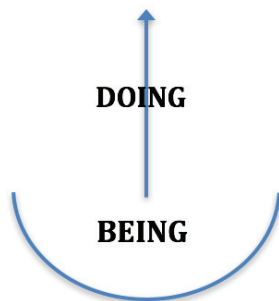
In every organizational group I work with there is clear agreement, and usually a painful groan of recognition about the fact that the Doing modality is massively dominant. As previously noted, in the VUCA world this brings terrible stress.

The next step is an acceptance that it would be much better to be able to function at the top of the triangle, in a high performing integration of the two modalities.

# HIGH PERFORMANCE LEADERSHIP



At the top of the triangle we find that, not only are Doing and Being no longer in an either/or scenario, but rather in something that looks like this:



That is to say – our optimum possibilities arise when *all of our Doing* comes out of an *inner base of Being*. The deepening of this possibility in every moment is a lifelong path of development towards mastery.

In *The Master and his Emissary*, his landmark book on right and left hemisphere brain function, Oxford University professor Iain McGilchrist goes so far as to say:

*“The relationship between the two hemispheres does not appear to be symmetrical, in that the left hemisphere is ultimately dependent on, one might almost say parasitic on, the right, though it seems to have no awareness of this fact.”*

This is exactly where the importance of mindfulness becomes apparent as we look for that stillness, that inner balance of the modalities, in the centre of the storm.

Mindfulness at its best has two vitally important effects. The first is that, through the simple and precise act of paying attention, the tyranny of the Doing modality starts to loosen its grip on us and we start to experience an interior *spaciousness*. The importance of this can hardly be overstated, for as long as we are dominated by Doing, we live in a relatively small part of ourselves, with a sense of being consumed by the world around us, and very little room to maneuver or breathe (metaphorically and literally).

The second vital effect of mindfulness is that it opens the Being side of the triangle. This happens in a fascinatingly concrete way. In one of the many research experiments reported by Iain McGilchrist a subject was temporarily placed in 100% left brain function and the right brain hemisphere shut down. At this point the subject looked at his hand and said: “whose hand is that?” This shows us that the Doing part of us *does not experience being embodied*. This is evident in any downtown gym, where you see people doing things to their body without necessarily feeling their body from the inside, even sitting on an exercise bike while responding to emails.

In the vitality of early childhood we were completely embodied, meaning that each second of life was an intensely physical experience. For many good reasons we had to reduce this intensity, and the most effective way to do this was to tense our body and restrict our breathing. These habits get embedded to the point where as adults we walk through each day with varying degrees of physical numbness. And therefore, with increasingly little access to the Being modalities of reflective thinking, intuition, and sensory and empathic connectedness.

The first and arguably most important practice of mindfulness is to bring our attention fully back into our body. As we do this over and over again, we start with a fairly basic sense of our overall posture, but then we notice more and more subtle levels of constantly changing physical sensations. It is as if our screen of awareness changes to HD, to a much higher resolution.

This, in combination with inner spaciousness, creates access to a new dimension of ourselves, and then,

**“Our optimum possibilities arise when *all of our Doing* comes out of an *inner base of Being*. The deepening of this possibility in every moment is a lifelong path of development towards mastery.”**

and only then we are on the developmental path of integrating Doing and Being. And the inner sensing of the body and more open breathing becomes one of the key practices that both keeps us in the zone of Doing and based in Being.

We start to walk through our days with a different kind of Presence, and all the well-documented benefits of mindfulness become more available to us – ease, calm, improved relationships, better decision-making, better sleep, and so on.

Above all, we develop a new kind of inner resilience in the face of VUCA, an egoic structure that has grown in what it can hold, and therefore in which knowing and unknowing, certainty and ambiguity co-exist much more comfortably. At best, as many people I work with report, we get far more done, in far less time, with far less effort.

## **II. What comes next, or “beyond the business school”**

In the 1970/80s self-development movement a phrase was coined that went something like: “you have to become a somebody before you can become a nobody.”

I meet an increasing number of very successful senior executive “somebodies” who have reached an interesting and challenging threshold in their life. This is typically characterized by a falling away of meaning and motivation, and a disquieting sense of emptiness, different from the spaciousness previously referred to. A gnawing feeling that something is missing, that there is something more than being a successful somebody, even one whose ego self may have figured out a good “sense of purpose” and was leading what felt like a satisfying, successful life.

At this time in life, beautifully articulated by Carl Jung amongst others, there is a turning inward towards what we might call *soul* needs and matters of the *spirit*.

In our post-modern, rational culture many people have understandably rejected the trappings of religion precisely because of its pre-modern, magical and seemingly childish frameworks. And yet in so doing I suggest that we may have thrown the baby out with the bathwater, leaving us in a spiritual wasteland, estranged from experiences of deeper connectedness, wonder and awe.

To quote Einstein again:

*“The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and all science. He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer pause to wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead: his eyes are closed.”*

Building a larger egoic structure to deal with VUCA, and the practice of mindfulness, essential as they are, do not inherently “open our eyes,” because the very thing we have built may be exactly part of what is keeping our eyes closed. This is a sobering realization, and at this point in life new questions of a somewhat different order arise. Questions such as:

- Where is the place for the transcendent or the sacred in my life?
- What is my true gift to life?
- How do I step into a deeper unknowing?
- Where is the place of wonder in my life?
- To what am I most truly devoted?
- What happens when I open to what I have always excluded?

And crucially, given our self-centred, unyielding culture:

- Can I surrender? Can I bow to something that is greater than myself?

Our post-modern culture mostly has little time for or sensitivity to these questions, responding with anything from humour about ‘the midlife crisis’ through to medication for depression, both of which miss by a

long way the profound opportunity that this threshold brings. In my experience, business schools have little to say about it, nor do any of the numerous business books I have read about mindfulness.

This latter absence is significant because the original purpose of mindfulness practice has been largely forgotten. The original practice was designed to bring people to deeper and deeper layers of transpersonal consciousness beyond their ego. It just so happens that the practice has a multitude of other lesser yet valuable benefits, as are well noted. It is itself a reflection of the controlling mechanisms of our ego structures that the business world in particular has finally gladly embraced the lesser benefits, while somehow forgetting the much higher purpose of the practice.

In this stage a different order of work is needed. The first requirement is to create a strong enough container – almost always with the help of a mentor or coach, or in the company of a group dedicated to such matters – in which the full composition of what is happening, including all its discomfort, can be unconditionally included and felt rather than fixed or rationalized. The creation of this kind of container is deeply skilful work, and goes far beyond the realms of most corporate coaching.

Then we can address the two kinds of tensions or “pull” that are typically emerging. Both need to be welcomed and precisely discerned.

The first tension is the pull of the past. Here, as the healthy ego structure we built in order to become a “somebody” starts to soften, unintegrated parts of our early life call for attention. We meet the places in us where our fundamental needs to be received, and for nurturing and belonging, were inevitably not fully met. As we allow these places in us to be felt – a process that needs deeply skilful and sensitive guidance – we also often see how aspects of the “somebody” we built were subtly and necessarily based around the exclusion of these painful parts.

This work – which at its core is a highly attuned *emotional/energetic* rather than analytical process – can bring us to a much deeper level of vulnerability, which in turn allows our heart to melt and new sensibilities of compassion, connectedness and humility to flower.

The second tension is the pull of higher levels of consciousness. If mindfulness brought us to a first level of spaciousness, here the call of an entirely different

“As long as we are dominated by Doing, we live in a relatively small part of ourselves, with a sense of being consumed by the world around us, and very little room to maneuver or breathe (metaphorically and literally).”



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**“We develop a new kind of inner resilience in the face of VUCA, an egoic structure that has grown in what it can hold, and therefore in which knowing and unknowing, certainty and ambiguity co-exist much more comfortably.”**

level of Emptiness awaits us. Art, Nature and Silence become more and more essential gateways, as the need for any kind of rational certainty recedes further into the background.

