Organisations **&P**eople

*Change Happens:
To People*

*African lessons
in leadership*

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NOTE

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Change happens …
… to people!

JOHN M FISHER

Navigating people and organisations through change transitions requires much thought and care. This article highlights the dangers and suggests that success only comes with patient communication, explanation, involvement and consideration of psychological contracts.

Change happens! However, how we actually emotionally deal with change depends on who initiated the change and what control we believe we have over the events in question. As change always impacts on people regardless of anything else changed, it is always a person who must deal with that change. To help people effectively through any change we must understand what the meaning and impact will be for them. Any change, no matter how small, has the potential to have a major impact on an individual, their self view and subsequent performance. Sabjanyi (2006: 9) recently said in this journal:

> Organisational change can only happen if employees shift their behaviour and mindset … so it is important to bring our attention to the level of the individual when attempting culture change.

He goes on to say:

> Organisational interventions can only be successful if they can influence individual realities in the direction of the intended outcome. (Sabjanyi, 2006:10)

I believe that this focus must be on how the individual perceives and reacts to that change – how do they see the change, what impact do they think it will have on them and what is their emotional journey? The anticipated outcome of any change may very well result in a conflict between what we've done in the past, our values and beliefs and our vision, rightly or wrongly, of the what we think will happen in the future.

However, it must be remembered that an individual operates within a multitude of environments within an organisation (e.g.

natural work team and the organisation. These three levels are also impacted by external customer/supplier interfaces as well as other, internal, natural work teams. All of whom have an agenda, wants and needs of their own.

Only by understanding how people see their own world and the meaning they attribute to events can we effectively interact with them. It has been proposed (Balnaves and Caputi 1993) that, at an organisational level, as well as having our own map of the world (or personal construct system), we also create a shared set of team constructs. These are those unwritten rules, myths and structures that we all abide by within an organisation but which are not generally made explicit, especially to those outside. So not only do we have to understand the individual but we also have to understand the organisational drivers within which that individual operates.
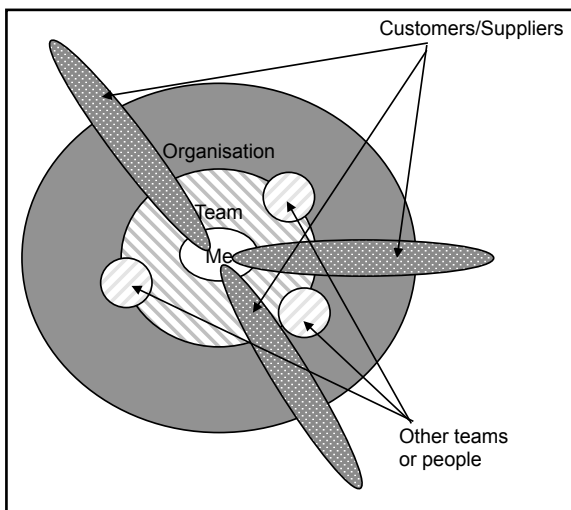
Figure 1. The Individual within their work space.

Therefore any change to the individual and their perception, and resultant actions, will send ripples across many boundaries and set up many change waves within the organisation – like ripples in a pond.

One common metaphor for the organisational transition process is that of bridging the gap between two peaks one representing where we are now and the other the goal. How steep the valley we need to cross is depends on a number of things, e.g. how much support, communication, past experience and influence we feel we have during the journey and our understanding of what we believe the new 'peak' represents.

We all go through a series of set, defined, stages whilst in the process of changing (see Fig 2). How quickly we cross the valley or how deeply we go into the trough of depression and how long we stay there, however, depends on what we bring to the process, and to some extent whether we initiate the change or not.

The stages we go through on our journey are, being emotionally laden, complex and we may spend some time in some of them as we come to terms with the situation and its implications.

One danger for the individual, team and organisation arises when an individual persists in operating a set of practices that have been consistently shown to fail (or result in undesired consequences) in the past and that do not help extend and elaborate their world-view. Another danger area is that of denial where people maintain

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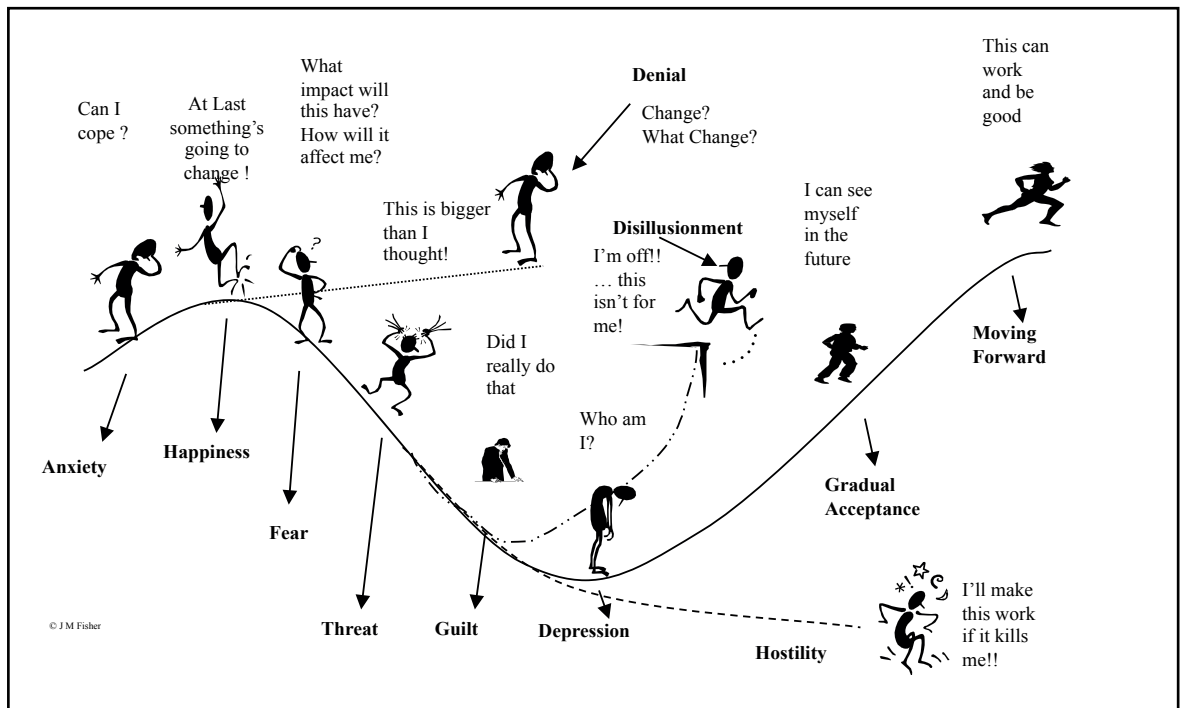
Figure 2. The Process of Transition

operating as they always have denying that there is any change at all. Both of these can have detrimental impact on an organisation trying to change the culture and focus of its people.

The Stages

Anxiety – realising that something is going to change but what, how or why is not ye undersood. Individuals are unable to adequately picture the future or understand what to do. They do not have enough information to allow them to anticipate how to behave in the future or what questions they should be asking.

Happiness – realising that onde is not alone! and that one's opinion is, sought, recognised and/or shared by others. At the basic level, there is a feeling of relief that

something is going to change and not just continue as before, especially if something is seen to be wrong at the moment. Whether the past is perceived positively or negatively, there is, possibly, a feeling of excitement at the thought of improvements (and we all think we'll have a significant say in the improvements).

In this phase we generally expect the best and anticipate a bright future, placing our own construct system onto the change and seeing ourselves succeeding. One of the dangers in this phase is that not enough is done to satisfy everyone. We may believe more should be changed, or think we'll get more from the change than actually turns out to be the case.

The organisation needs to manage this phase carefully to ensure realistic

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expectations and outcomes are communicated (and recognised/accepted) and perceptions are managed and redefined in the organisations terms without alienating the individual.

Fear - concerns about making small changes in individual behaviour. People start recognising that they will have to act in a different manner. This will have an impact on both their self-perception and self-esteem as well as their standing with others. However, in the main, they see little change in their normal interactions and believe they will be operating in much the same way, merely choosing a more appropriate, but new, action.

Threat – the discovery that lots of things have to be done very differently! Here people see themselves having to make a major lifestyle change, one that will radically alter their future choices and other people's perception of them. They are unsure as to how they will be able to act/react in what is, potentially, a totally new and alien environment – one where the "old rules" no longer apply and there are no "new" ones established as yet.

Guilt – a belief that we've been wrong in how we've done things in the past and we should have known better. If the individual begins self-critically thinking about how they acted/reacted in the past there is a danger that they become overly sensitive and re-interpret the past using current criteria. Recognition of the inappropriateness of their previous actions and the implications for them as people can cause guilt as they realise the impact of their behaviour.

Depression – This phase is characterised by uncertainty, procrastination, confusion and ageneral lack of motivation to do anything. Individuals are uncertain as to what the future holds for them, how their past skills can now help them, what they should do (especially as everything they've done in the past was wrong!) and an inability to see how they can fit into the future 'world'. They see their skills, experience and knowledge as inappropriate and this results in an undermining of their core sense of self; leaving them adrift with no sense of identity and no clear vision of how to operate.

Ironically, if we have initiated the change and we start to encounter difficulties we may then go into the trough of depression as a result of the change not happening. So, it's the lack of change or progress that gives us the problem as we struggle to accept that other people just don't seem to see things the same as us.

Disillusionment – where values, beliefs and goals seem incompatible with those of the organisation. The pitfalls associated with this phase are that the employee becomes unmotivated, unfocused and increasingly dissatisfied and gradually withdraws their labour, either mentally (by just "going through the motions", doing the bare minimum, actively undermining the change by criticising and complaining) or physically by resigning.

This can be seen in the increased amount of complaints about how the organisation is

treating people ("they don't seem to care", "they're not interested in me!", etc. and nostalgic references back to the "old days".

