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Conscious Business

Part 1

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developing people
developing organisations

Guest Editors: Rob Warwick and Pete Burden

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conscious business, conscious capitalism, corporate social responsibility (CSR), ethics, awareness, process, consciousness

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Introduction

Welcome to this special edition of *e-O&P* - on Conscious Business.

These are two words that initially may not seem to fit together. Both bring very different meanings. Our aim is to test and work with these meanings and to explore the implications for organisations, people and practice. In this edition of *e-O&P*, and the next one (Conscious Business, Part 2), we hope to give you a flavour of what 'conscious business' is all about, and why we believe it is an approach with something to add.

What is it? We believe that it is not a thing. Instead, being conscious is a process of being alert and alive to the situations that one is a part of. To talk about conscious business as a thing, along with definitions and labels, is to fix it. Although this might enable us to share meaning it also damages the very nature of being conscious and aware. We are then caught in a bind that affects much of the discussion.

So, rather than give you our definition, or a necessarily over-simplified framework, we would rather that understanding emerges from the process of listening to the contributors' stories and thoughts. We will then be sharing in the process of developing some joint meaning.

By adopting this approach we are valuing the role of our consciousness as editors, and of yours as readers. We have tried to observe the development of our own consciousness as we worked on the journal - compiling it, engaging with the authors and publishers, and in writing this editorial. And we hope you will equally note your own consciousness as you read.

Why Conscious Business is important

People say that 'business isn't working'. They point to 'fat cats' getting richer, environmental damage, lethal working conditions for many people who bring us much of what we buy in the shops, and to rates of 'progress' that seems unsustainable.

However, turning that around, we can also see that business has been a force for good in the world. Directly or indirectly it has led to many of the advances that we rely on in health care, food, housing, education, the internet, computing and so on.

It is our view that business can be more of a force for good. But for this to happen we need to develop and sustain a consciousness by which we hold ourselves and others to account - in our day-to-day work.

Frameworks and schema

This way of thinking about conscious business is different from the schema and frameworks that have been traditionally relied upon.

Consciousness is perhaps sometimes confused with conscience, or with ethics.

We've had Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), corporate responsibility, ethical business, responsible business, sustainable business and so on. The UK's Tomorrow's Company project has been running since 1993 - more than 20 years. Many of these approaches have been linked with some sort of ethical or moral schema or framework. These frameworks can then be applied, scored and compared in a form of benchmarking or transfer of 'best practice'. These approaches are no doubt important and they can point to many achievements.

But they also bring problems and questions including: How do we face the challenges of everyday life? Whose view is right? Whose ethics should we adopt?

Rob's experience in becoming a CSR Assessor with the European Foundation in Quality Management (EFQM) also showed him that the time spent focusing on policies, metrics and score sheets somehow meant the day-to-day reality was missing; in other words, this constituted ethics without full consciousness.

There was another problem too: there was a 'distancing' between those who measured and assessed and those who were subject to that assessment. Things become abstract - a score in a box or a few lines of text. To our minds this approach serves to dull awareness and consciousness of how our actions are affecting what is around us. It becomes an inflexible and unresponsive process.

We live in an interconnected world. There are some factors we are aware of, others that we are not, factors that come to affect us today, others in years or generations to come. Frameworks and benchmarking schemes can only get us part way - there is a longer journey and we argue that it starts with a close examination of ourselves and our impact with others.

A good starting point, therefore, is the idea that conscious business is an ongoing process, and that it is embedded in your own experience - where you are. This may be uncomfortable - it forces constant questioning, and holding ourselves and others to account, as we will see in some of the articles below. It is a struggle that is sometimes accompanied by self-doubt and hesitancy as to how we make sense of what we

do in the face of daily problems that challenge us and our values. Indeed, this was the invitation that we offered to the authors - to reflect upon their own role in the situations they describe.

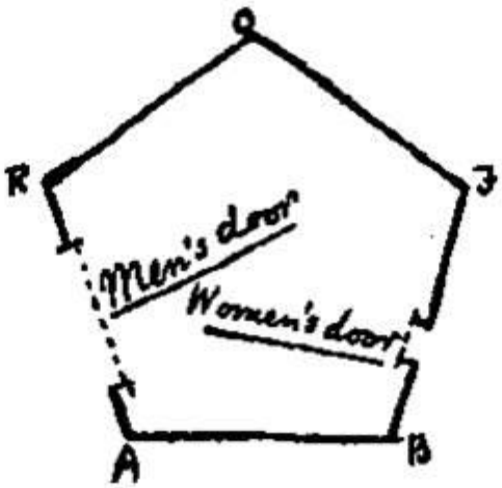
Conscious business has the potential to help us think differently about business; thinking *with* action as opposed to thinking *before* action, paying attention to the logic of business as well as emotion, feeling and instinct and intuition. We hope the stories in this edition highlight some of that as well.

Life in different dimensions

To explore this further we offer a slight detour into the world of Edwin Abbott Abbott and his best known work, the 1884 novella Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions. Here he explores the world of different dimensions - starting in a two dimensional world - as illustrated in figure 1.

Figure 1: A house in Abbott Abbott's two dimensional world

(click here, to see page 17)



At one point in the book the narrator, in his two dimensional world, is visited by a sphere. However, because the narrator has not heard of a sphere, or imagined its possibility, he uses his only frame of reference at hand, and so interprets this new object as a line. Both the narrator and sphere think they have a good understanding of the situation – and they do, but they are at cross purposes. Over time you could imagine how this might lead to frustration, lack of trust and a breakdown of any relationship.

We draw on this example as a way of exploring the importance of context. It is only by sharing and trying to understand the context, pressures, frustrations and excitement that each of us face that we can we build bridges in meaning.

Perhaps it also points to the **value** of doing business more consciously. Usually business is focused on the outer (societal) outputs including profit. The team and organisation are then considered next. Conscious business also gives emphasis to the inner development of the individual. All three aspects are important and conscious business tries to address them all.

Having lived in a two-dimensional world, suddenly appreciating that there is a three-dimensional is an enlightening experience. For both parties it is difficult to return to their earlier view of the world. This example also points to the process of adult development - and the work of Robert Kegan and others – concerning how we grow and develop our consciousness through experience.

Moving against the flow

The first three articles in this edition show what can happen when one moves against the flow of the ways things are done, and thought about. It is important to note that conscious business is not just about safety and protection, or about the lower tiers of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Instead, there are important

implications for innovation, solving problems, building confidence, self-development and potentially achieving that goal of building a better world.

The first piece, *The emergence of the Integrative Law Movement*, is by **J Kim Wright**. Kim is a US lawyer. Here she presents a very personal account of what brought her to law and the destructive conflict between people, both within the profession and in how clients were advised to solve their problems. Conflict which initially led her to turn her back on the profession.

She discovered an alternative collaborative and integrative way of practising law that seemed a more effective and ethical way for lawyers to make a positive impact.

This is one facet to her paper; the other has relevance beyond the field of law. Here Kim points to the development of a consciousness that law, as practised in the US, needs to be 'done' differently.

Here pockets of awareness develop separately and gather at their own pace and critical mass. Different norms and sources of enthusiasm within the profession were seen to develop, all addressing a different and more integrative way of practice. This highly emergent process is still underway and gathering pace.

And there is increasingly a sense that these separate ways of working are starting to merge; on the one hand this leads to greater voice and critical mass to affect more change, but on the other there is a tension as different values and ways of working rub up against each other. There are important insights as to how the conscious business (capitalism) movement on the larger stage could develop, gather pace and how internal pressures may come to affect this.

As CEO of Propellernet, **Jack Hubbard** explores consciousness in *Extreme innovations in employee welfare* from the perspective of being a highly commercial and successful entrepreneur in the dynamic digital world. For Jack the subject is less about reflecting on self and more about action. In dealing with the realities of business he describes innovative ways, and ways that continue to evolve, of linking the success of the organisation to those who work with him.

For Jack the subject is most vividly brought to life in making people's dreams come true. Developing a joint sense of curiosity, creativity and adaptability are critical if the organisation is to innovate and address customers' shifting needs; and if those needs are met the rewards are felt by the organisation and its staff alike. This is a virtuous circle that is often broken, as Jack describes, by accountants who have a tendency to see people as 'unpredictable liabilities.' Dreams reintroduce the value of liability.

Dick Davies spent many years working for a large multinational computer manufacturer based in the US. In *Leadership in the workplace: three precepts that will revolutionise work* he describes the development of a project whose benefits were sensed but were difficult to pin down. In the account of the work between his company and another multinational in a different sector, Dick points to the development of trust and ways of working and of being conscious of the interconnected web of possibilities.

The confidence of the parties was developed to enable the next tentative step to be made, not with empty promises of certainty, but with awareness of how the group was working together. This, like Jack Hubbard's piece, grounds us in emotional connection as well as in logic. In paying attention to these processes, Dick offers an additional way that organisations can work, or at least become able openly to recognise that these processes exist and have value.

All three of these contributions have in common the way emerging opportunities, conversations and contexts developed and how these were responded to in the moment. There was little by way of the application of pre-given thought or schema. All three experiences, in different ways, communicated a contagious clarity and built confidence that led to further effective action. All - some more overtly, some perhaps less so - leveraged the power of emotion and relationships to build their success. Part of our premise is that insufficient attention is paid to the importance of these qualities, and to the abilities needed to work with them.

One characteristic that is important to notice is that consciousness enables new connections to be made between people, thus giving careful voice to issues of emotion, rationality and intuition. We can also integrate the arts and science, the physical and mental, order and disorder.

Changing ourselves

The next three pieces build on the clues given by Kim, Jack and Dick, and explore these processes in more detail. Consciousness in business has the potential to enable vital movements of thought, to see things differently; or, as we saw in the case of Flatland, to see a flat line as a sphere. The articles all share one thing in common: how the views of the authors and those around them made a shift that has resulted in different action.

Gandhi urged us '… to be the change we wish to see in the world'.

Paul Levy's article, *Developing a conscious small business: an emerging view*, focuses on start-up businesses and fledgling entrepreneurs. Without established structures, histories and cultures, new organisations work differently and it is this that Paul addresses in a novel approach to action learning. Here he explores his experience of running a more open approach to action learning that involves people from small organisations coming along to 'drop in sessions' with different but like-minded people. Different in the sense of companies, markets, customers, but like-minded in the challenges participants face as start-ups and in the interests they share in becoming conscious businesses.

Like Kim, Paul also addresses the nature of a wider community that comes to emerge and how this has a broader and greater impact than had been envisaged.

Alison Donaldson offers us another approach in developing consciousness; that of using narrative to capture the essence of people's experience of working together over a long periods of time. In *Learning from experience: why history matters in organisational life* she offers this as an additional and alternative way by which we can think of organisations. Our usual frame is one of rationality, logic and managerialism but this hides much of what happened in organisations as people make sense of what they do.

Alison draws on a case study spanning several years that involved writing and tracking narratives of important events in a large UK-based charity. It is in this process that people can develop their awareness as to how things have come to be as they are - this means taking our experience seriously. Alison prompts us to notice taken-for-granted assumptions that we may otherwise not be aware of.

The enormity of change can lead to paralysis. This is how **Patrick Crawford** felt in realising the challenges ahead for us all when it comes to climate change. It is a paralysis we can also sometimes sense in societies, governments and perhaps in ourselves as individuals. This is the subject of *Climate Change from a Personal Perspective.*

With this challenge in mind Patrick, along with others, set about bringing about change, by introducing a local currency in a UK town. Its aims centred on supporting the local economy and producers and reducing the amount of carbon dioxide emitted to the atmosphere.

The 'act of action' had a different effect from the stick that is often wielded by distant people keen on advocacy and rhetoric - an approach that too often leaves people feeling beaten and powerless. In this process Patrick and his colleagues started to enable concrete change, but there were other and perhaps more important benefits too.

In a way that perhaps defied prediction Patrick became immersed in a greater shared concern. This led to further action and thought about climate change. This new consciousness re-informs his work with a much larger initiative at the other end of the scale - working with the Global 500 - the 500 biggest businesses in the world - on their awareness of climate.

In this article Patrick reconciles the vast, almost untouchable agenda of climate change, with local action that makes a difference, and particularly with an individual's - his own - sensemaking of this. We all have power; Patrick has chosen to use his to facilitate action and connections that brings about reflective thought and helped him create his own context for further development and change.

Conscious Business, Conscious Capitalism and beyond

There is, of course, a broader conversation going on beyond the rather small world we are discussing here. In early 2013 the two of us (Rob and Pete) were invited to a small lunch gathering with Raj Sisodia. Raj is the co-author, along with the Whole Foods Market CEO and great advocate of conscious business John Mackey, of a book called *Conscious Capitalism: Liberating the Heroic Spirit of Business* (Mackey & Sisodia, 2013). Eight or nine of us sat down to lunch in a small London Club in Pimlico. Raj gave us a clear and polished definition of Conscious Capitalism and gave an overview of his research into the subject.

Future gazers and social analysts like Raj point to the big underpinning trends: an ageing population - a good thing in terms of consciousness, perhaps - the feminisation of the workforce and maybe even the development of new technologies.

From Raj and others you'll also find evidence to show that companies that follow a broadly conscious approach outperform their competitors in the **long-term**. Another important source in terms of behaviour in business is Fred Kofman (2006). In both you will see perspectives of the micro (the personal) and the macro (the organisational) at work.

Hidden in both these approaches are suggestions that there is more to conscious capitalism (or conscious business) than the confident rhetoric might imply. John Mackey, a highly successful businessman, seems to be a sensitive, rounded human being. We would not claim to know him well but our sense is that Conscious

Capitalism - the movement - is as much born from the power of human vulnerability, emotion and intuition as it is from business plans, logic and the 'rational'.

Behind it, if you look, you may also find the world of Ken Wilber, Clare Graves and others.

And of course beyond Conscious Business and Conscious Capitalism there is a whole world of related initiatives. These range from meditation to government policy, from new ways of thinking about money, to the learning economy and employee ownership. These are all part of a wider trend towards improving the way business is done. Some of these may be conscious, some less so.

We believe the trends Raj identified are playing out under many other labels.

But what is Conscious Business - am I any the wiser?

So, after all this, maybe we should again return to the question of what is conscious business? We have offered some different thoughts and have invited you to draw your own conclusions based upon your experience and context. But all of us have to take ownership for what the world means and what we intend to do in it.

If you look you will find communities of practice, places where you can learn and develop your skills and engage in conversations that will sustain you. Pete started one with one of his business partners, **Jamie Pyper**. It is called Conscious Business UK and is described in *Conscious Business in Action*. You are very welcome to come along.

We hope that we have built some shared understanding between you as the reader, the authors and us as guest editors to take the next meaningful steps. These steps have no certainty or guarantee of success but are an important opportunity for us all. We hope they help in the process of raising consciousness in business. The conversations that we hope to have stimulated here will continue in the Spring 2014 edition of *e-O&P* – 'Conscious Business Part 2.'

Acknowledgements

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And finally to Alison, Dick, Jack, Kim, Patrick, and Paul who gave up their time to share their thoughts with us.

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Kofman, F. (2006) *Conscious Business - How to Build Values Through Values.* Boulder: Sounds True Inc.

Mackey, J. and Sisodia, R. (2013) *Conscious Capitalism: Liberating the Heroic Spirit of Business*, Boston: Harvard Business Review Press.

Suggested reading

Beyond the Corporation: Humanity Working by David Erdal

Betterness by Umair Haque

Culture Shock by Will McInnes

Employees First Customers Second by Vineet Nayar

The Seven Day Weekend by Ricardo Semler

The Art of Happiness at Work by the Dalai Lama

Immunity to Change by Robert Kegan and Lisa Lahey

On Becoming a Person by Carl Rogers

The Subtleties and the Exploits of Mulla Nasrudin: Two Volumes in One

The cover picture

Photo by: D.J Clark

As with the traffic jams in the picture, many in the business world trundle along following the fads and trends created by those immediately ahead. This in turn may develop into a lack of awareness of how these practices are affecting them, their colleagues and stakeholders. The effects are felt both now and have implications for the future.

As we see with the cyclist, being aware of their own practice and attitudes means conscious people and organisations can hold themselves and others to account, and be more aware of what is happening around them in the moment.

