**Leadership Book For CEOs**

**Introduction**

“Dream well, you may find yourself there.” - Neal Bushoven

My great uncle [Bill Santelmann](http://www.marineband.usmc.mil/learning_tools/our_history/directors/santelmann_f.htm) was director of the Marine Corps Band from 1940-1955. The Marine Corps Band is also known as The President’s Own Band and plays for Heads of State, Rose Garden ceremonies, Arlington Cemetery proceedings, and events throughout the world, playing at the pleasure of the President. The Marine Corps Band is known to be supremely capable and versatile, and Bill Santelmann was recognized for elevating their already excellent musicianship. Bill ushered in a whole new era for the Marine Corps Band. In the early days, enlisted marines who grew up taking trumpet lessons would join the band, but Bill took it to a whole new level – proactively recruiting talented musicians and building up their musicianship, ability to listen to eachother, and grow their repertoire to the extent that by the end of his tenure the band could play everything from Dixieland, to rock and roll to Blues to Waltzes to Orchestral arrangements – all with the precision and passion of the greatest bands of the time.

After his stint with the Marine Corps, he kept up a rigorous schedule performing and guest-conducting around the world.  In 1984 while attending the American Bandmasters Annual conference, the Marine Corps Band was given the highest honor of being asked to play as the closing band for the conference dinner. And Bill was also honored by being asked to guest-conduct his old band.

For a finale he led the Band through Wagner’s ‘Ascent into Heaven’. It was majestic, soaring. The crowd roared their approval and so then for an encore he chose ‘Stars and Stripes Forever’.  The chamber again thundered applause and while his own Band stood clapping in ovation in his honor, he walked backstage, and sat where he could see from stage right the first few rows of the audience smiling and clapping and the band bowing to both the audience and acknowledging him off-stage. With a great sense of joy he sat down, and exclaimed “I love this band!” Those were his last words, as immediately, he died of a heart attack.

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Sad yes, but also beautiful and sublime.  We all have to go from this world when it’s time, and this seems to me a beautiful way to go; surrounded by friends and colleagues and engaged in what you are passionate about and excellent at. Bill Santelmann left this world at the height of his passion and joy. He left the world a better place by sharing his joy.

Few of us focus on what we really excel at in our work and play. The culprit may be our culture’s obsession with remedies for everything. Our focus on corrective attitudes and the skepticism toward those who dream, conspire to build compliant behavior, not novel and unique behavior which reflect our true passions.

But what of the real you? Our greatest capabilities have to be used in finding our authentic identities, which will then give rise to our true voice.

This book is designed to help draw out those three key characteristics every CEO wants: your creativity, integrity, and global perspective. And of course, the CEO, the leader, has a most important role to play in this equation by setting tone, and creating the rich social ecosystem for such capacities to evolve. This book is intended to help you – in whatever capacity or place on the org chart - to discover your own real voice and build powerful echoes of change. Remember, no one regrets what they did attempt; only what they failed to try.

**Marketquake**

In this section, we are going to look at the abounding complexity of the world we live in, moving talent pools, 2.0 technologies which fuel innovation in emerging markets, and all those changes that affect our lives.

**Chapter 1 – Seismic Shifts**

1. **The Quicksand of Change**

Right now competition is coming from everyone, everywhere, for everything.

– Harold Sirkin, Boston Consulting Group

It’s easy to come up with new ideas; the hard part is letting go of what worked for you two years ago, but will soon be out of date.  
– Roger von Oech

A word about the complex world we are living in: countries, economies, societies and business enterprises are getting more and more interconnected. This is leading to increasing interdependency among nations, and companies

The consequences of every decision are transmitted with lightning speed across the globe, and the effect is felt by people regardless of where they live.

IBM conducted a study this year in which they asked 1500 CEOs, in face to face interviews, what skills were of paramount importance for the leaders in their organizations, to their business and to global competitiveness.

The premise of the study is that change is accelerating, and complexity is deepening in all markets around the world. Add to this the fact that the world has become increasingly volatile and the future, ambiguous. Yet, there remain a powerful minority of companies globally that have been able to capitalize on these seismic changes and turn this turbulence into innovation and advantage.

In a nutshell, these are what CEOs care about. The keys are:

1. **Creativity**. Yes! *Your* creativity, initiative, inventiveness and passion. More than ever, people have wholly transparent, real-time access to the relative value and price of market goods, and services that companies are providing. And our ability and willingness to bring our creativity to work can become the discerning factor in our organizations. Remember 3M famously created post-it notes by allowing people in the organization to express their own creativity. From 3M to Google to Atlassian, some of the most powerful innovations have come from the bottom up within business cultures where, autonomy is offered, people are inspired, creativity encouraged, and ideas are allowed to flourish.

**If we stop to analyze what creativity actually means, we see that it is the ability to bring something new into existence; new ways of solving problems; different ways of thinking; generating new ideas. This, though, can happen only if there is bold thinking – thinking which understands the need of the hour, and continuously innovates and re-invents.**

**Companies that encourage employees to ideate, and benefit from the diversity of ideas invariably stand out. Employees in such companies are emboldened to challenge assumptions. Since the emphasis is on team work, and often team work in a virtual workplace, the free flow of ideas, and communication with each other is the only way to arrive at solutions, combat challenges and achieve excellence at work.**

1. **Integrity**. I recently conducted a workshop, and interacted with a group of women executives at an insurance and financial services group. A running theme among the attendees was the challenge of ‘being everything to everyone.’ That is, being the great mom, partner, executive, community service contributor, etc…

Here’s a piece of advice from Rick Warren, author of The Purpose-Driven Life: When we think of our life, it’s common to think of ourselves as having different lives – the workout life, the professional life, the partner and spouse life, the parent life, etc., when, in fact, *we have but one life to live*.

My encouragement is to give permission to ourselves, and everyone around us to bring our whole selves to every endeavor. Those are the key words – *our whole selves*. This is what integrity is all about. In fact, the etymology of Integrity, is from the Latin integer, which means oneness, whole. We need to recognize that each of us is but one person with a rich history, present, and future. We, therefore, need to bring our whole selves to everything we do. We can turn every opportunity into something meaningful when we draw from our rich experience and apply knowledge acquired and wisdom gained. This would then represent our own unique and great contribution.

1. **Globalization.** Creative leadership is the ability to think globally, and a key aspect of thinking globally is to borrow brilliance from all sectors.

One finding of the study was that CEOs wanted creative leaders to borrow disruption models from other industries and market sectors. For instance, if you are in the IT business, don’t benchmark what other IT businesses are doing. Go out and borrow ideas from the toy industry or maybe the micro lending community – something outside your usual purview. Think big!

Finally, “act despite uncertainty.” Agreed there is much ambiguity in globalization, and yes, it can often seem a better idea to wait until things shake out before committing a particular direction. But increasingly, CEOs want creative leaders to take risks. Acting while others hesitate can pay off; responding swiftly to changes and challenges. In a volatile environment, speed of response is what is required. The key to a successful jump is to follow your true convictions and beliefs, even if they lead you on an unknown path.

1. **Follow the Right Idea Threads**

I can’t recall a period of time that was as volatile, complex, ambiguous and tumultuous. As one successful executive puts it, ‘if you’re not confused, you don’t know what’s going on’.

– Warren Bennis

On March 24, 2010, we had the honor of producing an event with Ram Charan, surely one of, if not the, most sought-after executive and management consultants in the world. His presentation was indeed thought-provoking and inspiring, but I’ll just pick one of his insights to share here: **follow the right idea threads**.

In the background of the complexity of change, the chaos of rapidly changing technologies and the overload of available-but-sometimes-conflicting information, I asked Charan how it was possible to keep up with it all, something many people try to do. He agreed that this was impossible, and said, “The key is to focus on what matters”.

The question that naturally followed was, “How do you know what matters?” To which, Charan said that it was all about context: What is it that really matters *to you* in your work, in your organization, and in the problems you are trying to solve. He added that the best approach would be to follow the idea threads that mattered.

What he meant is that while we can’t possibly digest the encyclopedia of our particular domain expertise, what we must do is follow the conversations where the center of gravity is. For instance, when attending a conference relevant to your field of expertise and interest, the keynote will drop a reference to a seminal study. You then go back to your hotel room and look up that study and follow that thread. That particular thread might not end in ‘eureka!’, but it would give you other leads, which could steer you close to what matters to you. By staying close enough to the management thinkers and to the ideas that matter to you, you can follow and develop the right idea threads.

I have a personal example. I recently reached out to Arie Lewin at Duke Fuqua School of Business, to request an interview with him around his seminal ideas of creating super-adaptive firms by globally sourcing ideas. During an advance call with Dr. Lewin to discuss content he referred to the work of Vivek Wadhwa. In my ignorance I had to ask him to spell it twice, but it sent me on a journey to read Vivek’s studies and listen to several podcasts and interviews he has given recently on moving labor markets and talent. Vivek’s research proves that it is only excellence that matters in the world. Further, I realized his work was important to my discovery process on moving talent pools. Now I had a new idea thread to follow.

And so, this is how it works - follow the right people and ideas and they will lead you to the next.

*Enjoy the journey and find the right idea threads.*

1. **New Markets, New Opportunities**

So much has been written about Leadership.  We try to find a universal theory.  There is none.  The condition changes.  The context changes.  Some things stand out for that emerging context that most leaders have to pay attention to.  Practice them.  Inspire others, develop others, and multiply others.

- Ram Charan

The context is indeed changing, and rapidly. Consequently, the question to be asked is:

If not you, then who? And if not now, then when? - Tim Sanders

And……..you grab the opportunity; you capture a new market…

As recently as just 2004 barely 20% of companies had adopted corporate-wide functioning, off -shoring captive strategies to leverage the promise of low-cost labor. Services and technical expertise were sourced to not just China, India, but Malaysia, Philippines, Vietnam and other global talent pools. (Arie Lewin, ORN).  But, “Emerging countries are no longer content to be sources of cheap hands and low-cost brains. Instead they too are becoming hotbeds of innovation. They are redesigning entire business processes to do things better and faster… Forget about flat – the world of business is turning upside down.” (The Economist, April 2010).

This is a lesson EMC learned years ago when they opened a technical facility in India and immediately offshored/insourced the more rudimentary and mundane tasks that the U.S. engineers didn’t want. Indian engineers were frustrated and annoyed, and characteristically weren’t inclined to give discretionary, passionate effort to their work.Part of what it means to have a global perspective is developing an emotional intelligence quotient to recognize and foster the skills, and orientation of international communities of contributors such that the integrated efforts exceed the local capacities of any contributing talent.

In a world so globally interconnected, it would be advantageous to source innovation and leverage emerging available markets. Some stances that an organization can take are:

* **Find new audiences.** C. K. Prahalad dedicated the last decade or more of his life to furthering the concepts of core competency and the fortune at the bottom of the pyramid.
* Core competency is what adds value. It is a deep commitment to working across boundaries; it is about learning, coordination and integration of many skills. Core competency is very hard for competitors to imitate.
* Fortune at the bottom of the pyramid – the bottom of the pyramid, or the BoP, is the poorest socio-economic group, which is, in fact the largest, at 2.5 billion people living on less than $2.50 a day. Business models that target the BoP for providing innovative products and services make for fast-growing new markets and opportunities for entrepreneurs. This, according to Bill Gates was an ‘intriguing blueprint for how to fight poverty with profitability’.
* **Source innovation from around the world**: This may be more accessible than you think. Consider InnoCentive whose mission is to “harness collective brainpower around the world to solve problems that really matter”. InnoCentive operates as an inverted eBay, offering puzzles and real-world problems from companies around the world with hard cash rewards.

Think you can solve how to virtually verify plastic product package sealing? Or, provide a metric for how to evaluate the effectiveness of an R&D facility? Or, even (yes!) help the Gulf Coast respond effectively to an oil spill problem? Sign up, solve the puzzle and get paid.

Some of the best minds around the globe are wrestling with these problems from their homes and offices and work groups and getting rewarded by the companies and people in need.

I know it sounds daunting, but consider this: whether you are a mid-America regional bank manager, or a small business developing killer web applications, you can leverage the mechanisms of innovation **AND** find new markets for your existing business. Doing nothing, or sticking to your knitting is not an option.

Market niches are temporary, and the world is abundant with talent and opportunity. New opportunities are constantly emerging in rapidly evolving markets. Further, customers are also differentiating themselves in mature markets.

In order to grab new markets and new opportunities, there has to be a new approach to planning.

* Business strategies have to be constantly assessed, and re-calibrated
* Operating models have to be flexible, and course-correction should be done speedily, as and when required
* All operations have to be simplified since speed is of the essence
* Meaningful interactions with partners, employees and customers – easy-customer-experience is the mantra here
* Balance global and local – which systems work best globally and which work efficiently locally

1. In an interview with Annette Njis, Executive Director Global Initiative of China Europe International Business School, she described the power of reverse innovation versus the more common multinational practice of Glocalization. Glocalization is fancy term for a practice that’s been going on for decades in which a global multinational organization engineers a product within a 1st world environment, which is ultimately designed for emerging economy distribution. Then they set up a local market division assigned to tweak, price, market, distribute said product on a +20% annual growth rate and expanding margins on behalf of the centralized big company. In this scenario**Tilting Talent Pools**

A business has to be involving, it has to be fun, and it has to exercise your creative instincts.

-Richard Branson

This is what CEO’s are looking for. They want their businesses to be involving, fun and something that exercises their creative instincts. Consequently, they want their employees to be involved, to enjoy their work, and be creative. CEO’s know that it is only such employees who will give their organizations the cutting edge. This is also what prospective employees are looking for in jobs…

The success of every business/organization depends on the talent it has. To find talent, HR departments are looking far afield. Organizations are ready to offer jobs to talent sourced not only locally but globally. They are looking for the best. Yet, finding talented people seems to be the most difficult thing for HR departments.

So what are we looking at here?