Hostility – the insistence that the old process still works accompanied by determined efforts to prove it. The problem here is that people continue to operate in ways that have repeatedly failed or are no longer part of the new world. The new processes are constantly criticised and ignored at best and actively undermined at worst. Support is actively (and aggressively) sought to continue to use the old ways and ignore the new.

Denial – what change? – nothing different is happening here! Here there is a lack of acceptance of any change and a denial that there will be any impact on the individual. People keep acting as if the change has not happened, using old practices and processes and ignoring evidence or information contrary to their belief systems. This differs from hostility in that here the change is ignored, whereas a hostile approach actively pushes the old ways.

It has also been suggested that there is a final (or should it be initial?) stage of Complacency (King 2007). Here people are laid back, not really interested and coasting through the job almost oblivious to what's happening around them. They are operating well within their comfort zone and in some respects can't see what all the fuss has been about. Even though the process may have been quite traumatic for them!

So what?

To help people move through the transition effectively we need to understand their perception of the past, present and future and manage their timeline (Fisher, 2005: 257 - 264). What is their past experience of change and how has it impacted on them? How did they cope then and what can be done to improve it now? What will they be losing as part of the change and what will they be gaining? It is important to deal with the past very effectively, recognise the good things and then explain why change must happen.

Figure 3 shows a model of how people approach situations and how they apply meaning based on what we think will happen. This is, itself, influenced by two things – what they did in the past in similar situations and what happened as a result of their actions. The result of past experience then influences the choice of behaviour in the hopes of getting the same (better?) response.

The full process moves from having an Experience through Evaluating the consequences of that experience, Integrating an evaluation into our world map, to Anticipation of subsequent outcomes and Planning what to do next time.

Less experience means fewer choices and a risk of less appropriate or positive responses. If our constant experience of change results in pain of some form, then we are going to be cynical, mistrustful and negative.

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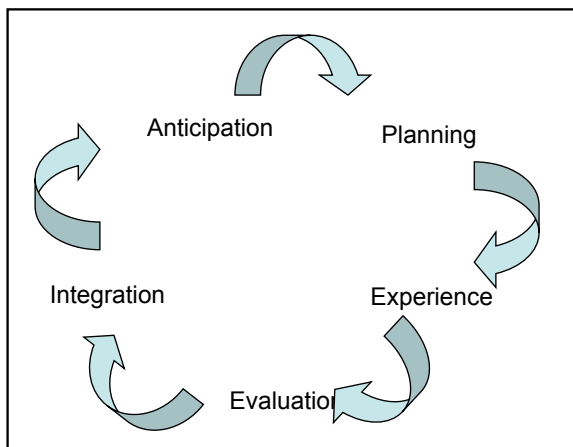
Figure 3. The Experience Cycle

It is important for an individual to understand the impact any change will have on them and their self perception. It is also important for them to be able to work through the implications for themselves and identify their own coping strategies.

By managing the past – acknowledging what worked and why change is needed, creating a viable future vision and then giving people a credible route map in the Present to help them start the process, any change programme will have more chance of success.

To help people move through the transition effectively we need to understand their perception of the past, present and future. What is their past experience of change and how has it impacted on them?, how did they cope? Also what will they be losing as part of the change and what will they be gaining?

Unfortunately this can only happen by communicating and including everyone in the process. Let them ask questions, walk through the process, develop changes/

work rounds, understanding, etc. You can use your favourite change model as long as you remember to focus on the individual and their point of view rather than at an organisational level.

As implied in Fig 1, all change happens within an organisational culture or climate and how people react will, in some ways, be influenced by how their peers, line management, customers, suppliers, friends outside and partners/family act. The "grape vine" can also play an important role in helping people see how others have reacted to the news and will influence their thoughts. We create stories and "myths" about our work and how people behave, so spread a few positive examples as part of your communications.

So, managers must ensure that for any change to be successful they must ensure they do the following :-

   a) Communicate fully the reasons for the change, celebrate those elements of the old system that were working effectively and "close" the past.

   b) Recognise the importance of understanding, and delivering against, the psychological contracts (both implicit and explicit) of all participants and of managing the expectations of employees.

   c) Involve all members of the organisation, allowing them to have their voices heard. Change should not be seen as something forced on people, by either HR or by "management", individuals must accept and own the change.

   d) Communicate the new vision in an

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easily understandable way that makes clear what is expected, what the future looks like and what will be required in the future.

e) Communicate a "route map" or timeline showing what has to happen, by whom and when, allow individuals to compare their own behaviours and actions against the wider organisation.

f) Be aware of, acknowledge and support people as they go through the various emotions and phases. Celebrate successes as you go along and help people feel involved, valued and in control.

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BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

John M Fisher has recently joined Balfour Beatty Utilities Ltd. as the Management Development and Soft Skills trainer, and is on the verge of achieving Chartered Occupational Psychologist status.

John operates from a Personal Construct perspective, meaning that much of his work is about understanding the meaning individuals apply to their experiences from within their own map of the world. He is a past Chair of the North West branch of the BPS, member of the European Personal Construct Association, keen Keighley Cougars Rugby League club supporter (somebody has to be!), Fellow of the Institute of Training and Occupational Learning, MBTI qualified, ICS assessor and is involved in various training and development activities.

10 Qualities to Look for in a Leader

MARTIN KALUNGU-BANDA

The paradox is that people seem quick to blame their leaders when things go wrong while at the same time turning to them to solve their problems. So what is a great leader? This author deconstructs the concept of servant-leadership and seeks to identify some qualities with particular reference to Nelson Mandela.

KEYWORDS. Leadership, servant leadership, Mandela

When we are looking for solutions to the problems confronting our organisations and nations, we often end up mentioning leadership as part of the diagnosis of why things are not as they should be. There is a sense in which the term leadership is used to explain anything and everything, making it come across as a panacea to organisational and societal problems. That leadership is core to the proper functioning of organisations, groups of people and nations, goes without question.

I am seeking to share in this article some of the practical reflections of what great leadership, in my view, entails.

I make the assumption that our world, today, is in dire need of great leaders, ones who inspire people not through words but service. I am of the opinion that the current edge in leadership discourse is the old fashioned idea of leadership through service. The whole human race, I hasten to say, desperately needs servant-leaders who really attend to others and are beacons of hope in our search for a world society where justice, fairness, care for the weaker members of our communities, and love, flourish. In this article, I attempt to deconstruct the notion of servant leadership by looking at ten qualities that I think great leaders have successfully lived by and worked with.

The call for leaders who genuinely serve their people is obvious in social and political communities. We can see it equally in the economic sphere, in business organisations or corporations. The high turnover of staff in

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many work places suggests that people are looking for what Lance Secretan, a Canadian guru on leadership, calls 'soul space' (1997: 129) – an environment where they will not simply be cogs in the wheel of production and service delivery but can live full and happy lives.

In my book, Leading Like Madiba: Leadership Lessons from Nelson Mandela, I have attempted to present through stories the type of leadership that will take our world to higher ground. (2006: 4) In this book, I focus on the person and leadership practice of Nelson Mandela. What is so extraordinary about Mr Mandela's style and practice of leadership is that it crosses the boundaries of culture, gender, race, religion and age. Madiba (as he is fondly referred to in his home country) has done so in a society that was once more polarized than any other – one the world expected to explode along racial and ethnic lines. That it did not was largely due to this extraordinary man and his unique leadership practice. What is equally fascinating about Madiba is the fact that each person that has encountered his leadership, in one form or another, feels personally attended to and served.

Mr Mandela's leadership transforms ordinary people, events and actions into the extraordinary. Great leadership consists in the capacity to inspire others to greatness. I use the term 'inspire' to mean the ability to bring out the best in the people one is entrusted to work and live with. Inspirational leadership (Secretan 2004: 207), like the yeast that imperceptibly causes the dough to rise and 'ripen', permeates society and its institutions in such a way that everyone

begins to see their own uniqueness and take up their role in society. Inspirational leadership makes all of us dig deep into the innermost parts of our being to find the very best that lies there and make it available to others and ourselves. This, in my view, is what great leadership is all about – the ability to coax out greatness in those one is entrusted to lead.

The stories I have told in my book show that Mr Mandela inspires the political leader as he does the boxer and the medical doctor; the footballer as much as the pupil and the government bureaucrat; the social activist and the prisoner; a neighbour, a religious leader, a farmer; the artist, the intellectual, the worker in an oil company; the businessman, the street vendor, the widow, the orphan. Through these stories told by ordinary men and women who have been impacted by Madiba's leadership, I am trying to invite others to reflect on, and perhaps attempt to practice, some of the key qualities of great leadership. The following are the ten key leadership lessons I have distilled from the Mandela stories.

Ten ways to lead like Nelson Mandela

1. A Leader must have a well cultivated and deep sense of awe for people:

Why?
Leadership is about people, and every single person matters. Leadership is not about personal achievement and glory. Leadership is not about self-importance.

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Leadership is about people becoming the centre of a leader's thoughts and actions.

How can we know whether a leader has a deep sense of awe for people?

He or she must have trained himself or herself to treat everyone he or she comes across with utmost respect and honour. The leader must attend to each person as if that person is the only one that exists and matters at that moment. Such a leader must have the capacity to listen with undivided attention to individuals and groups of people he or she meets. As Lance Secretan observes, the word "listen" has the same letters as the word "silent" (Secretan, 2004: 33). A leader who listens must have the ability to be silent.

2. A Leader must have Courage:

Why?

Great Leaders have courage. Courage does not mean absence of fear. Secretan defines courage as "Being brave enough to reach beyond the boundaries created by our existing and deeply held limitations, fears and beliefs." Martin Luther King Jr. once said, "Cowardice asks the question, 'Is it safe?' Expediency asks the question, 'Is it political?' Vanity asks the question, 'Is it popular?' But Conscience (courage) asks the question, 'Is it right?'"(Secretan website). There is a time when a true leader must take a position not because it is popular or safe, but because it is the right thing to do.

How can we know a courageous leader?