In traditional cultures people used to recognize this new calling and retire into the forest, literally or metaphorically, for a period of contemplation of undetermined length. Undetermined, because in matters of the soul, and of spirit, our wish to be in control no longer has a place.

A burning question for me is how can we create the spaces and the cultures in which that kind of contemplation can be honoured, without having to “leave the world”? And how might an entirely new kind of leadership emerge from those spaces in which our individualistic identity melts into a larger connectedness, and a more natural sense of stewardship and service?

Put in another way – in our secular world, how might we create the equivalent of a sacred Temple space for leaders?

I am reminded of the times in my former career as a theatre director when an actor would come to me with a text and the question “I don’t know what to do with this speech.” To which my response was along the lines of “What will be much more interesting is what the speech will *do with you.*”

And indeed, when one actor or, even better, a group of actors together could surrender themselves in the way all great artists and mystics understand, time and time again something of immense, extraordinary power occurred. The rehearsal room was transformed, and the energy flowing through the group became so strong that one felt the roof might lift off. Intense emotions and vivid worlds streamed through the actors as if from nowhere, and we were all bathed in a Presence in the face of which we could only bow and feel deep gratitude and humility.

*“An artist has to be ravished or there is no art ... the container has to be strong and at the same time very flexible ... true artists don’t imagine their egos created the work of art. It came through them; they were receptive.”*

– Marion Woodman: “Conscious Femininity”

Keith Jarrett, one of the greatest contemporary jazz musicians expresses it thus:

*I wish there were a way to make “I don’t know” a positive thing, which it isn’t in our society. We feel that we need to “know” certain things, and we substitute that quest for the actual experience of things in all its complexity. When I play pure improvisation, any kind of intellectual handles are inappropriate because they get in the way of letting the river move where it’s supposed to move.*

*To do an improvised concert – this includes the La Scala concert and every other time I walk on the stage and play from zero – I need to find a way to start the journey without creating the subject matter in my mind. In other words, I cannot have a melody or a motif in my head, because those things will protrude into the fabric. They will be too prominent and make the music seem like a solid object rather than a flowing process. I have to not play what’s in my ears, if there’s something in my ears. I have to find a way for my hands to start the concert without me.*

And Carlos Santana, another great contemporary musician:

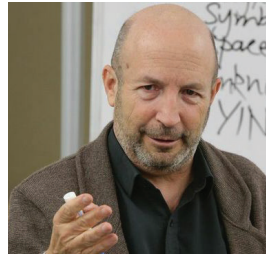
*As Miles Davis would say, “you just shut up”. Tell your mind to shut up. Turn off the TV, turn off the radio, and you start hearing this blend of voices, angels, demons and all of a sudden they become one note, one voice, one melody, and you grab it. Most of the time it comes from when you’re deeply still – that’s the best music that comes.”*

It has been my experience during training programmes that when an individual leader or even better a group of leaders cross this threshold from egoic identity into a more transpersonal realm, insights and connections of a completely different magnitude start to flow. The proverbial “light bulbs” start flashing with increasing intensity and we feel bathed in the presence of an emergent intelligence far greater than that of any one individual. Sometimes the room itself seems to become more luminous. Some people say it is as if we become “one mind”.

This is one of most vivid embodiments I know of what Einstein surely meant when he said that we cannot solve problems at the level of consciousness from which they were created.

In these challenging times I believe that we more than ever need leaders who are ready to step beyond their

own self-actualization and personal comfort zones into higher dimensions of consciousness, willing to become instruments of a higher evolutionary intelligence, surrendered to the service of the greater whole. ■



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# 10 Reasons to Invest in the Moment

by Mobius Transformational Leadership Faculty Member, Martin Boroson



## Mindfulness is certainly having its day.

Once considered a fringe pursuit, the practice of mindfulness is suddenly at the center of corporate life, valued by highly successful companies for health promotion, workforce training, and leadership development.

Although mindfulness is often positioned as a tool for stress reduction or relaxation, its core principle – being present in the moment – is about something far greater than slowing down or calming down: it is about waking up.

For several years, I have been advocating this dynamic understanding of being present in the moment, focusing on the benefits of this for leaders, as well as developing applications for strategy, innovation, and organizational change.

But to grasp the potential of a moment, we need to start with what a moment really is.

Although we tend to think of a moment as being just a few seconds, and therefore rather negligible, the word “moment” comes from the Latin word meaning “a particle sufficient to tip the scales.” A moment was a very small weight that *literally* shifted the balance.

This means that right there in the definition of *moment* is a sense of dynamic potential – no doubt why the word *moment* gives us the words *momentous* and *momentum*. This certainly suggests that a *moment* is far from trivial: one moment can change everything.

When you are feeling stressed, of course, being present in the moment can certainly help you calm down and get a grip. This is a great place to start. But being present in the moment can also inspire you creatively. It can energize you. It can be exhilarating.

This is why investing in the moment could be the best investment you will ever make. What I mean by “investing in the moment” is simply this: choosing to see this moment, right now, as a real resource, as something not to be missed. And learning how to manifest its potential.

In this article, I will outline some of the benefits of this investment for leaders. And although these benefits improve with practice, and benefit from training, they are also immediate: they begin the moment you stop skating over the surface of life and take a deep dive into what is here for you, right now.

Adapted from the blog series found at <http://martinboroson.com/writing/2015/01/10-reasons-to-invest-in-the-moment/>

“The word ‘moment’ comes from the Latin word meaning ‘a particle sufficient to tip the scales.’”

*Investing in the moment can help you:*

## 1. GET REAL

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Being at the top doesn't necessarily mean you know what's going on.

Indeed, as leaders become more successful, they can become isolated and even develop a skewed sense of reality. They can lose touch with what's happening in the real world, and become distanced from people who could give them honest feedback.

Many leaders don't even know what is going on inside themselves. And some leaders don't even know *how* to know.

Consider the typical leadership personality: confident, strong-willed, externally focused, action-oriented, analytic, and future-directed. Such leaders can lack the very first skill of self-awareness – the ability to do a simple reality-check about themselves: *how am I feeling, right now?*

This deficit in emotional intelligence can lead to critical instabilities down the line.

This is why, if you really want to be a better leader, the first step may well be to stop. You need to take a moment.

Think of this as a “power pause” – an essential act of maintenance, even repair – in which to audit your environment and, even more important, audit yourself.

In other words, simply take a moment to ask: what is really going on?

## 2. CREATE CALM

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Chronic stress can diminish your ability to think clearly and respond appropriately. It can also lead to serious health problems.

For organizations, stress can be pervasive, even systemic, causing not just illness but lost time, high turnover, bad judgment, poor performance, wasted effort, unnecessary work, safety errors, bad customer relations, and general hopelessness.

Leaders carry a particular responsibility for systemic stress, for as a leader, *it's you who sets the tone*. Indeed, the stress that is created, perpetuated, and distributed by just one leader can adversely affect entire teams, organizations, and communities.

One of the most effective ways to get a grip on stress

quickly is simply by paying close attention to what is actually happening now. Here is just one reason why this works: when your mind is fully focused in *this* moment, you are immediately freed from worrying about *that* moment. You are dealing with just what is real right now.

Once you have developed this ability – to pivot your mind from stress to calm in just a moment – you can manage even the most stressful situations in ways that are a lot less stressful. You may even develop the kind of calm, alert presence that is able to transform situations of even extreme stress into quite startling opportunities.

## 3. CULTIVATE PRESENCE

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Some leaders just seem to have it – a sense of being comfortable in their skin, an air of quiet confidence. This winning personality trait is often called *presence*. Through presence, a leader can effortlessly foster a culture of loyalty, trust, spirited work, and high performance.