They are agile, able to weave their way through the congestion of 'the ways things are done around here' and to produce results that are sustainable; to be profitable, and to reduce harm now and in the future.

About the guest editors

For more than 30 years, **Pete Burden** has worked in many businesses in several industries, mainly those severely disrupted by social change and technology. Several successful, innovative, and sometimes ground-breaking groups and organisations have emerged. He founded Conscious Business UK, a fledgling community-run organisation that helps spread experience of Conscious Business practice in the UK. He is also a founding partner of CBP, a business consultancy which works with purpose-led, entrepreneurial businesses on strategy, structure, culture and leadership.

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After 14 years in the NHS, latterly in strategic change, and a variety of consultancy roles, Rob is now Senior Lecturer in management and leadership at Chichester University. **Rob Warwick** has a doctorate in healthcare policy, focusing on the interaction between policy and frontline practice. His particular interest is the role of narrative in organisations and personal development and how this might be used to explore reflexivity, complexity and power relations in groups and how we can become more conscious of our impact. He can be reached at robertjwarwick@gmail.com; http://www.linkedin.com/profile/view?id=6061681

The emergence of the Integrative Law Movement

J Kim Wright

It has been said that the role of doctors is to heal the body, of ministers to heal the soul and of lawyers to heal relationships. Law provides the foundation for relationships, providing an institutional container for society's values and mores. It defines the social contract and helps to govern, define and end relationships. Lawyers are political and social leaders who can wreak havoc or bring calm and certainty to uneasy situations. They can solve problems creatively or stand in the way of progress.

What if lawyers were peacemakers? What if you took your hardest problems to a lawyer to be solved? And what if you could count on receiving compassionate listening from your lawyer? What if lawyers saw themselves as agents of transformation, helping their clients heal their conflicts and prevent them from legal problems? How would such a legal profession change the world?

There is a movement of Integrative Lawyers who are transforming themselves and the law. Like integrative medicine, integrative law seeks to bring together the analytical, evidence-based approaches with the emergent humanistic, caring and healing approaches.
This article describes my journey, which parallels the journey of the movement and of many lawyers who are creating a new paradigm of law.

Keywords

law, legal system, emergence, conscious contracts, integrative law, sharing law, earth jurisprudence, peacemaking

The emergence of the Integrative Law Movement

Authors Margaret Wheatley and Deborah Frieze of the Berkana Institute understand how social movements evolve. Wheatley and Frieze (http://margaretwheatley.com/articles/emergence.html) break down the Life Cycle of Emergence into these three steps (which I have greatly simplified.)

1. The **Creation of Networks**, connecting like-minded individuals who are focused on their own best interests.
2. **Communities of Practice**, where these individuals learn together and act not only for their own good but for the common good.
3. **Systems of Influence** emerge where the ideas have power and influence.

My story

I started law school in 1987. I was 29 years old and married with a blended family of seven kids at home. We were politically and socially active, making a difference in our community. My Libertarian husband was sometimes arrested for civil disobedience and it seemed that there was always a family law issue. I wasn't sure I wanted to practise law, but I knew that my complex family needed a lawyer.

As one of the first members of my family to go to college, I didn't know much about law school. I was prepared for hard work and, trusting that a path would open, I dove into the experience. I commuted 40 miles each way, worked full-time in our family business, raised my family, stayed active in politics, and somehow managed to study. I joined a group of students working to bring an American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) chapter to the law school, to help fight for civil rights. I became a volunteer Guardian Ad Litem, advocating in court for the best interests of abused and neglected children. I started a support group for Parents At Law School (PALS).

All law students are smart and achievers. I expected to do well because I always had.

One day a fellow student came to me and said that I was working too hard, that he thought I must have too much time on my hands. He knew our family business was a cash-based business and he thought maybe the Internal Revenue Service would be interested in looking at our books. He had therefore called and filed a complaint with the IRS, asking them to investigate us.

It was my first taste of the ugliness of the legal culture and the cutthroat competition was so foreign to me that it wasn't until twenty years later that I realised that my fellow student's actions were instigated because he thought I was a threat. I decided that I never wanted to be a lawyer, that all lawyers were jerks.

Before I graduated from law school, I was divorced. I had gone from a teetotaller to someone who drank to relax on weekends. I was stressed and probably depressed. I'd stopped reading for pleasure and had little time or energy for my children.

A Broken System

I thought my experience with law was personal, but I've since learned that in the late 1980's and early 1990's, research was already beginning to explore just how dysfunctional the legal system was becoming. Many law students went to law school to make a difference, but by the second semester of second year had shifted to focus on making money and extrinsic measures. [See, Krieger] In general, lawyers have rates of depression that are two to three times higher than the general public. Divorce, addiction and suicide rates are much higher than average. We are a profession not happy with ourselves and the public is generally not happy with us either. Lawyers and politicians have low levels of public trust. What other profession has a whole genre of belittling jokes? Bar associations in many states have published guidelines for civility, though headlines provide plenty of evidence that lawyers are neither civil nor focused on resolution.

It doesn't seem to be getting better. Law firms are scrambling for business and hiring fewer new associates. International law firms have merged with past competitors, even filed for bankruptcy and US law grads leave school with an average of $108,000 in debt, which cannot be discharged in bankruptcy. About half of recent law grads are not working in law at all – one wonders if this is good news or bad, since a recent career survey found that associate attorney is the unhappiest job in America. [Forbes] Many blame the tyranny of

the billable hour, measuring time in six minute increments, competing with colleagues for the most billable hours and promotions. Law schools are under attack for not turning out practice-ready lawyers, applications are down at almost all law schools, and even President Obama suggested that the third year of law school may be a waste of resources. I wish I could say that the statistics in other countries are better. Unfortunately, similar stories can be told about lawyers around the world.

All of this plus substantive law can't keep up with societal change. Old systems are not responsive. Precedent changes slowly and life is changing fast.

It is no wonder that many choose to leave the profession. And I almost didn't even start.

Not everyone flees the broken system.

After law school, I continued to work for social change. Just to prove that I could, I passed two bar exams, but I adamantly didn't practise law and even moved to a state where I wasn't licensed.

In November, 1993, I was in a seminar when a tall, distinguished man stood up. He introduced himself to the classroom: Forrest Bayard, from Chicago, Illinois, a lawyer whose practice was focused on divorce, making sure that everyone was granted dignity in the process and that husband and wife could be amicable co-parents after the divorce.

I recognised a new paradigm when I heard it. Within a few months, I had passed another bar exam and was on my way to practising law.

I soon learned that the type of practice Forrest was describing had a name: Collaborative Law, the brain child of American lawyer, Stuart Webb. Stu was a family lawyer who grew weary of the polarisation and nastiness of divorce trials. His Buddhist principles of do-no-harm didn't align with doing battle in courtrooms, destroying families and harming children. So, after considering whether to leave law completely, instead he invented a new way of practising law, a respectful process for resolving conflict in divorces. Though many versions of Collaborative Law have emerged, some with multidisciplinary teams of professionals working together to help families, the basic requirement is a signed agreement with husband, wife and their lawyers agreeing to work together, focusing on settlement. If they can't resolve the case out of court, the lawyers resign and the husband and wife start over with litigators. The possibility of withdrawal and starting over is a huge incentive for everyone to roll up their sleeves and work hard, so most collaborative divorces do resolve outside of court.

I also learned that Stu's idea was further developed at potlucks with local lawyers in his community. He often describes how hardened litigators came to potlucks, casseroles in hand, and after breaking bread with opposing lawyers, were more inclined to focus on resolution when they next met their adversaries in the courthouse. The potluck community led to a cornerstone of collaborative practice: practice groups which focus on building community, learning together and helping families.

When I opened my new practice, I was excited to become a collaborative lawyer. Instead, I ran squarely into the old paradigm legal system. Instead of giving up, armed with my new vision of what I was possible, my law practice became a laboratory of new models of practising law. I developed friendly relationships with my colleagues. I learned about restorative justice, the many forms of mediation, holistic law, therapeutic jurisprudence, creative problem-solving, and a dozen other approaches. I experimented with

different business models. I offered flat rates rather than hourly billing. I hired a social worker to work with clients and offered support groups for clients and their children. I talked with my clients and we connected. Sometimes I hugged them and they hugged me.

I soon learned that working with intimate issues in my clients' lives required me to do my own inner work. I became an enthusiastic consumer of human potential and personal growth. Doing my work helped me to facilitate my clients' work in resolving conflicts. I developed my empathy and compassion. Identifying and living in alignment with my own purpose and values gave me a context for the work in the broader legal system. My own personal and spiritual growth were prerequisites for the new paradigm of law.

In the early days before the internet, I used old-fashioned research tools to learn about alternatives to litigation. By 2000, I had collected what I'd learned and posted it on-line, empowering others with the tools to change their practices. The Worldwide Web wasn't crowded in those early days and soon 100,000 visitors found the site and my phone began ringing. Day after day, I heard lawyer after lawyer say, "I thought I was alone."

I was always the one who befriended the new kid in school. I was the mother who took in lost children. So, I became the connector, having thousands of conversations with lawyers, law students and judges and introducing them to each other.

In 2007, I attended a dozen conferences, Humanizing Legal Education, Collaborative Law, Restorative Justice, Sacred Activism, Lawyers as Peacemakers, Holistic Law, etc. and was a speaker at most of them. Each conference appealed to a different segment of the community, but I could see the common threads. I knew that it was time to weave those threads together. I bought a video camera, gave up my house, my law practice and went on the road to become the full-time connector. I thought I'd be gone for about three months. It has been more than five years.

If we ever meet over a cup of tea, I'll tell you many stories of adventures and new friends. I'll talk about living in the gift economy, about synchronicities and miracles that you might not believe, though I promise they happened just that way. For now, I want to share about some of the most exciting and interesting lawyers around the globe.

Integrative Law: Shifting to purpose and values

> *Whether they refer to themselves as holistic lawyers, integrative lawyers, or conscious lawyers—or prefer no label at all—they are all talking about much the same thing: an orientation toward law practice that . . . seeks to identify the roots of conflict without assigning blame; encourages clients to accept responsibility for their problems and to recognize their opponent's humanity; and sees in every conflict an opportunity for both client and lawyer to let go of judgment, anger, and bias to grow as human beings.*
>
> -- Steven Keeva, author of *Transforming Practices, Finding Joy and Satisfaction in the Legal Life*

As more than one lawyer told me, "I woke up one morning and I couldn't do it the old way; I had to find a new way to practice law that aligned with who I am." Integrative lawyers are those whose purposes and values didn't fit the old paradigm. Rather than leave, they created something new based on their own purpose and values. Here are some examples:

Purpose-Driven Practices:

Marque Lawyers in Sydney, Australia was founded by lawyers who had reached the peak of successful careers, only to find that they were not happy. They left their traditional firms and created a new law firm with the purpose of happiness. How does one create a law firm based on happiness? One of the first tasks on the to-do list: They did away with the billable hour. The firm walks their talk in other ways, too. There is no corner office. Rather, office spaces are assigned by lottery. The centrepiece of their office is a coffee bar. Conference rooms are glass, showing their commitment to transparency.

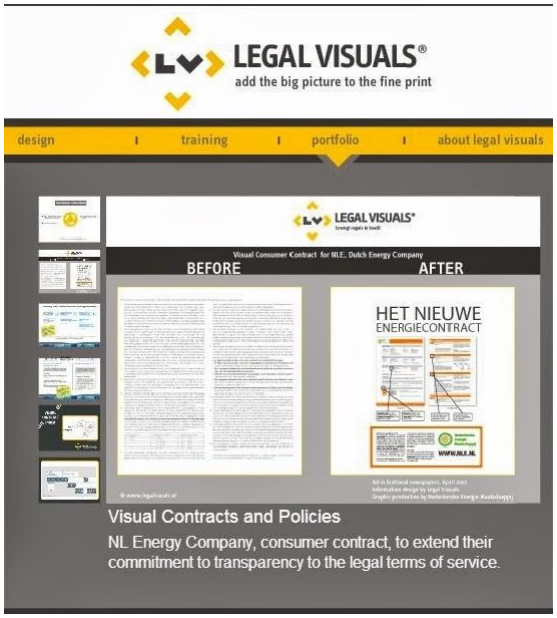
Estate-planning lawyer, Sean Mason of Santa Barbara, California, was doing some personal development and created his purpose as Love. He tells people that the purpose of his law firm is to "help clients show their love for those who are most important to them." Conscious Capitalism teaches us that purpose-driven companies earn more and have happier stakeholders. [Sisodia] Mason earned 70% more money the first year and greatly improved his quality of life and the lives of his clients.

New Models of Integrative Contracts

Milkwood Law, Creating Integrative Contracts, is in Cape Town, South Africa.

> *In addition to offering you a valid legal contract drafted by a Notary, Milkwood Law also facilitates a creative process in which you are able to identify the personal values which will inform the contents of your particular contract.*

Susanne Hoogwater, a Dutch lawyer living in the United States, using her artistic skills to create Visual Contracts. In this graphic, you don't have to read Dutch or very fine print to get an idea of how she turns fine print into graphic displays that are easier to read and understand.



California lawyer, Linda Alvarez, calls her practice, 'Discovering Agreement'. She uses the vision, purpose, and values of a company as the foundation of the contract, using them to align the contract and as the conflict resolution system when change happens or conflict occurs.

At ConsciousContracts.com,

> *"In a company, every relationship the company has needs to be embodied in a legal contract. The contract contains the "rules" of the relationship. It sets out what everyone has to do and how they should do it so that the relationship is fair and all parties know what to expect and feel good about playing their part to the best of their ability."*

Sharing Law

Janelle Orsi is the originator of sharing law. Sharing Law supports legal approaches to living together in thriving, interactive communities. Her first book, published by NOLO Press, includes legal advice and forms for those who wish to create neighbourhoods where people share cars, live in intentional communities, start tool libraries, and create cooperatively owned businesses. Last year, the American Bar Association published her second book, *Practicing Law in a Sharing Economy*. It quickly became an ABA best-seller.

> *Sharing is a big deal these days. Sharing is a growth industry, a new field of study and of practice; it presents a realm of career opportunities, a new way of life, and a concept around which we are restructuring our world. Sharing is the answer to some of today's biggest questions: How will we meet the needs of the world's enormous population? How do we reduce our impact on the planet and cope with the destruction already inflicted? How can we each be healthy, enjoy life, and create thriving communities?*
>
> *You might be asking: "What's so complicated or special about sharing? Isn't sharing just sharing—something we are all supposed to know how to do as civilized humans and kindergarten graduates?"*
>
> *It's true that sharing is a relatively simple concept and a basic part of human life. What's new is that people are applying sharing in innovative and far-reaching ways, many of which require complex planning, new ways of thinking and organizing, and new technologies. In short, people are taking sharing to new levels, ranging from relatively simple applications of sharing to community-wide sharing initiatives — and beyond.*
>
> *Taking sharing to new levels will require stepping outside of our usual boxes and acquiring new tools and skills. Many of us were raised in a world of tract housing, packaged foods, mass production, and cheap goods. We enjoyed our ability to buy everything we could ever possibly need, and fill our homes full of every "convenience." It worked beautifully, until many of us woke up and smelled the carbon. Or we just couldn't afford our lifestyles anymore—financially, socially, or emotionally.*
>
> Janelle Orsi - www.janelleorsi.com or http://www.theselc.org/

Earth Law

Many lawyers who explore what is most important to them find themselves with concerns for the Earth. As UK barrister Polly Higgins says, "The Earth is in need of a good lawyer."

> *I am someone who cares deeply about the Earth. I'm also a lawyer who loves the Earth. It's not often lawyers talk about love – and it can feel strange to do so. However, I believe love and law can be brought together and when the two meet, the potential to create new laws that put people and planet first is born.*
>
> *I'm rethinking law; my vision is a world that works from one simple overriding principle: 'first do no harm.' That is a world where people are thriving in harmony with nature. I believe in well-being for all beings. –*
>
> Polly Higgins, www.pollyhiggins.com.

South African Cormac Cullinan, an international environmental law attorney, consultant, and author of *Wild Law: A Manifesto for Earth Justice,* proposes recognising natural communities and ecosystems as persons with legal rights. For example, in a landmark agreement, signed in New Zealand last year, the Whanganui River has become a legal entity with a legal voice. (If corporations can be people, why not rivers?)