He or she must be able to recognise his or her own fears. This means the leader must demonstrate incidences when he or she was found between a rock and a hard place in decision making and yet chose to follow what he or she thought was morally right.

3. A Leader must lead by example and only use words where necessary:

Why?

Great leaders have always led by example. People get inspired and trust those who lead by example. Those who speak very well sometimes impress people. However, those who live by what they believe in always inspire others.

How can we know a leader who leads by example?

A leader must not ask of others what he or she is not ready to do himself or herself. The leader must, on a daily basis, be seen to be earnestly striving to bridge the gap between his or her words and actions. Such a leader must not ask others to make a sacrifice he or she is not willing to make.

4. A Leader is someone who is inspired by the giftedness of other people:

Why?

For a leader to be able to inspire others, he or she must have deeply rooted and well-founded sources of inspiration for himself or herself. Some leaders, such as Dr Kenneth Kaunda the first President of Zambia, are inspired by their belief

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in the biblical counsel that we are all made in the image and likeness of God and the dictum 'Love thy neighbour as you love thyself.' Other leaders simply have a deep belief in the sacredness of the human being, without any religious connotation. The Leader who does not have clear sources of inspiration will fail to inspire others.

How can we know a leader who gets inspired by the giftedness of others?
He or she must be someone who recognises and acknowledges the giftedness of other people. Such a leader must be one who appreciates human genius and the grandeur of nature. A leader of this kind must be one who does not feel intimidated or jealous of the achievements and giftedness of other hardworking people. Such a leader rejoices in and honours the good work of other people.

5. A Leader must have his or her own brand of leadership:

Why?
A leader's name must symbolise and be associated with a clear set of values. It is this perceived alignment between a leader's name and the values he or she is willing to die for that will make him or her most effective. All great leaders, while being inspired by others, did it their own way.

How can we tell a leader who strives for alignment between his or her name and deeply held values?
He or she must demonstrate alignment between his or her words and actions. He or she must be seen to be walking his or her talk. Such a leader must show that he or she does find moments, from time to time, to evaluate how his or her values are aligned to his or her words and actions. A leader must show that he or she makes an effort to gauge the kind of impact he or she is having on other people, and able to make timely adjustments without losing focus on his or her core values. There is a leadership style and practice that can only be performed best by a particular leader.

6. A Leader practices Humility:

Why?
Great leaders throughout history have practiced humility. Humility is the ability to acknowledge one's limitations and failings. The Dalai Lama describes humility as "...having the capacity to take a more confrontational stance, having the capacity to retaliate if you wish, yet deliberately deciding not to do so."(Dalai Lama, 1999: 216). Humility will attract people to a leader. Arrogance will not.

How can we tell a humble leader?
A humble leader is someone who when he or she makes a mistake does not shy away from admitting that he or she was wrong. The humble leader does not see the world through the lenses of his or her title in society. He or she simply sees himself or herself as an ordinary human being who is privileged, at a given point in time, to take on the responsibility to serve others. Such a leader will not make assumptions that others owe him or her

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respect unless it is earned.

7. A Leader must be able to live with the Madiba Paradox:

Why?

Life is a mixture of hope and hopelessness, joy and pain, success and failure, vision and disillusionment. A leader has the task of helping others to live successfully with these apparent contradictions. I call this the Madiba Paradox because it is the perspective that allowed Mandela and his colleagues to remain hopeful for a better South Africa each day of the twenty years he languished in prison.

How can we tell a leader who is able to live with the Madiba Paradox?
He or she must be one who lives in the moment. Such a leader must live each day as if it was his or her last opportunity in life. A leader must have experienced situations when he or she dealt with the paradox of confronting the brutal and negative facts of a given moment without losing focus on the great opportunity that lay ahead. Such a leader must be a dealer in hope.

8. A Leader must surprise his or her opponents by believing in them:

Why?

A Leader is one who is aware that there will always be people who disagree with his or her leadership style and his or her actions. This fact notwithstanding, a leader should recognise and believe in the good side of everyone. No one person

or group of persons is 100% bad just like there is no one who is 100% good. There is always something good that can be found about each human being. A leader who recognises the giftedness of those who consider themselves his or her enemies, quite often, ends up disarming the so-called enemies. However, the leader must recognise the good in others not out of manipulation, but because he or she truly believes in the notion that every person has some good. Abraham Lincoln is reputed to have once said, "I do not like that man. I must know him." By this Lincoln meant, the only reason why we may dislike another person is that we have not made enough effort to know something good about him or her.

How can we tell a leader who truly believes in the good all people?
He or she must be one who identifies and acknowledges, privately and publicly, what is praiseworthy in those who oppose him or her.

9. Celebrate life:

Why?

A Leader must be one who celebrates the achievements of the individuals and groups he or she leads. Such action on the part of a leader generates inspiration in people to achieve even more. Achievements are not usually an end in themselves. Achievements symbolise hope in the attainment of a better and happier future. It follows, therefore, that as the leader creates a culture where people have gotten into the good habit of wanting to supersede

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their earlier achievements, progress and development are not only assured, but also guaranteed.

How can we tell a leader who is able to celebrate and honour his people's success?
He or she must have a record of having celebrated the positive steps taken by people he or she has been privileged to lead or work with. Such a leader must be known not to claim other people's work as his or her own. A leader who honours other people's contribution makes sure that the people who make him or her shine are acknowledged and brought to the fore for others to admire and learn from. Such a leader deflects praise from himself or herself to people around him and accepts responsibility, as his or her own, in the face of failure.

10. A Leaders knows when and how to quit:

Why?
Throughout history, great leaders have known how to move themselves from centre stage. They know when it is time to go so that their legacy lives on.

How can we tell a leader who knows when to quit?
He or she talks and behaves as a pilgrim – someone on a journey. From time to time, such a leader openly talks about the need for other leaders to emerge. A leader who is a pilgrim has a track record of delegating authority, not for the purpose of exposing the weaknesses of others, but to demonstrate to people that

there are others who are equally good and even better to take on the mantle of leadership. Such a leader demonstrates genuine happiness when those he or she is leading show signs that they will be better leaders than himself or herself. He or she sees emerging leaders, not as a threat, but as fruits of his or her mentorship.

Conclusion - Great Leaders must have a higher purpose

What we learn from great leaders is that they have a purpose that is higher than what is transitory and temporary that guides their leadership practice. They demonstrate that understanding their purpose in life is intimately connected with understanding who they are. The one thing that most leaders seem to share is that we, human beings, are "...spiritual beings who have an inherent longing (whether or not we are aware of it) to realize who we truly are, individually and collectively. Thus, our most intrinsic motivation is to realize our essential spiritual nature and purpose, not to fill an ever-present set of need-based desires." (Pruzan & Miller, 2006: 77)

Stephen Covey says, "We settle for the illusion society sells us that meaning is in self-focus – self-esteem, self-development, self-improvement – it's 'what I want,' 'let me do my own thing,' 'I did it my way.' But the wisdom literature of thousands of years of history repeatedly validates the reality that the greatest fulfillment in improving

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ourselves comes from our empowerment to more effectively reach out and help others. Quality of life is inside-out. Meaning is in contribution, in living for something higher than self." (Covey 1999: 58) The higher purpose anchors the life of a leader in relation to other people, nature and any other forms of being.

Great leaders seem to appreciate that while there are many things that they can learn to do, and do them reasonably well, there is always something that is so much in sync with their natural constitution that when they discover what that is and then develop mastery in it, they simply do it better than any other person in the world can. Max Lucado calls this the 'sweet spot'. "You have one, you know", he states. "Your life has a plot; your years have a theme. You can do something in a manner that no one else can. And when you find it and do it, another sweet spot is discovered." (Lucado, 2005: 8)

Jim Collins uses what he calls the hedgehog concept to describe an organisation's 'sweet spot'. He says that when an organisation locates what it can do better than any other, it will have found its 'hedgehog concept'. Like Lucado's sweet spot, the hedgehog concept is the type of organisational and personal 'calling' which when the leader discovers and then fully explores and nurtures will give the organisation and the individual their distinctive performance and competitive edge.

I think the hedgehog concept is equally applicable to individuals. Each one of us has

to find what our hedgehog concept is: that which when we perform it gives us not only unlimited and stunning success, but also ever replenished energy and joy. For me, the process of discovering this 'hedgehog concept' or 'sweet spot' or 'calling in life' forms the hallmark and the enterprise of life itself.

The enterprise of finding our calling in life has three main parts.

First, we need to wake up and work, everyday, on the life long project of discovering what our hedgehog concept or sweet spot is. This is where our best chances of providing great leadership lie. Some people are lucky and can, with some reasonable levels of certainty, find their sweet spot quite early in life. You could say that about Ronaldinho, the Brazilian soccer star; Mother Theresa of Calcutta, Tiger Woods, the world's best golf player; Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the doctrine of non-violence; Isaac Newton, the renowned scientist; Luciano Pavarotti, one of the greatest tenors of our time; Jesus Christ of Nazareth and Bill Gates, the founder of Microsoft. For many of us, our calling becomes clearer a little or much later in life. However, it does not really matter how late we discover it. Whatever the time, there is still chance. The story of Colonel Harland Sanders who created the food chain Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) in his sixties speaks volumes of this fact (Colonel Sanders, web site). This leads me to the second part.

After we have come to know what our hedgehog concept or sweet spot is, we have

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to perform what I would term a spiritual act of total abandonment to the enterprise or cause. Half measures will not do. What we have discovered as our calling becomes our key reference point. This is the only way we see talent and expertise at their best. How else do we think monks manage to attain such high spiritual status? How do we think professors and renowned researchers attain their monumental scholarly feats? How else do we think great mothers, sculptors and painters do the magic that they perform to inspire others? It is by sheer abandonment to a cause. At least for a period of time.