Presence, however, is not really something you can learn. Nor is it something that rubs off on you magically from someone else. Indeed, the more you chase after someone else's leadership presence, the more you become, well, a follower.

Authentic presence springs from within. And all you have to do, if you want to start cultivating presence now, is this: Be more present. Simply tune into what is really true for you, right now.

As you choose to be more present, what emerges is presence. *Your* presence. For as you acknowledge, accept, and embody your truth, you bring forth your true being with honesty and integrity. Moment by moment, there is simply more of you here.

In my opinion, the world desperately needs more of this – by which I mean more of you. For in each moment you choose to live from the presence that is uniquely yours, you not only manifest the life you really want, you make the contribution that only you can make.

## 4. PAY ATTENTION

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We seem to be suffering an epidemic of distractedness. And the consequences are serious.

Distraction causes accidents, injuries, unnecessary work, diminished creativity, poor performance, reduced output, and critical accidents, not to mention ethical

lapses and PR disasters.

Consider, too, the demoralizing effect of working with people who are distracted. Think of those meetings that are so unproductive, so long, and so unsatisfying, simply because people are only paying *partial* attention. Think of those conversations you have in which no one is really listening.

Investing in the moment can help.

Paying attention to what is happening in the moment helps you avoid mistakes and accidents. It helps you think better, listen better, articulate better, and get things done more efficiently.

In addition, each time you bring your mind to what is happening in this moment, you are building your attention muscles. You are becoming focus fit. You are becoming *someone who pays attention*.

As your ability to pay attention gets stronger, you may find also that something quite remarkable starts to happen: your attention enhances whatever you are working on.

Yes, attention is such a powerful tool that, when you are finally able to devote your full attention – heart and mind, body and soul – to a situation, the situation itself begins to change, almost magically. It is this kind of attention, I believe, that is deployed so effectively by the most visionary leaders.

As a leader, of course, you have an additional opportunity. You have the ability and resources to promote attention skills in your team, to create systems that maximize attention, and to build a workplace that truly values attention. Imagine what you could achieve if your whole organization were just 10% more attentive.

The first move, however, is always right now. Go get your distracted mind, and start focusing on what you want to focus on in *this* moment.

## 5. STAY CURRENT

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We can get terribly comfortable with our old conclusions.

Those conclusions then become assumptions about the present and even filters on the future. Over time, they block our ability to even notice what is really happening.

If you want to seize the moment, however, first you have to see the moment.

Having an out-of-date mindset has tripped up many a leader. It has also tripped up many large, successful companies – so invested in their big old boats, steaming

toward their pre-programmed destinations, that they no longer notice which way the wind is blowing.

But think of the great politician or the inspired viral marketing campaign: What they each do so well is tap the *zeitgeist*. This doesn't mean that you, as a leader, have to be faddish or ruled by the mob. You can still articulate a better way. You can still inspire people about your bigger vision. But if you want to be effective, you certainly need your finger on the pulse of the present.

Fortunately, getting started with this is really simple: pay close attention to this moment, right now. This will momentarily liberate you. You will be liberated from your assumptions and expectations, and will be, simply, aware. Each time you do this, moment by moment, you are learning to let go of *then* and see what is *now*.

## 6. BE RESILIENT

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With the speed of life accelerating, and disruption becoming the norm, it's no wonder that resilience has become such a hot topic in leadership development.

Although everyone faces change, and everyone experiences setbacks, what distinguishes great leaders is their skill at bouncing back and, more to the point, bouncing back better.

When talking about resilience, it is helpful to consider two types – each demanding a different kind of investment in the moment.

The first kind of resilience is required in fast-paced situations, such as ball games, battlefields, and trading floors, where you need to make in-the-moment decisions. This demands a combination of hyper-focus, peripheral awareness, and instant reaction time. There is some evidence that meditation training can help with this – it improves your ability to sort stimuli efficiently and also reduce reaction time.

The other kind of resilience, however, is required when you experience a major life setback – such as when you experience an illness, divorce, or bereavement, or you suffer a career crisis, hostile takeover, or economic crash. Situations like these require *not* that you react quickly but that you not react quickly. Situations like these require that you have the wisdom to respond appropriately.

In such situations, there is huge benefit in knowing how to pause. In this pause, let yourself fully experience what happened. Notice how it really feels, right now, and don't pretend it doesn't hurt. Then, take stock of what

really has changed. And consider how *you* have changed. Do you really want to go back to the old situation? Is it even possible? Might this new situation present a radically new opportunity? And is there a possibility that this setback could actually help you grow?

After all, you want to be an authentic leader, not a robotic one.

What both types of resilience have in common is this: Whether you are reacting quickly or taking your time, each moment that you encounter is brand new – it has truly never happened before. And the past does not have to be a dark shadow on your present: each moment offers you a fresh start.

## 7. FIND SOLUTIONS

Too often, we try to solve problems by reshuffling what we already know.

Here's a better approach: Shift your focus from the problem that you think is *out there* to what's going on *in here*, in your own mind. Any problem can be considered just a symptom of a mindset that has outlived its usefulness.

In other words, instead of beating your head against the same old door, do something – anything – to change your point of view. And then see what life looks like through a whole new window.

The practice of investing in the moment helps with this immeasurably. Each time you face a problem, simply take a moment to consciously clear your mind and release what you already know. This enables you to look at the problem with fresh eyes, see what is really happening, and find a way to unstick what is stuck.

The more you practice this maneuver, the better you become at deploying it quickly and powerfully. And then, rather than being someone who had a new idea once, or gets a new idea sometimes, you can be a leader who has new ideas all the time.

## 8. SEE OPPORTUNITY

Too often, we assume that only geniuses can innovate. Or we assume that a great new idea will arrive with a thunderous AHA, so there's no chance we'll miss it.

A great new idea, however, rarely presents itself with a fanfare. Rather, it appears first as a tiny fragment, faint whisper, or tender shoot.

“Any problem can be considered just a symptom of a mindset that has outlived its usefulness.”

Imagine the writer who sits in a café with an open notebook, staring into space, waiting for inspiration. He is holding space for a new idea to land. Or imagine the inventor tinkering in her garage until, one day, something starts to click and whirr. She is allowing possibilities to appear.

These innovators trust that even a small idea can have enormous potential. And they know how to keep their minds open to what is emerging in the moment.

If you really want to innovate, you have to develop the capacity to notice all the subtle prompts that appear throughout the day, those small ideas that might just tip the scales. Approach each moment with an attitude of curiosity, and make sure you are awake to what could be emerging for you right now.

Don't forget, too, that being an innovative leader doesn't mean that you have to have all the ideas. Rather, consider it your job to create the conditions for innovation. Build an environment where everyone on your team is awake to the opportunity that is always budding now.

## 9. DEVELOP POSSIBILITIES

Once a new idea is conceived, you still have to develop its potential. In other words, you have to play with possibilities.

In a state of play, with all judgment suspended, you are free and spontaneous. You simply notice and elaborate what is arising in the moment. Like a child playing with blocks, you stack things in different ways and let yourself be surprised and delighted by what results. Like a jazz musician, you improvise.

The Zen Buddhist tradition calls this state of mind a “beginner's mind” – a state of openness, curiosity, and willingness to be surprised. Alas, many leaders, fearing loss of control, will resist this mindset. Or they just habitually rush right past this stage. Barely is a new idea conceived when they deliver judgment on it.

Some of the most egregious offenders in this regard are, of course, “experts.” Armed with reams of conclusions, all based on the past, they are so sure they “know what” that they shut down every playful “what if.”

Sadly, this attitude shuts down the possibility being offered in the moment. It simply kills new life. It destroys – even prevents – innovation.

To my mind, the really valuable experts are those who are smart and humble enough to suspend their expertise. They welcome the new information and new possibilities that arise in the moment.