A Community of Practice

In my travels, I met hundreds of lawyers. I would go into a city to interview one lawyer and be introduced to a dozen who were just as innovative and integrative. As I conducted interviews, I began to see patterns of behaviour and parallels in the paths taken. I saw the differences and came to understand the motivation of how some models were designed. Some chose to reform the old system, attempting to integrate new ideas into the old models. Others stepped out of the adversarial paradigm completely, generating new approaches. In many cases, the same model was spontaneously created by more than one person at roughly the same time. I've talked to dozens of people who believe they invented holistic law and I believe each did indeed invent something that was very like what their colleagues independently invented.

In 2011, a colleague and I convened a diverse group of lawyers from the various models. We came together to share stories and put our collective intelligence to work in strategising where to go next as a movement. It was there that we aligned on calling ourselves "Integrative Lawyers."

Looking from the Berkana model, it could be argued that this event was the beginning of a unified Community of Practice, an alignment and recognition as a community, moving from isolated cells, individuals just learning about each other, to a community, building awareness of itself, exploring what we say about ourselves and who else fits within our label. (On the other hand, there are still some countries where the networks are just beginning to build, awareness of the new paradigm is just arising.)

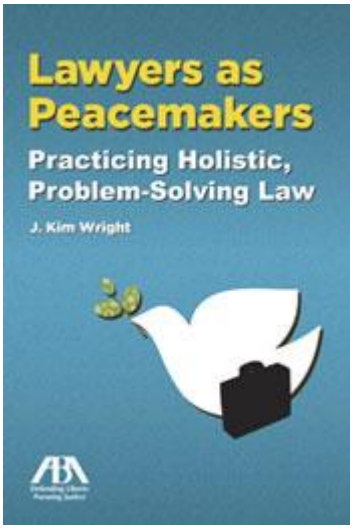
Moving toward power and influence

Berkana is quick to point out that you can create a Community of Practice, but you can't make it be powerful or influential. That happens organically, if it happens at all. I submit that Integrative Law is moving into the next level.

No one knows how many integrative lawyers there are and not everyone who is trained in collaborative or restorative (or the others) is necessarily integrative. One of the challenges of a new paradigm is that it is possible to follow a procedure or script without shifting the way of being that reflects the shift of paradigm. The qualitative difference may be easy to experience but hard to distinguish and measure.

We do have some measures. Of about two million lawyers in the world, about half are American. Many of our integrative law approaches fall within the field of Alternative Dispute Resolution. The American Bar Association (ABA) Section on Dispute Resolution reports that the section has 19,000 members. (The Litigation Section has about three times as many.) Jim Melamed of Mediate.com, the largest mediation site in the world, estimated about 50,000 mediators in the world. Tens of thousands of lawyers have now been trained in collaborative law, which has attracted family lawyers around the world. Problem-solving courts, one of the fastest growing integrative approaches, have more than 2,500 courts in several countries. Each problem-solving court represents a collaborative team of caseworkers, judges, prosecutors, defence lawyers and social workers

Recent articles in the New York Times, Wall Street Journal, and ABA Journal highlight members of our movement. And my first book, *Lawyers as Peacemakers, Practicing Holistic, Problem-Solving Law* was a 2010 best-seller and was named one of the flagship books of the ABA, a book they recommend for every lawyer.



Conscious Lawyering

These are but a few of the stories of Integrative Lawyers. We're all over the world, waking up in New Delhi, Singapore, Glasgow, Cape Town, Chelmsford, Buenos Aires and just about every other city on the planet, realizing that there is a more conscious and satisfying way to be lawyers, to make a difference.

Of course, law doesn't occur in a vacuum. As law is transforming, there are other transformational movements. Peter Block, consultant and community development expert, talks about these parallel movements in community-building, business, journalism, education and now law. Societal values are changing, around the world. Lawyers can lead the way.

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Resources:

For more information, please visit www.cuttingedgelaw.com.

Conscious Contracts, www.consciouscontracts.com

Discovering Agreement, www.discoveringagreement.com

Global Centre for Drug Treatment Courts, http://dtcourts.wpengine.com/about-us/

International Centre for Wholistic Law, http://www.wholistic-law.org/

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About the author

J. Kim Wright is an American attorney, servant leader, strategist and independent scholar on a global tour to inspire transformation in law. She has many projects in the integrative law movement, from www.cuttingedgelaw.com to the Global Alliance of Integrative Lawyers. She speaks at law schools, law societies, universities and coffee shops, wherever an audience will listen to her stories.

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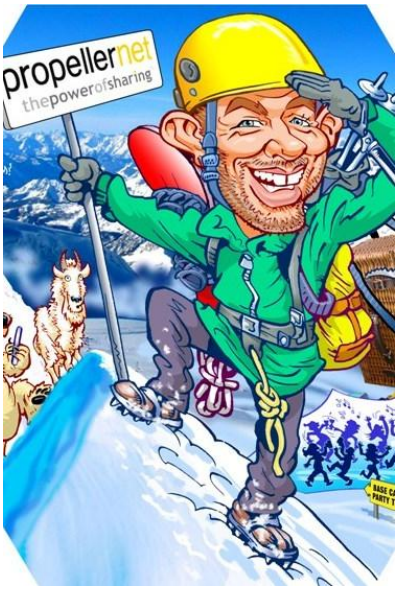
Extreme innovations in employee welfare

Jack Hubbard



The business world puts profit before people and in doing so cuts off its nose to spite its face. Inspired people and goodwill in relationships are where the true value lies in a business, but in an effort to organise and industrialise we stifle people and throttle value. Jack found that the tools and ideas of the business world were not fit for his purpose as CEO and has been on a 10 year journey trying to build a new mindset and toolset, one that recognises and harnesses human value potential. In this article Jack shares his credo and some of the thinking and initiatives that have helped him on his journey.

Keywords

lifestyle design, employee happiness, employee wellbeing, great workplaces, people first, employee ownership, artists for business communication, make life better, adventure business, fun business, dream balls

Having recently topped the Guardian's honours list, Propellernet is officially the best small company to work for in the UK. Our company is also accredited with the Investors in People Wellbeing Award and made the Worldblu list of the most Democratic and Free Workplaces in the world. And because of our complete commitment to the health and happiness of our staff, they return the favour by delivering outstanding work, market beating growth and record profits. We were also recognised as the Best Agency and for the Best Campaign at the European Search Awards earlier this year.

The credit for this success belongs to kind hearted MD Nikki Gatenby, everyday genius Gary Preston and the diverse cast of wonderful characters I am privileged enough to work with. For my part, as CEO, I strive to hold a vision and space for them to do their thing.

I believe the way to make a company the best version of itself is by hiring outstanding people and creating a culture within which they can become the best versions of themselves. In this article I share my thoughts on how the business world gets this wrong, and how we get it right.

People create the future

For the last 150 years the prevailing business paradigm has been one of industrialisation, globalisation and automation. The business world strives to do more at a lower cost. As a result, products and services that were considered high value just a few years ago have been copied, commoditised, automated and outsourced to Asia. Creating more of the same stuff for less money belongs to the robots and the Chinese, so creating better stuff is the only way to go for us.

This is the business of innovation and it is done best by companies who invest in their people because the requisite qualities for innovation (curiosity, creativity and adaptability) are fundamentally human attributes. Innovation is done best by people who embrace the uncertain future with a spirit of adventure, compelled to design a better one. A culture of fear kills this spirit.

Business at its core is about people working together to meet their needs and improve their situation. It is a tool to serve people, not the other way round, as is often forgotten. Employees and customers are human beings and the things that really matter are how these people feel, think and relate. Business is a design tool for improving the things that matter in life, and we should use it for this purpose; to improve life for employees and customers.

We are Superheroes

When we start a job, we are given a job description. How we perform this list of tasks is measured through our appraisal process, which forms the basis for how the company values our contribution. Our employer only places value on our ability to perform a narrow set of tasks. We are encouraged to limit our potential, which is why Clark Kent hides his cape at work.

Billions of years in the making through nature's great evolutionary design, we human beings are pretty special creatures. We are amazing in ways that are beyond our own comprehension and have many superpowers we don't even know about yet.

At Propellernet we encourage full use of super powers. Every one of our superheroes has a rich tapestry of history behind them and a world of possibilities ahead of them. As individuals they are vast reservoirs of energy, alive with experiences, ideas, contacts, dreams, opinions, emotions and abilities just itching to find a creative outlet. We are discovering new superpowers all the time, and as a team we'll save the world from the clutches of evil.

There's no accounting for people

The business world is run by accountants but accounting is not about people, it's about numbers. Accountants regard people as unpredictable liabilities. We have lives, get sick, change jobs and exercise rights. We are an obstacle to profit and a cost to be minimised. HR departments too often exist to protect companies against the legal repercussions of treating their employees badly. Is it any wonder people get sick or leave in search of a better life?

I believe people should be accounted for as assets who appreciate in value over time as they develop relationships, goodwill, knowledge and ideas. The more a company invests in each person, the more of themselves they invest into the company and the more valuable they become as an asset. This value is not recorded in modern accounting practice and until it is, bad decisions will be made at the top, destroying value and creating a mess on the shop floor.

Financial reward is an important but small part of investing in people. People need to rest, to learn, to be inspired, to be challenged and to grow. We all have different needs at different times in life, the most important thing is to be interested in people beyond their job role and invest time to get to know them.

Growth isn't always good for people

Small businesses want to get big enough to be bought out by big businesses so that the founders get rich. Big businesses want to get big enough to become PLCs so that their executive team can liquidate their stock and check out before it all goes tits up. The unsuspecting public then acquire what's left through pension schemes and wind up holding worthless shares in something they know nothing about, have no control over but are dependent upon for retirement. We blindly chase arbitrary targets around a hamster wheel to serve a system that will ultimately screw us over. Ask your mum or dad if their pension was as good as they were led to believe.

Companies chasing this dream often grow too fast and go pop. More clients increase service headaches, more employees increase HR headaches and more products increase administrative headaches. I don't know anyone that likes headaches, so why does the business world dedicate so many resources to producing them? Ironing out these issues is easy for an agile gymnast, but impossible for an unwieldy juggernaut. Growing a business of value and happiness is a worthy pursuit, but scaling a business full of suffering is toxic and should not be allowed. Stay small, iron out the pain and scale the joy later.

Employees make great shareholders

Many businesses give away big chunks of equity to outside investors, particularly in the early years, because they believe they need money to hire staff, develop products and find clients. They invariably regret it and there's no going back. If you are creative and keep things lean the money from your early clients will finance cash flow. This way you learn valuable discipline, stay in control of decisions and see a greater share of the rewards.

If you want to sell shares, sell them to your best employees. If they can't afford it, get creative, there are ways. These people understand your business better than anyone and know exactly what to do to grow the value of it. If they have a stake they will drastically increase the value of the company, along with the value of any remaining shares you hold.

Employee owned companies perform brilliantly because the people who best understand the company retain control of key decisions and share the rewards of good performance.

Pay your Fun Taxes

When you have fun, the tax man assumes it can't be work and taxes you on it as if it were salary. If a business expense can be seen to provide a level of enjoyment to employees it is deemed as a benefit in kind and subjected to an extortionate fun tax. The Inland Revenue assume that work is meant to be miserable and don't understand that you might be inspired to create something of value while climbing a mountain, dancing in a forest or gazing upon the northern lights. Their perverse logic leads them to believe that the most valuable work gets done in drab offices under fire of angry bosses and RSI injuries.

Most companies ban fun because the fun tax makes it too expensive. Christmas party budgets are slashed, benefits are scrapped, employees become miserable, they leave, then profits start looking miserable. We think it's worth paying fun taxes and go to great lengths to maximise fun levels despite the cost. We create beautiful workspaces, throw outlandish parties, take adventurous holidays and feast at fine restaurants. And guess what, we boost the economy, attract and retain top talent and do world class work.

Champion Wellbeing

When we feel great we do great work and so we are always looking for new angles on health and wellbeing. Meditation, yoga, Pilates, reflexology, head massage and mind clinics can often be seen taking place around our offices, and we regularly invite experts to talk to us on a wider range of wellbeing subjects. As a result we have a caring, healthy and happy culture. If our people experience adversity in life, we are there for them and try to signpost them to appropriate support networks such as doctors, counsellors and legal aid, often picking up the bill.

We encourage the creative arts and have sponsored employees through courses as diverse as glass blowing, improvisational comedy, street dance, pottery and learning to draw. This has strengthened the foundations of our culture and unleashed a wave of creative energy which has driven many innovations. The learning to draw course, for example, sparked a revolution in visual communication which has transformed the work we do with clients.

Art for Inspiration

The ever curious Sophie Tanner was astounded by how interesting her colleagues were and saw this as the company's primary asset. She set about interviewing everyone and documenting their life story, what kind of childhood they had, their philosophies, hobbies, ambitions, favourite music, what animal they saw themselves as. She hired a local artist to draw a cartoon scene capturing each person, commissioned the build of a beehive room and placed a cartoon world for each of our people in a honeycomb cell. Sophie's "Honeydrome" is a powerful metaphor for our collective intelligence and a great example of art for inspiration.

The richness of the Honeydrome

For a new starter it can take years to get to know just a few people, now they can get to know everyone on day 1. Employees can see that the company places value on the fullness of who they are in life, not just what they delivered at work today. And when we lack empathy for a client project we have a visual signpost to the parents, the skiers, the travellers, the foodies, the musicians, the fashionistas and the yoga teachers.

Will it make life better?

Nikki Gatenby and I were inspired by Olympic gold medallist rower, Ben Hunt-Davies. His crew in the 8 man boat were average at best and without the natural talent of Pincent and Redgrave. They had toiled away for years and gotten nowhere. They had to try something new so they replaced their training programme with a single question, "Will it make the boat go faster?"

They all came up with ideas, and every idea was put to the test. Over the months, bit by bit they discovered many ways to make the boat go just that little bit faster. On the big stage their boat went the fastest and the underdog crew each picked up an Olympic gold medal.

It wasn't a lengthy plan or set of arcane principles. It was a simple mantra that drove their behaviour every day in a way that would achieve their desired goal. We loved its simplicity and wanted our own one: "Will it make life better?"

The real purpose driving us, the motivation for getting out of bed, turning up every day, hungry to run a great business and deliver great work over and over again, is to make life better. Now if we are ever unsure, we simply ask "will it make life better?" and the way becomes clear. Consequently life keeps getting better.

Instead of making happiness a goal for a tomorrow that may never come, we design it into our everyday experience. And we become more successful tomorrow because we are happier today.

The glorious Dream Machine

Revenue-per-person

To calculate revenue-per-person we divide revenue by the number of people in the company. It is this number we are driven to grow because it indicates the relative resources available to make life better for everyone in the company.

If we doubled revenue and doubled staff numbers, revenue-per-person would remain the same and there would be no more money to make life better with pay rises and perks. More of the same growth means more work for the same reward. Revenue-Per-Person is aligned to our true purpose of making life better and powers innovation to create more value, not grow more volume.

The Dream Machine

When we achieve our revenue-per-person target we make a dream come true by drawing a dream ball from our giant yellow 80's bubble gum dispenser, our very own "Dream Machine".

We ask everyone to consider their dreams in life, the things that would really make life better for them and we help them understand how they can influence company performance in a way that will make theirs and other people's dreams come true.

Our business plan is to make everyone's dreams come true. It gives us a reason to dream and puts us in control of achieving our dreams. Steve and Jim are off to the Rio World Cup next year, Alan is riding a motorbike across Africa.

Steve and Jim are off to the Rio World Cup

Making life better begins at home

Only by discovering the fullness of what life has to offer am I in a position to share it, and by living as an example I give the people around me permission and inspiration to explore life and pursue their own dreams.

As a mere mortal, time is not on my side. So I seek extreme experiences which help me learn about life in an accelerated way. I've scaled the Matterhorn, danced on pirate ships, driven the getaway car from a jail break, challenged CEO's in their boardrooms, eaten 30 courses in a single day and performed on the main stage at Glastonbury.