* Personal qualities
* Where to get people with these qualities
* How to groom them

**Personal qualities:** Can the people you identify as talented to work in your company:

* Work in a virtual team
* Work with senior members
* Work as leaders, mentors
* Build a team
* Turn around a project that is in a crisis
* Cope with ambiguity and rapid change
* Unafraid to improve processes through testing, re-inventing, re-innovating, and refining
* Learn and grow continuously
* Contribute to strategic and intellectually challenging tasks
* Work on customer-related issues and solve problems

**Where to get people with these qualities:** Since most jobs are searched for on the Internet, prospective employers in order to attract talent need to see if:

* Their website is attractive, and detailed
* Job seekers can find them – smart and simple URLs are a starting point
* The website is updated and new job openings are posted with all the specifics mentioned
* There is a separate page for people with general résumés. They form a pool the organization can dip into at a later point
* There is an email address that can be used by job-seekers, and that all emails are responded to instantly

**How to groom them:** Organizations have responsibilities towards the talented people they employ –

* A 10/20/70 framework for the development programs for their employees has been found to be effective: 10% - training; 20% - coaching and mentoring in a structured manner; 70% - on-the-job learning
* There are challenging learning opportunities in the workplace, even if the workplace is virtual. This is because for real learning to take place, the employee has to be pulled out of his comfort zone. Stretch (not struggle) assignments are needed to sift talent, or retain and advance employees

That said, we need to look at the increasing importance of offshoring.

The Offshoring Research Network or the ORN project was launched in 2004 by the Center for International Business Education and Research (CIBER) at Duke University, The Fuqua School of Business. This is an international network of researchers who study organizations in their transition to globalizing business functions, administrative services, and other processes. Dr. Arie Y. Lewin, Professor of Strategy and International Business and Director of Duke CIBER, was the initiator and has been the Lead Principal Investigator of the ORN project. The idea behind this project was:

* To study the advancing trend of offshoring white collar jobs, which included administrative and technical tasks
* To track choice of locations,
* To see effective delivery models
* To track performance outcomes,
* To find out the risks of offshoring
* To study the future plans of U.S. based European and other companies

They found that organizations decided on offshoring because they had access to qualified personnel. Of course one factor was reduced labor costs, but more importantly it was found that companies used offshoring to access talent pools outside their home countries. This was especially true for higher-skilled work. For instance there is a large talent pool of science and engineering talent in India and other emerging economies. This talent is hard to come by in the U.S and Western Europe. Of course there are arguments both for and against offshoring of qualified talent. However, there is a trend towards modularization and standardization of higher-skilled work which could use less qualified personnel at lower costs.

According to Vivek Wadhwa, “The U.S. is graduating fewer and fewer scientists and engineers.” The real problem is “that the majority of these graduates are foreign nationals (who are now increasingly returning home).” Wadhwa goes on to say that the U.S. has to do all it can to retain the best foreign students.

Craig Barrett argues that this will help U.S. competitiveness only in the short-term. If the U.S. has to seriously compete in the 21st century, it has to increase its STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) talent pool. A work force of smart people has to be created, R & D invested in, and the environment made attractive for investment and innovation.

Both of them say that it is the responsibility of both the public and private sectors to create the ecosystem with incentives for deserving talent, regardless of whether the talent is American or foreign, and lots of opportunities.

Wadhwa, along with Anita Borg believe that a culture of inclusion and diversity has to be built into companies/businesses. Women are an untapped source of talent. By recruiting, retaining and advancing the careers of women, companies will not only get talented workers, but they will also be able to make a difference in the ecosystem.

For Barrett and Wadhwa, the key words are – passion, pride, and excitement in one’s work.

1. **The Opportunity is Beautiful, Unique and Meaningful**

Alan Greenspan, former chairman of the Federal Reserve Board, recognized the role of conceptual output as early as 1997 in a speech at the University of Connecticut when he said “The growth of the conceptual component of output has brought with it accelerating demands for workers who are equipped not simply with technical know-how, but with the ability to create, analyze, and transform information and to interact effectively with others.”

By 2004, he had developed his views on the topic, referring to reductions in manufacturing in the United States, outsourcing to India and China, excess of supply and the global marketplace, all leading to the increasing conceptualization of economic output.

Taking a page straight from Dan Pink and Gary Hamel, knowledge and even expertise are common, expected, and cheap (maybe even free) to source. They no longer represent lasting competitive advantage. We have moved from the knowledge age to the conceptual age. Creative, symphonic thinking, i.e., the ability to harness sometimes seemingly disparate pieces of information and ideas and mash them into wholly new iterations that can be applied effectively to solutions and results, are, in fact, the individual and organization’s competitive advantage.

Whatever field you work in, your expertise is expected, it is a given. It is your initiative and creativity to bring unique and signature solutions to solve unexpected problems that is your brand, and increasingly your company’s brand and identity.

Bill Taylor in his book, Practically Radical, puts forward 3 resolutions:

* To become the ‘most of something’. Check out the most successful organizations and people. They are all the most of something. There is no place in today’s high-pressured, rapidly-changing, killer-competitive world for anything less
* To embrace a sense of **vuja dé. Vuja dé is looking at a familiar situation as if you are seeing it for the very first time. This instantly opens up limitless imagination, and fresh insights and ideas**
* **To look for fresh, new ideas in new places. Never compare yourself with what or who is considered best in your field. Learn from people and organizations that are way outside your field**

The future of learning is to provide conceptual and powerful learning opportunities; opportunities which offer insight, ideas, and parables intended for inference and application by the learner. The outcomes of this kind of learning are quite unexpected, and by its very nature, bring in fresh insights and solutions. This is what makes the whole learning experience unique and beautiful.

To create the shift to conceptual learning, is to essentially balance the spoon-fed, outcome-anticipated, specific-competence results-oriented learning environments with more conceptual learning environments. This will treat learners as ready and able to distill ideas into their own signature integrated solutions, which are applicable for their line of work both internal and external. Success ensures that the experience is meaningful. This will then bring about the total shift to conceptual learning.

Tom Kelley, CEO of IDEO, a premier product and services innovation company, has been a long advocate of this approach. In his book, The Ten Faces of Innovation, he describes a particular persona called the “Cross-Pollinator”. Cross-Pollinators are those people who are inquisitive beyond their particular domain expertise and explore ideas from industries outside their immediate purview. They understand and learn the technology, device or methods employed elsewhere and figure out how to incorporate these ideas into their own work.

If learning environments use this approach, they will create environments that are media and socially rich, and which will aid learners deduct applications from disparate sources. The conceptual age learning environment will offer a deep portfolio of ideas and solutions garnered from varieties of domains. For example, a sales learning environment will offer:

* Presentation tips
* Niche industry knowledge
* Ways in which organizations outside their own field have leveraged technology to gain their customer attention

Learning opportunities are plentiful. Expectations too are rising. So, if an organization wants to be compelling, what they offer has to be beautiful, unique and meaningful.

Emerging learning environments will understand that people have their own intrinsic motivators. (These are often contrary to what their company or manager thinks is their primary motivator). What really motivate the learner are passion, purpose and curiosity. Learning opportunities will resonate only when they intersect with someone’s current passion, fulfil their sense of purpose and giving, and pique their curiosity.

1. **We’re Not in Kansas Anymore**

“Success is not the result of spontaneous combustion. You must set yourself on fire.”

In late 1953 the Swanson brothers, who were turkey wholesalers, had a glut of turkey.  They had overestimated the market.  So now they had 235 metric tons of turkey riding around the U.S. in refrigerated rail cars and the executive team was wondering what to do.  Can you try to imagine the CFO showing charts of what it cost to have all those turkeys rolling around on refrigerated rail cars per day?

Gerry Thomas, a sales executive at Swanson, had recently seen what Pan American airline was doing with compartmentalized in-flight food.  He and the executive team at Swanson coupled this concept with Clarence Birdseye’s new flash freezing technique. They then added the catchy label “TV Dinner”. This fit in beautifully with the cultural explosion of television. They were in effect targeting the 8 million Moms who were joining the workforce after WW II, and who were enjoying an abundance of electrical home appliances like ovens, refrigerators, freezers, and, of course, televisions.

Swanson prepared to sell five thousand units the first year. They sold ten million at .98 cents each.

It was the intersection of emerging technology, executive-led inspiration, niche marketing and abundant resources that made it happen.

But does that formula work again today in 2010?  Here’s the difference now, in 2010:

* **Resources are scarce, not abundant.** From water to textiles to lumber, the availability and premium placed on the natural resources we use to create consumer products and comestibles are in high demand. In the case of fossil fuels and water, particularly, the resources are increasingly precious. And just look at the premium now set on rare earth metals, necessary in the manufacture of consumer electronics, vehicles, computer systems and much more. China is currently one of largest mining and export countries in the world of rare earth metals, and recently both doubled their import levels while sharply curtailing their export of these valuable metals.
* **Talent is global,** not local. Historically if you had a local workforce that was obedient and diligent, and brought expertise and skill to execute top-driven strategies, you had a competitive advantage.  The future is most certainly now in terms of the ability to connect need with a globally-dispersed labor force; a force that is highly talented, motivated, and comparatively cheap by U.S. standards, all being connected by the internet at cost $0.  The skilled talent, regardless of source, is indeed not free, but increasingly any function that can be routinized and reduced, then equations which give correct answers can also be automated. Consider telemedicine. It is the in absentia health care solution to everything from fast, cheap review of MRIs, to mammograms, and all manners of diagnostics. You get an X-Ray in the afternoon in Illinois, the scan is reviewed by a U.S. board-certified physician in India, and returned overnight, or even immediately, over the web.
* **Innovation is democratized, not top-driven**: No longer can firms rely on the wisdom of a handful of insightful strategists at the top of a pyramid. Companies like Rabobank or Best Buy are doing a better job of catering to customer needs by creating mechanisms to actively listen to, and incorporate the interests of customers, as well as the know-how of line personnel.

In fact, today, customers have never had either so much information, or so many options. It is priority, therefore, to get connected to customers, make predictions, and give them what they want. When customers have access to new products and services, often, reputations of companies are either built or destroyed thanks to texting, tweeting, blogging, or through other social websites. In fact, two of the top focus points of organizations are about how to get close to the customer, and closer to recognizing and unleashing people skills. Customers expect to be understood, demand new services, and want more collaboration and sharing of information. Some of the most successful new innovations are built on the collaborative interactions of the product and consumer. Think Twitter, FourSquare, Facebook. Consequently, customer relationships have to be enhanced, and their feedback has to be evaluated and what you learn should be leveraged to your organization’s advantage.

* **People are creative and expressive, not compliant**: Pick your muse on this but currently I’ll take Sir Ken Robinson. He is on a crusade to persuade people to pursue their passions. He believes that this is the only way they will make greater contributions, build community value, and importantly find fulfillment in their endeavors.  In his book, he profiles Matt Groening (who created the pitch for The Simpsons, on the spot, in a meeting), Mick Fleetwood (who bailed on high school at 16 to be a jazz drummer in London), Gillian Lynne (who was deemed an underachiever until she enrolled in a dance school), and many others, who eschewed the proper ‘safe’ advice of elders, or, who were recognized by mentors for who they were, and pursued their passions to great ends.
* **Technology is still changing**: Rapidly. Too rapid, in fact, to adequately understand the implications.

Try this for analogy: “If you’re not shocked by quantum theory, you don’t properly understand it.” – Neils Bohr.

The point is this: You don’t need to be up for the challenge of constantly creating magnificent products and services that the world suddenly realizes it has been missing, or it desperately needs (think iPad).  The iPhone didn’t exist five years ago and now you need one.

Think rather, *What am I good at, love to do, and what provides purpose and meaning in my life and the lives of others.*  Focus on this, and you will give meaning and value to the world and to yourself.

1. **Build a Mantra**

Organizations spend hours and thousands of dollars on crafting mission statements.

Guy Kawasaki’s take is dynamic and he has a suggestion for those working diligently to build mission statements that matter. Don’t do it. That’s right. Just drop the two day offsite and the fifty thousand dollar consultant-generated mission statement that no one reads or can remember.

His advice: Create not a mission statement, but a mantra. A mantra is three, or four words at the most, and goes straight to the heart of what you are all about. It is easy to understand and people who read your mantra will know exactly what you are all about. In three or four words you explain why your product, service, or company should exist.

A mantra is not a tag-line. A mantra is like a meditation, almost a mystical incantation, simple and powerful enough to constantly remind you, the customer, or you, the engaged employee what the whole goal and intent is.

Some examples of mantras:

* The happiest place on earth – Disneyland
* Relax, it’s FedEx – FedEx
* Peace of mind – Federal Express
* It keeps going, and going, and going… – Energizer
* Democratize design - Target
* The miracles of science – DuPont
* Authentic athletic performance - Nike
* They’re g-r-r-r-eat! – Kellogg’s Frosted Flakes

You get the idea? A mantra is about what you can say about yourself or your business that speaks to the heart of who you are.

Creating your own mantra requires distilling three things down to something as brief as a haiku:

* What you believe in,
* What you are good at
* How can you make a difference

**Integrity**

Integrity comes from the Latin *Integer* meaning *whole, one*. In this chapter we offer an invitation to bring one’s whole self to bear on work and life endeavors.

**Chapter 2 – The EchoLeader and the Call to Greatness**

1. **Change People, Change the World**

Michael Stallard first told me this true story. It’s about the rock band U2. Now we know that the world is littered with rock bands who make it and break up, or don’t make it and break up – all caught in the throes of ego battles or conflicting opinions and ideas, or maybe just so awash in money that they lose the storyline of the band and its identity. U2 is an anomaly in the world of rock music. From the beginning U2 has maintained, “Music can change the world because it can change people.” The strength of the band’s identity and commitment to each other has driven its success. The band’s success has not driven its success.