As a leader your greatest contribution might simply be this: to create and defend the conditions that give rise to this mindset of possibility, ensuring that everyone on your team has the time, space, safety, and encouragement to play.

## 10. UNLEASH MOMENTUM

So, what is really standing in your way?

Many of the obstacles to change we experience are all in the mind: insecurity, bias, stubbornness, and doubt – not to mention those out-of-date lessons we carry from the past or those fears we project into the future.

In organizational life, of course, obstacles can be even more challenging, for they are systemic. Certain characteristics of most organizations – excessive workload, inflexible rules, crowded calendars, fixed agendas, complicated procedures, and rigid plans – stop people from moving freely or responding in the moment. All of this is death to momentum. People get discouraged. New ideas don’t stand a chance.

To make matters worse, many leaders attempt to drive change just by making a plan and then pushing. But if the obstacles to change in a system are entrenched, that push won’t make much progress.

As a leader, you might use your time more efficiently, and much more wisely, by focusing on creating the *conditions* for momentum. Start by unsticking what’s stuck. Liberate people and ideas so they can begin to move freely. Make sure that everyone on your team – those people you have chosen and trained, those people you trust – actually have the freedom to respond in the moment.

In my experience, when large systems move toward this kind of “in the moment” behavior – flexible, dynamic, and responsive – then everyone benefits. I have seen this

kind of transition release extraordinary enthusiasm and creativity in even the most dispirited staff. And the key principle is simply to liberate each person’s ability to be in the moment. You might even succeed in creating an “in the moment” organization.

### Everything starts here.

It may seem at times that advocates of mindfulness, myself included, are selling some kind of snake oil. How can something as simple as presence in the moment have so many benefits?

Perhaps this is because, to quote the Zen teacher Dainin Katagiri, *each moment is the universe*. Or, in other words: there is nothing we really have but this moment. Wherever you go, you will always be here, and the time will always be now. Despite this self-evident truth, we spend much of our time imagining scenarios that have nothing to do with now, haunted by fading memories of the past and fantasies about the unknowable future.

This puts us at a serious disadvantage. For when we are distracted from this moment, or act in ignorance of this moment, or try to flee from this moment, we are just running from reality. It is as if we are manically adding stories to a house that has no foundation.

As soon as you invest in this moment, however, something remarkable starts to happen, because you are no longer running away. Allowing yourself to land in this moment fully, you are aligning yourself with what is true. You are choosing to be real.

In this becoming real, you discover, paradoxically, that everything is possible. You are fully yourself and also free of self. You are totally grounded and yet exquisitely inspired. You are at peace with what is and also wide open to what could be.

Indeed, when you are present in this moment, you are ready for anything. ■



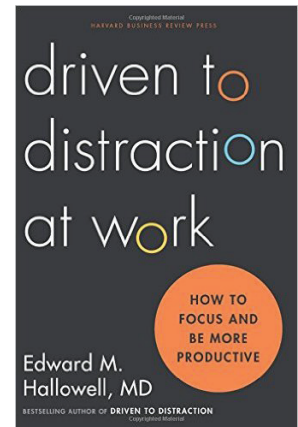
**MARTIN BOROSON** is a member of the Mobius Transformational Leadership Faculty and is founder and CEO of the One Moment Company, which delivers scalable training programs in present-moment awareness to

Fortune 500 companies and helps leaders design systems that promote rapid innovation and culture change. He is an executive coach, a keynote speaker and the author of *One-Moment Meditation: Stillness for People on the Go*.

# Driven to Distraction at Work:

## How to Focus and Be More Productive

A book excerpt by Edward M. Hallowell



### Attention Deficit Trait – The Growing Workplace Problem

You know the problem – swarms of distractions, constant interruptions, various tones chiming all around, rampant “screen sucking,” texting under the table during meetings, the overloading of mental circuits, and frequent feelings of frustration at trying to get everything done well and on time. This is the modern context in which most of us work. Whether the workplace itself or the numerous demands on your time drive you to distraction, the end result is the same. You can’t focus on anything anymore at work, and it’s taking its toll on your performance and your sense of well-being.

Capturing a widespread desperation, Ann Crittenden, in her *New York Times* review of Brigid Schulte’s sobering 2014 book, *Overwhelmed: Work, Love, and Play When No One Has the Time*, allowed that Schulte’s sensible solutions were “good suggestions,” but then punctuated her review with grim resignation: “But like all self-help advice, they don’t measure up against the entrenched forces that are indifferent if not hostile to the emotional well-being of a majority of Americans. Schulte is fighting SEAL Team Six with a pair of fingernail scissors.”

This book offers a different view. While I fully agree that we are contending with forces never seen before – and that the modern workplace presents distractions like never before – I also know that any person can learn

to modulate distraction and overload well enough to take greater control, while becoming happier, healthier, and more productive in the process. To be sure, as Crittenden, Schulte, and numerous other commentators have shown in well-documented detail, the special forces that oppose a sane and measured life today advance en masse like invisible pincers, nipping at us wherever we turn. And this isn’t going to let up. If anything, the number of distractions will continue to grow, exponentially. This is why all the commonly offered advice – such as manage your time and to-do lists more efficiently, multitask better,

“Since modern life induces ADT, you may wake up in the morning without it, but by 10 a.m. have developed many of the symptoms.”

be more organized – don’t and can’t work. They’re only Band-Aids. Instead, you have to retrain your attention. You have to recognize that the underlying issues of mental distraction – all of which are magnified and even harder to control in the workplace – are within your control. Even if you can’t control your environment, you can learn

how to reach a more productive mental state of focus, relying on planning, preparation, and technique instead of the frantic efforts people typically use to control their time and attention.

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I’m a focus doctor. An MD, now sixty-four years old as I write these words, I’ve studied attention and productivity for my entire career. “Attention deficit trait,” or ADT, is

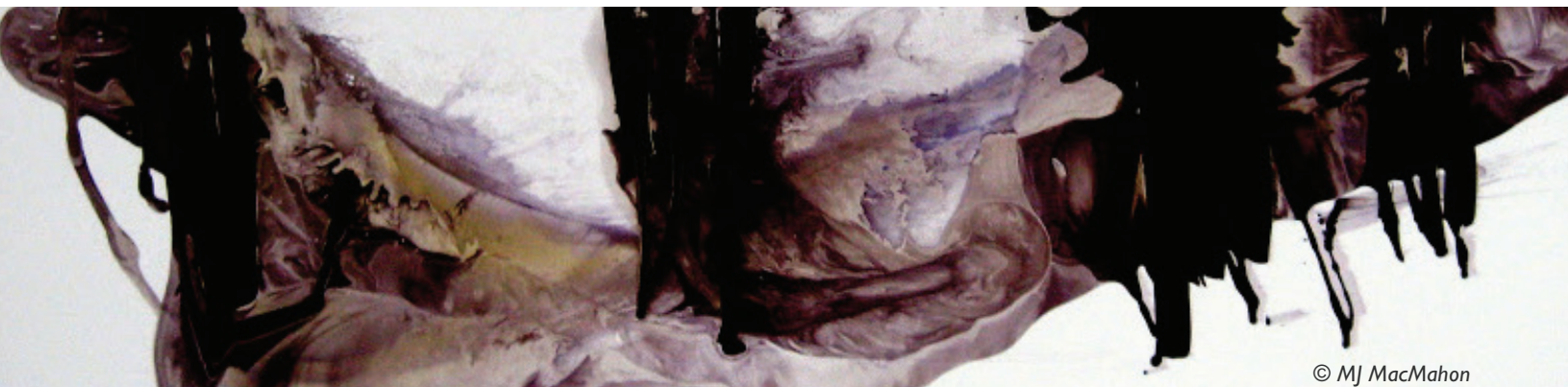
a term I coined in 1994 to describe what I observed at that time to be an increasingly common problem in the modern workplace.