Abandonment to the cause is equally the story we get when we learn about the leaders, men and women, who led the independence struggle of African countries and other former colonies. It is the same story we hear about those who entirely dedicated themselves to causes such as racial and gender equality, freedom of speech and of worship. To some extent, it is almost "reckless abandon". They put in everything, almost neglecting everything else around them, for a period of time. This is the best way history explains how heroes and heroines attained their greatness. After committing ourselves in this manner, then we move on to the third stage.

The third stage, which often runs at the same time as stage two, is about investing all our energies in developing our mastery in what we have discovered. This stage is not different or separate from living our dream. As we develop mastery through practice, we are, at the same time, living our passion. Great leaders behave like artists who spend most of their time practicing

to perfect their art, then once in a while, they surface to perform. Mastery only comes through practice. Do we know what happens to artists who spend more of their time on the stage rather than in practice? They burnout. So is the case with leaders who do not find the time and space in their lives to perfect their art of leadership. For a leader, the practice is in deliberately reflecting and trying out in practice the ten qualities we have talked about above. A leader must take time off public appearance, from time to time, to reflect and make sense of what is going on around him or her. A leader must find an individual or a group of individuals who offer honest feedback and challenge.

When a leader has time to grow his or her mastery, he or she gains the stamina with which to provide the necessary leadership in good and difficult times. He or she responds to good and bad situations knowing very well that right decisions do not necessarily have to be popular and that immediate yet ephemeral satisfaction may be sacrificed in order to attain long term and sustainable success. Mother Theresa, in a poem attributed to her, describes in my opinion, the disposition of a great leader when she says the following:

People are often unreasonable, irrational, and self-centered.
Forgive them anyway.
If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives.
Be kind anyway.
If you are successful, you will win some unfaithful friends and some genuine enemies.

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Succeed anyway.
If you are honest and sincere people may deceive you.
Be honest and sincere anyway.
What you spend years creating, others could destroy overnight.
Create anyway.
If you find serenity and happiness, some may be jealous.
Be happy anyway.
The good you do today will often be forgotten tomorrow.
Do good anyway.
Give the best you have, and it will never be enough.
Give your best to the world anyway.
In the final analysis, it is between you and God.
It was never between you and them anyway.[1]

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BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

Martin Kalungu-Banda is a Leadership Consultant based in Oxford, UK, and author of the bestselling book Leading Like Madiba: Leadership Lessons from Nelson Mandela (2006) published in Cape Town by Double Story.

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http://www.prayerfoundation.org/mother_teresa_do_it_anyway.htm

Self-Reflection: by invitation only

BILL NOONAN

Self-reflection that seeks out how one is contributing to the problem is very difficult to do when the focus is primarily on how others are behaving badly. This article explores what makes self-reflection hard to do given the way we experience others' actions. When helping their clients, consultants encounter several pitfalls trying to get their clients to be self reflective. They can improve their chances by using certain techniques that do not demand, but invite self-reflection on the part of their clients.

KEYWORDS: Self-Reflection, Chris Argyris, Blaming, Action Learning, Defensiveness, Consulting

When a problem occurs, it is so much easier to look outside of ourselves for the cause, rather than looking within. After all, some person, team or department has done something to make your life difficult. Most of your mental activity is spent figuring out why they did what they did. It remains a problem "out there."

Seeing the problem as external to one's own self is a hard perception to shake loose. When I intervene in a team conflict or crisis, I usually find everyone finding fault with another person's words or actions. The problem is defined as the "other guy."

Any self-reflection as to how one might be contributing to the difficulty at hand is as rare as an UFO sighting.

The greatest challenge I face, as a consultant, is helping someone stop pointing the finger of blame at someone else and instead examine his or her own thinking and behaviour. A willingness to be self-reflective is critical to the successful negotiation of working relationships. Thinking and acting differently depends on our ability to stand outside our own perspective in order to understand different points of view and gain insight into how others may be experiencing our actions.

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Self-reflection helps us to see how our interactions create results that no one desires or intends. Even in the situation where there is a bona fide example of a poor performer or an autocratic boss, what is often missed is what we do to either trigger or enable the identified problem behaviour. Self-reflection that seeks out how one is contributing to the problem is very difficult to do when the focus is primarily on how others are behaving badly. In this article, I will explore two main reasons why *self-reflection* is hard to do and what consultants do that either promotes or inhibits their client's chances of engaging in a self-reflection process.

The Impact of Another's Actions

The ease with which we see others as the problem is due to how we experience the impact of their words and actions. When someone does or says something that creates difficulty, we feel the force of his or her action immediately. From this impact, we draw inferences or conclusions about what happened and why they did it.

For example, I was facilitating a meeting of a group of managers. At the end of the meeting, I conducted my usual check-out question designed to evaluate my performance. I asked:

> Bill: Was there anything I said or did that either inhibited or promoted your learning during our session?

> Manager: (raising his hand) Yeah, you attacked me the whole meeting.

I was taken back a bit, largely because I barely noticed his presence during the meeting. I asked him:

> Bill: I am not aware that I was attacking you, so help me out here. What did I say or do during the meeting that led you to believe I was attacking you?

> Manager: You kept poking your finger at me during the meeting.

Not aware of my gesture, I asked the group, "Did others notice that as well?" A number of participants confirmed the manager's perception that indeed, I was pointing my finger a lot, but that it didn't bother them. Clearly it had bothered the manager.

I acknowledged the impact of my actions by saying, "Yes, I understand now. If you kept seeing my finger pointing in your direction, I can reasonably understand how you would interpret it as singling you out."

That evening at home, I asked my wife, "Do I point with my finger a lot when I talk?" "Yes, you do," she said. "It is the teacher in you." Since then, to avoid that potential, unintended impact upon others, I keep my hands in my pockets or at my side when I speak in a group setting.

For this manager, my finger pointing led him to think he was being singled out. From this, he made several quick assumptions – what I was saying was being directed toward him and that I was critical of him. Based on these assumptions, he drew the conclusion that I was attacking him. While understandable, his final conclusion was inaccurate. Once we tested his inferences against others' interpretation of my

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gesturing, he backed off his accusation. He admitted that it helped hearing my acknowledgement of how I contributed to his perception of being attacked.

The impact of an action says as much about the person on the receiving end of the action as it does about the person who initiated it. Understanding the impact of our actions upon each other requires attention to both parties' contribution: what is said or done and how it is received.

Quick Thinking

This example illustrates the second reason why one maintains the perception of the problem being "out there." Our reaction to the impact of another's actions is to draw a quick conclusion – one which may or may not be accurate. In particular, when the impact activates our internal sense of being threatened or potentially embarrassed, our conclusions not only occur instantaneously, they tend to be black or white. We go on to develop a host of explanations and theories that account for why the other person is so difficult. This thinking is not shared publicly with the other person, but kept private or confined to sympathetic listeners. When this happens, the chance of mistaken thinking increases. Without the benefit of any external verification or public testing, we can fool ourselves very easily.

A friend of mine came back from an Alcoholic Anonymous (AA) meeting once and related to me a popular AA slogan: *"Remember that your mind is like a dangerous neighbourhood. You are not to go in there alone or unarmed."* The slogan

remains a reminder that one can be mugged by false assumptions and erroneous perceptions.

The AA slogan does not communicate a message of "Don't think." The slogan does not say "Do not go into the neighbourhood." The analogy instructs us that we need help from others to see what we are unaware of and critical thinking skills capable of challenging our own thinking. We usually need the most help separating intent from the impact of someone's action upon us.

When we experience the impact of another person's actions as problematic, we quickly attribute negative intent on their part. Two of the most common negative intentions we assign others is malicious intent ("The person is out to get me") and pure self-interest ("She is only looking out for herself.") This seems to be the only reasonable explanation that can account for the behaviour.

The mental shift from assigning negative intent to registering the impact of the offending action is very difficult to do. Removing negative intent does not mean brushing off what the person said or did and excusing them from their actions. The behaviour had an impact. The impact is what you want to raise in conversation. When registering the impact, start with the observable behaviour that had an impact on you. Paraphrase what the other person said or did and keep your paraphrase free of inference. Then describe the impact it had. "I am unsure as to what your intentions were, but when you said, I had X reaction.... Did I mishear you or did you intend something different from what I heard?"

A student of mine presented the following situation to me as a case study. Members of her team sat down with their director to raise the issue of inappropriate conduct on the part of another team member. After each person had shared their experiences, the director expressed his appreciation and stated his intent to look into the matter. He also requested that the information shared stay in the room.

In debriefing the meeting, I asked her:

Bill: "What did you say to him in response to his stated intention to look into the matter?"

Sheila: I asked him directly, "When will action be taken?"

He responded by saying that he wasn't sure and would need to gather more information. He thanked us again for bringing it to his attention.

Bill: What was your reaction to what he said?

Sheila: I was disappointed with his vague answers. He is new and doesn't want to rock the boat. He gave us no indication as to what steps he would take to follow up on our concerns.

Bill: Did you saying anything back?
Shelia: No, I left the meeting frustrated and with no confidence that he would do anything.

Bill: So, while he listened to your concerns, the concrete action steps you were expecting to hear didn't materialize. It makes sense then that you would interpret his words as vague.

Sheila: Correct.

In Shelia's mind, her need for immediate action sets up an expectation. When the expectation is not meet, the impact is disappointment. Not hearing any concrete action plan, she draws the conclusion that his answers are vague and assigns a negative intention of "not rocking the boat." Unable to separate the intent from impact, she walks away from the interaction frustrated and experiences her director's response as problematic.

Depending on our frame of mind, we select some things that people say and ignore others. Because of Sheila's expectations, she skips over her director's statement that he wasn't sure what he was going to do. By focusing on what has been missed, I can begin to help her separate intent from impact.

Bill: You recall him saying that he wasn't sure what to do. Given that he is new to the position, I could imagine that on face value what he said is true. If so, how would that alter your thinking about him?

Sheila: Well, he might be more cautious and want to gather more information like he said he needed to. I don't know, maybe I came off too demanding, but still I wanted to hear concrete steps.