The story behind the success of U2 is this: In 1974 Bono’s mother died unexpectedly of a brain hemorrhage. His father was left to hold together the family, and as Bono describes it, he felt alone during the experience. A couple of years later, in 1978, Bono’s friend and drummer, Larry Mullen, lost his mother in a car accident. Larry was devastated. Since Bono had gone through the experience of losing his mother, he was able to help his friend heal emotionally. He remained close to Larry so that he could help him cope with the pain. In 1990, Bono’s dear friend and band mate, Dave ‘The Edge’ Evans, separated from his wife. In 1996, he went through an emotionally difficult divorce. Once again the band rallied around their mate. They offered their solidarity and kinship unhesitatingly and ungrudgingly, and supported him unstintingly through this time. During this same time, U2’s bassist Adam Clayton was working through debilitating drug and alcohol addictions which left him unable to play a signature live concert from Sydney, Australia. This was a concert which was to be televised around the world. Nevertheless, the band slowed down, once again, and took a break to support one of their own.

In 1987 the band was playing a concert in Tempe, AZ to celebrate the Reverend Martin Luther King. Their song, “Pride”, is a tribute to MLK. The band had been receiving consistent death threats from someone who claimed he would be present in the audience, and if U2 played that song, there would be an attempt to assassinate Bono. The FBI declared the threat credible and advised the band not to play, and certainly, not to play their signature song.

As Bono recalls, he entered the third verse, “Early morning, April 4. A shot rings out in the Memphis sky…”. He closed his eyes not knowing what would happen. When he opened his eyes, Adam Clayton was standing directly in front of him.

In your life, in your work, you might not be in a rock band galvanized by hardship and triumph. Yet, consider the power of finding that particular storyline that binds; the powerful connection that holds you together and which goes beyond finding the next quarter profit, or hitting the upcoming deadline.

The message by analogy must be: Focus on building each other first. Help everyone in your path to grow.

It’s not about individuals anymore in this rapidly changing world. It’s about teams. It’s about achieving things together. It’s about collectively attaining success. It’s about a team spirit that supports, upholds, and moves forward together. When members of a team support each other, they actually contribute to the overall success of their organization. You may have a specific job function, just like the different members of a rock band, or you may belong to a separate department, like the sound engineers and stage managers. But, if you work together, care for each other, and support each other, you will be able to accomplish the overall objectives of the organization, or in rock band terms, you will keep the storyline and identity of the band.

A word of caution here: Teamwork is collaborative. Thinking, planning, taking decisions, and working out action plans, is best done collectively, collaboratively. It is a case of “none of us is as good as all of us” (High Five). It is NOT about individuals winning, or being the best, or coming out on top.

Our workplaces today are increasingly virtual environments, where people of diverse cultures, backgrounds, experiences and ideas work together. There has to be collaboration if there is to be success. When things go wrong, as they have a way of doing, a solution is found collectively. This is likely to be a better and sounder solution, and more effective for the organization as well. Every member of the team collectively thinks only about where their team’s work fits in the total context of the organization’s goals. This overarching sense of place in context of the overall mission and goal of the organization is critical to building the engaged workplace. Consequently, they feel responsible and accountable for the team’s achievements. The beauty of collaborative working is that individual members actually get stretched, and therefore learn, and grow. It is also a huge confidence-building measure. Another key tenet of creating the engaged workplace to providing opportunities to learn and grow personally and professionally. The vision and mission of the organization is never lost, because you are not working all on your own in your own little work area. Working together never allows individuals to lose sight of the organizations goals. Work is thus value-driven not merely profit-driven.

1. **Conjure Hope, Change the World**

Nick Morgan told me this story. In 1944 Robert Desnos, born 1900 in Paris, had become a poet and member of the French Resistance. He was subsequently arrested by the Gestapo. While interred in Auschwitz, he and his companions and friends watched as, over the weeks their fellow inmates were gathered in groups on trains to be taken away. The Gestapo said nothing of their fates but everyone knew, as no one returned, that they were being sent to die.

In the words of Susan Griffin, who relates this story illustrating Desnos’ surrealist spirit: "One day Desnos and others were taken away from their barracks. The prisoners rode on the back of a flatbed truck; they knew the truck was going to the gas chamber; no one spoke. Soon they arrived and the guards ordered them off the truck. When they began to move toward the gas chamber, suddenly Desnos jumped out of line and grabbed the hand of the woman in front of him. He was animated and he began to read her palm. The forecast was good: a long life, many grandchildren, abundant joy. A person nearby offered his palm to Desnos. Here, too, Desnos foresaw a long life filled with happiness and success. The other prisoners came to life, eagerly thrusting their palms toward Desnos and, in each case, he foresaw long and joyous lives.

The guards became visibly disoriented. Minutes before they were on a routine mission the outcome of which seemed inevitable, but now they became tentative in their movements. Desnos was so effective in creating a new reality that the guards were unable to go through with the executions. They ordered the prisoners back onto the truck and took them back to the barracks. Desnos never was executed. Through the power of imagination, he saved his own life and the lives of others."

A beautiful story indeed. Imagine how this vision of joy might translate to your work, and to your life.

As John Hope Bryant says: there are only two things in the world, love, and fear. At the point of greatest despair, if you can conjure hope, it will resonate around you and change the world.

Hope can counter fear, and make love live.

The seismic changes that are happening in our world are the cause of a lot of fear. But, the globalization is equally generating love. The new generation, or the millennial generation, have brought into existence the phenomenon of hope. This generation, born between 1985 and 2000 numbers 78 million in the U.S. alone. It is this generation that has breathed new hope across the globe. According to J. Michael Adams (president of Fairleigh Dickinson University, Madison and Teaneck), they are socially committed and technologically savvy. This is, in fact, what unites them no matter in which part of the globe they are. The millennial generation wants to work in value-driven organizations, rather than in profit-motivated ones. This is clearly going to change the very nature of business.

Thanks to globalization, goods, services, ideas and finances flow across countries. Of course problems of terrorism, economic crises, diseases, and environmental disasters also afflict all countries. There are no national borders for either. But, there is hope. With social commitment and technological advances, the millennial generation is determined to create a better future simply because they believe in one. They believe that change can happen and they know that they can make it happen.

The new generation is equally determined to play it’s part in their country’s policies. There are laws which are being implemented for Clean Air, Environment Protection, Renewable Energy, and Carbon Emission, to name a few issues. There is the need to end war. There is also investment in new technology to create viable alternatives for energy sources. As awareness grows, communities are trying to become self-sustaining.

These are signs of hope – hope for mankind, albeit the times are turbulent. Nurturing this hope is what is going to give rise to a better future.

Today’s person is more tolerant of differences, and is keen on building bridges with people of other nations, cultures, and ideas.

Being globally connected, it is, in a way, the power of imagination that fuels work. If Desnos could have so effectively used the power of his imagination to save himself and others from execution, how much more can this power be used to save the world.

And this is where creative leadership comes in. Recognizing these changes, this new environment, these new demands, and creating hope is what creative leadership is all about. Creative leadership requires bold initiative to break free of historical dogma – the patterns and organizational behaviors that hold us back. The seismic changes are throwing up new threats, agreed, but they are also throwing up new opportunities. And, what’s more, they are throwing up the possibilities of working with a global workforce. There is more scope for experimentation and consequently, more chances of success with innovation. Digitalization has made the whole process of communication much easier too. Communication with employees is helping create a collaborative workplace, encouraging them to ideate and imagine, and constantly assessing work in the light of the company’s value system. Communication with customers is helping organizations understand customer trends and define their products and services more clearly. The organization’s growth objectives are increasingly being seen in the light of collaboration not only within the organization, but also externally, with customers.

Leaders today are staying on top of change by:

* Creating an environment of optimism
* Instilling confidence in the members of their team
* Using all that technology has to offer
* Being true to the values of the organization

The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (or MLQ), has been designed to help leaders to understand their particular style. This questionnaire does not tell leaders how to run their organizations, but offers a number of insights that they can use to improve their leadership skills in this rapidly changing scenario. The need of the hour is transformational leaders, and this questionnaire helps leaders assess themselves, and also gives ideas for change of style. Leaders have to not only understand how they measure up in their own eyes, but also how they measure up in the eyes of those with whom they work. Retesting after a period of time, will show whether they are on the right track or not, or what they need to work on. It is of paramount importance to be effective transformational leaders in order to take the organization forward, and that means seeing to it that everyone is inspired to pull in the same direction.

1. **Contagious Optimism**

Workplace stress is a worrying reality today. James K. Harter., Ph.D., the chief scientist of workplace management at Gallup has been investigating, for some years now, the manager-employee relationship, and the role stress plays. His team has found that the quality of our relationships with our managers, and our perception of our workplace as a positive or negative environment can predict, and contribute to, up to 30% of the heart disease that we actually develop. That’s how powerful these relationships are. They actually affect our own health.

A related Yale School of Management study revealed that Managers, simply by changing very small things about how they interact with their teams, and the expectations they have, can create immense performance differences.

For example, in a phase of the study, one group of managers was asked to deliver a script read in a negative, neutral, or stressful tone. A second group of managers was asked to deliver the same message in a cheerful or positive tone of voice. As you might expect, the first group not only participated in a more negative and less productive discussion, but they also understood and comprehended less. The second team was not only more productive, but they reported that they enjoyed their work more. Imagine that! And remember, both groups were given exactly the same information.

Shawn Achor and his team at Harvard conducted another related study in which they identified individual managers in a large group as having either a “Theory X” disposition or a ‘Theory Y” disposition.

Theory X managers believed that employees:

* Essentially found work to be toiling
* Only performed for the money
* Had to be constantly watched or they wouldn’t perform.

Theory Y managers believed that people:

* Were intrinsically motivated
* Creative
* Could best decide how to get their work done with little supervision

What the study found was that Theory X managers had Theory X employees, and Theory Y managers had Theory Y employees.

These managers were followed over a period of time, as they moved into leading different teams. It was found, interestingly, that these managers had the ability to change the orientation of the people on their team. A Theory X manager could inherit a Theory Y team and turn them into Theory X employees!

This is the Pygmalion effect or the Rosenthal effect in which the greater the expectation placed on people, the better they perform.

One of the classic experiments by Robert Rosenthal involved telling teachers that particular students (selected randomly) were exceptional and very intelligent. The teachers were found to have unconsciously changed their attitudes toward those children, facilitating their learning, encouraging them, and expecting them to perform better. And, the students did! The teacher’s biased expectations had real-life actual effects.

It is the same in organizations. If leaders believe that they have the best team, that becomes the starting point. Everything falls into place then. The leader is more effective and all the members of the team give of their best. Result: the leadership is transformational and positive, resulting in a positive environment, resulting in the employees being more productive, and doing more meaningful and useful work.

The lesson thus is: Expect the best, and this is what you will get.

To go further:

We know from science that nothing in the universe exists as an isolated or independent entity

– Margaret Wheatley

Didn’t your mother tell you to ‘give a firm handshake, smile, and look them in the eye’ when you meet someone? Got to make a good impression, right?

That smile was supposed to convey your own confidence and likability. As it turns out, that smile didn’t just help people to like you, it also made **them** happy – made them smile.

The inverse is true as well, as Shawn Achor describes. Watch people in a crowded airport. If a person approaches a boarding gate in a nervous and anxious condition, he is likely to express these feelings by tapping his toes and frequently checking his watch. You will see that within minutes, more than half the people around this person will exhibit the same symptoms of nervous anxiety.

The mirror neurons in our brain are so powerful that it’s nearly impossible not to smile when smiled at, feel emotional anxiety when you see someone crying, and, more commonly, yawn when you see someone yawn, even when you’re not either tired or bored.

Our mirror neurons are so powerful as emotional and performance emulators that we can improve our batting swing, our dancing, or our piano technique, simply by observing someone performing these skills with a high degree of excellence.

Thus, if leaders only expect the best, and mirror neurons to advantage, the results are bound to be positive.

The old proverbs about model the way, or smile and the world smiles with you, take on new meaning. We understand that whatever emotion or intention we convey, consciously or unconsciously, people are almost powerless against them.

Dear friends, use your new found powers only for good, to help and benefit people.

“Wall Street today was a street of vanished hopes, of curiously silent apprehension and of a sort of paralyzed hypnosis yesterday. Little groups gathered here and there to discuss the fall in prices in hushed and awed tones.”

- New York Times, Oct 30, 1929

You might expect that at that moment in 1929, and again in 2008, sleep-deprived, anxious bankers worked tirelessly to arrest the stock market free-fall. And yet, more often, sleep-deprived anxious bankers sat in paralyzed hypnosis as the crisis unfolded before them. Not because they were unable to do anything about it, but instead were drawn into a state of learned helplessness. Learned helplessness is that point at which we feel we are utterly unable to make a difference no matter what we do. We have to start by controlling/influencing what we know we can – which often means the lowest denominator.

Consider the story of Zorro in which early on we find our hapless hero, Alejandro Murrieta who is drinking and raging quietly against Captain Harrison Love who has killed his brother, and feeling totally helpless to take his vengeance. Zorro introduces him to the Master’s Wheel and advises, “This is called a training circle, a master’s wheel. This circle will be your world, your whole life. Until I tell you otherwise, there is nothing outside of it.” He teaches Alejandro to first control only what comes within his circle and by the end of the story the new Zorro is swinging from chandeliers and handling twenty men in battle.

In 2011, remember to focus first on what you can control. Your circle will widen.

“The joyfulness of a man prolongeth his days.”

—Sirach 30:22

Optimism, like creativity, can be learned. By stretching and confusing muscle groups and adding variety to our workouts, we get stronger – not through the constant repetition of exercises already known to our muscles. That will only get us to plateau, not muscle growth. And similarly through intellectual experimentation and allowing ourselves to find the unexpected, we can hone our creativity as well.

Optimism works much the same way – it can be learned, but it takes effort and practice. One of the keys to learning optimism include reflecting on things we are grateful for, and then sharing that gratitude with those around us. By recollecting and expressing gratitude we activate endorphins which have the power to fight fatigue and pain, and increase happiness. Then by sharing that positive experience socially we transmit, through mirror neurons, that experience to others which invokes an endorphin response in them as well. And so we can experience making someone else happy, and that translates to a sense of purpose and meaning. This reinforces our sense of community by affirming that our actions matter.