Fate gave me a catbird seat from which to observe the growing epidemic of ADT that we are experiencing today. I've witnessed the vaporization of attention, as if it were boiling away, while people tried valiantly to keep track of more data than even the most adept human brain could possibly accommodate. Since modern life induces ADT, you may wake up in the morning without it, but by 10 a.m. have developed many of the symptoms, which include the following:

- A heightened distractibility and a persistent feeling of being rushed or in a hurry, even when there's no need to be, combined with a mounting feeling of how superficial your life has become: lots to do, but no depth of thought or feeling.
- An inability to sustain lengthy and full attention to a thought, a conversation, an image, a paragraph, a diagram, a sunset – or anything else, even when you try to.
- A growing tendency toward impatience, boredom, dissatisfaction, restlessness, irritability, frustration, or frenzy, sometimes approaching panic.
- A tendency to hop from task to task, idea to idea, even place to place.
- A tendency to make decisions impulsively, rather than reflecting and taking time to think them through.
- An increasing tendency to avoid thinking altogether, as if it were a luxury you don't have time for.
- A tendency to put off difficult work or conversations, coupled with a tendency to overfill your day with feckless busywork.
- A tendency to feel overwhelmed, even when, in reality, you're not.
- Haunting feelings of guilt about incomplete tasks, coupled with resentment that the tasks were imposed in the first place.
- Difficulty in fully enjoying pleasant moments and genuine achievements.
- Too often saying to yourself, "I'm working really hard but I'm not getting to where I want to be," both at work and in relationships.
- A feeling of loss of control over your own life and a nagging feeling of "What am I missing?"
- A recurring thought that "Someday I will make time for what really matters, but I don't have time to do that today."
- A growing, compulsive need for frequent electronic "hits," for example, checking e-mails, speaking on your iPhone, sending or receiving texts, Googling random subjects, visiting favorite web-sites, or playing games, coupled with almost an addict's yen for them when they are unavailable.
- A tendency to overcommit, make yourself too available, allow too many interruptions, and say yes too quickly.

If you see yourself in many or all of these feelings and tendencies, welcome to modern life. ADT is everywhere, especially at work.

Consider some of the pernicious effects of ADT. It leads you to respond to others in ways you otherwise wouldn't. How often do you find yourself tuning out when someone – say, a colleague or a friend – tells a long, albeit amusing, anecdote or who poignantly pours his or her heart out, while you fake full attention? Sometimes you might hear yourself responding rudely to a person



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who is trying to explain an important matter to you. How often do you find yourself just saying “Bottom line it” or “Give me the elevator pitch”?

Hyper-speed makes it impossible for you to absorb what’s new or different. So instead of finding new material to help you think in unexpected ways, you start thinking in bite-sized, convenient, mundane chunks made up of what’s familiar: the stereotypes, slogans, and buzzwords that trigger stock responses and come to define your predictable, prefabricated beliefs, understandings, and convictions.

### Prescription For Focus

Although I never planned to when I was in medical school or residency, over the past thirty-plus years, I’ve turned focus and attention into my specialty, a specialty that didn’t exist when I was in training, but is booming now. If you search for the word “focus” on Amazon.com, you will get 463,374 titles, including Daniel Goleman’s 2013 book, *Focus: The Hidden Driver of Excellence*. While this book gives an excellent account of why focus is important to achieving goals, it doesn’t look at the many ways people lose their ability to focus at work or provide practical solutions for training the attention and regaining control at work.

Most people don’t see lack of focus as the root of their problem or even as a possibility. Most of those who consult me simply blame themselves for their failure to be happier or more successful. They don’t make excuses or blame the system or a difficult boss. “Maybe I’m just a born underachiever,” they conclude, or “Maybe I just don’t have what it takes to get where I want to get to.” They are worried about their jobs, their relationships, and their families, but they only blame themselves in response to the problems they face.

People are usually in more pain than they let on. If they even recognize how much their problem relates to impaired focus, they deal with it simply by trying to overpower it. But that’s like trying to cure nearsightedness by squinting harder. Ironically, the harder they try, the more likely they are to fail, which leads them to blame themselves even more, thus intensifying the problem. They don’t need to work harder, just smarter.

This book will teach you to work smarter, not harder. First, by recognizing and dealing with the six most common distractions or patterns of ADT at work,

and second, by learning a new set of techniques for managing your attention over time, you’ll be equipped to overcome whatever distraction is holding you back from doing your best work.

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### What is flexible focus?

Focus varies in its intensity and duration. At one extreme is the absence of focus (without being asleep, drunk, in a coma, or deprived of focus by some other physical cause). I call this aimless, meandering state “drift.” It can be a sweet state, indeed, or a time waster. Your mind simply drifts along, like a fisherman trawling. Sometimes, in drift, you catch a big fish.

You don’t know it, but your brain uses these seemingly empty moments to do a lot of work. It goes into what’s called “default mode,” activating the default network, or DN. Particularly active in these moments of daydreaming or drift are the lateral prefrontal cortex and the dorsal anterior cingulate cortex, both of which are crucial in so-called executive function, which includes planning and focusing attention.

This explains, in part, why you need to look away from what you’re doing from time to time, to drift, to take a break mentally. Your brain does not take a break during these periods. Quite the opposite. It stokes up on energy, element number one in the basic plan, equipping you for the next period of paying close attention.

You might think the brain would consume more energy when working on a problem or concentrating on a task, but it doesn’t. When in drift, the DN consumes just as much, if not more, energy than when deeply in focus mode. Interestingly, in drift or in DN, what you think about (since your brain never goes empty) is usually other people, yourself, and the relationships among those. You engage in “social cognition.” Nature wired us to think socially during its down times. As psychologist Matthew Lieberman, a pioneer in social neuroscience, put it, “There are so many other things our brain could have been wired to spend its spare time on – learning calculus, improving our logical reasoning ability, cataloging variations in the classes of objects we have seen. Any of these could have adaptive value. But nature placed its bet on our thinking socially.”<sup>1</sup>

At the other extreme of drift is “flow.” The

psychologist who researched this heightened state of awareness, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, named this most focused state of mind in 1975.<sup>2</sup> In flow, a person becomes so immersed in what he is doing that he loses self-consciousness altogether. He gets so into what he is doing that he merges with the action he is involved in, becoming one with it. He loses his sense of time, even his awareness of his biological needs and drives, a state reminiscent of William Butler Yeats's lines: "O body swayed to music, O brightening glance, / How can we know the dancer from the dance?"<sup>3</sup>

Like all moments of peak intensity, flow fades. Almost all of us have entered into flow at one time or another, so we know firsthand that it doesn't last. Some people find flow while running or doing yoga; others while playing music, meditating, knitting, doing crossword puzzles; others while risking their lives skiing downhill or sweating over a piece of sculpture.

According to Csikszentmihalyi's research, corroborated by many people I've interviewed as well as my own experience, in flow a person experiences life at its peak, its most joyful, its most intensely fulfilling. It is also the state in which people exceed their personal best, often achieving much better work than they've ever done before. So absorbing, however, is the flow state that you only recollect the high of it, the pure joy of it. Since you lose self-consciousness when you're in flow, you're not aware of how great it is until it's over.

But you can't spend your whole day in flow. You need to eat and sleep. Furthermore, the brain in that state is limited by its supply of neurotransmitters. With practice, however, you can learn to enter flow regularly. The key is to engage in some activity that both matters to you deeply and is challenging, so that you have to stretch.

Csikszentmihalyi's work has been extended in practical directions by Steven Kotler, director of research for the Flow Genome Project, an international, transdisciplinary organization dedicated to decoding what happens during flow.<sup>4</sup> Kotler and his group are developing methods for "hacking flow," as he puts it, as it occurs in everyday

life.<sup>5</sup> Most of his research has been with athletes who do extreme sports that often put their lives in danger. He's found that these athletes access flow regularly and that when they do, they routinely exceed their personal best. In these cases, great gain comes with great risk.