This of course is the ultimate in work life balance, but it isn't as easy as it sounds. There is an oppressive assumption in the business world that if we enjoy something, it isn't work and doesn't create value. It's as if we equate the level of suffering we endure to the amount of value we create. When business leaders behave in this way, sacrificing health, family life and happiness for the cause, they set a destructive precedent for everyone around them and create a culture which sacrifices people on the altar of profit.

Don't get me wrong, I totally love making life better for myself on company hours, but because it's not the normal behaviour the world expects from a CEO, I find myself swimming against the tide to make it work, and this can be exhausting. As long as I stay positive and focus my intentions on holding a vision, living the values and making life better for people, I can trust that I'm doing my bit in holding the right space for everyone to do their thing.

Staying positive is an essential part of it, and here are a couple of the practical brain tools I use.

Curate Positive Beliefs

We attribute meaning to our experiences through our belief systems. We all have different belief systems, which is why different people experience and perceive the same events in different ways.

For example, I choose to believe that everything happens for a reason and that it serves me in some way. So when something doesn't go my way, instead of affirming the negative "bad things always happen to me" which will only help you make more bad stuff happen, I instantly think the infinitely more helpful "OK, that

wasn't meant to be for a reason because there is something even better that it would have prevented happening." Then my mind searches for something better, finds it and makes that happen instead.

I curate my beliefs like a football team and field the team I know will score goals. I'm always scouting for talent and will regularly try out a new player. If they perform badly they're out. Only consistent performers maintain their place in the squad.

The act of believing tricks the mind into perceiving our experience in ways that are consistent with that belief. I also choose to believe the mind is just another muscle to be put to work for the benefit of my greater self, so I have no problem deceiving it.

Developing an awareness of a conscious self beyond simple mind function in this way enables me to understand people and situations from a broader and more objective perspective. This is a vital skill for business leaders with responsibility for vision and culture.

As this awareness becomes more habitual, I find I can switch off my mind, relax and allow the world to make good things happen in my space. Less effort seemingly delivering better results.

Star in your own movies

The media promotes a belief that life is happening somewhere else, and we can only observe it from the sidelines. This gives us a feeling of powerlessness over our lives. When I came to realise this I stopped reading newspapers and watching TV and started paying more attention to my own world, the physical one that I actually live in and can influence.

A friend recently joked that I was too busy starring in my own movie to have time to watch the ones on TV. I thought that was a powerful metaphor which captured it nicely, so now I choose to see myself as a screenwriter and producer for my own life. I write the scenes in my mind then watch them unfold through my eyes. It's great, I get to play all my favourite roles and cast all my favourite people in all my favourite places.

When you get really good at producing reality it's essential to stay positive because our moods and emotions control the sort of films we make. If we feel negative we might make drama and horror, if we stay positive we can enjoy action, comedy and romance.

Whatever next?

I said earlier that putting people first isn't an altruistic principle and that's because for 20 years I have had my own dream that has motivated me to overcome the countless challenges along the way. I close my eyes and this is what I see.

> *I'm living in a large chalet, surrounded by lush green forests and snow-capped mountains, the faint sound of a waterfall crashing in the distance, wild deer grazing in the valley and eagles soaring high up above in clear blue skies. This is my base of operations for a lifetime of adventures. I select the mission, assemble the team, consult with experts, gather intelligence, pour over maps and check equipment. We set out, the fires of excitement in our bellies. We return, enriched by new experiences and treasured memories. Then we feast.*

Tomorrow I fly to the Alps where I am viewing 8 chalets in the valley of dreams. Next year my team will be joining me on a host of new adventures designed to make our lives better. Feel free to join us.

Heroes and influences

Here are some of the great people and ideas that have helped me along my journey.

Endless inspiration for conscious business - Karen Smithson

World class mentoring - Simon Conroy

Inspirational Spaces and Dream Machines - Nicola Gobat

Will it make the boat go faster? Ben Hunt-Davies

Freedom and democracy in the workplace www.worldblu.com

Wellbeing and creativity courses www.evolutionarts.org.uk

Business as an enabler of dreams - The Dream Manager by Matthew Kelly

On lifestyle design - The 4 Hour Working Week by Tim Ferriss

A spirit of adventure - Vagabonding by Rolf Potts

Right brain business - A Whole New Mind by Daniel Pink

Embracing change - Who moved My Cheese by Spencer Johnson

The importance of values - Built to last by Jim Collins

On hiring - Who by Geoff Smart

How the mind works - Blink by Malcolm Gladwell

Effective brain management - Unlimited Power by Anthony Robbins

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Leadership in the work place

Three precepts that will revolutionise work

Dick Davies

This article describes the trajectory by which an unsolicited proposal led one of the world's leading computer manufacturers to develop a new way of doing business.

It seeks to bring out how the culture of the company enabled it to deal with the proposal in a way that effectively embraced the interests of the business. It then traces the way the company responded using a set of simple yet profound business precepts deeply internalised within the company.

Finally, it proposes that these precepts could be of great benefit if widely applied commercially now, as the very meaning of work is undergoing such transformation and the Internet plays an ever-increasing role.

Keywords

Independent contractors, leadership case study, new ways of working

Introduction

I would like to describe how a highly productive workplace successfully handled an unsolicited proposal from an employee. It did so without micro-management or indeed more or less any form of management, beyond compliance with accepted process (essentially administration).

I shall seek to show that the environment which made this possible emerged from a small number of business precepts, thoroughly internalised by the people who brought it into being.

I shall then suggest that these business precepts could form the basis of a revolution affecting how work gets done in economies around the world.

Case Study (1) – Starting to understand the problem

The story begins over thirty years ago. I worked for a US based computer manufacturer, a Fortune 100 company with a strong presence in North America and Europe and business in the Middle East, South America and Australasia. I had been manager of a European group developing corporate software products, though I was now in a new position.

I had seen the company struggle first with word processing and then with the broader notion of office automation. The behaviour of both buyers and sellers in the market for these products seemed driven by a toys-for-boys enthusiasm, compounded by a fear of falling behind, rather than by any real concern with benefit to the business bottom line. Even the top designers had their doubts about its 'usefulness'. They too had become driven by a 'tick-box' and 'had to have it' culture.

As products seemed to get more and more complicated while delivering less and less benefit, I started to form the idea of a different kind of conversation with customers – one dominated by real value delivered to the customer's bottom line rather than the latest fashions in technology.

In the end, a small event proved to be the catalyst. I had a 216 page manual for the terminal on my desk. Over three years, I had opened the manual from time to time, but never understood what I was looking at. On an impulse, one day I decided to find out what I had been missing, and I physically deconstructed the manual, tearing it into chapters, pages, sections and even sentences in an effort to grasp what it had to tell me. Before I started, I knew how to turn the terminal on and off. By the time I finished, I learnt that I had managed to get through the last three years without also knowing how to change the screen from black on white to white on black, and from 80 characters to a line to 132.

Gazing at the pile of scraps of paper I was left with, the fantasy came to me of closing the local motorway and laying the scraps out in lines according to a labelling system, then sitting an expert at a desk ready to receive those in search of enlightenment on matters relating to the terminal. How does the conversation proceed? How do they get past just being polite and concealing their ignorance to engage about matters that really could be of benefit to their business? What does the labeling system look like that enables the solution to be identified once the opportunity has been understood?

Of course, the terminal stuff on the motorway is just a metaphor for the wider question of the conversation between technology suppliers and users, but the image seemed to work in getting the attention of people. If the conversation could lead to a richer understanding of what would benefit the customer, it would also show the company how to target its products and services.

When I first mentioned the idea to my boss, he engaged quickly, so much so that he wanted to pursue it, making it formally part of my job.

Inquiring into who might be helpful in the universities, I made contact with a leading academic and a meeting resulted in her recommending a bijou consultancy. A contract for their ideas gave us a theoretical foundation which helped us frame more clearly the challenge we faced. They remained with the 'team' throughout the early years.

As the picture developed, we needed funding for serious work to build a demonstration. I approached a top executive with whom I had worked before. He was well aware of the background through previous conversations we had had, but this time I was able to show him we were making progress. At the end of a forty minute conversation, he said: "Contact Y (my financial controller) to fix the funding", followed by: "Do you know X (a consulting engineer, who had been technical director of the company in the past)?" I said I did, but only by reputation. "I think he might be interested. Why don't you give him a call tomorrow?" And finally: "You mentioned your boss. I don't know him. Would you ask him to call me next time he's over and maybe we could have dinner?"

After I called the consulting engineer the next day, we spent three hours talking and then arranged to meet for another two days. Thus was the long term foundation of support for the project laid.

A 'proof of concept' was seen to be an important first step, requiring a demonstration. A person doing a job using a computer at the time typically had to learn how to use an application. The application embodied its

designer's view of how the job should be done, which was often to make it over-complicated or unsuitable for the circumstances of the user. If technology was to be used, it was on the terms of the technology. What we wanted to do was to get 'the business' rather than 'the technology' in charge of how the job was done. We needed to show that technology could offer 'seamless' support to whatever the user needed to do.

Contact with the local university led to us finding a research supervisor with skilled graduates keen to take on the challenge of building such a demonstration. They were set up in an incubator unit on a local business park, and equipped with the resources they needed (which included the purchase of computers from another manufacturer – not an easy sell).

In Europe at that time, it was the responsibility of one small business group to be on top of the progress and status of every order in the company's European business. This group answered questions, provided updates and produced reports to meet demands from management of all the lines of business and all the countries of Europe. This group volunteered to be guinea-pigs for the demonstration.

The academic who introduced us to the consultants, an acknowledged expert on work design, guided the members of the business group through a series of meetings to develop their new work process.

The research group sat in on these meetings to understand the needs of the business group. It then became their job to build a computer system that enabled the business unit to work in the way they had decided on. Doing this would show work process being designed to meet business need, and technology continuously responsive.

The experiment went remarkably smoothly and people were impressed with the outcome. Comments such as 'we are looking at the future of computing' were gratifying to hear.

As an aside, the project was also to have a big impact at the university. Encouraged to take an interest by our contact professor, the president became a convert and based a new Business Masters course on the ideas underlying the project. This involved a massive effort to develop a culture of interdisciplinary cooperation within the university, and resulted in a very popular and successful course.

The implications of the project also began to be felt more widely within the company. A series of meetings among business leaders, referred to as Cauldron, was instituted. The top executive sponsored the meetings, and a senior HR executive chaired them. The new style of conversation with customers was starting to get serious attention.

Case Study (2) - Working with the customer

Meanwhile, on another continent the company's biggest commercial customer was experiencing difficulties. The customer was a highly respected household name in the aeronautical industry and had a long history of building commercial aircraft and as a defence contractor. The customer had written to the company, however, asking if the company could offer them help in improving their work processes. The customer was bogged down internally in turf wars, poor work practices and a pervasive atmosphere of mistrust. Their order book stretched out for over a decade, but they were losing money. They had to achieve flexibility and a willingness to cooperate and share.

This was a most unusual approach at the time. Wondering how to reply, the account team took the letter to the top executive. He pointed them to the consulting engineer and the task of responding became ours.

In due course, we met with the customer's top management team for a couple of hours. The meeting happened at a time when many innovations in work practice and work design were taking place in parts of businesses. Often, in themselves these innovations produced good results, but clashed with the traditional culture or established norms of the business. The result was that people not directly involved just saw people getting away with breaking the rules or behaving in other unacceptable ways. This gave rise to a new set of conflicts and divisions which at the very least meant the ideas did not spread.

To get the conversation going, we presented a four level model for thinking about the organisational challenge facing business. Work itself was at level one and design of work at level two. Levels three and four were respectively the environment in which the work took place and the design of that environment. We declared that we did not know how to design environments so that all levels were compatible, but would welcome the opportunity to explore the topic and learn working with the customer.

The theme of our presentation was abstract, but it struck a reasonable political note and produced a thoughtful discussion. We proposed a series of follow up offsite meetings between the two companies. We left with the outcome hard to read.

The next day we got a call. The customer told us they had debated our ideas for four more hours after we left. They accepted our proposal of offsite meetings. They also noted a reference we made to our internal Cauldron meetings and asked if they could attend those as well.

The Cauldron meetings (to which we gladly invited them) and offsite multi-day meetings served two powerful functions. One was that they facilitated and legitimised the emergence of many initiatives aimed at engaging customers in a new way, amounting to a new agenda in leadership. The other was that they provided an environment in which hard problems could be discussed outside the usual context of company politics. Experienced high-tech management from different companies in different industries gained a lot from interaction.

Some months after these meetings began, when the customer was looking for a partner in the development of a major new product line, our company was invited to apply. A formal selection process, reducing to five applicants, then to two finalists, culminated in a retired 'legendary' programme manager drafted out of retirement to take charge of the bid. Over a hundred people volunteered for a six-month secondment to work with the customer on the technical proposal that focused on savings and value-added through the development of new process.

The story deserves a happy ending but, regrettably, a late withdrawal of funding by some investors meant that the project in fact never went ahead. But the value created by the team effort, assessed and agreed by many sceptical eyes, seemed to astonish all those involved.

The core members of the bid team formed a unit to go after other business opportunities arising from the business model they had developed.

Proposition: the environment emerged from three business precepts

What does this story say about the company in which it took place?

- It has managers who listen and act.
- It protects people who are looking to develop ideas it supports.
- It has managers who make decisions without passing them up the line.
- It has managers who understand that their job is about furthering the best interests of the company.
- It has managers who know how to lead from the back.
- It has managers with acute sensitivity to treating people in a way that brings out peak performance

What caused this management practice to emerge?

Anybody working in the company quickly became aware of 'family' aphorisms. The three that feature most prominently are: 'Do the Right Thing'; 'He Who Proposes Does'; and "Knowledge Authority".

A good way to explain aphorisms is to contrast them with their opposites

The universal maxim (inside the company) '*Do the Right Thing'* is to be understood by its contrast with 'follow the rules' or 'do as you're told' or even 'do what your boss is telling you to do'. In this case, you are expected to take responsibility for your own behaviour. (It took me many years to twig that 'do the right thing' in other companies could mean precisely the opposite of what it meant in this company.)

'He Who Proposes Does' means that if you propose something that is taken up, it will not be tolerated for someone else to step forward and say 'this is clearly in my field so I will take it over from here'. The proposer must be allowed a chance to develop her idea.

'Knowledge Authority' captures a style of decision making and is to be contrasted with 'positional authority'. The positional authority of management is to be used not to make decisions but to ensure that the appropriate knowledge is assembled to get to the right decision so that the system is not short-circuited.

From the point of view of anyone taking part in the business, these three precepts amounted to a charter of rights and responsibilities.

My idea first came at people out of the blue. I explained the idea first to a man who already had a large, complex and problematic business to sort out. He was an ideas man by nature, but he could easily have passed it off to somebody else or played for time. Instead, he judged there may be something important for the company and 'did the right thing'. The same thing goes for the top executive and the ex-technical director. They gave the idea a chance and as it progressed they stayed with it. What seems to be of overwhelming importance is of the extraordinary extent to which the environment lived up to the precepts. The top prize has to go to the president of the company who laid the foundation for this.

I would now like to turn to what his legacy may have to offer the future of work.

Implications for the future of work

Most of us want to work, and the engagement we have with our workplace is one of the most important in our lives. That engagement can take many forms much influenced by the workplace environment. Sadly a lot of people spend their lives struggling to tolerate environments that are close to toxic. No one should have to tolerate this toxicity.

There is no such thing as the blueprint for the perfect workplace that would be fit for everyone. I do believe that different styles of workplace can be designed and offered to appeal to people on the basis of their preference. For example, some may choose permanent, regular, secure employment, while others opt for task oriented challenges demanding maximum flexibility and offering no security but a fantastic opportunity to learn fast and make money.

The precepts described earlier define one style of workplace. Anyone choosing to join implicitly agrees to honour the precepts which, as we have seen, worked very powerfully. People who had never met worked well together around the world, united by the company lore. An environment designed along these lines could become an engine room of economic productivity. It would offer:

- an expectation of independent, responsible self-management by those involved,
- a respect for the principle that decisions are based as far as possible on knowledge (or rationality in the overall interest of the business) and
- a respect for the principle that new ideas should be listened to and supported if seen to have value.

A lot of experience and learning can build rapidly when people apply these principles clearly in their dealings with one another, leading to a high level of productivity. The importance of other matters such as trust, openness and honesty quickly become evident. They could form an environment in which cooperation over the Internet develops rapidly.