Also visualizing previous and anticipated positive moments, places and people can elevate our sense of optimism. The reason for this is that our brain has a difficult time discerning between what is actual and what is mentally visualized. In cognition studies researchers have demonstrated that mental practice can be as effective as actual practice. This has been demonstrated to be true in music and athletics, as well as disposition. Mentally rehearsing an athletic activity, or playing a musical instrument, can have very nearly the same performance-enhancing value as actual physical rehearsal. The same is true for events and interactions – by visualizing a positive outcome we affirm and encourage that result in our mind and thus contribute to an actual positive result.

Another powerful optimism-enhancer is meditation and focus. By relaxing your body, calming your mind, and focusing on single mental or physical activities, we gain greater proficiency, talent and task-success. Which then again leads to greater happiness. It should be unsurprising then, that studies have shown that happiness precedes success, not the other way around. A common story propagated in our culture is that hard work will lead to proficiency, which will lead to success, which will make us happy. Much of the research recently suggests the inverse – that behaviors, communities and practices which develop our happiness will contribute then to talent and performance, which in turn will fuel success in all aspects of our lives.

1. **How our intention is echoed back to us**

David Penglase, fantastic speaker, writer and entrepreneur, who is based in Sydney adds a new selling proposition to the already existing USP, ESP and TSP.

To sum these up briefly:

* USP/USPs (Unique Selling Proposition) identifies what is really unique about your product and service
* ESP (Emotional Selling Proposition) considers those features about your product or service that will make the customer take an emotional decision
* TSP (Tribal Selling Proposition) is about how your product or service link your customers to a social community such as Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn.

The selling proposition David Penglase adds is ISP or Intentionomic Selling Proposition. He suggests that a key success factor for salespeople is to ask ‘WHY?’ this is because, ‘Why’ is all about intention. He believes that there is a value placed on the intention of the salesperson when he sells something. Intentionomics, therefore is the economic value of intention, and it is all about how clear you are about your ‘why’ when you sell.

It is our intent that drives all results in life interactions. Our intentions are the platform on which our behavior, thoughts, habits and actions stand. Our customers, colleagues, (certainly our children) and pretty much everyone we interact with have keen detectors of our intent. If, as a salesperson, your primary intent in prospect interaction is to maximize a contract value instead of honestly solving a client puzzle, they’ll recognize it. Even if that recognition isn’t immediate, your later actions, by either conscientiously adding superlative value or not, will come back in spades. This is the karma effect, the what-goes-around effect. Thus, if your intentions are not right, the results too will not be right. However, if you have the right intentions, then even if there are mistakes, or flaws, they can be absorbed. Further, if the intentions are right, then you will be acting with integrity and this is something that can be felt by customers.

[Nick Kugenthiran](http://www.fujixerox.com.au/about/nickkugenthiran_profile.jsp), CEO of Fuji Xerox Australia believes that positive team environments attract like-minded people, who, in turn, feel more enabled to take risks in innovation. The leader ensures that the risk-taking is safe and within the shared value of the team. The value is never lost sight of, and so every member of the team feels empowered to take risks and work collectively to get solutions.

‘If it were possible’ is an expression that Lincoln Crawley, Managing Director of Manpower Australia, feels is very powerful. This phrase allows the team to speculate and opens a whole new discussion about potential without the negative pressure of accountability. Starting any project with this phrase opens up vast possibilities. Imagination and ideas flow freely and people feel free to create and innovate.

John Grant, Managing Director of Data #3, likes to say that ‘people are our greatest people’ (as opposed to people are our greatest assets). He believes in offering people the autonomy and freedom to take strategic risks. This is what spurs his employees to growth and innovation, within their signature process PDO2. If you believe in people as people and not as assets or inanimate things, that itself sets the tone for all future risk-taking. People thrive in an atmosphere where they are not mere numbers, but are recognized as people. This draws out the best in them.

The travel policy at NetApp is ‘Do the Right Thing’. Officially it’s “We are a frugal company. But don’t show up dog-tired to save a few bucks. Use your common sense.” By providing the latitude for employees to exercise their own discretion, they also self-select for continued employment there. This is because, the employees are working within a social contract not a policy one. Once again, it is the freedom that is offered employees that drives them to give their best in finding solutions to challenges and problems.

Or Consider Disney. Cast members have the authority and discretion to solve any customer dilemma on the spot. They can comp a penthouse suite if they choose. Later, their peers and colleagues provide the social feedback mechanisms to allow cast members to understand the extent of reasonable customer remedies. There are no punitive measures.

These are the characteristics of the EchoLeader, who value initiative over compliance, while expecting people to behave with an aligned moral compass. EchoLeaders emphasize what they can give to the world and bring forth a point of view, a perspective and intent of construction – a will to build stronger communities of collaboration around a resolved vision. An EchoLeader has the ability to galvanize teams and create results because their purpose is beyond personal success. The purpose becomes pursuit of significance for the vision we serve.

The story of The Giving Tree reminds us of the power of giving.

This is a tale about a relationship between a young boy and a tree in a forest. The tree always gave the boy with what he wanted: branches on which to swing, shade in which to sit, apples to eat. As the boy grew older, he needed more and more of the tree. So, the tree gave him apples to sell, so that he could buy toys, and later, branches with which to build a home. Finally, when the boy, now getting old, wanted a boat to go sailing, the tree gave him the trunk.

It was the ultimate act of self-sacrifice. Many years later, the boy returned as an old man. The tree said, "I have nothing left to give you. The only thing I have left are my roots.” The old man replied, "I do not need much now, just a quiet place to sit and rest. I am tired after all these years". The tree said, "Good! Old tree roots are the best place to lean on and rest. Come sit with me and rest.”

The boy sat down and the tree was so glad, it shed tears of happiness.

1. **Make your work your play and never work again**

When you do what you love, you never work again.   
- Confucius

Mihály Csíkszentmihályi calls it being in the **Flow**.. Flow is a mental state. It is that mental state a person is in when he is fully focused on what he is doing. He is totally immersed or involved in the activity he is pursuing. According to Csíkszentmihályi, ‘Flow is completely focused motivation’. The way we can assess whether we are in the Flow or not, is to see how we feel. The point of Flow is that delicate point at which the task is neither too difficult (anxiety-inducing), nor too onerous (boredom-inducing). If we feel spontaneous joy when performing the task in hand, we are in the Flow.

According to Sir Ken Robinson, finding your passion changes everything. And, when you do this, you are in your **Element**. He says that the Element is ‘the point at which natural talent meets personal passion’. When people are in their Element, they feel most like themselves (not pretending to be someone else), are most inspired, and achieve at their highest level. The two important stumbling blocks might be age and occupation. But, Sir Ken Robinson feels that these are not barriers at all, if we are committed to our own capabilities. Creativity and innovation can only be enhanced when we think differently, and use our imagination. It is only this strategy that will help businesses, education, organizations, and communities to stay on top of the seismic changes that are taking place today.

Clearly the state of Flow or Element is a wonderful state to be in. Moving to other areas, it’s also a great state for musicians to be ‘in the pocket’ or ‘in the zone’ for athletes.

The historical business model dictates that a few wield the insight, and the others provide the mental brawn of execution. This model squanders the potential collective insights of people who make up the bulk of the executing talent we employ. Yet, research shows that those who are enabled to find their voice, skill and passion, are the most likely to build stronger collaboration with customers thus building successes.

I use the term EchoLeaders to mean those who find their voice and start to build resonant ideas around them. Resonance happens when the energy applied is in sync with the intended outcome. And so, if we are vocal in what we believe, and give voice to our passions in work, play, or whatever field we choose, we’ll naturally find like-minded people in our field who echo back their own experiences. Collectively, then, we find new paths of creating value and innovation.

Watch the Facebook or Twitter scroll you participate in. The ‘like’ affirmations and comment participation demonstrate your resonant posse on any given idea or moment in your life.  Each point of participation is a building block of collaborative effort. All contributions are cumulative. The point is this: if you focus on your skill and passion, you’ll find an interested like-minded group to participate in the journey.

Make your work your play. Wherever you are on the Org chart, reach beyond your task and team, and give voice to what you believe. If your heart and intent are authentic, a growing party of fellowship will happily join your venture.

To expand on this thought: There’s an old saying that goes, “How you spend your day is how you spend your life.” According to Dan Gilbert, ‘our longings and our worries are to some degree overblown, because we have within us the capacity to manufacture the commodity we are chasing when we choose experience’. So, if we choose to be happy, that is how we are going to be regardless of what life hands out. Researchers have shown that we, predictably, are poor predictors of what will make us happy. Often, when we have no alternative, we find in our circumstances ways and means of making ourselves happy. We draw from inner resources and find our happiness.

The world is full of miserable lottery winners and yet we still think if only we have the house, the car, the spouse, the job, the vacation, we’ll be so very happy. Consistently, we see that many of these dreams fail to deliver joy upon arrival, let alone sustainable joy.

We are also not very good at remembering how happy we were. We fairly consistently recollect memories as joyful, when in fact the majority of the actual time spent was of a mundane variety.

We have the experiencing self in real time that has opinions and emotions, and we have a remembering self that recollects events and provides us with advice about the quality of that experience and how to make future choices.

So to figure out how happy we really are on a moment to moment basis, researchers Alan Krueger and Daniel Kahnman conducted a study in which they asked 4,000 participants to categorize their days into 15 minute increments and value them based on how they felt at those moments. It was found that – ouch!! – We really only spend less than 30% of our day engaged in activities we characterize as either enjoyable or meaningful? Almost a third of our day is spent wandering through the “conveyer belt” of life, which, to the average of those 4,000 interviewed, meant work or school.

Todd Kashdan, author of **Curious?**, suggests it doesn’t have to be this way. The world over, people say they want happiness, health, and wealth, in that order. He makes a strong argument for the power of curiosity. According to him, the greatest opportunities for joy and personal growth happen when we are curious, and not when we are searching for intangibles like happiness, safety, or certainty. Curiosity reveals new experiences, and delight in the unknown. In moments of cusiosity we find ourselves extracting the most out of experiences. The power of curiosity can be the sustaining key to happiness, joy, and lifelong fulfilment.

We can build positive mood states which lead us to identify our strengths, learn new things, find novelty in the world, improve our health, enhance our well-being, and forge meaningful relationships, and in the process discover the meaning and purpose of our lives. Of course this takes hard work. But, if we apply ourselves to the game of learning curiosity, the results can be profound.

Try this for just five minutes. When engaging in an activity you regularly do (walking to the mailbox, washing dishes, or anything you do in the normal course of the day), look for something new in the experience.  Slow down and be present for something you have never noticed before.  For example, Todd has a great story of a guy he interviewed whose job was to spot irregular potato chips on a moving conveyor belt and remove them to ensure product consistency.  This would have to be on the same rung as tollbooth operator in terms of the boredom factor. But, the guy said he loves his job.  Loves it. Seriously. Why? How?  He plays a game in which he tries to spot famous faces in the potato chips (Hey, there’s Ernest Borgnine!). Now this maybe not your idea of fun but it was fun for him. Result: he loved his job, and was a success at it.

Find something new in each experience. Sometimes it’s only a slight turn of the head. And you make work your play…

1. **Find your Wings Set Out with Courage**

Courage is nothing more than your faith reaching through your fear, displaying itself as action in your life. It’s okay to be afraid, but ACT.

-John Hope Bryant

I recently had an interview and an opportunity to collaborate with John Hope Bryant, American financial literacy and poverty eradication activist, and ‘silver rights’ entrepreneur. Among other things, he is the founder, chairman and CEO of Operation HOPE, America’s leading non-profit social investment banking and financial literacy empowerment organization.

The world is a better place because of his message and energy of hope. Bryant has created an organization which has raised over five hundred million dollars for financial literacy to help alleviate poverty in the U.S. and beyond. His foundation, Operation HOPE, was founded in the wake of the civil unrest of 1992 in Los Angeles and is dedicated to alleviating not just the poverty, but the social pain of the ‘other’ America, i.e., to bring hope and meaning to the other America that lives in constant economic and social pressure. It is marvelous to see how he is going about this. Through many global initiatives and 3 main programs, Operation HOPE is leading the ‘silver rights’ movement. These programs encompass all elements of society: Banking on Our Future (financial literacy for children), HOPE Coalition America (financial preparedness for emergencies and disaster recovery), and HOPE Center Banking Network (understanding banking procedures and principles, payment of bills and computer literacy). Through these programs, Bryant is making free enterprise and capitalism relevant to all the undeserved communities.

Bryant gave this marvelous analogy about eagles:  Most bird species learn to fly in small ground bursts building confidence, or, like ospreys can be coaxed from their nest by food, but not eagles.  Eagles are literally kicked out of the nest by Momma and forced to leave their comfort zone. Dad circles diligently below in case they falter and need to be caught.  Eagles, those powerful birds, must be pushed to leave their comfort zone and exercise their innate capabilities; capabilities which they have yet to realize.

John Bryant believes in the same kind of idea.  He urges leaders to first allow people to find their own seat and role of comfort, instead of being shown specific tasks and procedures.  ”Let them find their seat and then approach them.”

Finding their seat happens because of intrinsic motivation. People who are intrinsically motivated do not think of external rewards. In fact, Edward Deci (1971) found that if people were offered external rewards for intrinsically motivated behavior, it undermined their intrinsic motivation. Soon, they grow less interested. Intrinsically motivated people are working for the sheer joy of it, because they are passionate about their work, because they enjoy their work, and because it gives them a great deal of inner satisfaction. For instance, an externally motivated police officer will work hard in order to earn a bonus, a promotion, and for recognition from the community. An intrinsically motivated police officer, though, would put in his very best because he wants to serve the community; he is concerned about law and order; he is concerned about social issues; and wants to create and maintain a healthy and safe society. He is not looking for external awards or recognition. This is the police officer who will be approached in a crisis. He is going to be stretched to the limits of his capabilities. This is the person who is likely to work harder, put in longer hours, take on more responsibility, and more challenging situations.

If we think Autonomy, we realize that situations that give autonomy are clearly linked to motivation. Studies have found that when a participant’s options and choice in a particular activity are increased, their intrinsic motivation to perform that activity also increases.