But it is a safe assumption that most people do not want to put their lives in danger in order to access flow. For us – and I certainly include myself in this group – the doorway to flow still remains open. We need to select those activities that both challenge us and matter deeply to us.

For example, in my case, this challenge comes with writing. I have a love-hate relationship with writing; most writers do. That's because writing is beyond challenging; at times, it seems impossible. The writing is almost never as good as it could be or as the writer hopes it will be, so the task promises disappointment at every turn. That's why we writers often avoid writing. When Ernest Hemingway was asked how to write a novel, he replied,

"The first thing you do is clean out the refrigerator." He meant that writers will do just about anything to avoid putting words onto a page.

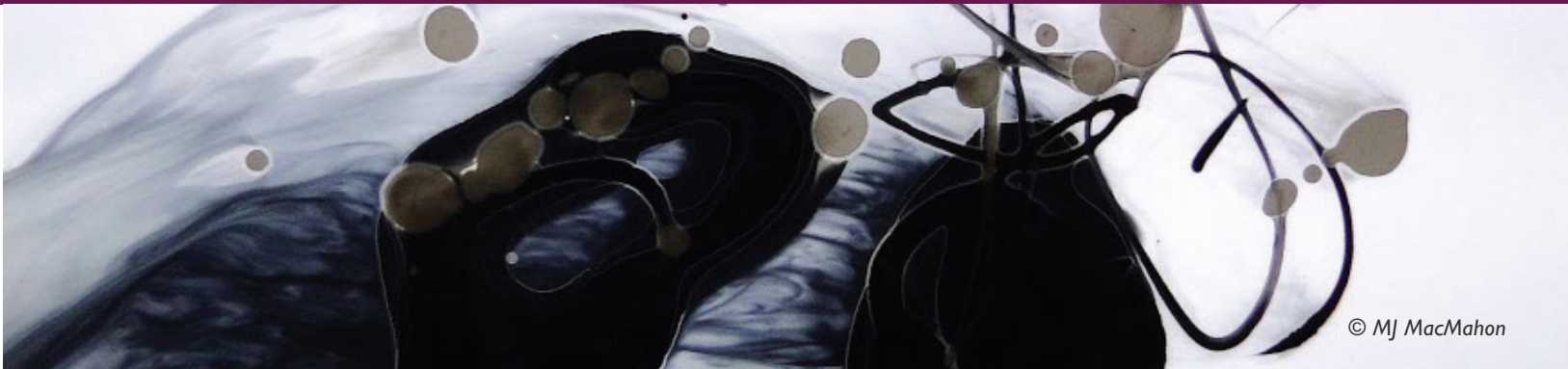
Yet, we love what we do too. Few things please me more than creating a well-turned sentence or describing an image that does its job succinctly. (I hope you find a few in this book.) They are my reasons for coming back to the blank page, just as the great shot is the golfer's reason for coming back to the tee, in spite of all his bad shots. When I finally do sit down at the keyboard, I typically enter flow – usually for minutes, but sometimes for an hour. The difference between my experience with writing and that of, say, the extreme skier is that I do not have the element of danger to keep me riveted in flow for extended periods. As a result, flow comes and goes as I write. (I suppose if I were writing with my life on the line, I might remain in flow for a longer time.)

Short of flow, there is focus. We all know what focus is. It is the standard term for a concentrated, clear state of mind, focused on one target. Between focus and flow lies what I call "flexible focus." It differs from flow in that it's not the high that flow is; it's a way of tapping into

**“You might think the brain would consume more energy when working on a problem or concentrating on a task, but it doesn’t.”**

## ACHIEVE FOCUS THREE WORDS AT A TIME

- 1 Turn it off (TIO).** Turn off your electronic devices during periods of the day when you want uninterrupted, focused time.
- 2 Trust your way.** Perhaps the single-most clichéd song lyric ever, “I did it my way” became so clichéd because its message is so powerful. We focus best and do our best when we do it our way. We all have our routines, our own individualized process or way for producing our best work. Trust yours. When you don’t know where you’re headed, your process or way will allow your unconscious to enter. It will guide and often surprise you with your most valuable discoveries and unexpected solutions. Don’t work against your grain, but with it.
- 3 Take a break.** When you start to glaze over or feel frantic, stop what you are doing. Stand up, walk around, get a glass of water, stretch. Just sixty seconds can do the trick.
- 4 Do something difficult.** People focus most intently when they take on a challenge, when they are working in an area where they are skilled, but where they are also stretched. Often, amazingly enough, what seemed impossible becomes possible.
- 5 Ask for help.** Don’t feel it is a sign of weakness to ask for help when you hit a snag. It’s just the opposite, a sign of strength that can get you out of a confused place and back on track.
- 6 Take your time.** One of the truest rules of modern life is if you don’t take your time, someone or something else will take it from you. Guard your time jealously. It is your most prized possession. Do not give it away easily or let someone regulate it for you, unless you absolutely have to do so.
- 7 Close your eyes.** When you are losing focus or feeling confused, the simple act of sitting back in your chair and closing your eyes can, oddly enough, allow you to see clearly. It can restore focus and provide a new direction.
- 8 Draw a picture.** Visuals clarify thinking. Draw a diagram, construct a table, cover a page with zigzags like a child finger painting, cover a page with phrases and arrows, use colored pencils or markers. Draw on poster paper on an easel or on the floor, just get past words and blow up the frame to accommodate visuals of all kinds. You may soon see the bigger picture you’d been looking for coming into focus.
- 9 Talk to yourself.** Talking aloud to yourself can lead you out of confusion. Assuming you are in a setting that allows for this, simply talk about the issue you are grappling with. Talking out loud engages a different part of the brain than thinking in silence. It can clear out the fog.
- 10 Do what works.** Don’t worry about convention or what’s supposed to work. Some people focus better with music playing or in a noisy room. Some people focus better when walking or even running. Some people focus best in early morning, others late at night; some in cold rooms, others in a sauna; some while fasting, others while eating. There is no right way, only the best way for you. Experiment and discover what works for you.



some of the qualities of flow without being so absorbed that you can't attend to anything else. In a state of flexible focus, you retain the ability to concentrate on a task, while at the same time remaining open to new input.

Flexible focus is a hybrid of flow that's accessible in everyday life. When in a state of flexible focus, you have a semipermeable boundary around your mind that allows for some distraction and sometimes the arrival of a new and important idea. For example, consider the case of David Neeleman, the founder of JetBlue. Neeleman invented the electronic ticket, one of the most important innovations in the business of aviation in the past twenty years. "I didn't plan to do it," he told me. "I just saw the idea one day. It seemed so obvious. I didn't understand why someone else hadn't already thought of it. But, in fact, everyone else in the business laughed at me, saying, 'No one will go to the airport without a paper ticket.' Of course, now we all do, and it's saved the industry many millions and saved customers all kinds of anxiety and missed flights."

"What led to the idea?" I asked.

"Nothing," Neeleman said. "Other than that I'm always thinking of ways to improve the business. That's really all I do. Come up with ideas and develop them. The electronic ticket was just one of my better ones. But the process is the same with all of them. I get into a certain mode and ideas come."

Neeleman is not an artist; he's a businessman. But in thinking up the electronic ticket, his mind was in a state of open-minded readiness. He was pondering ways to improve efficiency, as most executives do. But instead of forcing an idea up from a rigid, established, well-trodden place – say, overvaluing or being invested in his own past experience or reading everything he could about improving efficiency – he put himself into a state of flexible focus, and the idea appeared.

Flexible focus embodies a paradox. In flexible focus, you hold on to and balance both the logical and creative

parts of your brain at the same time. You combine both your creative powers with your powers to organize and analyze. You're able to take in new input without becoming sidetracked by it. You're able to stay on task but not rigidly so.