Attractive local workplaces could provide a base for people with a wide range of skills. In addition to work they undertake independently, they could look for opportunities to cooperate on new undertakings, perhaps competing in tendering processes. Such local workplaces could network together not just locally, but nationally and internationally. On the demand side, a clearing house of outcomes that people are looking to buy could become established.

There is a potential commercial proposition here based on investing in creating these environments as accelerators to generating value more quickly across the economy. Creating the business plan for such a venture could be the first move towards taking on the world through online networks. Played out successfully, the undertaking would be far more than a commercial venture, since it would have enormous social and educational ramifications, transforming the concept of work in the lives of those who engaged away from the traditional idea of the boss/employee relationship.

How much of the economy could it take over?

A parting thought: If you want to build Conscious Business successfully, make sure you build an environment that gives everyone involved the inalienable right to act according to its values and principles.

About the author

Dick Davies is a technophobe who survived thirty years in the computer industry, first as a software designer, then in software development management and lastly, by providing leadership to a strategic business initiative.

His abiding interest in business is focused on what he sees as the scourge of productivity and particularly of human fulfilment created by so much of the practice of management resulting from today's cult of managerialism.

He graduated in philosophy and psychology at Bristol University in England and later spent five years studying strategic management at Western Behavioural Sciences Institute in California. He now lives in Australia.

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Developing a conscious small business

An emerging view

Paul Levy

Many books and studies about conscious business have tended to focus on large businesses. The notion of conscious business as "socially aware and responsible" often leads this narrative, despite thought leadership from authors such as Kofman (2012) who highlight notions of "awareness" and relationships being key to being a conscious business. However, smaller businesses are also showing interest in consciousness as meaning being more aware in real time. This article presents a discussion of how small businesses are employing different approaches to becoming conscious businesses, focusing on the example of peer-based learning. New insights about conscious business for all sizes of organisation emerge from the insights in the article.

Keywords:

consciousness, awareness, small business, reflection, action learning

Introduction

Over the last two years (mid 2011-2013), I've had the opportunity to encounter and observe over 100 start-up and pre-start-up businesses on the DIAL Project (Drop-in Action Learning), and the previous ALPINE Project (Action Learning Pilot for New Enterprises), both a regular process of drop-in peer support based on action learning, in Brighton in the UK. (Levy and Knowles 2004. 2005, DIAL 2013)

Action Learning is defined as follows: "The process is based on taking one or more crucial organizational problems and, in real time, analysing their dynamics; implementing proposed solutions derived from the constructive criticisms of colleagues; monitoring results; and through being held responsible for these actions, learning from the results so that future problem solving and opportunity taking is improved." (Garratt 2012)

Peer-based action learning often leads to profound questions and challenges from peers, meeting regularly. The process essentially involves sitting around a table, with each group member having a dedicated time slot to reflect on, explore and then set actions around a chosen business problem or challenge, either with the support of a facilitator, or self-managed.

When asking participants about the process, I have often heard one benefit of this process that is cited again and again. This peer process of scrutiny, questioning, exploration and challenge, via a conversation-based

process, is often viewed as a “wake-up” call. One direct quote, from an owner-manager, was this: “It’s made our business more conscious of what it is doing.”

Participants refer to these wake-up calls as critical incidents (a term borrowed from crisis management and also therapeutic practice), where a challenge or question revealed something critical in the business that the entrepreneur or business leader had been “asleep to”.

This begs a number of questions. Why was the leader in a state of “sleep” in the first place? What, inherent in the way the business operates, engendered this “sleep state”? A sleep state is a lowered or dimmed state of consciousness and this can create dangerous risks for a business, especially in a volatile, competitive environment.

This article explores tentatively the causes of this ‘sleep state’ and posits some features of a more conscious small business.

The role of processes such as Action Learning in engendering conscious business.

Elsewhere we have reported how drop-in action learning can reduce the “sleep” state of a business owner or leader by offering a peer-based wake up call. (Levy et al, 2005). Action Learning can create “prods” that stimulate reflection, thinking, creative exploration and, ultimately, action implemented back into the business. Action Learning’s problem is that it is a process that lies outside of the day to day running of the business and, at a monthly meeting rhythm, may well be too sluggish to provide needed conscious input to critical day to day occurrences and challenges.

What is needed is an organisational form and culture that allows the business to behave in a more awake, self-aware, agile way on a day-to day basis. In other words, conscious business practice needs to become an inherent quality of the culture. Such approaches have been pioneered by Kofman (2012), building upon earlier notions of Organisational Learning (Pedler et al 1991). Learning and response will be more real time and the business to be in a state of needed “awakeness”. (Kofman 2012).

Action Learning can provide a sporadic, occasionally important reflection point and a kind of last chance “wake up” call. But equally, the business may need to augment processes such as Action Learning with a more consistently present quality of consciousness.

Drawing upon the qualitative data from notes taken at the many Action Learning meetings and from unstructured interviews/conversations drawn from the pool of participants on the DIAL project, we share some initial findings concerning how consciousness of a business is raised via peer learning, and also how this consciousness can become embedded in the day to day running of the business.

We specifically focus on the actions taken arising from Action Learning meetings that are applied to improving business consciousness, stories and examples of how they and their businesses behave on a day to day basis,

In this article we use the term “conscious small business”. We are not using the “good, nice and responsible” definition to be found in the “conscious capitalism” definition of a conscious business (Abbott 2009) but instead a more literal approach to applying the word ‘conscious’. How awake and self-aware is your business? How sharp and heightened are your business’s senses?

Often a conscious business is also defined as a business with a conscience (Kofman 2012) and also a conscientious business. It may be that to be a highly conscious business the heightened self-awareness also gives the business a clearer perspective of the impact of its operations, possibly awakening its "conscience". Certainly Kofman's work focuses on the values aspect of business. However, it is also a value-laden approach and it might equally result that a more conscious business can become more conscientious as behaving without conscience. The viewpoint here is that consciousness does not necessarily give birth to conscience in the sense used by the Conscious Capitalism movement (Aburdene 2007, Rajendra 2009).

So here we focus specifically on a more neutral definition of consciousness in a business to reflect a dimmed state of internal and external awareness and understanding (Levy 2013). *A conscious business is an "awake" business, with heightened sensing abilities.* This sensing is both internal and external. Social responsibility may form part of a conscious business but is not part of its root definition. A conscious business has a higher probability of survival and success,

With the high failure rate of not only start-up businesses (Scott 2012), but also of businesses of over three years old, we propose that small business failure is a failure of consciousness at one level or another.

If Henry Ford is right that "failure is only the opportunity to begin more intelligently" than when we failed, we appear to have been lacking awareness. I'd go further and say we were short on consciousness. We may have been very intelligent, even too clever, but we may have also been asleep to something crucial.

The evidence for the notion of a "Sleep State" in peer learning

Zhang and Hamilton (2009) undertook some research into small business that "explores the issue of the small-to-medium-sized-enterprise (SME) as a 'learning company' and argues that the key to its learning is via the transactional and other relationship that it has with its immediate network environment." In peer learning, direct access is offered to learning, not only from the close-knit network for the small business, but also from players in others fields - a wider network from non-competing sectors and industries.

On a monthly basis, business owners and leaders (also leaders from pre-start-ups) meet in a café setting, in small facilitated groups and engage in peer learning - in this case, Action Learning.

To quote one owner-manager speaking about a café session: "It's very useful to take time out from the day to day routine and step back and look at what I'm doing".

Stepping back, reflection, looking in from outside - many of these terms resonate with traditional approaches to consciousness raising such as meditation, but also forms of therapy (for example, group therapy), where the therapy session and its dialogue between client and therapist enables the reaching of a more conscious perspective on one's situation.

None of this is new. The new pieces are the specific aspects of "conscious business" that we have identified from participants in peer-based Action Learning. They are as follows:

Challenging subjectivity

The majority of participants in the DIAL and ALPINE projects were owner-managers. They often described themselves and their businesses as one and the same thing. Even though the business is a separate legal entity, the owner behaved in set meetings in ways that did not make this distinction and soon we were hearing about "my business". The emotional involvement of the owner with the business created a deep subjective connection and this subjectivity reduced the owner's ability to step back and take a more detached, objective view of their business.

Criticism and challenge then became a problem of the owner seeing problems and challenges as personal criticisms and even attacks from outside. Emotional attachment increased passion and commitment to the business, but also increased bias, distortion and subjective, emotional attachment. Peer group Action Learning addressed this in two ways:

1. *Through devil's advocacy.* Fellow set members had no ownership stake in the business and were able to ask challenging often tough questions and make suggestions that put the owner-manager in a zone of discomfort. Sometimes the shock of the challenge was met with defensiveness, but, over time, this "shock" became a wake-up call to think differently and for the owner-manager to see him- or herself in a more detached way. One definition of objectivity is to make oneself an object of observation, and thus able to see more clearly one's own subjectivity and how this plays into emerging reality. Without a strong subjective interest in the business, peers were often able to see things, especially uncomfortable truths that the subjectively attached owner couldn't see. Consciousness was therefore raised through "disinterested challenge and questioning". For example, one manager was challenged about why certain products were still being prioritised in terms of marketing effort, when clearly customer interest had been waning for a while. They were able to surface the favouritism the owner-manager had developed over some years towards these failing products and to enable focus on newer opportunities in the market.
2. *Through challenging assumptions.* Schein (2006) points out that our deeper-rooted, taken for granted assumptions often play powerfully into our behaviour, even as the external evidence for our behaviour and espoused values contradict these deeper assumptions. An owner-manager's deeper-rooted assumptions often impact on their business positively or negatively, outside of their own awareness of them, even as the business's stated values and shown behaviours contradict them. A business may say green but be driven by greed. A business may claim to be a team culture even as an authoritarian boss, directs by hidden and overt threat.

Peer-based learning can open a trapdoor to these deeper assumptions and, either through challenge or self-discovery, the owner-manager wakes up to what is going on deeper down. For example, one pre-start-up participant in the DIAL project heard three different peers suggest that they saw their clients as threats, rooted in the person's own deeper assumption that people are not to be trusted until they can prove their trustworthiness.

This had resulted in some very problematic pitches for work from new clients, even as the entrepreneur's publicity materials boasted informality and accessibility as business virtues. This wake-up call led to the person embarking on some life-coaching. Yet the simple realisation and naming of this assumption and the resulting challenge also led to some changes in behaviour over the ensuing months with the now trusted Action Learning group used as a check in point and a further sounding board.

Reality checking

Many participants in both the DIAL and the ALPINE projects referred to group meetings as a vital and regular reality check. Even the use of this term suggests that, often, normal day to day working pitches the leader into a state of "unreality". This can be a result of subjectivity consciousness, but also it can be the result, not only of emotional involvement, but also because of sheer (and often routine) time immersion in the daily work. By being in the middle of the field, we can't see the field as a whole. Reality checking doesn't only take us above our biases, but also gives us a clearer view of the field of the action and activity that lies outside of our inner world - the world out there. This was often achieved in peer learning through:

1. *Multi- perspective challenge and questioning*. Different group members came from different walks of life, with different worldviews, values and backgrounds. Different perspectives helped participants view their situations and problems from different angles. For example, an accountant challenged a drama teacher to prove their pricing was right with more detailed numbers. A marketing expert wanted to know if the entrepreneur had really tested the market. Each new question from each new perspective also raised consciousness through augmenting the person's reality with a new perspective.

2. *Naive questioning.* Sometimes it was the lack of knowledge of a specific business that allowed for innocent questions. Classic "what, why and how" type questioning also added the richness of perspective on the business. Sometimes questions were more specific. A dancer asked a web designer: "I've no knowledge of web design but shouldn't that page look and feel more dynamic?"

3. *Renaming and rescoping.* Different perspectives, both naive and diverse, also allowed for boundaries to be challenged. This broadened consciousness of the business. Sometimes questions and challenges helped to re-scope an idea. For example, a naive questioner asked "Why only the UK? Why don't you expand your view of your product into Europe and the US?". A more expert participant challenged a peer, "I made more income putting my training materials onto Amazon Kindle than ever I achieved on paper." Similarly, renaming can also enhance consciousness. "You are calling yourself a trainer, and it is in all of your advertising, but what you really seem to be offering is change facilitation". Renaming and reframing with the help of peer group input was a regular and often transformational aspect of the Action Learning process. In some cases an entire leap and shift in business consciousness took place, referred back to as a critical incident.

New perspective creation

Another reported enhancement in business consciousness arose through the offering and creation of new perspectives, applied sometimes fairly immediately as innovations back into the business context. By tapping into different skills and experiences, a temporary skill and experience base was established. We saw examples of two peers meeting up on the same day and sharing skills. For example, one helped look at product costings whilst the other coached her peer on design of her website. Here self-organisation kicked in as participants created their own informal meeting processes, sparked by the more formal Action Learning session. Facilitators encouraged this in session, reminding participants that exchange of ideas and experience could take place at any time and need not be confined to the Action Learning sessions.

During the meetings, what was an old, shared story from one peer was a new story for one listening and generated an entirely new perspective on a problem or challenge. The "Aha" moments often arose from the stories of others and innovation ideas often emerged from shared, creative exploration. Idea generation, suggestion, invention, all enhanced the creative and innovative aspects of some of the business's consciousness. On several occasions we heard "I hadn't thought about that", or "I didn't know that was possible."

Often synergy arose when the group dialogue achieved a group breakthrough to an idea that benefited ALL participants. One example was a shared conversation about e-commerce where it seemed all participants had some experience, but only through combining all ideas and stories in a shared dialogue did a group breakthrough occur. All went away with an enhanced consciousness of the potential for e-commerce in their respective businesses.

Challenging repetition fatigue

As businesses grow, they move beyond their often informal pioneer phase, into a more rational, repetitive phase as the business achieves "steady state". (Pedler et al 1991). Repetition fatigue arises where the routine of the business has dulled the ability of the people in the organisation to sense emerging problems, to pick up on warning signs and changes in the environment. It is possibly one of the more significant causes of business failure. In earlier work, we identified twelve "death signs" for a growing business (Levy et al 2005).

One of the advantages of peer Action Learning is the wake up call it provides, the "prod in the arm". Peers offer fresh eyes on a problem, and see what is old and habitual for the leader as if it is suddenly new. For example, one peer asked another: "But why do you use distributors - why not sell directly to the customer?" "Because that's the way we've always done it!". The owner-manager had never even considered direct distribution as a possibility in his industry. A bit of research uncovered that most of his competitors were already looking at it and that is was becoming the norm in other industries. Old habits are often deceptively called "standard processes" and this can hide innovation potential. Low consciousness businesses are often full of standard processes. Does this mean that an organisation should never sleep? Not at all. Repetition fatigue arises when it sleeps too much and for too long. Standard processes are the sleep state of organisations. They provide needed stability and maintain standard quality. However, when what is needed is response to environmental change, when innovation and proactive thinking are needed, then the sleep

state becomes pathological, and we fall into what the poet Christopher Fry called “The Sleep of Prisoners”. What then is needed is the wake up call. It may be that peer learning will be the only hearable wake up call before the too late call of bankruptcy.

Learning through reflection

The process of reflection itself raises awareness. Reflection is critical to learning from what we do. But subjectivity consciousness that arises from the closeness between owner and owned can inhibit and distort reflection. Subjectivity consciousness is a form of consciousness rooted fully in the “involved state” of a person and a situation. They become so involved, that they identify intensely with it, unable to step back at will and separate themselves off. This inability to find a detached point of observation and reflection introduces distortion and bias in judgement and decision-making.

Peer Action Learning allows not only reflection but also adds the awareness of others to that process. We have the benefit of reflection away from the day-to-day pressures and also, through the time allowed for Action Learning (a dedicated time slot for each group member), slower reflection replaces reaction and firefighting - time to learn from mistakes and crises. “I get some quality time to step back, reflect and do things differently next time” said one Action Learning group member”. “You get to see what you are doing more clearly through everyone else round the table” said another.