Bill: Yes, so if you think of him as truly being uncertain as to what to do, you can think of yourself as helping him be more concrete. You might say something like, "Bob, your statements about being unsure as to what to do and the need more information creates a concern in my mind that action may not be taken quickly enough. What would alleviate my concern is if you could tell me when I can check back with you to hear your thoughts on how you can help us address this issue?

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> Sheila: What if he said, "Don't worry. I will get back to you."
>
> Bill: I'd say, "I don't doubt that you will, but we are reaching the outer limits of our tolerance for Roy's behaviour and an open-ended time frame only adds to our fear that nothing will be done."

Sheila and Bob have a different sense of urgency. Being the recipient of the inappropriate behaviour, Sheila has a greater sense of urgency than Bob who hears about the complaint for the first time. Rather than leaving the meeting frustrated, she can register the impact of Bob's words and keep the conversation going by stating how he can help alleviate her concern.

Because registering the impact of another's words is a new skill for Sheila, I make it a point of practice to model how it could be said, rather than offering abstract advice. This gives her a chance to try on the words. I usually follow up my effort of modelling the skill with a question: "Can you see yourself saying something like that or would it prove to be difficult to say?"

Getting Others to be Self Reflective: The Pitfalls

One can not programme insight, write a policy for reflection or develop a procedure for self-discovery. Each of us makes our own journey of self-discovery.

I learned this the hard way. Early in my career as a counsellor, I mistakenly believed that I could get another person to be self reflective. My first practice was in the field of death and dying. I was charged with the vision of helping people come to a peaceful acceptance of their death. I got fired by my first patient. I was told that she was dying of cancer, but was in denial about her death. Ready to bust down denial with the latest psychological judo manoeuvre, I continued to bring up in our conversations the reality that she was going to die soon.

When I called to make our second appointment, she told me not to come. "Why not?" I asked. "You are too depressing," she said. "All you want to talk about is death."

She was right. I was running my agenda for when and how she was going to come to grips with her death. In that moment, I learned that whether I am helping someone to reflect on her words, actions or the course of her life, I cannot engineer her reflection by my desire for her to do so. The invitation for self-reflection is accepted by one's own will to do so. It is an invitation and not a demand.

The challenge to the consultant is how to extend an invitation when he or she thinks the client is in desperate need of self-reflection. There a number of common pitfalls he or she can fall into when trying to help others be self reflective.

Convincing the Client

The consultant can help clients to organise their experience in ways that make it understandable and manageable. From an outside perspective, the consultant has a better vantage point for making observations and seeing patterns of

dysfunctional interactions – usually long before the client can see them. Free from any emotional attachment or historical and cultural baggage, a consultant can be more objective.

Unfortunately, a consultant can project an attitude of "I see what is going on and if you can see it, you will agree and we will make a breakthrough together." It is an "I know better" attitude that trips me up every time. This is not arrogance in the sense of being smarter than others, but a flash of insight based on experience and a good use of theory. There is nothing wrong with this attitude, and it is very likely that I have a good insight. It is my attempt to impose my view of what is happening unilaterally that gets me in trouble.

A mental tip-off that I have fallen into this pitfall is when I hear the voice in my head say, "I've got to get him to see what he is doing." I have a theory as to what he is doing that is contributing to the difficulty. I want him to take the focus off of how bad the other person is and help him see how his own response is triggering the very behaviour he deems objectionable. This is tricky because I am trying to get the person to see something that he is unaware of or doesn't want to admit to. If I point out his own problematic behaviour, and he resists, then I label him as being defensive. I am now in a position of either having to back off or push harder to make my point. If I back off, I leave the session thinking my client is resistant and defensive. I am pessimistic about any positive change. If I push harder to get him to buy my position, I may only increase his defensiveness.

As a consultant, I have now employed what Chris Argyris (1974) calls "defensive reasoning" or "Model I" thinking and behaviour. I believe my view is sensible and right. My client is thick headed and I have to crack his skull to get him to see what the problem is. Even if I back off, I am still operating with the same mindset: I am right, he is wrong. Not surprisingly, there is a good chance that I have replicated the same dynamic that got the client in trouble in the first place.

I have adopted two techniques to avoid this pitfall. First, when I meet defensiveness on my client's part, I go with it and explore its sources – which could very well be what I have said or done. Second, I explore with my client the observable, behavioural data each of us would need to see to either confirm or disconfirm my theory of what is happening.

Avoiding the Socrates Effect

The Socratic Method is simply asking a series of questions in order to help another person with self discovery. While the Socratic Method is a noble, time-tested method for self-reflection, it can cause the Socrates Effect. The line of inquiry becomes so persistent that the other person begins to feel interrogated. It doesn't take long before the other person wants to slip you a hemlock cocktail to get you to stop.

A consultant needs to become vigilant around the unintended impact of asking too many questions. I have found it helpful to cue the other person by saying, "I am

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going to ask you a series of questions in order to better understand your thinking. If at any point, you get a sense that I am interrogating you, please stop me." It is always important to remember that the philosopher Socrates started from ignorance. He sincerely did not know. His intention was not to draw the other person toward his version of reality, but to help others explore their own thinking.

Fostering Self-reflection: Modelling the Behaviour

Even after multiple gentle nudges to encourage self-reflection, I hear from my client, "Yes, I know I have a part in this as well, but if you knew this guy like I do, you would react the same way." Given how our buttons are pushed by different people and contexts, I might have or not have reacted the same. Yet, what I am aware of is my client's complete reluctance to focus more than a nanosecond on his part. I begin to form an opinion in my mind that my client is being thick headed. Early in my career, I would write off the client as being constitutionally incapable of being honest with him or herself. When I did so, I was punishing my client for not being self reflective.

I have been capable of punishing others for not being reflective when I, myself, have shown very little self-reflection. Once, I received feedback from someone who had overheard a comment in the hallway during a break that the workshop was "going to slow." When I resumed the class, I asked them, "What prevented you from raising

the issue of pacing?" This had an impact of essentially saying, "You have pointed out a possible error on my part, but I am not going to address it. Instead, I am going to focus on yours." I could have taken the opportunity to model how to receive feedback and modify errors by dealing with what was going on with the pacing.

After I had investigated the issue of pacing, then I could have helped the group discuss what made it difficult to raise the issue publicly. There is a difference between saying, "What prevented you from raising it?" and "What makes it difficult to discuss the issue of pacing?" The former has an accusatory meaning of "what stopped you from doing what you were told to do?" The latter phrase sets the context of how difficult it is for anyone to do this given cultural norms and behaviours. I could have also explored whether their perception of me or my actions had made it more difficult to discuss.

Punishing people for not being self reflective has never been helpful nor generated a productive result. Instead, the best way to foster self-reflection is to provide a good example by modelling it myself.

Examining Results and Getting Curious

A good stimulus for reflection is the simple question, "How's it working for you?" The question focuses the person immediately on the results. If the person is not getting the results they desire or intend, then it is time

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to get curious and figure out how his or her actions are contributing to the results. After the person lists the disastrous results generated from a recent interaction or failed project, I ask, "What actions did you take that contributed to those results?" Once a few problematic behaviours are identified, then the deeper work begins. I ask, "And in what ways were you thinking that led you to your actions?" An examination of the assumptions, frames of mind and values presents ample opportunity for reframing and redesigning action.

Imaging the Other Side

When I experience my client possessing a high degree of confidence in their version of reality - particularly in their view that the other person is the problem - I ask for examples of how they respond to the person. When I hear what they say, I can get a good idea of the likely impact the words had on the other person. I will either register the impact of my client's words upon me by putting myself in the shoes of the other person or I will ask my client to imagine what it must be like to be on the other side of the conversation hearing their words. The following is a brief interaction with a person who was the lead on a company project and described a member of his team as doing everything he could do to "bully me into his ideas."

Bill: When he tries to bully you into his ideas, give me an example of how he does it.

Manager: He told me that without his suggestion, this project would fail miserably and wanted to go on record that he did not agree with my course of action. He accused me of not listening to his ideas. He said something like, "So far everything that I've said has been dismissed by you."

Bill: And how did you find yourself responding?

Manager: I said, "That's not true. I take every idea into consideration. The problem is that we don't have enough time to implement all of these ideas. Besides, this project is my responsibility and you will not be held accountable for any problems."

Bill: If you were on the other side of the conversation, how might you have interpreted those words?

Manager: (smiles) That my ideas aren't going to fly with this manager. It is going to be his way or the highway.

Bill: Yes, I can well imagine that reaction on his part. Do you recall what he actually said?

Manager: Yes, he said, "Of course I won't be held responsible. You're not taking my suggestions." So I was bullying him right back, but because I am the manager, I can bully back harder.

Bill: So, you were doing to him what you yourself don't like being done to you.

This technique achieves a simple goal of self-reflection – the ability to stand outside of one's perspective. Once outside, the person has the chance to see how others may be experiencing their words and actions. The result is often ironic. They see that the very behaviour they are objecting to in the other person, they are doing as well.

The common complaint is that people do not feel they are being listened to, and yet, upon examination, they are making no

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effort to listen to the other person. Instead, they are advocating their point of view just as hard as the other person. This insight helps break the lock on the other person as the problem and turns the attention to the quality of the interaction.

Conclusion

Helping others to reflect on their actions has been a hit and miss adventure. No technique or tool in the hands of a consultant is foolproof. I have walked out of many meetings where I conducted an intervention around a contentious issue and been discouraged by the results.

People appeared only further entrenched in their views and none of my appeals to seek greater understanding were heeded. Just then, I get a phone call from the client saying what a great meeting it was. I hear comments like, "We have never been able to talk about these issues publicly before." The client goes on to report his post-reflections on the meeting demonstrating a better understanding of views that differ from his own and claiming insight into how his own behaviour proves to be problematic for others.