Thus, for best results, people need to be allowed to choose what task or activity to engage in next, their collaborative team to work with, and their technique – the *how* they do things. These intrinsically-motivated people should then be pushed to reach beyond their comfort zones. It is only when pushed or stretched that learning happens. As in the case of the eagle, it is only when pushed out of its comfort zone that it learns to fly. Like the father which observes, the creative leader is around to fire-fight as and when necessary. Everyone makes mistakes and might not be graceful at first, but if you allow people to choose their place of comfort first, and then push them in the direction of their possibilities, people display their innate creativity and learn to soar. These people use mistakes made to their advantage and along with their growth, help the organization to grow.

There are two instances that prove this point. Both are set in India, a fast-developing country.

The first example is about how intrinsic motivation drives people. Pandey, grew up in a village in the state of Bihar, India, where there was no electricity. This motivated him to study electrical engineering. After his graduation, he went to the U.S., and did his post graduation at the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Troy, N.Y. He landed a good job with International Rectifier in Los Angeles. One of the first things he did was to buy his parents a diesel-powered electric generator. Though he was well-placed, he felt deep within himself that he had to come back to India and do something for his village. Along with a friend, who had also graduated from the U.S., he explored various possibilities of producing electricity. Bihar is an extremely poor state and he had to find some resource that was easily available as well as inexpensive. Studying the situation, he found that rice husks were not recycled. In fact this was the only thing that was not recycled, as in India, everything finds some use. The two friends decided to try rice husks in their experiments. They found that they could burn 50 kgs of rice husk per hour and produce 32 kilowatts of power, which would bring light to 500 village households. And so, for a nominal amount, every home could have light, and for extra charge, they could power their fan, TV, radio and water pump. Two other friends, who were doing their M.B.A at the University of Virginia’s Darden School of Business, put together a business plan and set out to raise money. These friends experimented and innovated to bring down costs, with what they call ‘frugal innovation’, fully aware of the fact that their customers were very poor. They also employed local people, training them to work in the various areas of their organization. Today Husk Power Systems is bringing light to the thousands of villages across India.

For these 4 young men, the fact that they are contributing to the solution of this huge global problem is reward in itself.

The other example is of test pilots who love the challenge of testing, flying and certifying aircraft even though the job pays them a pittance as compared to what commercial pilots earn. They are highly motivated by the fact that they are testing indigenous aircraft. They know how difficult it is to design and build aircraft, and their reward lies in their believing that they are part of this dream. It is the dream that drives them as new technology is designed and developed for the country.

**Chapter 3 – Intent and Expectations Drive Outcomes**

1. **The purpose driven Leader**

Every social and global problem is a business opportunity in disguise.

– Peter Drucker

At the Peter Drucker Centennial conference in Vienna, Austria, on the 18th and 19th of November, 2009, I had the incredible opportunity to interview and film world thinkers and leaders who were celebrating and discussing Peter Drucker’s legacy, and the future of management and business in the world.

A word about Peter Drucker: Peter Drucker called himself a ‘social ecologist’. He focused on understanding and improving human interaction. He taught that management is a ‘liberal art’, and infused his advice on management with interdisciplinary lessons from philosophy, psychology, history, sociology, religion and culture. He firmly believed that all institutions (private as well as public) have a responsibility to society, and they had to take responsibility for the common good.

There is a lot to learn from Peter Drucker, because his story is the story of management. His thinking and analysis form the foundation of modern, globe-spanning corporations, as well as the organization and practice of management. He believed in the human being and gave the maximum importance to people. People were the assets in an organization. He taught generations of managers how important it was to pick the best people, to focus on opportunities instead of on problems, and of seeing things from the customer’s point of view. He taught about competitive advantages and how to refine them. He believed that talented people were essential for any enterprise to be successful. His was convinced that an organization is first of all a human community and has to be built on trust and respect for the worker. It is not merely a profit-making business. As early as the 1950s, Drucker taught the importance of the customer. During the 1970s Drucker realized that in the New Economy, knowledge would gain precedence over raw material and he wrote about the contribution of knowledge workers. He believed in asking questions, because he believed that this was the only way the best could be drawn out of people. Drucker was truly the purpose driven leader.

Simply put, social ecology is the study of the relationships between individuals, social groups and their environments. All social ecologists believe that ecological problems or dislocations, apart from natural catastrophes, cannot be understood or resolved without dealing with the problems in society , namely the ethnic, cultural, economic and gender conflicts to name a few issues.

Another definition of social ecology is: 'the study and practice of personal, social and environmental sustainability and change based on the critical application and integration of ecological, humanistic, community and spiritual values’.

The key words are ‘integration’ and ‘application.’

Pastor Rick Warren, author of A Purpose Driven Life, gave the opening address at the conference and spoke of the three primary characteristics that defined Drucker’s life and work: Integrity, Humility, and Generosity.

These three traits are the antidotes to the three traps of today’s leaders.

* The first trap is to segment and partition our lives into work life, home life, sporting life, community-service life, etc. Our greatest strength, however, comes from integrating all the disparate interactions, ideas and energies into a unified and integrated whole. We need to remind ourselves of the etymology of integrity which comes from the Latin integer, meaning wholeness, or the unit of one.
* The second trap is to focus and try to remediate what we think are our faults. Humility is often misunderstood to mean acceptance of weakness or inadequacy. Humility, though, is freedom from arrogance and pride. Intellectual freedom allows for the ability to recognize the marvelous, and to embrace wonder and curiosity.  Further, it is important to be inquisitive (curious), and open to learning.  Rick talked about how, whenever he went to visit Peter Drucker and learn from him, he wound up trying to answer and wrestle with Drucker’s own persistent questions.
* The third trap is to hoard. It’s no accident that to be miserly with time, energy, resources, talent, etc., is to be miserable.  Rick echoed Drucker’s advice that management and leadership was a liberal art, as well as a practical calling, and we all need to focus on what we can give and contribute in generosity.

From Peter Drucker to Rick Warren to you, pause to keep Integrity, Humility, and Generosity ever present.

And, so, what would be the characteristics of purpose-driven leaders?

They:

* Identify challenges
* Value employees
* Recognize talent and help talented people to grow, at the same time allowing autonomy and flexibility in the workplace
* Value all inputs and knowledge on the subject
* Are alert to opportunities
* Prepare thoroughly
* Have a realistic plan, work out realistic timelines, and monitor progress
* Act with integrity, and are not afraid of re-working a plan in case a better plan is found
* Understand customers
* Value and facilitate teamwork, which also includes customers
* Favor growth of the employees, and allow for freedom in the workplace to innovate, re-define and refine

An example of a purpose driven leader is Professor Muhammad Yunus. He and the Grameen Bank which he created were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2006, *"for their efforts to create economic and social development from below".*

He believed that credit is a fundamental human right. His objective: to help poor people get out of poverty. He did this by giving them loans on terms which were suitable to them. He also taught them sound financial principles, thereby empowering them. This system of microlending has now become a world movement and replicas of the Grameen Bank model operate in more than 100 countries around the globe.

Many of the world’s leading nations are committed to reducing poverty by at least 50% by 2015. One of the methods of doing this is through the mobile phone. There are more than 2 billion mobile phone users, worldwide.

Two people believed that access to finance would facilitate entrepreneurial activity. In turn, this would create wealth, create jobs, and further trade. Nick Hughes, Vodafone executive started a project in 2003. He now heads a mobile payments team. Susan Lonie is a mobile-commerce expert. She managed the project the drawing board to the final commercial operation. In March, 2007, Safaricom, which is part of the Vodafone Group, launched M-PESA. This is an innovative payment service for those people who do not use commercial banks. ‘M’ – Mobile, ‘’PESA’ – cash or money (in Swahili). An M-PESA customer uses his/her mobile phone to move money to another mobile phone user, over great distances. This transfer of money is quick, and secure. What is wonderful is that the customer does not need a bank account. All he/she has to do is to register with Safaricom for the M-PESA account. They convert cash into e-money, and then follow simple instructions on their phones thus making payments through their M-PESA accounts. This system works as well as banks as regards money transfer. M-PESA accounts are secure, PIN-protected, and there is a round the clock customer service provided by Safaricom and Vodafone Group.

So what was the challenge facing Hughes and Lonie? There were huge financial, cultural, political and technological challenges. Vodafone had to bring together different cultures of global telecommunication companies, banks and microfinance institutions. They also had to cope with the demands of their regulatory requirements. The greatest challenge lay in training, supporting, and accommodating the needs of the customers who were unconnected, very often semi-literate, and who had had no experience of banking procedures. These were customers who faced routine challenges to their security, both financial and physical. Hughes and Lonie had to think on their feet, and create solutions as they went. There were times when a solution took much longer than what had been planned, but belief in what they were doing and perseverance at a purposeful task made the lives of many people easier and better.

1. **Waiting to talk is not listening**

Pick your management guru and each gives this one piece of insistent advice: LISTEN

* Stephen Covey: “Pass the torch and listen.”
* Susan Scott: “Waiting to talk is not listening.”
* Keith Ferrazzi: “When you ask someone’s opinion, your next job is to listen and give a damn.”
* Marshall Goldsmith: “Let go of ‘yes, but…’ – stop adding too much value and listen.”
* Tim Sanders: “Recognize and welcome appreciation with a simple ‘Thank you’.”
* Warren Bennis: “Ask a probing question and then listen.”
* David Whyte: “The conversation IS the relationship.”

In February 1964, Simon and Garfunkel wrote “The Sounds of Silence”. His lyrics, ‘People talking without speaking, people hearing without listening’ are as relevant today as when he felt strongly enough about them, to write them.

Mark Goulston’s book, ***Just Listen***, seeks to help people build stronger and more creative relationships through the power of deep listening. Through this book, you learn the secret of getting through to anyone.

One may well ask why we should take Goulston seriously. We all talk, and we all listen. Goulston has another take. We all talk, but we all do not listen. Dr. Mark Goulston is a business advisor, consultant, trainer, and coach who has trained as a clinical psychiatrist. He honed his skills as an FBI police hostage negotiation trainer. You would take such a person seriously. ‘Just Listen’ reaches out to everyone with tips, techniques, and anecdotes about not only improving your listening skills, but also developing effective listening skills. Many of these techniques are trust-building so that you can get to the root of what is troubling other people. It could be their fears, insecurities, anger, or other concerns. According to Goulston, if you really want to get through to people, what you tell them is less important than what you enable them to tell you. Further, we’ve all been in situations when we want to confront people. It could be because we feel humiliated, rejected, cheated, or hurt. 9 times out of 10, when confronting someone, we end up making the already bad situation worse. Goulston teaches how to confront people so that the situation does not get worse; in fact, it gets better. This skill is extremely important, especially since in the line of work we face not only people above us, but also our colleagues, people who work under us, and outsiders.

Thus, once you’ve been patient and thoughtful to learn effective listening skills, Goulston says there are a few things you can do to encourage open listening in those you are speaking with. Often when presenting a new or provocative idea, your audience may metaphorically cross their arms in their mind. Even if they don’t provide any physical clues as to their position or opinion, if you can get them to gesticulate and open up in their posture and body language, their opinion is likely to follow. A simple mechanism is to ask, “Can you show me what you mean by that? Can you draw it for me?” By asking for an illustration, their visual and creative energy is engaged and they are more likely to open their mind to new ideas. Further, by asking a provocative question, you’ll sharpen their listening skills because the message that goes out is that you expect them to be active participants in the conversation, and are not only waiting to talk.

The main point here is: get your audience to open up their posture and their mind will follow.

One thing that struck me about Mark Goulston was that he quietly observed human interaction and then offered marvelous insights. Mark told a story of how he had interviewed a CEO to learn of his company’s trials and efforts. He wanted to know how the CEO was working to affect substantial change, and, had this interview to offer his services as a consultant. He wanted a relationship with this company so that he could help galvanize the key executives and help them find the right path to success. The thing about Mark Goulston is that he starts from a place of figuring out how to give first.

While the CEO was telling his story, Mark counted 10 times in which he was tempted to interrupt and offer some keen insight. At each stage of the narrative, he wanted to show that he understood clearly what the company and the CEO were going through, and that he knew how to help. But, instead of offering direction and insight, he said, “Tell me more” or “Yes, please go on.” And so, each time he felt compelled to intervene in the story, and offer his thoughts and insights, he paused and instead used ‘deepening’ words to encourage the CEO as he told his story.

At the end, Mark simply reiterated what he had heard and waited for acknowledgment.

“Yes, that’s what happened”. “Yes, that’s what I meant”, were the CEO’s responses.

The CEO clearly felt that what he said had been wholly heard. He felt understood.

Mark had built a relationship of trust and mutual understanding. Instead of trying to solve each emerging issue as it came up, he encouraged and deepened the conversation, and ultimately got the job to help redirect and support change initiative.

Mark claims he learned this from Warren Bennis, when participating in an evening of high-powered professionals and intellectuals. While the participants at the dinner were busily thinking of their next powerful insight to offer, Warren Bennis merely listened and only interjected to pinpoint key ideas and ask the players to elaborate on their insights. The discussion deepened and each participant felt sincerely heard and understood. In fact, they were. They were sincerely and completely heard, without interruption.

Warren Bennis, one of this generation's greatest authorities on leadership, states, "The basis of leadership is the capacity of the leader to change the mindset, the framework of another person." Simply put, leaders get those working in their team to reach for the common goal. By his whole-hearted listening, he knows each member of his team. He knows what they are trying to say. Then, by his questions provoke them to see the world differently. He inspires them and effects change.

Talking about leaders, Warren Bennis has this wonderful story. It was said that the difference between 19th-century British prime ministers William Gladstone and Benjamin Disraeli, was that ‘when you had dinner with Gladstone, you left feeling *he* was the wittiest, most brilliant, most charming person on earth. But when you had dinner with Disraeli, you left feeling that *you* were the wittiest, most brilliant, most charming person on earth.’

It is the same yardstick, of careful listening, that CEOs use when hiring people. They know that prospective employees who are capable of listening are the ones who will be most successful in achieving the goals of the organization.