To achieve flexible focus, you instinctively balance right brain with left brain, creativity with discipline, randomness with organization. You can be searching while sticking with what you're doing, combining flexibility with rigor, spontaneity with structure, rule breaking with rule adherence. You can mix a new way with a proven way, and a journey with a goal. This is the great cerebral balancing act, the major skill, that allows you to master the challenges of your work and to take advantage of the opportunities with which modern life abounds. In achieving such a balance, you gain access to unbidden, unexpected thoughts, images, impulses, and emotions that can deepen any mental activity, while you retain the ability to organize and develop the ideas you already have. ■

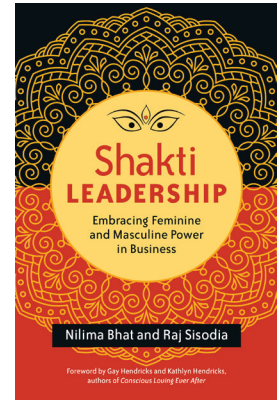


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# Shakti Leadership: Embracing Feminine and Masculine Power in Business

A book excerpt by Mobius friends, Nilima Bhat and Raj Sisodia



“Reaching into ancient spiritual and mythical teachings, we revive a feminine archetype of leadership: regenerative, cooperative, creative, and empathetic. In the Indian yogic tradition, these qualities are associated with Shakti: the source of creation, sustenance, and transformation that powers the cycles of life.”

## Shakti: The Power Base for Conscious Capitalism

Recent years have brought a dawning realization that we need to rethink the foundational bases of capitalism, starting with the idea that it is solely rooted in the pursuit of narrowly construed and material self-interest. Human beings have multiple primal drives, including the need to survive and the need to care. Love and work define what it means to be human. The emerging Conscious Capitalism philosophy is about blending the two. It starts with asking the question “What is the purpose of business?” The answer: it is *not* to maximize profits but rather to uplift humanity, by meeting real needs, providing meaningful work, spreading prosperity, and enabling more of us to lead more fulfilling and more fully human lives. The second pillar is stakeholder integration. Companies should consciously create multifaceted value for customers, employees, communities, suppliers, investors, the environment, and beyond. The well-being of each stakeholder should be seen as an end in itself, not as a means to the end of making more money for shareholders.

The next pillar of Conscious Capitalism is that companies should create nurturing and life-enhancing cultures imbued with values such as trust, accountability, caring, and transparency. Most businesses are

characterized by high levels of fear and stress; conscious businesses are built on love and care.

Perhaps the most fundamental pillar of Conscious Capitalism is about reimagining leadership. Conscious leaders are fundamentally selfless. They care about people and the purpose of the enterprise ahead of their own ego or personal enrichment. They seek power *with* rather than power *over* people.

The stated purpose of Conscious Capitalism is to “elevate humanity” through the practice of business as a force for good. Its narrative is centered on the need to cultivate a new consciousness of how to lead and conduct business. For that, we are going to need a new base of power. “Business as usual” runs on ego-based power; Conscious Capitalism runs on Shakti-based power. Shakti is power that comes from an infinite source within you that you can tap into at all times. This power is linked to everything, including money, which is what business has traditionally focused on.

Why do we consider Shakti an infinite source? Unlike the ego, which can be broken down, no one can take Shakti-based power away from you. You may feel that your power derives from your position. If you are the CEO today, you are vested with privilege and

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power, but if you are not CEO tomorrow, who would you be? Would people still respect you, look up to you, follow you? Can you hold your sense of self, and can you help bring about meaningful outcomes from that true source rather than from the position vested in you?

This whole game is about power; everyone wants and needs power. Without power, everything remains stagnant. Nothing can become manifest, become actualized. Shakti is the transformative power that manifests ideas into reality.

You may ask, why Shakti? Why not, for example, the Tao, which works with the core principle of *qi* (pronounced *chi*), not just as a philosophy but also its power? The compelling difference in the yogic tradition is that Shakti is not an impersonal, inanimate force; it is intelligent and conscious. You can enter into relationship with it. Once you do, it serves you, moves you, and fuels you.

Critically, Shakti also brings in the feminine dimension, which is lacking in the world and has been for a long time – if not for all time. Shakti is understood as creative and generative, and is therefore represented as feminine. Men as well as women can tap into it. In the yogic tradition, the human journey is one that seeks to end the duality between masculine and feminine, or Shiva and Shakti. It's not about “separate but equal,” but about evolving into an integrated and synergistic combination of both.

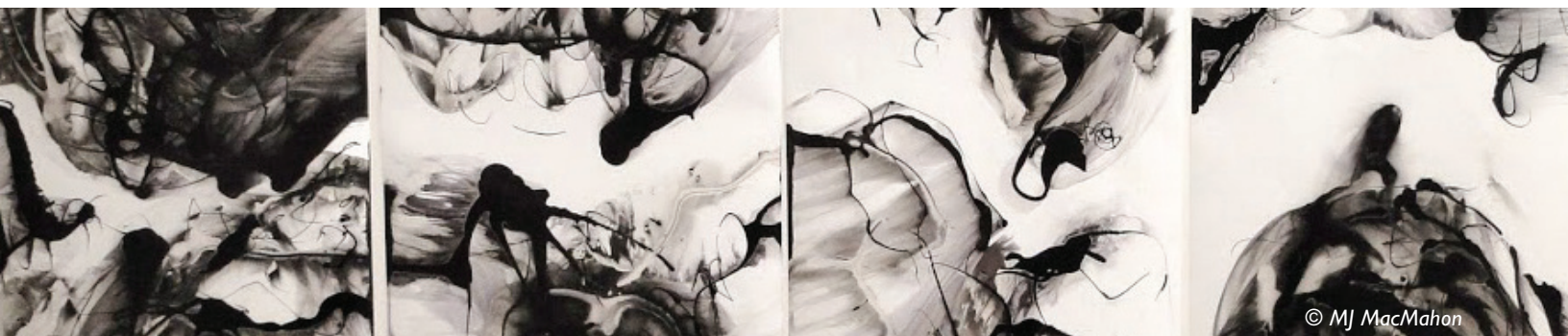
How does Shakti fuel us? Consider the north and south poles of a horseshoe magnet. There is potential in the space between the poles, but you can only tap into that energy when you insert a wire in that space. We exist in this duality and polarity between male and female. We may prefer our traditionally masculine or traditionally feminine leadership styles, but that means we're basically split beings, operating from half of our selves. As a result, we barely operate, because energy

only flows when both polarities are leveraged.

Shakti, the power that is latent in your being, gets unlocked when you become whole, flexible, and aligned with your unique purpose. Shakti is an evolutionary force, moving you toward fulfillment. The more you put yourself in accord with your purpose as a being and as a leader, the more energy starts rising up in you to move you forward. There is a beautiful reinforcing pattern there: the more you are on purpose, the more power you get to meet your purpose. It is similar to the idea of being “in flow.”<sup>1</sup>

Becoming a conscious leader requires a transformational journey. You do not become a conscious leader just by getting behavioral skill training in “what leaders do.” Deeper, foundational shifts are required to connect you to new and true bases of consciousness and power. The person you are is the leader you are; therefore, you have to make the journey inward to transform yourself. The “hero's journey,” Joseph Campbell's masterwork, maps perfectly onto modern leadership and business. You need to push beyond your known zone. It takes hard work and you will face many obstacles along the way. It is also a dangerous journey in which you're going to have to “die” in some ways.

Human beings and the universe are evolving in a certain direction; there is a distinct trajectory that can be discerned. There is an evident purpose to this process; it is not all based on random mutations. If we can flow into that trajectory and be part of it, rather than be at cross-purposes with it, we can have access to extraordinary power. We become agents of what needs to be. If not, these infinitely powerful forces quickly cancel out our feeble efforts. How do you connect with a place that fuels you continuously? How do you become a whole person in order to be a whole leader? How do you become a flexible person in order to be a flexible leader? These are the questions this book will answer.