For awhile, I was simply dumbfounded by the response and could not take any credit for the final results. Over time, I have learned patience and once again, the lesson that self-reflection cannot be demanded, engineered or tailored to my expectations. Self-reflection does occur when a gentle invitation to enter into a different perspective is offered.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Bill Noonan is an educator and consultant with an international practice including many leading learning organisations. His practice includes facilitation, executive coaching, conducting workshops and designing web-based learning programmes: Forging Breakthroughs with Peter Senge (Ninthhouse) and Productive Business Dialogues and Managing Difficult Conversations (Harvard Business Review Publishing Company).

He is the author of Discussing the Undiscussable: A Guide to Overcoming Defensive Routines in the Workplace, published by Jossey-Bass (2007). (A review of this book appears in this issue).

He received a BA from University of San Francisco, Masters from Harvard University and his Ph.D. from the Graduate Theological Union/ UC Berkeley. He teaches at Marylhurst University in the Business Department, and the Religious Studies Department.

He also teaches the Philosophy series at Columbia Gorge Community College.

Bill can be reached through his website: www.discussingtheundiscussable.com

SOAPBOX

by DAMIAN HUGHES

Are you prepared to open your mind and relax any fixed, know-it-all thinking? Then read on . . .

LiquidThinker, my change management consultancy, has been established for over two years. I have enjoyed a wide and varied career, which has taken in roles as diverse as HR Director for FMCG giant Unilever, a football coach for Manchester United's academy youngsters, a leader for a voluntary run Manchester inner city youth club (a position I still hold) and am also the author of a number of books on personal and leadership change. I have drawn together all of my experiences from each of these areas and now support organisations, team and individuals to replicate the habits of success which I have been fortunate to witness at first hand.

Before I attempt to explain what Liquid Thinking is (and no, it isn't what you think!), let me answer the most commonly asked question which I am posed: why Liquid Thinking? The answer is surprisingly straight forward. When discussing suitable names for the title of my first book on

personal change, I wanted something which was memorable and captured the essence of my point. Edward de Bono, the renowned creative thinking guru, has spoken of 'solid thinking' being one of the biggest barriers to changing behaviours and the opposite of this is exactly what I advocate, hence the creation of 'liquid thinking'. I must confess, however, that the drinks we nursed in front of us did also contribute to our own creativity.

Before you read any further, I'd like to issue a challenge to you and ask whether you are prepared to apply some Liquid Thinking, as opposed to the kind of Solid, arms folded, know-it-all thinking, which those of you who have - or work with – sulky teenagers will be all too familiar with.

You are? Good. Please read the following quote:

> I shall always be a flower girl to Professor Higgins because he treats me as a flower girl and he always will.
> Eliza Doolittle.

In the play, 'My Fair Lady', Professor Higgins, a wealthy academic, wins a bet with his friend, Colonel Pickering, that he can take an ordinary Cockney flower girl and pass her off as a duchess amongst London's high society, merely by refining her speech and dress. After he finally

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succeeds, the flower girl, Eliza Doolittle, suggests that the only real difference between a lady and a humble flower girl is "not how she behaves but how she is treated".

I fiercely believe that Eliza Doolittle's passionate complaint is something which those of us who want to change and taste success must address. These nine words explain one of the first principles of Liquid Thinking: the level of success you will achieve depends on your own attitude and expectations.

What are your own expectations of your capabilities? Do you believe that change is a waste of time, a nonsense and certainly not worth the investment of your time and energy, after all, what's the point?

Alternatively, does the idea of change leave you feeling inspired, motivated and excited? The answer to this question is integral to the results you get and whether you should even bother read to the end of this article.

In the 1970's, psychologists carried out a famous experiment in schools to test whether the expectations of the teachers had an impact on their pupils' success. They told the staff that certain children had been identified as being 'late bloomers' and were certain to do well in the future. In reality, however, all of these children had been picked completely at random and were no different to the rest of the class.

Without consciously realising it, over the next few months, the teachers began

to give these specially identified children more encouragement and praise and allowed them to ask extra questions in the classroom. Incredibly, all of these so-called 'late bloomers' then went on to achieve better test scores than the other children in the same class.

What had happened, quite simply, was that by increasing their expectations of the children's abilities, the teachers had started to encourage the children to behave in a way that transformed their expectations into a reality.

So what do you expect? Posing this question is one of the primary functions of Liquid Thinking, which is to challenge the norm, to push the barriers and expectations outside of the comfort zone.

It is all very well to get people to raise their expectations level of their own capabilities but another aspect of Liquid Thinking is to help others to identify what the end result will be. This lack of direction and sense of purpose, which we all need to embrace or identify with, is a critical element of change. In situations where a vacuum exists and no vision is offered, it becomes easy for mediocrity to quickly take hold and become accepted as the norm. This is especially true with young people from difficult backgrounds that often don't have the experience or maturity to question whether there is something better out there; an alternative from the cycle of misery which they are surrounded by.

One effective way of combating this is to create a compelling picture of what

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possibilities are open, challenging them to dream about what could be. The trouble with trying to create such a vision is the easy cynicism, from young and old alike, who regard this as being too soft or wishy-washy. I have discovered that offering practical examples, which could never be described in this dismissive manner, has proved incredibly effective in helping to overcome this objection.

One such example is Muhammad Ali, who I often talk about with children to help them realise their own ambitions. I have also found that there is a similar impact when this is shared with adults as well. The attitude seems to be that although typically, vision statements may be a series of bland words cobbled together by management before being hung, ignored and unnoticed, on a wall in a corridor, if the greatest athlete of all time can use them, maybe it is worth paying attention to.

There is a little known fact about Ali which I often use to illustrate this point. Before a number of his fights, he would make a number of bold predictions about what round he was going to win and would even describe in vivid detail the manner of his imminent victory procession. He actually made these predictions on nineteen occasions and amazingly was right on seventeen of them.

I have been fortunate enough to interview both Ali and his trainer, Angelo Dundee and have learnt about the techniques which they used to create these visions and actually make them come true.

After getting the workforce's interest through such examples, another community-rooted idea is to get them involved in colouring the vision in. There have been a number of government sponsored community initiatives which have adopted the Broken Windows Theory, espoused by criminologist James Q Wilson and put into practise in the local community by Rudolph Giuliani when he became Mayor of New York, which engaged residents in helping to design community centres and landmarks. The Theory suggests that when responsibility for keeping environments well maintained is shared, the impact on the residents is significant and the behaviour becomes more responsible and the risks of vandalism and neglect are significantly reduced. This same principle holds true in business.

How many of your employees would believe that they have any significant influence over the direction which their organisation is heading? I am a firm advocate of 'who wants to be a millionaire' thinking in all organisations. What do I mean by that? In the history of the popular television quiz show, it has been verified that the most effective lifelines available to contestants is the 'ask the audience' option, which offers a 91% chance of success. Incidentally, 'phoning a friend' is just 64% reliable and '50:50' is the least effective option with just 61% chance of success.

I believe that inviting others to have a say and to submit their own input into a vision is an effective approach. I have done this through creating 'top 10' lists of what they want to see in 2 years time. I have also

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played the role of a newspaper reporter and interviewed volunteers about what they think success will look, smell, sound, taste and feel like. The answers are often far more colourful, vivid and engaging than anything which a board of directors can come up with in isolation.

Another important element of Liquid Thinking is to help you to move closer to a greater understanding of your purpose. Many organisations can learn from the succinct but passionate articulation of why many charities or community based projects exist. One of the best I have seen is the Harlem Childrens' Zone, a charity which looks after children in deprived areas of New York. They have outlined their own sense of mission in the form of a poem, which captures the real essence of their work.

> Maybe before we didn't know
> That Corey is afraid to go
> To school, the store, to roller-skate
> He cries a lot for a boy of eight.
> But now we know each day is true
> That other girls and boys cry too.
> They cry for us to lend a hand.
> Time for us to make a stand.

A recent organisational effectiveness survey estimated that nearly 65% of the population don't know why they bother to go to work, beyond doing it for the money, but research indicates that the 35% who have identified a clear purpose are up to eight times more effective. Other research shows that people with a clearly identified purpose are less likely to suffer illness and absence. Yet still, most people either ignore it or instead waste time creating what former Burger King supremo Barry Gibbons dubbed 'crumbug statements' (because they contain a mixture of crap and humbug) that mean little to those they are aimed at.

I often help to identify organisational purposes, in both voluntary and commercial organisations, by asking the simple question: 'if you didn't exist, who would miss you and why?'

When I worked in the UK's oldest manufacturing plant, this exercise produced some fascinating differences between leaders and the majority of staff. The leaders suggested that the company shareholders would miss them because they would not realise their return on their investments. On the other hand, the staff responded by suggesting that they were proud of following in the footsteps of their fathers and grandfathers before them and wanted to leave a legacy for their own children to come and work there. Our mission, therefore, was amended to suggest that we existed to 'leave a legacy.' We allowed each individual to answer who they were leaving a legacy for.

The management guru, Tom Peters, refers to an approach which he calls 'leadfrogging,' where people who are achieving success are highlighted as good examples. Liquid Thinking offers this same process of 'creating heroes.' I have seen the impact in the youth club I run when one member can achieve success, such as going to the Olympic Games, and how it can inspire others to want to improve.

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I have, therefore, produced books which do exactly that and tell employees' own stories. Liquid Thinking books are designed for individual workplaces which capture the stories of local employees. In Port Sunlight, I told of Brian Higginson, a factory safety officer, who shared the deeply personal story of how he and his wife had struggled to beat breast cancer.

Another story highlights how Steve Byrne, an engineer, surmounted numerous obstacles and setbacks to achieve his life long dream of building a house. The book offers steps on how to attain success and then makes it inspirational by recognising and celebrating these acts of heroism in the working environment.

This brings me back to the point where I began. It is all too easy to become myopic about the myriad challenges which we face at work and spend our time addressing issues which are urgent and need our immediate attention. Liquid Thinking allows us an opportunity to step outside of our usual environment and realise the millions of different ways to help engage others and allow people to fulfil their potential.

This is, surely, the raison d'etre for Human Resources.

Are you a Liquid Thinker?