Mark’s lesson (and the similar lesson from Warren Bennis and Marshall Goldsmith) is this: Stop adding too much value. Slow down and listen. Retain your curiosity and openness. Sometimes in our efforts to display our brilliance we get preoccupied with what we are going to say. We want to impress and consequently lose sight of what is being said, the message that is being delivered. By remaining interested and engaged, anyone you are talking to will feel they are heard and will offer more trust. As a result of this, the relationship will deepen.

Do a simple check: see how many times you use the word “I” in a conversation.

**The question to be asked is: Are you listening, or are you reloading?**

**The same paradigm applies during the interview process.** Fred Kleisner has an enviable job. As CEO of premier boutique hotelier, Morgans Hotel Group, Fred’s job is to run some of the coolest, hippest hotel properties in the world. From the Delano in South Beach to The Clift in San Fran to the Hudson in New York City, Morgans has become known as the kind of place celebrities, rock stars, and wannabes, wanna spend their time. Their signature experiences are the lobby and entrance spaces, as well as their clubs and night life environments. The place, the property, the ambiance are all of course incredibly important, but Fred understands that at the heart of Morgans is the people who make the place cool and fun.

When I went to interview Fred Kleisner at his Hudson property near Central Park, New York – and no, sadly I didn’t get to stay there… – I was greeted by a couple stylish, cool women in the lobby who chatted me up about where I came from, the city, the weather. It was not at all evident initially that they worked there. There’s no uniform, no name tags, no clear evidence that people work there, except for the fact that they are incredibly thoughtful and helpful. For example, Jessica greeted and escorted us to our filming location with Fred and remained constantly helpful throughout our visit.

During the interview I asked Fred what kinds of characteristics and personalities they look for when hiring. He said they aren’t interested in hiring tall, thin models, but are much more interested in someone’s whole personality and strengths. Morgans’ more recent interview sessions, which he calls a “casting call,” were hosted in a theatre. After the more standard Q&A, candidates were invited to get up on stage and share anything they wanted, with an emphasis on something that expressed who they were at heart. Fred said candidates sang, told stories, danced, recited poetry, talked about their travels, and more. This exercise told the candidates they were entering a safe, welcoming environment where they were expected to bring their unique identity to work, while also allowing the interviewers to glimpse the more personal and honest side of potential hires before they find out six months into the job.

If we want initiative, passion, and creativity, take a tip from Fred Kleisner and Morgans Hotels – don’t just have an interview, have a casting call.

1. **When you don’t care who gets the credit, you can do anything**

My parents, Hal and Bev Hunter won “Citizens of the Year” in Rappahannock County for 2009.

Hal’s motto is, “There’s no limit to what you can accomplish if you don’t care who gets the credit” It’s an apt saying for those aspiring to accomplish remarkable things. The excerpt below is straight from the Rappahannock News..

*There are many who volunteer their time, energy and more in Rappahannock County – and then there are Hal and Beverly Hunter. County residents since 1968, the Hunters have, particularly in the past decade and most visibly over the past couple of years, put in countless hours looking after the continued health of Rappahannock’s watersheds, its farms and viewsheds, its hungry people and its educational and arts communities. They have done so quietly, relentlessly – and cheerfully.*

*For their work with the Rappahannock Friends and Lovers of Our Watershed, the Rappahannock Food Pantry and Plant-a-Row program, historic districts and conservation in general, Beverly and Hal Hunter are being recognized jointly as Rappahannock News’ 2009 Citizens of the Year.*

*“The choice of Hal and Bev as Citizens of the Year is in some ways an inspired one, but in some ways a no-brainer,” said County Administrator John W. McCarthy, who has worked with them on many projects over the years. “It’s a no-brainer because it’s hard to imagine any couple that have given more of their time, efforts, and energies to the community at large. And it’s inspired because . . . it’s nice to see the deserving rewarded.”*

Among the many projects that Hal and Beverly Hunter are involved in, these two shine out:

* The RappFLOW mission, which helps to preserve, protect, conserve and restore water resources and watersheds in Rappahannock County
* The Rappahannock Plant A Row is an all-volunteer organization with the mission to feed the hungry. This is a place where no hungry person is turned away; anyone in the County who is hungry, can come and get food here. There are more than 300 donors and volunteers who work here.

Take this to heart: If you can identify a need, have the will to make positive change, and don’t care who gets the credit, you can change the world.

Incidentally, this was also President Reagan’s motto.

The beauty of these projects brings home the fact that it is possible for people from all walks of life, different points of view, varied interests and diverse backgrounds come together and learn from each other. They also learn from the experts they bring in. Which brings three points into focus:

* Team work where there is respect for the knowledge that each team member brings. It includes the ability to learn from those who know more, the experts.
* The work done is for the whole community. These people feel the weight of social responsibility and use the knowledge gained for the common good of all
* There is great respect for the environment

Of course, the inspiration, and motivation has come from the Hunters, and they have managed to get the whole county involved. This kind of selfless involvement is possible only because they are not waiting to be recognized or decorated or felicitated. The work in itself is the reward.

This is the secret. If you are not waiting for public acknowledgement, but do what you believe in, selflessly and keeping in mind the whole, then you are more likely to give of your best. What is better is that you are not afraid to experiment, invent, re-invent, and innovate to find viable solutions for challenges and problems.

Rose Nakamura found a need, and with a group of volunteers decided to do something about it. Hawaii’s senior population is a growing one, and many of them lead rather isolated lives. She created a program that would give volunteer assistance to homebound frail elderly and disabled persons, in a manner that would ensure their independence and dignity.

She co-founded Project *Dana* (the Sanskrit word for “selfless giving”), with 55 volunteers serving 110 elderly people. Today it is a state-wide interfaith coalition, with more than 750 volunteers helping thousands of senior citizens.

According to Nakamura: “Dana is about extending compassion and care, without any reward or recognition. Caregiving is everybody’s business.”

Nakamura has never sought recognition, yet she has been greatly recognized and rewarded. In fact the Inspire Award is for ‘extraordinary people who inspire others to action through their innovative thinking, passion and perseverance’.

At 80, she shows no signs of slowing down, and still believes strongly in the power of positive change.

Plan Philipines is an organization where from the country director to the humblest community worker, everyone is enthusiastic about what they are doing. Their selflessness is amazing. They ensure that the deprived children in the communities they work in are served well.

The organization advocates gender equality. Men and women keep long hours and are often away from their own families for long periods of time. Yet they are all fired with the zeal that they are looking after the future of the country.

They have training and development programs for the members of a community and when a community can stand on its feet, they phase out.

Plan Philipines has built scores of schools and waterworks systems. These people have realized that they can build a school complete with good ventilation, safety provisions, and working toilets, as well as desks, and other school supplies for just P800,000. Plan volunteers work at the grassroots level and bring their expertise to what they do. Plan offices have provisions and safety utilities which are ready for distribution should some disaster strike. They have enough school supplies for every kid in the poorest of localities. They also have medical and hospital equipment. Their many awards are not on display, but are tucked away in their offices.

And so, it is when you are not focused on recognition, that you find endless possibilities within you.

Every opportunity need not be a biz-op, but a biz-op might just follow an opportunity of selfless service; of working without thought of reward.

1. **The more you give the happier you are**

A remarkable event occurred recently at USC Marshall School of Business. Three titans of leadership: Warren Bennis, Bill George, and John Hope Bryant gathered to share their insights on emerging leadership practices and what it’s really going to take to reset the economy and re-establish trust in the financial sector. The best thing is that it is not rocket science. It is a very real possibility. According to the panel we need to restore collaboration, trust, humility, passion, and purpose.

Bennis, George and Bryant, have, through their experiences in a rapidly changing business world, described what an effective leader’s leadership style should be.

It has to be first understood that leadership is quite, quite different from management. A leader is more than a manager. There are many other dimensions to leaders.

According to Warren Bennis, ‘true leaders understand themselves, possess both a vision and the ability to translate that vision to their teams, and are able to establish an environment of trust’. He has written about 30 books on leadership, many with co-authors. His books on 'Reinventing Leadership: Strategies to Empower the Organization' and ‘On Becoming a Leader' clearly show the changing face of leadership.

Bill George draws from first-hand knowledge, as well as lessons from various leaders (from an array of companies), who themselves had weathered tough economic storms. The 7 lessons from his latest book, 7 Lessons for Leading in Crisis, that he talks about are:

* Face Reality, Starting with Yourself
* Get the World off Your Shoulders
* Dig Deep for the Root Cause
* Get Ready for the Long Haul
* Never Waste a Good Crisis
* You’re in the Spotlight: Follow True North
* Go on Offense, Focus on Winning Now

John Hope Bryant is the author of **Love Leadership: The New Way to Lead in a Fear Based World**. He is also the Chairman and CEO of Operation HOPE Inc., a non-profit, social investment banking organization. It is a public benefit organization. HOPE seeks to create sustainable change within the under-served communities. It promotes self-esteem, self-love, opportunity, optimism and future aspiration. It is a self-help provider of economic empowerment tools and services for the undeserved. Operation HOPE promotes the positive merits of inner-city communities to big business interests. He encourages companies to provide “a hand up, and not simply a hand out” and to “do well by doing good.”

He has a powerful message: ‘Ultimately you must ask yourself, “Does my work matter? Am I making a difference?”’ John encourages people everywhere to abandon the pervasive selfish attitudes that dominate contemporary thinking, the ‘what’s in it for me?’ attitude, and instead focus on what you can contribute.

Bryant urges us all to shift our thinking to how we can contribute, how we can give, how we can ease suffering, enlighten others, and offer our time, interactions and energy to giving. In his work, he sees time and again, that those who give without concern or interest for WIIFM (What’s In It For Me), always wind up healthier, happier and spiritually (and economically too!) richer.

Michael Norton, Harvard Business School, and his colleagues Elizabeth Dunn and Lara Aknin from the Universtity of British Columbia, researched on whether money can really buy happiness. They published their findings in an article, "Spending Money on Others Promotes Happiness," which appeared in the March 21, 2008 issue of Science.

The reason for the study was based on the paradox that though people spend so much of their time and effort trying to make more and more money, having all that money does not seem to make them as happy. Could it be that they were not spending money the right way? If people were encouraged to spend money in different ways, maybe those areas where money would lead to happiness could be found.

Norton, Dunn and Aknin researched in 3 broad fields:

* A national representation
* Those who indulged in windfall spending
* When participants were randomly assigned to spend money on others, rather than on themselves

The answer to the question, Can money buy you happiness? Is ‘Yes’. The rider on that deal is that you have to spend the money on someone else. For instance, in the bonus study, how much bonus people received did not impact on their happiness. When tracked, it was found that some paid bills or the mortgage, or treated themselves to something special, while others gave to charity or bought gifts for others. Norton, Dunn and Aknin called this kind of charitable or gifting behavior, “prosocial.”  Thus, it was deduced that if people spent a percentage of that bonus on others, it clearly increased their well-being. In fact, even giving other people something as little as $5, could lead to an increased sense of well-being for the giver. And so, “Employees who devoted more of their bonus to prosocial spending experienced greater happiness after receiving the bonus and the manner in which they spent that bonus was a more important predictor of their happiness than the size of the bonus itself.”

Another study showed that spending a relatively small amount such as $5 over one day on another person led to increased happiness. Which only goes to prove that people do not have to be wealthy and make large donations to charity to experience the happiness and benefits of prosocial spending; just a little money drawn away from themselves to another person is enough.

Activities in which people fully engaged represents the way to lasting happiness. The study showed that HOW people choose to spend their money was as important as HOW MUCH money they made. Most people realize that once basic food and security needs are met, money does not equal happiness.

*What* we **do** with the money and resources we have, has a greater affect on how we feel, than the amount of resources we have available.

This is something that has to be taken seriously.

1. **The Walk is part of the Gift**

This true story was told to me by Jo Radner. Years ago, Mary was a young woman working in the Peace Corps in Africa. She befriended Abena from a local village who had endured a string of hardships including the loss of her husband to tribal feuds. She also lost a child due to malaria. Mary spent a much of her energy between her work duties to nurture Abena to health and support her family with food, company, and hope. Abena was a skilled weaver and later, with new-found energy, she spent her off hours gathering bits and pieces of cloth, thread, and fabric and wove a beautiful small tapestry as a gift of thanks for Mary’s birthday.

When Mary’s birthday arrived, Abena filled her skin with water and set off on the five mile journey to deliver her gift. The sun was strong and hot winds blew in her face and parched her lips. She finished her water only halfway on her walk and arrived exhausted. Mary greeted her with cool towels for her feet and water to drink. They spent the afternoon sharing stories of their families, their hopes, and dreams.

As the evening light approached Abena rose to leave. Mary filled her skin with fresh water from the well and called for a mule-cart to take Abena back to her village. Abena stopped her gently, “Please understand your generosity is not necessary. Understand that my walk is part of the gift.”

Let all of our efforts of gratitude be in the walk.

If you want to build a good relationship, or a positive team, it is essential to be a good boss, not a bosshole. This happens to, in a very picturesque manner, describe what a leader should not be. Absolutely. Bob Sutton, Professor of Management Science and Engineering, Stanford, and a Professor of Organizational Behavior, at the Stanford Graduate School of Business, refers to this word when making a point about leaders. Sutton’s studies on innovation, leaders, and bosses, evidence-based management, the links between knowledge and organizational action, and workplace civility.

To share some of his insights on key beliefs held by good bosses (not bossholes) are:

* Success depends on being the master of obvious and mundane things not on the magical or breakthrough ideas
* Focus on small wins that enable the members of the team to make a little progress every day
* Do not impose your own idiocy on your team, and be humble enough to realize that you might be wrong at times
* One of the best tests of leadership is: ‘what happens after people make a mistake?’
* Innovation is crucial to every team and organization. So a boss has to encourage his team to generate and test all kinds of new ideas. He also, has to be ready to ‘kill off’ the bad ideas, and maybe some good ones as well
* A boss is at a great risk of acting like an insensitive jerk, and not realizing it

His beliefs are also very interesting. Some of them include:

* Sometimes the best management is no management at all – first do no harm!
* In organizational life, you can have influence over others or you can have freedom from others, but you cannot have both at the same time
* Learning to listen and then to ask smart questions is far more important than saying smart things and giving smart answers
* The best test of a person’s character is how he or she treats those with less power
* “Whenever people agree with me, I always feel I must be wrong.”
* Strive for simplicity and competence, but embrace the confusion and messiness along the way

Clearly, knowing how a leader should be, offers criteria of how employees should be.