Conclusion

If a business lacks consciousness when it is too close to what it is doing, if its day to day habits obscure the ability to see potential for innovation and newness, and if the knowledge and skills in a business are constantly being recycled through the same people (internally and externally working in and with it), then peer-based Action Learning can become a regular new touch point for raising awareness, understanding, knowledge, experience, creativity, and thus consciousness. Awareness itself doesn’t necessarily raise consciousness. It affords the possibility for a richer picture to be reflected upon, and this creates the opportunity for more conscious experimentation and action taking.

The danger of traditional approaches to Action Learning is that the group membership remains the same, attendance is compulsory and, soon enough, the peer learning process itself can degrade its own consciousness by becoming standard. The DIAL project broke new ground by allowing peers to “drop in”. There is continuity from the voluntary regular attendees, but group membership is varied, and there is a deliberate input from new, drop-in, attendees. This can inhibit group trust but so far, anecdotally, we haven’t found this to be a major limiting factor. By creating a “drop-in and dive-in” feel in a café environment, conversations are quickly established and challenge and depth are quickly found. We are also finding some indications that informal café environments are an important element in creating this “feel”. (Levy, 2013)

This doesn’t address the problem that peer-based Action Learning takes place outside of the normal running of the business and doesn’t embed in that day-to-day culture. It may be an occasional injection of consciousness in the business leader but does it go further? We would suggest at least, in part, yes. And this is because of the unique nature of Action Learning itself. At the end of each peer’s time slot they set actions, many of which are focused on embedding business consciousness back at work.

Here are a few examples:

- more regular check-ins with fellow employees and co-workers
- setting up more real time customer input
- collecting environmental and market data on a more regular basis
- setting up peer learning back in the organisation
- solving an identified problem back at work with specific actions for finding root cause and prevention of recurrence
- improving performance data collection
- costing products properly
- revisiting an old business plan and making it more real and authentically used
- sharing information more effectively and regularly
- monitoring cost data closer to real time

Regular consciousness-raising through peer learning can be motivating and energising, not only in terms of the Action Learning process itself, but also because raised business consciousness can energise the business to create and perpetuate further business. This is true for any business which aims to exist and survive in a dynamic environment, no matter what size it is. Awareness can breed the motivation for further awareness and a restlessness to avoid states of unintended "sleep". For becoming a conscious business is a journey, not a destination.

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Learning from experience

Why history matters in organisational life

Alison Donaldson

In organisational life today, little attention is paid to history – how things have come to be as they are. Yet reflecting on what has happened can be a good way of learning from experience, tracing the effects of a particular investment and/or acknowledging the contribution people have made. To these ends, the author and her colleagues have, over the past decade, been developing narrative writing methods that are particularly informed by thinking around emergence and the role of writing in society. Seeking to understand how things have come to be as they are is arguably a conscious act in itself. It can also be seen as a counterweight to dominant managerial practices – mostly future-focused – in both public and private sectors

Keywords

History, writing, narrative, stories, learning, evaluation, organisational change, influence, causality, sensemaking, emergence, managerialism, awareness-raising

Prologue

Go into any organisation today and ask to see something in writing about a programme of work, a team, a department, or even the whole organisation. What do people show you? Dry documents, most likely, such as plans, strategies, policies, proposals, guidelines or “terms of reference”. In my experience it is rare to come across any kind of readable account about how things came to be the way they are. It almost seems as though we live entirely in the present, ignoring the processes that got us here.

For the past decade, I have been writing narrative accounts to describe and evaluate organisational activities that have evolved over time and are hard to measure. The organisation that has given me the opportunity to develop such writing methods is UK charity Macmillan Cancer Support. Often, people who read one of the accounts say it was a relief to learn about how a group or work programme came into being. They understand better what the instigators had in mind, how the shape of things changed along the way, and what can be learnt from the experience. My work has been referred to variously as “capturing the story”, “making the invisible visible”, “narrative tracking”, or even “evaluation for learning”.

It has become clear that, by shedding light on what happened over time, a narrative account makes it possible to trace what has come from an investment that the funding organisation has made. Macmillan’s Chief Medical Officer, Jane Maher, has referred to this as “traceability”. A written account can also serve to acknowledge the effort people (individuals and groups) have put into making a difference in their field.

The conscious business connection

What does all this have to do with "conscious business"? My experience is that narrative accounts can not only contribute to organisational learning, but can also further understanding of organisational change as it really happens. In doing so, they challenge the fiction that top-down strategies, policies and bureaucratic controls are the best or only way to bring about large-scale improvement.

In my view, seeking to understand how change really happens, and who has contributed what, is in itself a "conscious act". However, there is more to it than that. A narrative approach can offer a counterweight to the managerial thinking and practices that are so widespread today yet remain strangely unchallenged:

> *"Managerialism has now become so rampant... that it fills the days and nights of practitioners and managers alike in organizations around the world, with its unending requirements for measurement, assessment, evaluation, report-writing and presentation. Yet its invasion has been so drawn-out, and its approach so stealthy, that we have scarcely noticed how profoundly it has altered the organizational landscape."*
>
> Taptiklis 2008, p. 4

Particularly relevant for my purposes, Taptiklis goes on to urge people to focus on the reality of the world as it is rather than on the idealised, simplified depictions offered in most reports and presentations.

Personally, I am convinced that a more realist, narrative approach could be helpful in both public and private sectors. In public services like education and healthcare, most people agree that target-setting and "paperwork" (now largely computerised) have become extremely demoralising for many professionals. Meanwhile in business, enormous resources go into planning and proposal writing, which often ignore history and focus on the future, thus missing the wider picture.

Developing a practice of narrative writing in an organisation

The narrative approach I describe has been developed over the past decade with my colleagues Jane Maher and Elizabeth Lank. It was in 2003 that a conversation began between the three of us about how Macmillan Cancer Support might go about describing and evaluating its relatively unpublicised work with doctors. In essence, what needed investigating was whether, by enabling general practitioners to develop a collective voice, the organisation had helped to improve the quality of support given to cancer patients and their families across the UK.

Over about three years, some 30 narrative accounts emerged, telling the story of this work. This was not a PR exercise – we took care to include controversies and "dead ends" as well as achievements and lessons learnt. We then used these (mostly internal) narratives as our main source when publishing our book, *Communities of Influence: improving healthcare through conversations and connections* (Donaldson, Lank and Maher 2011). (For some related articles, see also, the book's web site: http://www.communities-of-influence.co.uk)

Since then, Macmillan's senior management has started to highlight communities of influence as one of the organisation's main ways of working to improve the care offered to people affected by cancer. In 2012, Chief Executive Ciarán Devane stated: "In the absence of 'political' authority, we deliberately work with others to establish communities of influence" (Devane 2012). Charities in the health sector often have little or no direct control over people in the NHS, but with its focus on long-term relationships and "communities of influence" Macmillan has developed an innovative way of improving patient care.

The example below may help to show how this works. Although it involves health professionals in the NHS, it is almost certainly relevant to business. In one sense a charity like Macmillan – which seeks to influence the care provided by the NHS as well as providing its own services to patients – is no different from a business: it cannot make professionals act upon its recommendations, nor can it compel people to use its services. But it can extend its reach and influence by creating and working with communities of health professionals or people affected by cancer. This is not unlike a business using social media and stories about its products and services to reach out to customers.

An example: tracking a group of health professionals

In 2009, a new community of influence was formed with joint funding from Macmillan and the Department of Health, and I was asked to do the narrative tracking. The group, which is still going strong today, has 12 members – 11 of whom are research-active senior nurses and one a physiotherapist. It is known as the Consequences of Cancer and its Treatment collaborative group (CCaT). I won't give much more information about CCaT itself, as it is not my main subject here. (See www.cancerconsequences.org/our-aim.html). Suffice to say that the group articulates its aim on the web as follows: "CCaT is a collective voice influencing healthcare policy, practice and research to improve the experience and outcomes of people affected by cancer and its treatment"

As narrative writer, I was part of the Macmillan team supporting the group, and I joined every group meeting and kept in touch with members in between, mainly by email and phone. Looking back over my journey with this group, it strikes me now that I did not simply write a chronological account of its development. In fact, I produced various types of writing – for example: a detailed description of the group's early life; some brief accounts of the influencing activities of its members; a comprehensive log of achievements (e.g. useful research, presence in influential bodies, identification of the skills needed by health professionals supporting people after cancer treatment); and some tips for others who want to form a community of influence in their own field. Sometimes I stretched my role as narrative writer and edited some of the group's publications.

To give a flavour of what happened in the group's first four years, I will point to some significant phases or moments. In the early stages, we (the support team) attempted to help the members develop into a community with an agreed sense of purpose. We did this largely through face-to-face overnight meetings, which many members later recalled as uncomfortably unstructured yet important none the less.

At these gatherings, we encouraged people to share experiences of influencing and collaboration. Sometimes I used the stories I had collected to stimulate thinking. Below is an example of a small story I read out on one occasion. The group member, Gillian, a Nurse Consultant in a Scottish Cancer Centre, had maintained regular informal contact with her medical colleagues (hospital consultants) over time and thus succeeded in persuading them to share their patient follow-up clinics with her:

Persuading consultants to share follow-up

Gillian keeps chipping away, having conversations with colleagues on an everyday basis. For example, the two colorectal consultants who treat anal cancer knew her from earlier, so she spoke to them about consequences of treatment and eventually all agreed to share follow-up, starting in early 2010. This is important, because normally the consultants are mainly focused on detecting recurrence of the cancer, and if an anal cancer patient gets a recurrence the situation is often still 'salvageable'. Gillian commented: 'It's small step changes like this, not going in like a bull in a china shop. We respect each other's skills.'

As this small narrative made clear, this was a significant step, allowing Gillian to focus on any unmet needs patients might have after their treatment. Following the community meeting where I read out this story, more than one group member said that it had revealed a lot about the nature of influence and why it was important to capture it in writing.

Further turning points came in year two, when the group took charge of its own meeting agendas and started work on what proved to be a crucial joint product, subsequently published as a Macmillan patient booklet called "What to do after cancer treatment ends: 10 Top Tips". Working on this collective task proved to be a galvanising experience and the group came to see the booklet as much more than a patient leaflet. For them it became an important working tool in their effort to improve care for people after treatment.

(See http://be.macmillan.org.uk/be/p-20338-what-to-do-after-cancer-treatment-ends-10-top-tips.aspx).

At this point, it feels important to shine a little light on some of the principles that inform the narrative writing. First, I recognise that there is never just one history of a group. Writing about what has happened and what people have learnt from the experience is a highly selective process. It is up to the author to write something that is interesting, based on what people have told her, and which might stimulate learning and be useful to those it is addressed to.

Additionally, if it is to stimulate learning, the narrative account itself needs a *social life*. In other words, it has to be shared, read and discussed in order to influence thinking and practice. This insight came to me some years ago when I noticed the tendency for reports to end up unread and unloved, gathering dust on shelves. As a writer, I have since learnt to insist on face-to-face meetings as an opportunity to discuss drafts and draw out new insights. Indeed, I have come to think it is largely the writer's responsibility to make sure this happens.

How have we come to neglect history?

No doubt there are many ways of understanding how people have come to neglect history. Perhaps two world wars have something to do with it – leaving people eager to look ahead to a more positive future. But I feel inclined to go further back in time.

Subtle influences of writing and printing

In the beginning, when humans had language but no writing, it appears that they told each other stories to pass on experiences and knowledge. Then, two developments changed society for ever: first, about five thousand years ago, alphabetic writing was invented in the Middle East and was soon taken up by the Ancient Greeks; printing then followed (in Europe) in the 15th century.

The printer's device of William Caxton

Many scholars have shown that these two technologies – writing and printing – have exerted subtle but far-reaching influences on us all (Ong 2002; Havelock 1986; McLuhan 1964; Innis 1951). In other words, while writing and printing were essential ingredients in the development of modern society, they also introduced certain biases into the ways in which humans relate to one another.

When I look at organisational life today, it seems to me that these same technologies have fostered abstract, conceptual thinking, categorisation, over-structured meetings, uninspiring presentations and written guidelines (Donaldson 2005). History and stories have been largely squeezed out of the reports, plans and proposals produced daily in modern organisations.

Dominating influences of science and technology

Writing and printing were also prerequisites for another major development in human society – science – which has further contributed to the eclipsing of stories and history. With all its advantages, scientific thinking has become so dominant in many areas of life that we are often oblivious to its influences. It has instilled in many people a blind faith in objective evidence, measurement, statistics and rational decision-making. In contrast, stories and anecdotes have come to be seen as unreliable and best limited to the realms of childhood, literature or entertainment.

A related development that has brought obvious advantages but has come to dominate many areas of modern life is technology. Computer technology, in particular, has allowed bureaucratic ways of working to spread rapidly in recent years. As Neil Postman pointed out more than 20 years ago in his book *Technopoly*, bureaucratic techniques (e.g. the use of standardised forms and categories) are employed almost

unquestioningly – without looking at context or history – to situations that “cannot be solved by technical means and where efficiency is usually irrelevant, such as in education, law, family life, and problems of personal maladjustment" (Postman 1992, p. 88).

Indeed, in my view, the misplaced use of scientific thinking in organisational life, and the associated neglect of history, is helping to perpetuate the view that human problems can be solved with technical means, that organisational change is susceptible to planning and rational design, and that quantification is the best way of evaluating activities and incentivising human beings.

Interestingly, Postman ended *Technopoly* by recommending that every academic subject (including scientific ones) be taught as history. That way, he argued, people might begin to understand that "knowledge is not a fixed thing but a stage in human development, with a past and a future". History teaches that the world is not created anew each day and everyone stands on someone else's shoulders. Looking back on my own schooling, I wish we had learned about the history of science, religion and other subjects, rather than being presented with a tedious catalogue of monarchs, dates and battles.

Process thinking and emergence

To address this neglected historical perspective, how might we think about, or write about, how things have come to be the way they are in the organisations we work in? In my view it is indispensable to understand “process thinking” and “emergence”. I will try to provide a simple and succinct explanation of these two concepts here.

Process thinking: there are many physical objects in our world, but many of the “things” we deal with in organisational life, including organisations themselves, but also strategies, culture, systems and procedures, are best understood as processes (Elias 2000; Whitehead 1929). This is more radical than it may sound, because we are so used to referring to processes as things. To give just one example, we talk about “knowledge” as if it were something you could pick up or put down, when what actually happens is learning, recalling, thinking, writing, reading, publishing, connecting, discussing, reflecting and comparing – all dynamic, largely interactive processes. Process thinking is also a prerequisite for understanding emergence, as we shall see next.

Emergence: how does anything develop or change in organisational life? A simple way of putting it is to say that organisational change (and sometimes stagnation) emerges predominantly through specific human interactions over time (Stacey 2005). Below are my suggestions about some of the main aspects of emergent thinking:

- Emergence is at work all the time – it is not a choice. Some people imagine we have the freedom to choose: either we apply command-and-control or, at the opposite extreme, just let things emerge or go with the flow. This is mistaken. Even a leader telling people what to do is subject to emergence. Nevertheless, some individuals are more influential than others – which is another way of saying that power is ever-present. Indeed, change sometimes depends on someone challenging authority.
- Change is a complex, uncertain process. This has a number of implications: no single person can control or accurately predict what happens; emergence is paradoxical, in that change and repetition (e.g. in the form of habits, “stuckness”, and even culture) can occur at the same time; and change is

non-linear, which means, for example, that influence is typically mutual rather than one-way, and that a small beginning can unpredictably turn into major change.

- Humans are through and through social beings (Burkitt 1991, 1999), and organisational life consists essentially of people relating and responding to one another in conversation and writing (Shaw 2002, Stacey 2005).
- Human beings are constantly engaged in "sensemaking". We are always making sense of what happens by developing stories, including rational explanations, and we often come to believe our own stories to be "true". Indeed, much of what goes on in organisational life can be seen as people negotiating over which stories and interpretations assert themselves (Wenger 1998; Weick 1990).

Reflecting emergence in writing about organisational life

> *"In order to see more clearly, here as in countless similar cases, we must focus on the details of what goes on; must look at them from close to"*
>
> Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, 1953

It makes sense, in my view, for anyone attempting to think or write about organisational life to reflect process thinking and emergence in their language as much as possible. People may experience these phenomena daily in practice, but I suspect few think consciously about them. We are so used to swimming in a sea of abstract concepts like "system", "strategy", "implementation", "leadership" and "performance" that we hardly notice them, or we just accept them as convenient short-hand. For me, it has been an interesting journey exploring how to reflect emergence in my writing. Below I will offer a few thoughts on what has worked.