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## Blending Positive Feminine and Masculine Capacities

Within all of us, there is a feminine element that is both distinct from and entwined with a masculine element. There is a purpose for this: to generate the creative tension within and from which evolution can move towards its own fulfillment. We need to leverage this internal diversity in a way that allows each individual to find a unique balance of expression freely for themselves.

Traditionally “feminine” capacities that are gifts of tapping into Shakti include beautiful qualities such as surrender, receptivity, adaptability, intuition, creativity, beauty, flow, sensuality, nurturing, affection, sharing, gentleness, patience, vulnerability, empathy, inclusion, openness, variety/flavor, trust, and harmony.<sup>1</sup> But taken too far, feminine qualities can manifest in undesirable ways, such as smothering, sentimental, needy, dependent, exploited, unfocused, irrational, weak, and manipulative. These are considered hyper-feminine or immature feminine qualities.

Likewise, positive “masculine” capacities include freedom, direction, logic, reason, focus, integrity, structure, stability, passion, independence, discipline, confidence, awareness, discernment, authenticity, strength, clarity, assertiveness, order, and convergence.<sup>2</sup> Hyper- or immature masculine qualities manifest as aggressive, cruel, mechanical, arrogant, insensitive, violent, power-hungry, and spiritually empty.

Of course, to categorize certain characteristics as “traditionally” masculine or feminine is not to say any of them are innate to men or women. Sally Kempton points to the danger of pigeon-holing men and women based on gender:

*“I have a little bit of a problem with the idea that the feminine is naturally nurturing and emotional and the masculine is naturally competitive and aggressive. I actually think that both genders are nurturing in their own way and aggressive in their own way. I would say that Shakti is really much more in an individual about finding your personal source of the vibrant fountain of power which is moving through your unique configuration – which applies to men and women.”<sup>3</sup>*

Even as women rightfully fight for equal rights, opportunity, and status, it does not take away from

the need to maintain this primary polarity in a healthy balance.

### Shakti Leaders Speak:

#### On Masculine and Feminine Qualities

Former President of Southwest Airlines Colleen Barrett recalls,

*“I’ve learned most of my lessons the hard way, because I’ve made mistakes. When you make them and you realize it, you’re fine as long as you don’t make the same mistake twice. I’ve learned the value of discipline; that’s a masculine trait. I’ve also learned that even if you have to make tough decisions based on what is best for your organization as a whole, you can still keep your friendship.*

*For example, you can terminate someone because it was the right thing to do for the company, but you can still keep your friendship with that person as long as you handle it in a positive way. I think lots of people struggle with that, male or female. Of course, your heart aches. If you ever feel good about terminating somebody, then there’s something wrong with you as a leader to begin with. But I have kept close friendships with many, many people that I had to let go for one reason or another.”<sup>4</sup>*

Author and educator Judy Sorum Brown notes that, “leadership is ... holding both sides and valuing both.”<sup>5</sup> John Gerzema and Michael D’Antonio’s research for the book *The Athena Doctrine* also supports the idea that individuals recognize the value of both types of traits. 81% of survey respondents agreed that, “man or woman, you need both masculine and feminine traits to thrive in today’s world.” Gerzema and D’Antonio note that individuals who “include feminine strategies in their decision making are twice as optimistic about their future.”<sup>6</sup>

A truly conscious leader is able to call on positive masculine and feminine qualities regardless of what gender they are. They know when it is beneficial to use more masculine or feminine energy, and are sensitive to the negative aspects of each. But most leaders disown their innate feminine capacities because they are devalued, and always choose more masculine capacities because these are what are seemingly rewarded.

## Transitioning from Old to New

**H**uman history is one long litany of the consequences of masculine values such as conquest and domination. Many increasingly recognize that the future needs to be more feminine, rooted in nurturing and caring. How will we get there? Will it take a revolution? Author and social activist extraordinaire Lynne Twist has a beautiful way to describe the transformation process: the simultaneous “hospicing” of what needs to pass on and the “midwifing” of the new wholeness:

*In the Pachamama Alliance, we call ourselves “pro-activists,” which means we’re standing for, not against. I’m standing for a vision and I know there are things in the way blocking that vision. There are structures and belief systems that have become rigid and calcified, causing people to behave in ways that are inconsistent with their humanity. They are not bad people. When we can look from the depth of our humanity and the humanity of others, we see that we’re all caught in some sort of a weird trance. If you can wake up from it, what’s waiting for you is love, compassion, forgiveness, commitment, courage, and authenticity – true power, but it’s blocked by the old way of doing things. We need to hospice the death of these*

*old structures and systems that no longer serve us. We don’t need to kill them; they’re not viable or sustainable so they’re dying a natural death anyway. If we hospice their natural death they will die more quickly and with some respect and some grace, because they were useful until they became obsolete. We need to hospice the death of those structures and systems while we midwife the birth of the new structures and systems that are so obvious to us now. Midwifing and hospicing are acts of love and witness. A midwife doesn’t give birth; a midwife witnesses and allows natural birth to take place. A hospice worker doesn’t destroy or kill; a hospice worker witnesses and allows something to die gracefully with dignity. In many ways, that’s the great work of our time, as Thomas Berry says: to transform the human presence from one that is destructive to a mutually enhancing and nurturing presence on this planet. It’s an act of love, to wake up from the trance we’ve been caught in and re-dream the world from a place that’s more conscious, more highly evolved, more loving. Rather than a “you or me” paradigm, it’s a “you and me” paradigm, where you don’t have to make it at my expense and I don’t have to make it at your expense. Instead, you and I can both make it at no one’s expense and everyone’s benefit.<sup>1</sup>*

**Life. What are the chances? Wildly improbable.**

**Earth, self-created, born of self-will and stardust,  
made her self-willed way her own, the aboriginal I Am.**

**Wilful and subversive planet that she is, grinning into the dark, roaring out  
her rebel yell, Earth is the rebel against the whole damn (solar) system;  
Earth, protesting against vacuum, in riot and revolt,  
throws her knickers at the space police.**

**– Jay Griffiths in *Wild: An Elemental Journey***

To enact those two great duties of our time requires us to cultivate presence (a deep connection to our higher/universal self) and tap into its power (Shakti) to fuel the process. Indeed, in the idea of lovingly hospicing the old and midwifing the new, Lynne is describing the ongoing work of Shakti, the evolutionary process of the universe itself that we are called to flow with and manifest as leaders.

Of course, this is easier said than done. Humanity is poised on its greatest evolutionary adventure yet, but our survival depends on our success at making this transition. Are we up to the challenge? How can we learn to source from the ground of power that is Shakti? How can we embody it and manifest from it? ■



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is also Co-Founder and Co-Chairman of Conscious Capitalism, Inc

## EDITORIAL REVIEW

**As global populations age, Bhat and Sisodia suggest that the world is reaching a point of major transformation. Simultaneously, women are gaining in numbers in white-collar professions, headed toward becoming the majority in the near future.**

**This escalating shift in evolution is rattling the foundations of one-sided patriarchal leadership, moving us toward a crisis point. These authors believe that in order not to implode, both men and women must begin to embrace a leadership style which utilizes competency-based (masculine) and consciousness-based (feminine) leadership skills in equal balance. Laced with insights from successful women (and men), it also has suggested exercises, such as *Dialogue with the Higher Self*, to help readers access the transformative power of Shakti within themselves. Commonsense and cutting-edge perspective make this one a sure-fire winner. Consider displaying it with Joseph Campbell's *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*.**

**– Anna Jedrziewski, Retailing Insight**

*from The Next Practice Institute of Mobius Executive Leadership*



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