There is statistical evidence to show that creating great results and great relationships, is correlated to the ratio of positive/negative interactions we have with the people around us. Above 2.9:1, and below 11.6:1 is positive. 6:1 is the best ratio for professional environments. For personal relationships, this ratio has to be 5:1 to indicate a positive relationship.

Marcial Francisco Losada is the founder and executive director of Meta Learning, a consulting organization that specializes in developing high performance teams. His studies centered on the interaction dynamics and the productivity of business teams. He conducted studies in which teams of assistants, behind one-way mirrors, observed group discussions and categorized comments made as either positive, negative, or neutral. Later, he drew upon independent metrics of performance, and was able to rank the team’s performance in the context of the tenor of the conversations they had. The researchers also measured whether questions were intended to elicit new information or advocate their own point of view. Interestingly, low-performing teams asked very few inquisitive questions, and instead exercised a position of “waiting to talk” instead of actively listening. Interestingly, on the high-performing teams one person’s inquisitive line of questioning would lead to another’s positivity. That is, if someone in the group made a curious inquiry, another member would react positively toward that line of questioning.

His findings can be summarized thus: If a team is highly connected, it will tend to maintain an equilibrium between internal and external focus as well as between inquiry and advocacy. It will also keep a positivity/negativity ratio in the range of 2.9 to 11.6. If the connectivity is low, i.e., below 2.9, the team will be more internally focused, and it will advocate strongly. Higher levels of connectivity, but within the range, along with a balance between internal and external orientation, and inquiry and advocacy, leads to sustainable high performance.

The take-away here is straightforward: build positive interactions into your daily life and good things are sure to happen.

**Creativity**

**Chapter 4 – Find Possibilities, then Execute**

1. **What We Think, Reinforces What We Think**

I would begin with the premise taken from Buddhism:

We are what we think

All that we are arises with our thoughts

With our thoughts we make the world

Speak or act with an impure mind, and trouble will follow you, as the wheel follows the ox that draws the cart

We are what we think

All that we are arises with our thoughts

With our thoughts we make the world

Speak or act with a pure mind, and Happiness will follow you, as your shadow, unshakable

How can a troubled mind understand the way?

Your worst enemy cannot harm you as much as your own thoughts, unguarded

But once mastered, no one can help you as much, not even your father or your mother

……and what we think reinforces what we think.

Therefore it would be wise to get a peep into the mind, since it is the mind that is the seat of our thinking.

According to Buddhism, the mind is unsettled, restless, capricious, whimsical, inconstant, confused, indecisive, and uncontrollable. It is therefore likened to a monkey, and is called monkey mind or mind monkey. This metaphor was adopted in Daoism, Neo-Confucianism literature. The concept of the mind as a monkey mind is as old as that!

Why monkey mind? Because of the endless chattering that goes on in our heads as we jump from one thought to another. Everyone has an internal running dialogue in their head. It is the mental input that feeds our thinking, and ultimately our own output, our behaviors and decisions.  Our internal narrative might be opinionated, “I can’t believe how slow these people are to respond!”; or it may be a life commentary, “Wow, what a beautiful piece of music,”; or it could perhaps be our own personal tormentor, “There’s no way I’m going to get this done.” We analyze personal and professional relationships threadbare; we worry endlessly about the future; we dissect every word that we speak or that is spoken to us. What we tell ourselves can become habitual.  And what we think consistently, and then say out loud, infects our conversations and others around us.  The mental cycle becomes reinforcing.

The constant stream of internal dialogue may feel beyond your control. You may say to yourself, “They’re just my thoughts. I can’t control what I think!”

**But you can…**

Yes. You can control what you think, simply by considering what you allow in.  Faced with any moment, any interaction, any experience, you can control your mental reaction and choose a positive or constructive tone with yourself, instead of a negative or derogatory thought. Simply by choosing the initial reaction, you will begin to alter the shape of what happens next. One moment is the unconscious mental gestation period for the next one. When wrestling with any puzzle, professional or personal, there is typically a period of mental churning before the A-ha! Moment. That’s the ‘sleep on it’ period of time.

Looking at this process scientifically. Way back in 1890, William Jones first introduced the idea that our thoughts can change the structure and function of our brain. Of course, this shook the very foundations of the traditional scientists who believed that the brain is rigidly mapped out. Certain functions are controlled by certain parts of the brain. If a particular part is dead, or damaged, the function that is controlled by that part also is lost or altered.

Today, researchers have shown that thinking does change the brain. The science that deals with this is called Neuroplasticity. It has been proved beyond all doubt that our thoughts can change the structure and function of our brain even into old age. The brain is endlessly adaptable and dynamic. It has the power to change its own structure. Even those with severe neurological illnesses have responded to neuroplasticity and shown great improvement, simply because what we think creates pathways in our brains that are reinforcing.

Therefore, repeating positive thoughts and activities can rewire the brain and reinforce and strengthen those areas in the brain that stimulate positive feelings.

The Brain That Changes Itself: Stories of Personal Triumph from the Frontiers of Brain Science by Norman Doidge is a must read. It clearly proves how the brain has the capacity to actually rewire itself and form new neural pathways. All we have to do is to exercise it, the same way as we learn something new i.e., though repetition. The brain is not a machine, nor is it hardwired like a computer.

What is it that happens, exactly? According to researchers in Neuroscience, our thoughts, feelings, perceptions and behavior are because of electrical and chemical communication between brain cells. Thanks to Magnetic Resonance Imaging or MRI, scientists can observe the pattern of how the brain is organized; the way the neurons behave, because, whatever we do or think creates a certain pattern of activity in the neurons. Neurons fire electrically in response to inputs from other neurons, or, they release neurotransmitters to communicate with one another. Thus, it is an actual fact that our thoughts can alter our brain; it can even switch our genes on and off.

All of this goes to prove that what we think becomes what we think, which is why it’s so important to choose your attitude carefully.

Something to think about: one way to tame our monkey minds is through meditation. Meditation tames the monkey mind and strengthens it. You gradually become aware of each thought. This allows you either accept the thought or reject it by letting it float away. You are not allowing the unwanted thought to influence you or pull you in another direction. Gradually, this process enables you to concentrate and focus on the thought that you have chosen.

How would this affect us in our workplace? Better concentration skills lead to greater focus at work, and this would automatically reflect on the organization.

Once we can control and direct our thoughts, we can concentrate on other aspects of our minds: the capacity for curiosity and the ability to ask questions.

**The capacity for curiosity:** We recently had the opportunity of interviewing Professor Yves Doz from INSEAD University in Paris. He had three bits of advice for those looking to make a difference:

* Expose yourself to new environments
* Get curious
* Challenge yourself

He has a great story about a CEO of a large company who travels alone and incognito when visiting his store locations around the world. He would always use the opportunity to visit local architecture and culture. Without the usual entourage and fanfare that accompany his visits, he claims that he gets much closer to the people who interact with customers and operate the business every day. Likewise, Brad Anderson, former CEO of Best Buy, would famously disappear for weeks at a time and drive around, surprise visit Best Buy stores, and ask tons of curious questions to the associates to learn what they think is going to work best for the business.

Professor Doz emphasizes the importance of getting outside your comfort zone and constantly creating new challenges for yourself. Often fear motivates stagnation. The fear of failing can drive people not to try new or challenging things outside their competence. The monkey mind prevents them from trying new ways. Further, when competent people are pushed into new situations, often, they feel overwhelmed and afraid. This brings its own fears. Once again, monkey mind gets into action, and pushes the person into a level of incompetence. This is a clear example of the Peter Principle, which holds that people are promoted as long as they work competently. However, sooner or later they are promoted to a position at which they are not competent any more. Since they succumb to their monkey mind, they remain in the same position, and stagnate.

A critical part of challenging oneself involves fostering environments that are unstable by design. He advises reconfiguring resources, roles and business architectures regularly to intentionally create a moderate amount of creative tension. This intentional disruption can aid strategic agility, a phrase he uses to describe the importance of being constantly strategically inventive, not seasonally. Often companies enter a periodic mode of brief strategy sessions followed by longer-term implementation and execution.

So you need to get out, get curious, and challenge yourself!

**The ability to ask questions:** We grow in the direction of the questions we ask. Our line of inquiry reinforces our interests, and fuels our curiosity. It amplifies our identity and understanding in that direction. In a world today that is increasingly volatile, ambiguous and complex, the ideas and opinions that vie for our attention have compounded vastly, far beyond our abilities to digest them intellectually. Thus the inquisitive choices we make become increasingly important in directing the shape of our ideas, our identities and our collaborative communities.

We need to follow the positive idea threads that matter to us, in context of our work, our play, and our lives. The notion of Appreciative Inquiry is what is required. Popularized by Dr. David Cooperrider, a management professor at Case Western Reserve University, AI consists of discussions, and brainstorming sessions which are designed to tap into the existing strengths of an organization. Discussions on how to perpetuate them follow. All proponents of AI claim that the only antidote to all problems, including the very serious one of resisting change, is a positive approach

Appreciative Inquiry helps us appreciate, and add value to, the ideas and beliefs that we inquire about. Our questions then, are such that they beget change. What we anticipate in the world and each interaction in the future is a reflection of how we behave. They also reflect our spirit, our tendencies, and our inclinations. That is why it is so important that we learn to control our mind.

Appreciative Inquiry respects Remedial and Diagnostic forms of organizational development. It also presents a future path of positive change focusing on inspired innovation as opposed to focusing solely on correcting what isn’t working.

Diagnostic exercises such as “autopsies without blame” are definitely useful at isolating and excising those practices and processes that failed, but arguably only add to the ever-increasing list of things we should not do.

Remediating efforts, like finding the weakest link, can certainly work toward elevating those skills and behaviors that fall below the curve.

However, in this rapidly evolving economic landscape where next iterations, and emergent-inspired innovation represents real differentiating value, I believe that a more forward, positive and appreciative approach is needed.

Basically, I believe the world is moving too fast to spend most of our time fixing the old, we need to be creating the new.

We are seeing these developments in the emergence of positive institutions such as IDEO, the award-winning design firm. As IDEO engages their clients in their highly co-creative, rapid-prototyping process of design, they are simultaneously instructing and creating these capacities in the customers they work with. So even beyond the personal level of creating and affecting change by the questions we ask, we see whole organizations positively affect other whole organizations simply by their manner of interaction and behavior.

And so, craft your questions carefully, for they affect everyone they touch.

1. **Let New Ideas past the Watchman**

Thomas Jefferson, Teddy Roosevelt, Issac Newton, and Albert Einstein included long walks as part of their daily routine. Charles Darwin had a favorite “Sand Walk”, which has since become famous and popular for tourists to walk.  Teddy Roosevelt, who greatly expanded our National Parks, was such an avid outdoor enthusiast that after his Presidency, he spent almost a year on safari in Africa.  Isaac Newton was known for his odd tendency of drifting off into a silent trance of thought for several minutes even during his lectures.

Freud used the analogy of a large banquet hall to represent our unconscious. (A word about the unconscious: this is the store of collected information that has been repressed. They stay here till brought to the conscious mind. If we are not careful about choosing our thoughts, these might control the conscious mind).

An adjoining small drawing room symbolizes our conscious mind.  At the door of the drawing room is a Watchman.  Within the unconscious mind of the banquet hall, there are all varieties of guest ideas, memories of trauma, thought patterns, desires, urges, or sense impressions. Within the smaller drawing room are ideas the conscious mind is actively working with.  The Watchman’s job is to allow entry to the drawing room for only those ideas which comply with our belief and logic system.  So while we consciously work with only a small subset of ideas, skills, behaviors and attitudes in our active, conscious mind, William James, the father of modern psychology, believed we have a wealth of thoughts and ideas at our disposal. We just don’t allow them into our conscious thought patterns.  The Watchman evaluates bizarre, foreign, strange ideas in our subconscious and decides whether or not they can be permitted into the active thinking process.  William James believed the healthiest mental relationship with our thoughts is to treat them as simply thoughts, without any bearing on reality. He believed that his will was free. He was greatly influenced by Renouvier, who defined free will as ‘the sustaining of a thought because I choose to when I might have other thoughts'. He goes on to say that his first act of free will would be to believe in free will.

At the other end of the spectrum is psychosis, in which thoughts are treated as reality.  In this mental state, if you have the thought that there are ants on your arms, you believe this is reality.

If you can treat your thoughts as simply thoughts, without danger to reality, the Watchman will permit more into your active, conscious mind.  The result is that you will have a much greater arsenal of ideas to work with.  More tools for your creative problem solving.

After you start feeding your mind positive, constructive ideas, you need a pause in your efforts.  These pauses open up the drawing room of your conscious mind and allow new ideas from the unconscious to enter.  And a physical or emotional provocation is a great way to start.  By removing yourself from your desk, engaging in physical activity, attending an art exhibit, having lunch with someone who works in a different field, etc…, you allow the puzzles that are active in your work to incubate.

This incubation period is crucial to synthesis i.e.,mentally pulling together the ideas that have come in, into an innovation solution.  New ideas and creativity aren’t enough.  You must put them into action.  Thus, Innovation = creativity X execution.

We must find the time to partition your active thinking and turn off the white noise in our lives. Yet our conscious thought is incredibly difficult to turn off.  Just try it while lying awake at 2:00 am while your mind churns.  Consciously persisting in repetitious mind games on ideas isn’t usually the best way to solve a problem because you aren’t allowing new ideas to enter your mind to contribute.  You need to allow new ideas past the Watchman. Start by getting outside of your usual domain and getting comfortable with new ideas and experiences.  You can teach the Watchman to allow more ideas into your active thinking process.

Thus, there are two processes at work.