Before I do that, however, it is worth mentioning that my argument about the importance of history is not just addressed to writers. Anybody working in an organisation can create opportunities for people to reflect on experiences together – whether during routine meetings, or on occasions specially set up for this purpose, such as debriefs, reviews or "post-mortems". When we take time to make sense of the past, or for that matter the present, we are often able to see a new way forward. One colleague described this as "using the rear mirror to drive forwards". Historiographer E H Carr used a wonderful metaphor to convey the historian's relationship with the future:

> *"Good historians, I suspect, whether they think about it or not, have the future in their bones. Besides the question 'Why?' the historian also asks the question 'Whither?'."*
>
> Carr 1961, p. 108

In my own experience, when thinking or writing about organisational life, above all it pays to take extra care in how we use language. One feature of modern language already alluded to is the widespread habit of reifying or "thingifying" processes. For example, when people talk or write about "organisational structure", we might think this is just convenient short-hand. But we cannot touch an organisation's structure (which isn't usually buildings, by the way), so the term is in fact metaphorical. Even if someone can produce a diagram, in practice structure is experienced on a specific level, such as "the chief executive has never set foot in our department", or "the people in marketing are not talking to their colleagues in production". As far as possible, therefore, I try to use words that bring out the movement and flow of life – often verbs are better than nouns.

Furthermore, once one accepts that change emerges from specific interactions, it follows that *detail sometimes matters*. For the writer, this may mean pointing to a specific conversation that changed minds, or to an initiative (individual or collaborative) that made a difference. Another way of capturing detail more accurately is to use people's own words wherever possible, recognising that the story is theirs even though the author is the one responsible for the writing.

One way of doing this is to audio-record and transcribe what people say, but this is very time-consuming and not always helpful. Often, I simply try to note in handwriting as many of the words spoken as possible, and then resist the temptation to change or paraphrase them in the narrative account. I recognise that I am responsible for the text, but I always hope that, by incorporating people's own words, a narrative is more likely to "resonate" with those written about. One member of the group of health professionals mentioned earlier emailed me a comment on a narrative account I had circulated, saying that it resonated with her as a participant and this was likely to mean it had "veracity".

Another method that has proved useful is to put together *multi-perspective narratives*, which make it possible to reflect people's diverse interpretations of events. There is then no need to reach a unified account – each person can speak or judge for themselves.

Finally, I always make a point of giving people opportunities to review what has been written about them, so that I can work their comments and suggestions into the next iteration. As well as giving them a chance to suggest revisions and correct errors, this is another way of bringing multiple voices into the story. When referring to this practice of inviting comments from those written about, again I often use the phrase mentioned earlier, "the social life of documents". Or, in the words of social anthropologist Tim Ingold:

> *"…any study of human beings must also be a study with them."*
>
> Ingold 2011*, p. 239*

Conscious business revisited

As we near the end of this story, what further connections have emerged between history, narrative writing and "conscious business"? First, it seems to me that part of thinking consciously about organisational life means being mindful of history. What I am advocating is that people working in organisations pay more attention to how things have come to be as they are. This may in turn give them the courage to question taken-for-granted ways of thinking about leadership, change and influence. By reflecting on actual experience, I hope people will come to see that what makes the world go round is not just control, structures, plans and measurement, though they have a part to play, but also relationships, conversations and stories.

It has been suggested to me that perhaps those managing organisations actually want to be history-less; in the pursuit of efficiency and control, understanding what happened in the past may not seem useful or relevant. What counts, according to this worldview, are things like structure, clear objectives and planning – the rational, forward-looking disciplines. What's more, delving into history may seem a risky business, as it inevitably raises uncomfortable questions about who was responsible for mistakes and failures. It is a credit to Macmillan Cancer Support that it has the sense and courage to use writing to look back and to learn from its experience.

Today, many people at work are burdened with excessive paperwork and computerised procedures. And they may be surrounded by idealised depictions of the organisation they work in. Perhaps, in some situations, a more intelligent use of writing would be to adopt a more historical approach, by which I mean capturing and reflecting on how the present state of affairs has emerged. There is no guarantee that this will make things better, but I think it stands a good chance of raising awareness and challenging conventional wisdom about how organisational life really works.

One golden thread that has run through my story here is the social, interdependent nature of human beings. By bringing narrative and history back into the workplace, we are recognising that it is human relating and relationships that make a difference in organisational and business life.

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Climate Change from a Personal Perspective

Patrick Crawford

This article examines change from a human perspective. Economic reasons may be a necessary driver for change but they are clearly not sufficient. We ignore the human dimension at our peril. Indeed the lack of action on climate change places us all at unnecessary risk.

The Lewes Pound is a complementary local currency designed to support the local economy of the town. The economic arguments supporting local business made by the New Economic Forum's Leaky Bucket Report are sound but these are minor reasons why people use Lewes Pounds. The actual reasons are widespread and need to be articulated and communicated. In analysing this further, the paper considers local connections and suggests the need for a balanced and congruent life: in summary – health, wealth and happiness.

In parallel to this, with atmospheric CO2 concentrations passing the 400 ppm mark, the need to find solutions to climate change are taking on a new urgency. But with this knowledge why is there so little action from government, business, investors and us? Of the many reasons, two stand out – personal relevance and complexity.

The article makes the case that being conscious of personal connections makes climate change more relevant and that the personal grounding of more self-awareness makes the complexity of these issues easier, though not easy, to address.

Keywords

climate change, values, local currency, conscious business, motivation, ethics, civic duty

Introduction

As a reader of this journal you are likely to be a practitioner with academic interests or an academic with practitioner interests. From a conscious business perspective these positions are a good place to start, being aware of business practices with the objectivity that academic discipline provides. On examining these business practices it is customary to convert these observations to a theory. In a business context the majority of these theories are economic. In fact, from a practitioner standpoint, many business decisions are taken from a wide variety of perspectives that are not purely, or even at all, economic.

My aim is to write this article from an individual point of view with the purpose of engaging with you as a person. My hope is to present my personal experiences as suggestions to consider rather than directions.

Advocacy has its place in acknowledging the power dynamic of the stick. However, my hypothesis is that when we consider the carrot of individual motivations we add a different perspective. And bringing these two together means we can start to clap with two hands rather than the soundless sound of one.

I see there is a clear need to examine business practices in the light of the risks and opportunities from climate change and a resource constrained world. I work with CDP, formally the Carbon Disclosure Project, a climate change charity working on behalf of the world's institutional investors. CDP's mission is to prevent dangerous climate change by placing information at the heart of business, investment and policy decisions. Considering why the climate change message, obvious to some, is taking too long to reach home requires examination of the levers and reasons for change. However, working from global perspectives considering the complex science and complex consequences of climate change can be disorientating.

At the same time as inquiring into the global issues of climate change I was considering local issues. I work with the Lewes Pound, a complementary currency supporting the local economy of Lewes, the county town of Sussex, England. Lewes Pounds can only be spent with local independent traders. Examining why people use Lewes Pounds gave me insight into local behaviour. But I soon realised that for this inquiry to be meaningful I had to access my personal experience. Surprisingly, perhaps, my conclusion is that the drivers of change at a local level can also be relevant to the changes necessary for global issues such as climate change.

Decisions are made by individuals, however collectively – even at business and government level. And individuals in a business context are subject to a wide range of influences from shareholders and other stakeholders. In addition, decision makers - and you and I - have personal motivations, including an often hidden influence that impacts our human decisions, a set of values, a basic humanity.

These values connect us all. When our links to these shared values are stretched or broken, life becomes more complicated. We can become stuck in a series of habits that take us away from the health, wealth and happiness of an improving quality of life for ourselves and others. At the extreme, life can become meaningless and we wonder why.

Climate Change

In 1987 scientific investigations found that Chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) emitted into the atmosphere through aerosols and refrigerants depleted the ozone layer, threatening the future of mankind from global cooling. The gases also caused acid rain that damaged crops and trees. Global governments convened and produced the Montreal Protocol banning the offending emissions. The result was significant reductions in emissions, reducing acid rain and the healing of the ozone layer.

Similar, but more robust, science has shown that manmade emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases are having a detrimental effect on the Earth's temperatures now and forecasts dire but preventable consequences. (Visit www.ipcc.ch for more information including the Fifth Assessment Report released on 27 September 2013 that provides a comprehensive assessment of the physical science basis of climate change.)

Through the work of CDP we know that many businesses are taking these issues seriously. 81% of the largest companies in the world report to institutional investors on their emissions as well as the risks and opportunities from climate change (https://www.cdp.net/en-US/Pages/HomePage.aspx). CDP asks leading businesses to provide information on emissions and climate change risks and opportunities and holds the largest database of business-related climate change data in the world. The charity also requests information regarding water and commodities from forests, recognising that these issues are closely connected to climate change and its consequences. Governments are moving with an increasing number of regulations being introduced around the world. Most recently the UK government has introduced mandatory greenhouse gas emissions reporting. Consumers, us, are beginning to demand products that have been produced, used and disposed of sustainably and ethically. These are signs of hope but despite this we have to ask why is so little being done and progress so slow? We have a long way to go before we can live comfortably in a low carbon, resource constrained world.

However, with atmospheric CO2 concentrations passing 400 parts per million mark, according to data from the Mauna Loa Observatory in Hawaii, the need to find solutions to climate change is taking on a new urgency. So why is so little being done?

We know the science that supports the predictions of global warming. We are experiencing the economic damage today from severe weather events, some of which are predicted by the climate science. These same events are causing deaths and severe hardships for millions of people. We know the world's natural resources are being depleted unsustainably. We see pictures of melting ice caps and hear of an increasing number of species becoming endangered before their extinction. Each one of these issues is enough for global campaigns by activists and should concern us all. But when all of this evidence comes together, why is so little being done?

With these rational facts being necessary drivers of change but clearly not sufficient, I went on a mini quest for answers.

Influenced by John Broome's recent book *Climate Matters: ethics in a warming world*, I turned to moral philosophy for a human perspective. The premises, that carbon emissions cause global warming and that global warming causes harm, lead to the conclusion that my emissions cause harm. This harm is on others and could be anywhere in the world and in the future. It is my moral duty of **Justice**, and that of each one of us,to reduce these emissions. But it is the moral duty of **Goodness** to go further and find answers to control climate change. Goodness is a duty of governments, not individuals. But it is our civic duty to get governments to fulfil this moral duty of Goodness. Interestingly, here is a separation between my own behaviour and my actions of civic duty.

With rich people causing more emissions and harm than poor people, it is clear that we are trying to solve global inequality at the same time as climate change. Can we really solve two of the biggest problems the world faces at the same time – or do we perhaps have to solve both at the risk of solving neither?

These moral arguments add to the scientific arguments that we should change our behaviour and actions. But again why is so little being done? Of the many reasons, I realised that two stood out for me – personal relevance and complexity.

Getting Lost

It was at this stage of my investigation that I started feeling slightly nervous and a bit lost. Conceptually I could understand the pieces of the jigsaw, the economics, the science, the threats to the people and the world we live in, the consequences of climate change now and in the future and the moral duty we all have to take action. These factors were supporting change but were not enough and would not make enough difference in time to avoid serious consequences. I realised that several pieces of the jigsaw were missing. These thoughts added to the complexity of the situation, particularly as the change that is needed is much more than understanding and harmonising the workings of the existing system. But what was this new system and who am I to prescribe and challenge the behaviour of others?

There was something else. I felt separated from these thoughts and the necessary actions. Where do I fit into the picture? Why are these issues relevant to me?

The Lewes Pound – a case study

At the same time as I was wrestling with climate change problems and their solutions, I was considering the undoubted merits of the Lewes Pound. This is the complementary local currency launched in 2008, designed to support the local economy of Lewes, the county town of East Sussex, UK. The economic arguments made by the New Economic Forum's *Plugging the Leaks* report are sound.

http://www.pluggingtheleaks.org/downloads/ptl_handbook.pdf

Local traders are more likely to use local suppliers, local produce and local services, with money staying in Lewes. Chain stores use national organisations to provide services and use their buying power to source from further afield, with money leaking out.

Discussions about increasing the usage of the Lewes Pound often centred on economic incentives. But first I needed to understand why people were using the local currency in the first place.

A personal view: Why the Lewes Pound matters

As one of the volunteers running the Lewes Pound stall at the monthly Lewes farmers' market, I have first hand experience of explaining how the Lewes Pound works. Understanding money is difficult because money means different things to each of us, hence the need for individual conversations.

It was while I was considering the results from these conversations that I realised what was happening. I had moved from basing decisions about the Lewes Pound on what I *thought* were the drivers of other people's behaviour to asking people what mattered to them and what they really wanted. Secondly, I realised

individuals had different reasons for using Lewes Pounds, which moved swiftly to the conclusions that the reasons why I used Lewes Pounds were also important. However this was more complicated. When I started to express my views I found they were based on a collation of rational theory and practice of other people. Although relevant these external views and theories obscured my own views. I needed to understand my behaviour from a different and more personal perspective. And to do that I had to ask what really matters to me.

This had to be a personal view and could not even be a view of the group running the Lewes Pound (although I'm glad our views are congruent!). Until now my arguments about using local currency were about the benefit to others, which could be connected with Broome's arguments about moral behaviour. Here my focus was on me and my motivations and I felt selfish. Interesting but wrong. A respect for my views is necessary because they form the foundation for my behaviour and a benchmark to assess the views of others.

As I explored my views further I realised that the toast of Health, Wealth and Happiness, a simple axiom, rang true. This was a good starting point. I knew that for me the Lewes Pound was more than just money.

I examined each of the three strands in turn. *Health* linked to the natural world, which I too often take for granted. Clearly I must continue to value but connect more with the great outdoors. I felt that the essence of *Happiness* meant being with people, however much I value my own company. *Wealth* was more difficult. Working outside Lewes meant that I was bringing money into Lewes. However, I saw that by engaging more with local businesses and producers this supported the local economy. Rational arguments and business cases work here. This was the original justification for the introduction of the Lewes Pound. Finally, I realised that each of these three strands are important - and as important as bringing them all together - making connections.