DAMIEN HUGHES

Leading Like Madiba: Leadership lessons from Nelson Mandela

by MARTIN KALUNGU-BANDA

Published by Double Storey Books Cape Town 2006
Soft back, 126 pages,
ISBN 1-77013-044-6

What an absolute, uplifting joy it was to read this book! Martin Kalungu-Banda has taken stories from Nelson Mandela's life and extracted the leadership lessons from each one. And how amazing they are! I am tempted to say if you want to read ONE book on leadership about someone who embodies being a great leader, this is the book to read. It will inspire you. Of course we each embody leadership in our own unique way, however, there are lessons here for each of us and ideas that we can each try out that will improve our leadership.

There are 22 short stories, each with a different leadership lesson and a note Martin calls 'Food for Thought'. There are also lovely black and white photos of Mandela to illustrate the stories. The stories and lessons are quite simple, but all the more powerful for their simplicity. I suppose a bit like Mr. Mandela himself! I found many of the stories gave me something to aspire to.

At the end of the book, Martin distils the lessons down even further so that there are six main lessons for you to take forward. This is a most wonderful book which I can highly recommend – enjoyable, easy reading with a powerful and memorable punch.

TRICIA LUSTIG
Lasa Developement UK Ltd

Liquid Leadership
Paperback, 119 pages

The Liquid Thinking Survival Guide to Change
Paperback, 140 pages

Liquid Thinking
Published by Liquidthinker Ltd. Manchester 2008
Paperback, 143 pages
ISBN 978-0-9551848-0-2

All books available from www.liquidthinker.com. Part of the proceeds from each book will go to the Collyhurst and Moston Lads Club.

By DAMIAN HUGHES

All three of these books were written as coaching manuals for people – the first one around awakening the leadership within people (leading of self) – urging them to take responsibility and take action. The second is around leading others – what do you need to do to motivate, inspire and change your life and the lives of others; and the third one is around how do you deal with change and how can you improve how you interact around change.

All three are designed as workbooks with exercises for you to work through which will help you to develop your leadership or change capability. And all three have many stories from sporting heroes and well known people so you learn what other people do and how other people lead.

As developers, our role is to help others to develop their leadership. We are therefore, more self-aware than most. So you might find some of the exercises a bit simple. However, if you are coaching a person or a team of leaders who themselves are just starting down the 'path' of self-awareness, you might find these very useful workbooks to give to people – useful tools supporting your own work with the person or team.

In particular if you find yourself working with 'macho' people who don't 'do' feelings, the examples from famous sporting heroes talking about what they do and how they lead might convince people to give it a try themselves.

TRICIA LUSTIG
Lasa Developement UK Ltd

The Change Handbook (2nd Ed)

PEGGY HOLMAN, TOM DEVANE and STEVEN CADY

Published by Berrett-Koehler, San Francisco CA. 2007.
Paperback 732pp £31.99
ISBN-10: 1-57675-379-4
ISBN-13: 978-1-57675-579-8

The Change Handbook is a 'must-have' for anyone working in the field of organisation development whether in the public sector, small to multinational business, community and not for profit organisations, education or consulting. It is a major reference text, rightly described on the cover as "The Definitive Resource on Today's Best Methods for Engaging Whole Systems". It is, to my knowledge, only book that provides such a comprehensive view into the wide variety of change methods from around the world in one place. The first edition was published in 1999 and is now updated with the latest change methods that have emerged since the first edition was published and the removal of now outdated methods.

In all, the book covers 61 processes. 19 of the more well-established practices such as Appreciative Inquiry, Dialogue and Deliberation. Open Space Technology, Technology of Participation, World Café, Future Search, Scenario Thinking, Rapid Results and Six Sigma, are given in-depth chapters written by the leaders in the community of practice, in many cases the original designer □ names like David Cooperrider, Harrison Owen, Marshall Rosenberg, Dick and Emily Axelrod, Marvin Weisbord, Sandra Janoff and Diana Whitney are among the chapter authors. The other 42 chapters are described as thumbnails □ briefer overviews of the method, In some cases these methods are long established, or hybrids or developments of core methodologies, but also there are outlines of new, leading- edge techniques that bring an originality and challenge to the subject.

As you would expect from a comprehensive reference text covering so many methods, none of the chapters contains a complete 'how to' guide, but there is an overview of the basics, usually illustrated with some examples, answers to the frequently asked questions on the method, a table of uses, and where to go for more information. In addition the in-depth chapters contain sections on getting started, the roles and responsibilities of sponsors and facilitators, the theory base and conditions for success.

The methods are grouped into Adaptable – ones that can be used for a variety of purposes; Planning – about helping people shape the future; Structuring which seek to redefine relationships or work practices; Improving methods to increase effectiveness; and Supportive methods which enhance the efficacy of other change methods. There is an overview matrix in the introductory section and a one page quick summary of each method at the end of the book which allow quick comparisons and method selection. Chapters on mixing and matching; outcomes, sustainability and measurement; and future speculation round out the introduction and epilogue to the main text.

As you would expect from the standard of the authors and the 90 or so international contributors who supply the meat of the text, the articles are informative and authoritative. It is no mean feat by the editors to have compiled such a wide set of contributors and yet maintained a consistently high standard and style of writing throughout. It is a comprehensive and useable resource in the area of whole system change. For anyone remotely involved in the subject it is an invaluable asset. My copy is already well used and will probably stay on the desktop rather than being returned to the bookshelf!

GEOF COX,
New Directions Ltd
Consultant and writer.

Is Leadership the New Black? Becoming a Resonant Leader

ANNIE MCKEE, RICHARD BOYATSIS, FRANCES JOHNSTON

Published by Harvard Business Press, Boston MA. 2008.
Paperback, 229pp, £13.99
ISBN 978-1-4221-1737-7

Total Leadership

STEWART D. FRIEDMAN

Published by Harvard Business Press, Boston MA. 2008.
Hardback, 248pp, £14.99
ISBN 978-1-4221-0328-9

Crucibles of Leadership

ROBERT J. THOMAS

Published by Harvard Business Press, Boston MA. 2008.
Hardback, 263pp, £16.99
ISBN 978-1-59139-137-1

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Followership

BARBARA KELLERMAN

Published by Harvard Business Press, Boston MA. 2008. Hardback, 302pp, £16.99 ISBN 978-1-4221-0368-5

It seems as though Harvard Business Press is in a leadership cycle. Three books appeared on my desk in as many weeks from this publisher that dealt directly with the subject of leadership, and one with the essential element of followership.

All three leadership books approach leadership as something to be developed from within oneself rather than a series of techniques to be learned. They all seek, in their own ways, to help the reader find an authentic style – one true to personal values and experience. Thus they are all, in part, self help texts that guide the reader to draw conclusions for themselves on their own leadership style. They require reflective practice and invite the completion of a number of exercises to tease out the underlying learning's, values and experiences which shape leadership personality, and build on these to enhance practice.

The McKee, Boyatzis and Johnson book has the most number of exercises and activities. Built on their previous work using Emotional Intelligence as a core component of leadership (they were co-authors of Primal Leadership with Daniel Goleman), Becoming a Resonant Leader takes the reader on a journey to identify their ideal leader profile and create a learning map to take them there.

Exercises to uncover beliefs and values, analysing stories about best and worst leaders, looking at defensive routines and life's wake up calls build a picture of self awareness. Identifying values, life lines, career patterns, social networks and personal preferences help to create a personal vision. Setting personal learning goals, building support systems and action steps then bridge the gap between the current reality and the ideal self.

This is a genuine guide to developing leadership, wherever you practice it – be that in the family, social groups, the local scout or church groups, or in organisations at whatever level.

In Total Leadership Stew Friedman follows the outline of the leadership courses he has been pioneering both as the founder of the Wharton School of Leadership and at the Ford Motor Leadership Centre. The sub-title Be a Better Leader, Have A Richer Life gives a clue to Friedman's approach – he seeks what he calls 'four-way wins'; achieving sustainable improvements in the four domains of work, home, community and private self without having to trade one off against another.

The journey that Friedman guides us through starts by clarifying what is important and authentic to your own self, which is similar to the McKee et al process. Then, he takes a slightly different approach by looking at the stakeholder interests in all of the four domains to make it possible seek innovative and creative directions to help integrate

practice and development in all four domains – the 'four-way wins'.

Not as many exercises, but ones that require a lot of self reflection and involvement of others (like key stakeholders in conversations about expectations), with the added benefit of a number of case studies and examples of the course alumni who have been on the journey and have inspiring stories to illustrate different aspects and activities. For someone seeking to get some real balance in their life, or to asses and identify their leadership role – perhaps as they enter a career or life stage – this would be an invaluable process to follow.

The third book on leadership, authored by Robert Thomas (who co-authored *Leading for a Lifetime* with Warren Bennis) starts with an insight – at a master class given by the choreographer Twyla Tharp she reflected that to a dancer, practice and performance are part of the same thing: the key is to practice while you perform, and vice versa. Applying this insight to leaders, Thomas identifies the importance of learning from experience, and particularly those crucibles of transformative experiences where the leader can extract their 'gold' of learning.

So, like the other two books, Thomas focuses on self awareness and identifying an authentic and personal leadership style, not selling a particular model or style. The approach differs in the focus of the reflection, using these crucible events – often unplanned and traumatic – to help to analyse

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not just how we lead but also how we learn. The crucible events he relates in the illustrative examples from leaders in organisations that range from UPS to the Hells Angels include teenage experiences, the death of a worker, being mentored by a grandfather, having to take command in emergency situations.

The lessons extracted from these experiences help to craft a personal learning strategy with suggestions for activities, self assessments and exercises to help the reader to develop their effectiveness as a learner and leader – ideally integrating the two, just like a dancer. In a final section of the book, Thomas looks at organisations such as Toyota, Boeing and General Electric who have developed experience based leadership development programmes.