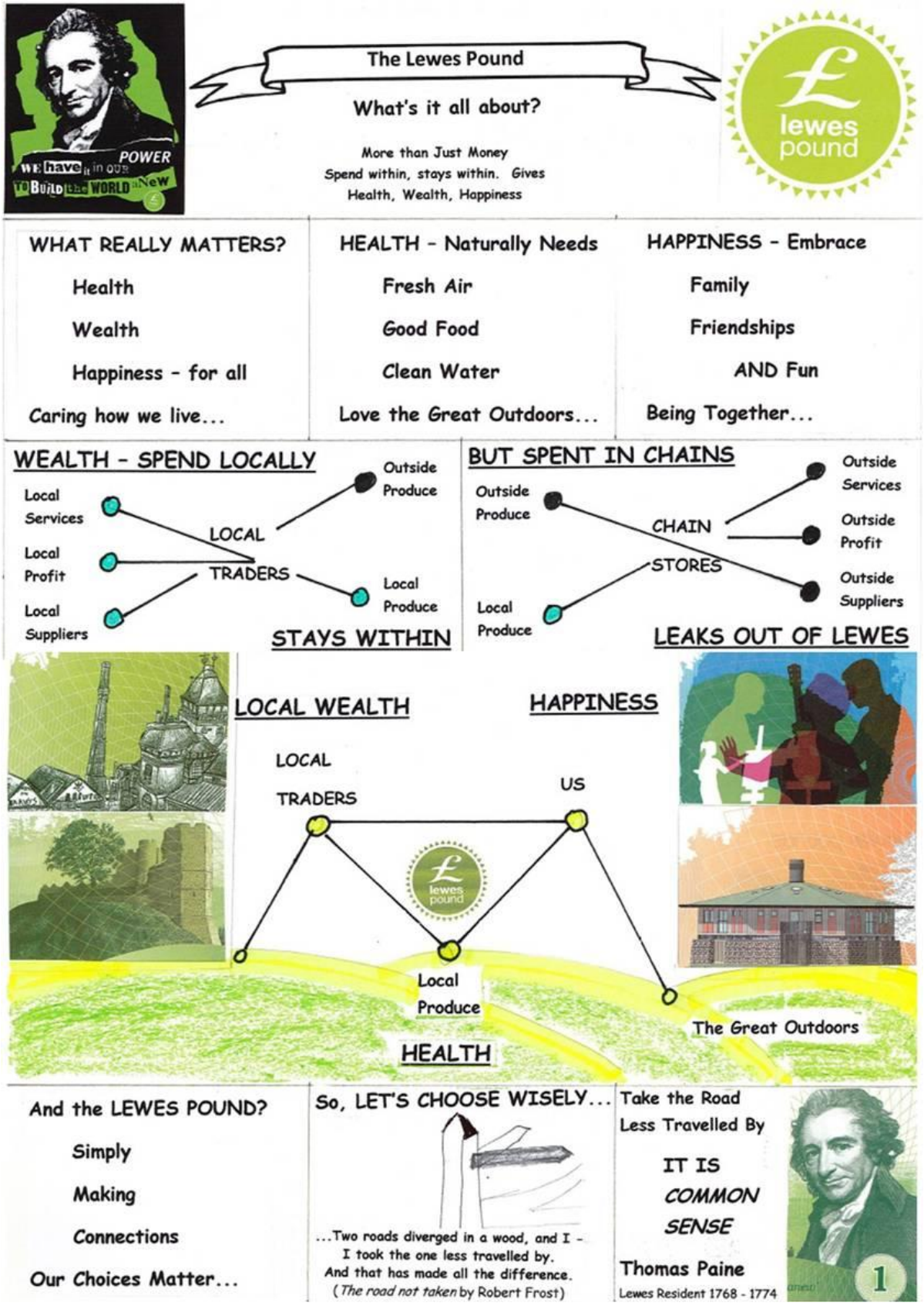
Further, it was a joy to discover that the designs on the Lewes Pound notes coincidentally reflected the three main strands of a sustainable life:

- 10 Lewes Pound note: Lewes's Linklater Pavilion for environmental education, represents the environment and planet.
- 5 Lewes Pound note: The myriad of cultural skills, artists and fun drawn by Michael Munday represent the social and people aspect of our lives. (As does the bonfire scene on the LP21 pound note but that goes without saying.)
- 1 Lewes Pound: Harvey's Brewery represents the economic and profit need – and the social one too.

I asked myself how I could communicate these views on the Lewes Pound in a format that was easily accessible and visible, enabling people to engage with the ideas. Images and a story could add feelings to the logic of words so I chose the cartoon style. Feedback from early discussions about these findings was that the portrayal was still intellectual and what was missing was the care and the humanity - hence the inclusion of 'Caring how we live' as part of simplifying the images and story

When I brought the three elements of Health, Wealth and Happiness together I realised that they formed a map underpinned by the environmental surroundings of Lewes. I instinctively placed the Lewes Pound symbol in the middle of the picture and saw that for me the purpose of the Lewes Pound was to make and support the

connections between the three. The cartoon ends with the title of Tom Paine's book [It's] *Common Sense.* . And it is. Our choices matter, so let's choose wisely. The result is the cartoon you see below. The faults are mine but grateful thanks to everyone who provided their feedback.



The Lewes Pound – Making Connections

More than Just money.
Spent within, stays within. Gives
Health, wealth, happiness.

As this is a personal view I am less uncomfortable about sharing the Haiku poems. (In fact the entire cartoon is a series of them.) I use these to consolidate and clarify my thinking and feelings rather than to access the poetic muse.

A consolidation

My conclusion from this exercise relating to the Lewes Pound was to realise the value in connecting with people. Conversations articulated many different views, enabling me to engage with the issues that are relevant to each particular individual. Yes, the economic arguments about local wealth are true but these arguments are much more powerful when they include wider issues connected with health and happiness.

I am aware that I have sub-consciously followed the process of Peter Senge and Otto Scharmer's Theory U articulated in their book *Presence* (Senge, P et al., 2005). Simplifying: the steps of Sensing the current situation, Presencing, a deeper understanding of roles and Realising have helped to bring new insights into my current concerns.

From a personal perspective I was aware of two key findings – the importance of individuals and the importance of engaging with their motivations and values. The exercise showed that by accessing my own viewpoint I increased my awareness of what is important and showed that I am responsible for my own actions. My choices matter and I matter, as do you. And taking this attitude supports the argument that it is individuals who make decisions.

Secondly, by considering the importance of my connections with people and the world around me I rekindle my own values. Rather than keeping the focus mainly on the value of money I can bring value into the realm of values. Much has been written on the lack of correlation between increasing income and increasing happiness, beyond a certain level of income. Even in this simplistic way, bringing the values of health, wealth and happiness together goes a long way to improving my quality of life. As an individual my behaviour needs to be congruent with my values. From this place I can have empathy with others and respect their positions – being empathetic, but keeping my views separate from theirs.

These two findings are helpful in establishing a base from which I can engage with others and the complex issues that affect us all. Considering my role as an individual and the importance of connections provides a more solid foundation from which to address both the personal relevance of climate change and its complexity.

Back to climate change

John Broome's argument about the importance of looking at my own behaviour as being different from my civic duty now makes more sense. I can engage with external issues from both a direct and indirect way, which increases the personal relevance of issues like climate change. Having this grounding has enabled me to accept the vast complexity of the subject, still acknowledging the difficulties that lie ahead.

If these insights helped me, this leads to the conclusion that if others find these issues of personal relevance they may well be motivated to seek solutions to climate change from their own perspective. But how can I let go? Can I simply hope that the suggestions above can encourage others to become more aware of the

common values that connect us all and take the necessary steps to prevent dangerous climate change? Now here is the tricky part.

Yes, I want you to change your behaviour. I am in danger of taking all these findings above and trying to use them as a stick to force change. A moment's reflection shows the futility of this advocacy. This attitude will not work for meaningful change because it uses the same coercive arguments that brought me to this inquiry in the first place. I can only hope that by using Bill Torbert's four parts of speech: Framing, Advocating, Illustrating and Inquiring I can invite you to reflect on these findings and make your own decisions (published in Reason, P & Bradbury, H eds, ([2001] 2006)

However an interesting point emerges. In the sphere of work, and indeed in most relationships, factors of power are at work apart from individual motivations. Referencing Adam Kahane's experiences in his book *Power and Love: A Theory and Practice of Social Change* (Kahane, A, 2010) Love, in the sense of unifying, needs to work closely with Power, in the sense of 'power to'... rather than 'power over'. As Kahane says 'Power is never absent, only sometimes concealed'. Both are needed for lasting change. Where the focus is on integration - of values and people I need to ask where the power is. Where the focus is on power I need to bring in the unifying nature of love.

In the world of business I translate this into identification and consideration of the stakeholders in any situation, acknowledging that shareholders are also stakeholders. I see this as a straightforward way of bringing the role of values, externalities, non-financial information and climate change together with value and profit. From this unification I can work with the power dynamics in an interactive way. Business cases have their place but need to reflect both current and future impacts – on current and future stakeholders, knowing that this includes future generations. The threat of climate change requires us to take this broad view.

In every walk of life it is individuals who make decisions. If I also bring my personal motivations and those of others into the picture I can connect with the underlying values that connect us all. We may be individuals but how we relate with each other makes us people, all connected at a fundamental level.

Conclusion

The paper makes the case that being conscious of personal values and connections makes climate change more relevant. The personal grounding of increased self-awareness makes the complexity of these issues easier, though not easy, to address. Encouraging people to reconnect with their own values will increase the number of conversations on these essential topics and increase the likelihood of change. Moreover, it is we as individuals who make decisions in our home life, businesses and in governments. Bringing together the sticks of business imperatives and regulations with the carrots of self-motivation from a human and personal perspective makes change more likely and longer lasting.

Considering the role of current and future stakeholders, including shareholders, may not be the new system needed to take us into a low carbon, resource constrained world but it is certainly a step in the right direction.

I have started from one place, and been on a journey considering global problems and local issues. I have made connections and ended back at the same place but from a different more conscious perspective.

Final words

Connected
Based on the simple
I see the complexity.
Like views from the Downs.

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About the author

Patrick Crawford is Development Manager at CDP, part of CDP's Technical Team developing global partnerships and engaging companies. Changing careers from Head of Business Development at the UK's Telegraph Media Group Patrick joined CDP in 2007. He is working with corporations to use the CDP process to catalyse change; and is working with companies to adopt CDSB's Climate Change Reporting Framework, linking financial and non-financial information. In his spare time he is a founder director of The Lewes Pound a complementary currency supporting local businesses. Think Global Act Local. Patrick has an MBA from London Business School and received the MSc in Responsibility and Business Practice from Bath University.

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Some forthcoming events

You are most welcome to join us.

Please click on the links if you'd like to find out more.

Date	Event	Link
Friday 13 Dec Roots & Shoots, London, SE11	**AMED Writers' Group annual celebration**: ' Private Passions: highlights of our Writing Year'	http://www.amed.org.uk/events/amed-writers-group-private-passions-highlights-of-our-writing-yea
Thursday 23 Jan, (to be confirmed)	**Joint AMED/ Exeter University Centre for Leadership Studies Network** Post-publication workshop following the Autumn 2013 'Leadership Paradoxes' issue of e-O&P, with Roger Niven and Keith Kinsella	http://www.amed.org.uk/events/leadership-paradoxes-a-joint-amed-exeter-university-cls-network-p
Friday 21 Feb Roots & Shoots, London, SE11	**AMED Writers' Group (AWG):** *'Intensive Journalling'* with John Sweet	http://www.amed.org.uk/events/awg-intensive-journalling-with-john-sweet
Friday 28 February	**Publication of Spring 2014 *e-O&P* special edition** 'Conscious Business Part 2', guest edited by Rob Warwick and Pete Burden	www.amed.org.uk
Friday 16 May, at Friends Meeting House, Brighton	**AMED's 8th Annual Collaborative Writing Workshop,** 10 am – 4.30 pm *'The future development of e-O&P* (and other AMED publications)', with David McAra and Bob MacKenzie.	http://www.amed.org.uk/events/the-future-development-of-e-o-p Coincides with the Annual Brighton Festival, so come and make a weekend of the festivities.

Other 2014 AMED Writers' Group meetings take place 11th April, 20th June, 15 August, 17th October and 12th December.

And watch out for details of **Open Source Thinking**, **Part 2: OST 2014; Exploring Frontiers 2014** and other events.

You can find a regularly updated list of events posted by individual AMED Members, Networkers and Guests by clicking on this link, http://www.amed.org.uk/events and scrolling down the calendar of dates.

Or you can contact **Linda Williams** @ the AMED Office.

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Conscious Business UK

Conscious business in action

So far in this journal you've probably read a fair bit about the why and the theory. This bit is about the 'how'. A couple of years ago, working as business consultants Conscious Business People, we'd experienced enough first-hand success bringing conscious business principles into companies that we kept bumping into the question: How do we spread the word and get more companies practicing?

We wanted to build something organically that was sociable, fun, thought provoking, very much 'learning by doing' and that might actually stimulate change. It struck us that running regular 'practitioner' meetings might be the way forward so we launched a group on Meetup.com to test the water.

Within a couple of months Brighton had 20+ people coming along with a desire to learn more and we were looking for bigger venues. After 6 months we started the London group, then Bristol, and now a City of London version is having its inaugural session.

It was always going to be about practice and very hands on, so right from the start our format was (and still is): a check-in, news, 75 mins of mini workshop usually in groups, a check-out and then some social time. It's consistently proven a fun and effective way of meeting like-minded people and learning new things or more effective ways of doing the things you already are.

The workshops have revolved around all sorts of subjects, mainly from business folk who practice this actively. We're a very broad church but we do believe in proven, evidence based approaches. As much as possible we want things that you can use today, now, based on your current business situation.

We've had sessions from Al Reid at Red Design about marketing more effectively from the heart; from Nate Whitestone, revered in the UK Sociocracy community, about effective decision making and communication; Ray Richards from Do Something Different helped us design a CB DSD programme; Paul Levy from CENTRIM at Brighton University on how to measure and identify the challenges around organisational consciousness; Tom Nixon from the award-winning and democratically run NixonMcInnes showing us conscious selling techniques; Worldblu helping us become more democratic as organisations; and of course all of the workshops we've created between us. Upcoming are a Social Innovation Camp hackathon amongst others.

So far we're connected to nearly a 1000 people through one or other of our community sites purely through organic growth. We're still growing and we have bold ambition as a member run movement to lead business through demonstrating better results by essentially 'doing the right thing'.

We put in the time and travel to host and arrange presenters, find venues, etc. but we need help. So this is an invite.

An invite to come to a meeting - they're fun, low-cost, and you'll meet like-minded people.

Or why not start a Meet-up where you are? We'll help as much as we can to get you established, perhaps to leverage the existing Meet-up group, and publicise around our networks, through the LinkedIn group, the blog etc.

Just contact me (details below) or go and check out http://www.meetup.com/consciousbusinessuk/ or the LinkedIn community group 'Conscious Business UK' and start a conversation or ask a question.

As we've learned a lot can happen from asking the right questions.

Jamie Pyper - Partner, Conscious Business People,

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About e-O&P

AMED's Journal

e-O&P is AMED's quarterly online journal, published by a team of committed volunteers in pdf format. For 25 years, through persuasive writing, *O&P* has been connecting the worlds of work, theory, ideas, innovation and practice by making new knowledge and original thinking available for developers, facilitators and their clients. Our readership consists of academics, professionals, managers and consultants at all stages of their careers. Through this medium, we address innovative approaches to personal, professional and organisational development in a reflective and accessible way. *e-O&P* blends theory, research and practice, offering a range of well-written thought pieces, case studies, interviews, articles, reviews and editorials. We maintain our high standards of writing through the careful selection of relevant themes, through our support of outstanding guest editors, and through our nourishment of novice as well as established authors.

About our guest editors

Once selected, our guest editors have a pretty free hand within a broad set of guidelines. Guest editors deliver to the *e-O&P* Editorial Board a set of articles of suitable quality, ready for publication, according to a pre-arranged schedule. They invite proposals for contributions, identify authors, commission stimulating articles, reviewing, and where appropriate, critiquing drafts and proof-reading final copy in a spirit of critical friendship.

e-O&P's other 'Critical Friends'

For their particular edition, guest editors often find it useful to create a small, temporary editorial team to support them, including 'Critical Friends'. The *e-O&P* Editorial Board are happy to help them find such collaborators, and are on hand to explore any issues or concerns that arise, bearing in mind our limited time to engage in extensive, detailed reading or conversations.

Are you interested in joining our exciting project?

We are always looking to expand *e-O&P*'s network of 'Critical Friends', who would be available to guest editors or individual authors on request. Depending on your preferences and on any specific need, as a Critical Friend you can help in various ways. You can read drafts, offer constructive feedback, clarify ideas, comment on style, provide encouragement, proof-read or copy-edit pre-publication texts. In return, this affords you the opportunity to develop greater insight into, and awareness of possibilities for, your own writing, editing and professional practice. You might even consider subsequently becoming a Guest Editor or an author for *e-O&P*, or joining the Editorial Board.

If you'd like to find out more, please contact one of us. We'd be delighted to hear from you.

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A note about AMED

AMED stands for the Association for Management Education and Development, www.amed.org.uk. We are a long-established membership organisation and educational charity devoted to developing people and organisations. Our purpose is to serve as a forum for people who want to share, learn and experiment, and find support, encouragement, and innovative ways of communicating. Our conversations are open, constructive, and facilitated.

At AMED, we strive to benefit our members and the wider society. Exclusive Member benefits include excellent professional indemnity cover, free copies of the quarterly journal *e-O&P*, and discounted fees for participation in a range of face-to-face events, special interest groups, and our interactive website. We aim to build on our three cornerstones of ***knowledge***, ***innovation*** and ***networking*** in the digital age. Wherever we can, AMED Members, Networkers and Guests seek to work with likeminded individuals and organisations, to generate synergy and critical mass for change.

To find out more about us, you are welcome to visit our website www.amed.org.uk, or contact Linda Williams, our Membership Administrator, E: amedoffice@amed.org.uk, T: 0300 365 1247