Despite its title, *Followership* is not a companion volume to the three on leadership, except that it focuses on how people relate to their leaders Instead it is an in depth analysis of the psychology and sociology on what makes followers. Kellerman traces the development of follower power and impact, especially over recent years and identifies five different types of follower: Isolates, Bystanders, Participants, Activists and Diehards. As each of these group names suggests, they have different levels of engagement with their leaders, from the completely withdrawn to the totally committed, and can be either in support or opposition.

Major case studies of Nazi Germany, Merck, the Roman Catholic Church in America and the US military illustrate each group of follower behaviour and their impact. And looking to the future, the growth of influence and the impact of information technology, Kellerman demonstrates that understanding follower behaviour is now more important than ever. Followers are now less likely to remain silent and are getting more strategic and bold. A lesson that many leaders would have liked to heave learned before their downfall. So this is a book for leaders as well – not just to understand follower behaviour but also to remember that leaders are also followers. To just analyse and fixate on leader behaviour distorts the relationship between them and followers.

GEOF COX,
Consultant, developer, facilitator
and author
New Directions Ltd

British Vocational Qualifications (10th Ed)

Subtitled 'A Directory of Vocational Qualifications Available in the UK' it's an ideal tool for anyone who needs to find out what vocational qualifications are available for age 19 plus. For an individual who wants to find out what subjects there are to choose from go straight to Part 2, the main directory, to look up a topic you know or get ideas by browsing through the 110 subjects available, listed alphabetically from Accountancy via Footwear and Photography to Uniformed Services and Woodwork.

It will tell you the levels the qualifications are offered at, whether Apprenticeships are offered, but it won't tell you the content or the subject matter of courses, or where they run. It identifies the Awarding Body so go to Part 3, the next section on Sources of Information, to look up the Awarding Body's contact details and get on to their website to find out all the information they have available about the qualification and how to find courses.

The information in Part 1 of this directory sets the context for Education and Employment, explaining the significance of Regulatory Authorities and Awarding Bodies; Skills Councils and Development Agencies; the different Qualifications – NVQ's; SVQ's and VRQ's and recognised qualification levels from entry level up to level 8, through the National Qualifications Framework and how they link to the Framework for Higher Education Qualification levels – helpfully set out in a full page table. Apprenticeships are explained in detail.

Part 3 has an excellent list of Acronyms – the initials of 127 organisations who are the Associations; Professional Institutes; Societies; Trusts and Worshipful Companies; the Awarding Bodies and Sources of Further Information, whose contact details are given in full, including telephone numbers and websites for quick access.

Part 4 gives a directory of 'Active Further Education Colleges' throughout the UK as a starting point for readers to identify providers of vocational qualifications. It provides a quick reference to the Colleges in your area, again with telephone numbers and website details. The book is well laid out for quick reference with clear Contents pages and a guide on 'How To Use This Book' that promised

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a further Part 5 – an index of all qualifications listed, which however was not included – but the book seems to me to work quite satisfactorily without it.

JILL LANG, CFCIPD
People Potential Partnership Ltd.

Successful Interviewing and Recruitment

DR. ROB YEUNG
Publisher: Kogan Page
Paperback: pp 176. £ 8.99
ISBN 978 0 7494 5164 6

Dr Yeung provides relevant and above all readable information of use to managers with a passing knowledge of the subject who want to do a good job and get successful recruits, and to HR professionals as a reminder of good practice and how to help line managers to be effective interviewers.

The book starts with the benefits of bothering to learn to interview well – to persuade those interviewers 'who know it when they see it' that they don't, and the pitfalls of believing preconceived ideas about firm handshakes and eye contact.

One of the book's most useful messages for an interviewer is to remember that recruitment is a two-way process and how important it is to treat candidates with respect at every stage from attraction through to acceptance. Unfortunately this is surprisingly easy to forget when immersed in the process, but how frustrating if after protracted deliberation by the interviewer, their carefully chosen candidate declines their job offer because of the rude way they felt they were treated that has put them off working for the organisation altogether.

The importance of structuring the interview is explained with practical help in choosing useful styles of questioning, the importance of listening well and avoiding questions that add no value or get you invited to employment tribunals for discrimination; with examples to help restructure questions to ask what you really need to know that is relevant to the job.

Having explained the vital importance of researching the main elements of the job to be done and the skills, experience and style required for a person to be successful in the role - the competencies, Yeung provides an excellent plain language guide to competencies and developing competency–based interview questioning for the key elements of the job. This enables the interviewer to spend the majority of the interview time confidently obtaining valuable evidence on what the candidate has actually done in their previous experience that is relevant to the job, as the best predictor of future performance, avoiding 'theory', 'exaggeration' and even downright lies.

Many experienced interviewers struggle to discuss money or wrap up interviews effectively, and Yeung gives useful hints here and on avoiding the many difficulties in decision making afterwards - in comparing candidates fairly with each other; in comparing different interviewers findings; on determining whether any of the candidates is suitable, or whether deciding on the 'best' candidate is just a matter of arithmetic.

The later chapters complete the process with thoroughness - reviewing and evaluating what you have done to make improvements next time; creating documents to support the process and providing an interviewer guide for consistency; ending with Yeung's '10 Commandments' that should become every recruiter's screen saver.

JILL LANG, CFCIPD
People Potential Partnership Ltd.

What Got You Here Won't Get You There: How successful people become even more successful!

MARSHALL GOLDSMITH with MARK REITER

Published by Profile Books, London 2008
Soft back, 236 pages,
ISBN 978-1-846681-37-0

According to this book, Marshall Goldsmith is 'corporate America's pre-eminent executive coach.' He has written a book for highly successful people on how to capitalise on – and improve on – their success.

He starts by talking about your success and how you got near the top of your organisation. And why it is just this success that stops you from wanting to change and also stops your progress.

He then identifies twenty different habits that stop you from

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reaching the top. He reckons that most people approaching the top will have one or more of these. The twenty-first habit of Goal Obsession is shared by all. Once you've identified which are your particular habits, you can work on changing them. He suggests seven strategies you can use to improve these habits (and gain new ones).

It is easy to read, has clear presentation of the ideas with case studies. Ostensibly the reader is supposed to be able to self-coach, but I don't think that would be possible with these issues. Certainly, it would be very difficult. And Goldsmith assumes you already know something about the basic premises of coaching. Of course you can always get Goldsmith to coach you himself, but perhaps a better way to use this book would be to get your coach to read it and help you. Or, if you are a coach, to see how much if it rings true for your experience with your clients. How much of it could you use yourself in your practise? Might this be a book you could give a prospect to read (big name, US coach as author) to help them understand why they need a coach?

There are certainly some great ideas here for upping your game, although they are not easy to implement – I guess if they were, you wouldn't need coaching.

There are many coaching books out there these days and I didn't feel this one was a big 'Wow!' of difference. It is solid, it has a model that is useful, especially with very senior executives and it can give you some good ideas. It is pleasant enough to read too. However, it is taken solely from Marshall Goldsmith's own

experience. What works for him as a coach, may not work for you. I found myself thinking how I would do things differently as I am a different person. That said, case studies make it easy to see how to pragmatically use what is suggested, even if one can't see academic rigour behind his methods. It may well be there, it just isn't evident.

So, if you collect coaching books and like to look at different styles of coaching or if you only coach senior executives, it is worth buying. If you are looking for one book as a basic 'how to', there are other books that will serve you better.

TRICIA LUSTIG
LASA Development UK Ltd

*Beyond Bullsh*t: Straight-Talk at work*

SAMUEL A. CULBERT
Foreword by Warren Bennis

*Published by Kogan Page,
London 2008
Hardback, 168 pages
ISBN 978-0-749453-19-0*

An intriguing title and certainly something I expect we'd all agree we need more of (the straight-talk at work bit). Professor Culbert has studied this area for almost 40 years and has written several books on the subject. This book was first published by Stanford Business Books in California and I'm afraid I quickly picked up on its US feel. For a start, he uses an asterisk instead of an 'i' when talking about bullshit. The other thing that caught my attention was the use of the word 'cohort'. I had to find an American Dictionary

to be sure of what it meant: 'a companion or associate'.

That aside, Culbert defines what he means by bullshit at work and then looks at when it is and isn't needed. Sometimes it is necessary, he says, to use in an organisation in order for things to work. He identifies how to tell when it is necessary and when it isn't. He also talks about when we are bullshitting ourselves and don't know it and how we might uncover that – very important if we want to have less of it around us.

Next he goes into how we can use straight-talk instead – what do we need to do in order to enable it to happen. His first requirement is that we use 'I-speak'. You use it because you want self- and other-integrity. It enables power-sharing, win/win working and two sided accountability. Straight talk is different to truth-telling and candour; truth-telling entails unilateral honesty and is specific to a moment, candour is marked by give-and-take honesty, is topic specific and usually occurs from time to time, while straight talk is specific to a relationship, not exclusive of any particular incident or topic.

Another requirement is to invest energy into the relationship. And you need to check that what the other person heard is what you meant to say. But to do so you will need to balance things out – you want to keep the relationship on good footing as well as getting your communication across – you need to maintain the other person's goodwill.

The final section is on how to apply what has been discussed.

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Can you use it with your boss? Culbert's view is that it is usually not possible – bosses usually don't have "skin in the game" commitment to your success and well-being which is essential for straight-talk to work.

He only recommends using straight-talk where people are able and willing to follow through and reciprocate. So while it is a good thing to practise, you do need to think about it quite carefully and build up a relationship with a colleague before you start. You need a strong foundation for the relationship to withstand the occasional lapses that happen.

The final advice he gives is that if you are interested in straight-talk "the absolute best thing you can do is listen." That would go a long way to helping any communication!

Having read the book I think it will be valuable for young managers and first level leaders; people with up to 10 years of experience in the workplace. For those with more experience, I doubt you would find much that is startling or new. Of course the way the cake is cut may be different to your thinking; therefore you may get some interesting insights into your own (and other's) behaviour. There is always something new to learn. If you are experienced I would only recommend this if you have a special interest in the subject.

TRICIA LUSTIG
LASA Development UK Ltd