* One is when we control the thoughts that come into the conscious mind, so that we allow only positive thoughts to come into our mind
* The other is allowing related ideas and thoughts to enter the mind freely, so that they aid in dealing with the situation in hand, instead of getting caught in a repetitive cycle of thought that is not dealing with the situation in hand, but causes stress and incompetence

The result of this exercise would be an open mind. And an open mind, as we know, helps in converting challenges into creative possibilities.A fun exercise is to assume the absurd. Making wild and absurd assumptions can be a fun exercise if you are open-minded. The question, ‘What if?’ will invariably lead to many solutions. We just have to see what fits! Another way is to see how others are doing things. You never know, one of those non-traditional, unconventional solutions might just be an effective answer to your challenge/problem.

Seeing how others do things, and allowing new ideas past the watchman, is illustrated by this example: a new apartment complex was so much in demand, that people started moving in before the sidewalks were laid. While ‘in-the-box’ thinking says that sidewalks have to be laid in a particular way, the developer found that, since there were many entrances, people were taking the route they found shortest and most convenient route to the main road, or to where their cars were parked. He decided to wait and see if any pattern emerged. The routes people were taking, he found, created clear paths on the grass. He then laid the concrete pavements on these paths. These were quite different from what was on the blueprint, but they served the purpose more effectively.

It is, indeed, a case of harnessing the mind so that we remain positive and open in all situations.

1. **Opening Possibilities**

Don’t be put off by people who know what is not possible. Do what needs to be done, and check to see if it was impossible only after you are done.

-Paul Hawken

I learned a powerful lesson recently in an interview with Lincoln Crawley, Managing Director of Manpower for Australia. I asked him if there was a watershed learning event in his career. He pointed to a moment more than fifteen years ago when he was trying to win a services contract. He was the lead on a proposal competing against a company with an enormous infrastructure advantage. The client required a redundancy system in place as a security measure. Crawley’s competitor had the necessary systems in place to serve the client, while his company didn’t. He seemed sure to lose the contract, as the task to replicate their infrastructure in the time required, seemed nearly impossible.

In discussions during the proposal process, the people around him described the obstacles and cost, and all the other hurdles, foreseen and unforeseen. Finally, in one meeting Crawley’s boss said, “I understand the issues and concerns you are raising, but tell me: If it were possible, what would the solution look like?” That simple phrase – if it were possible – gave the team permission to speculate, and opened a whole new conversation around ‘if it were possible’; ‘the real possibility of… ‘. It was an invitation to dream.

Lincoln and his team conceived of a plan, and proposed it to the prospective client. They won the contract.

Here’s the interesting part – Crawley said he didn’t fully recognize the power of the suggestion “If it were possible” until years later when he started using the expression with his own team in a leadership role. Only then did he recognize the power of these 4 words in opening the capabilities and imagination in his team. If you think your team is stymied, try imagination!

Imagination can convert impulsive thoughts or ideas into pictures in the mind.

In fact, it is a well-known fact that the one common feature that all successful people have is imagination.

George Bernard Shaw said, ”Imagination is the beginning of creation. You imagine what you desire, you will what you imagine and at last you create what you will.”

The point is that each business is unique and needs its own unique solutions. While you can draw inspiration from various sources, if you want to solve a problem that has cropped up in your own particular situation, or want to create something new, you have to dare to imagine. You have to dare to open your mind and let your thoughts flow. You have to dare that. Observe children at play. They do not need fancy toys to play. Give them some old pots and pans, or give them nothing, and they will devise games for themselves which will keep them occupied hour after hour, day after day. Somewhere along the line, this gets lost/hidden/suppressed. Traditional, conventional, established business houses had executives who generally left well enough alone, relying on the strength of the good name of their organization; the fact that it was established in the last century, or earlier; their listing on the stock exchange; and the phrase ‘it’s been done this way always, so is there any need to change a system that has worked?’ For the corporate world, imagination was not a top priority.

While it might seem that this ‘tried-and-tested’ method was firmly entrenched, what the authorities in these conventional business houses did not reckon with was the seismic changes that globalization caused. It started off gently enough, and maybe was not spectacular, but the rumbles have become strong enough to topple many an established organization. Those ways are just not working anymore. The competition, and oftentimes the competition is from the unorganized sector, is producing new and improved products, at considerably less cost. So there are a range of quality products available in the market at eminently affordable prices. Further, seeing the way the wealth is spread in the world, increasingly, there is a movement toward the BoP model of doing business.

Another point is that the old way of running organizations is not working anymore.

The challenge for all old business houses and organizations is to change, because the alternative is to be left behind, or maybe even to opt out completely.

The field is open now for more entrepreneurial business, but the change to keep-up-with-the-times, and stay ahead of competition is as real for small businesses as it is for the large business houses. Clearly the deciding factor is the power of imagination. It takes imagination to start a business, imagination to keep it going, and imagination to stay on top. All organizations have to offer something unique, whether they offer a product or a service. The bottom line for all organizations how good customer service is and whether they have the latest technology supporting their systems.

Very challenging problems would need not only your imagination, but also inputs from other sources. This is because, just in case you get stuck, an input would fire off a new line of thinking and imagination. Your solution might just lie there! Market research helps identify customer needs. Collaborating with members in the team helps in the exchange of ideas, resulting in fresh perspectives. Spending time with other imaginative people (confreres from other business houses, artists, friends and even children), helps in jogging your own powers of imagination. An open mind would permit the watchman to allow related thoughts and memories and experiences which would fire the imagination, and get the creative juices flowing.

Increasingly organizations and corporate houses are seeing the importance of giving their employees breaks. These ‘off’ times help in recharging batteries and refreshing the mind.

According to Charles F. Kettering, “Our imagination is the only limit to what we can hope to have in the future.”

What we have to remember is that imagination has no boundaries, so it is equally important to be able to sift the possible from the irrelevant. Keeping the values and goals of the organization in mind, will help in choosing the most viable and real options.

Individual members working on a team, successful entrepreneurs, and team leaders who use their imagination in problem solving, innovation and re-defining of issues, have to know when to stand back, and review their ideas objectively. Problems and their solutions, sometimes, have a way of entangling the person working on it. It becomes an obsession to get to the bottom of the issue, and the more one goes on worrying it, the more tangled and complicated it becomes. This is the time to stop and take a break; it’s time to get detached from the issue on hand; it’s time to step back and give the whole issue a total rest; it’s time to take an objective look at the problem in its entirety. Only then will the flaws be seen, the mistakes recognized, and the change in direction effected. Stepping back helps to recognize which links in the chain need special attention. It could well be that there are some tiny pieces missing in the puzzle. Or, it could be that something very obvious was getting missed out. It is important too, to focus on the weaknesses of an idea, because that might offer a viable clue.

The thing about imagination is that if you get stuck, it is not a crisis. Your open-mindedness would be able to draw parallels from other, maybe quite different, fields, which could be adapted to the issue in hand.

Albert Einstein, who was one of the most imaginative and knowledgeable individuals in history, once said, "Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited to all we now know and understand, while imagination embraces the entire world, and all there ever will be to know and understand."

Thomas Friedman, best-selling author of The World is Flat, gives an example of Israel to illustrate the power of imagination. He observes how Israel, despite all its geopolitical struggles is enjoying overwhelming economic prosperity. Israel’s stock market and consumer sale are at record highs, and Israel is second only to the U.S. in the Nasdaq listing. As the reason for this spectacular success, Friedman refers to an ‘ecosystem’ of innovators and venture capitalists. Young Israelis are involved in creating innovative projects in biomedical engineering, electrical engineering, robotics and computing. Investors who think far and think big are investing heavily in these ventures.

Global competition is continually increasing and intensifying. It is only those organizations that empower their employees to act on their imagination will succeed and prosper. Look at the scene:

* Today’s technology is obsolete tomorrow
* There are so many information-processing tools available
* The world has shrunk, so individuals can connect, collaborate and compete from anywhere in the world

In such a scene, there is a premium on the power of imagination, and only those organizations that nurture and reward people who are imaginative will come on top, and stay on top.

Friedman quotes Nimrod Kozlovski, an Israeli expert on Internet law: "We are not investing in products and business plans today, but in ***people*** [emphasis added] who have the ability to imagine and connect the dots."

One cannot stress enough on the importance of investing in people. It is enlightened human capital management that makes the difference.

Along with imagination goes experimentation. Organizations that have been able to create a culture where this is possible are the only successful ones today.

Something to leave you with: Einstein worked in relative obscurity in a Swiss patent office for 7 years. Only then were his ground-breaking ideas recognized. You might have a budding Einstein in your organization!

1. **Use your Peripheral Vision**

The world is changing so rapidly these days that we are constantly confronted with new dilemmas and new opportunities. And, often when confronted with these new puzzles we rely on the same skills and tactics which got us to where we are today. In fact, we allow ourselves to be so overwhelmed (and maybe even terrified) by the changes that are taking place so swiftly, that we know that what we have been doing will soon be dated. What’s even more terrifying is that if we don’t come up with new ideas, and new ways of doing things, we might find ourselves obsolete. However, as Roger von Oech says, ‘the hard part is letting go of what worked for you two years ago.’

Now comes the hard question: What if solving 21st century problems and building 21st century opportunities require new thinking?

Fact is that there are a lot of changes taking place in the world. Oech goes on to say: ‘Take advantage of the ambiguity in the world. Look at something and think what else it might be.’

Here are a few problem-solving ideas for the times your team feels stymied:

* **Restate the puzzle.** Rephrase the problem, in as many ways as you can, using different words and perspectives. The best way to do this effectively is to take turns around the table and have different players try this exercise. You are certain to uncover new clues to the solution as well as isolate what really matters.

Too often we get hung up on aspects that don’t merit as much mindshare as we initially allow.

By using different vantage points on a particular problem, you:

* Get closer to the essence of the issue
* Recognize the real value you are trying to generate

Any puzzle: a technical fix, a service issue, or a product enhancement, is ultimately aimed at value generation.

* **Approach from downwind**. Simply put, this means you need to attack the problem so it doesn’t see you coming. Come at the puzzle from a direction it never suspects. Chances are you have confronted something similar in the past and you follow the well-trod neurons in your brain. This tactic can be expedient in a pinch but unlikely to produce something novel. Also, the solution is likely to be temporary.

If the challenge is prickly, and you have the luxury of a bit of time, try a new approach. It is likely to be more effective, and real.

* **Call in the talent**. Reach out to your network and don’t be afraid to ask for help. Your posse internally and outside your organization is pleased to be tapped and eager to reveal their ingenuity. You are likely to find a new elegant fix from a source you already know.

All these methods push you to use your peripheral vision to find creative solutions.

Roger von Oech is a firm believer in using fun ideas to stimulate creativity. His company Creative Think was started in 1977. He is the author of A Whack on the Side of the Head, and the Creative Whack Pack. Oech believes that his Ball of Whacks and X-Ball are ‘creative stimulants’ and ‘mental fresheners’. They stimulate the thinking process, and open the mind to creative ideas. The X-Ball will, in his words, ’put white caps on your gray matter.’ These are fun objects. You use the X-Ball to design and create new shapes. It is also used as a relaxation aid. This helps to free the mind from other concerns, and focus on the task in hand.

Elaborating on creativity, Oech says that creativity is the process by which new and different ideas are produced. However, there is a practical angle to it. It has to work in the given situation, or adapted in a manner that can work in the particular situation.

Oech recommends that organizations have an ‘innovation requirement’ in the performance plan of employees. This way, employees would also focus on looking for innovative solutions. Asking questions that stimulate their thinking, or putting them in situations which require them to think laterally, or giving them open-ended problems to solve would get their creative juices flowing. It is important for people to approach a problem from many and different points of view.

Having a sense of humor helps. It has been found that there is a close relationship between the ‘ha-ha of humor and the A-Ha! of discovery,’ to quote Oech.

Employees with wide-ranging interests in fields other than their field of work, or area of specialization, or have absorbing hobbies are always more creative than those who only specialize in their field of work.

How does one use peripheral vision? Here again, Oech has a suggestion: ‘Look for the second right answer.’ Most problems have many solutions. The rider is that one has to look for them; one has to free the mind enough to see them. It is only then that all the possible alternatives can be found.

1. **Millions Saw the Apple Fall. Newton asked Why**

Play that is directed by the child, not the parent, is the key to cultivating curiosity. – Todd Kashdan

This evening I was treated to my 7 year old son playing the piano. Not the pounding childish make-noise kind, nor the rote practice kind assigned by music teachers. (Both are quite valid in figuring out this instrument). My son worked on the piano in a moment of utter focus finding melodies he invented. It was nothing Mozart-like of a young prodigy. He was simply exploring the piano in a very in-the-moment, and examining way; finding rhythm and notes on his own. He’s never had piano lessons beyond watching and listening to my own piano tunes, learned long ago. It was just simple curiosity about what the piano sounds like.

When we are in a curious state, we ask probing questions, read deeply with intent, manipulate, and examine objects, and persist in activities and tasks which we find both challenging and stimulating.

Clinical psychologist and George Mason University professor Dr. Todd Kashdan, cultivating curiosity is the drive which helps us to realize and achieve a life worth living. Studies with his colleagues demonstrate that curious people tend to become more curious over time (curiosity breeds curiosity) and ultimately find greater enjoyment. They even live longer!

Todd Kashdan has turned on its head the general belief that we grow as persons, and find true joy when our activities and our striving are geared to finding certainty, safety, and happiness.

In his book CURIOUS?, he says that it is only when we open ourselves to new experiences (get off the beaten track) and when we have a zest for and enjoy the unknown (get out of our comfort zone), that we can actually find meaning and real, lasting happiness. To be open to the unknown implies curiosity. It also implies fearlessness and strength of mind to take on challenges, easy or difficult. We don’t shy away from anything that comes our way; we don’t pick and choose only what we are comfortable with, but take on what may be completely strange and new, and different.

The wonderful thing is that we can cultivate curiosity, no matter what our age, occupation, or stage in life. After all, all of us want meaningful relationships, personal and in our place of work, good health, and joy of life. The strengths that we develop when we take on the unknown, when we allow for curiosity in our lives, help during times of loss and adversity. This is because we would have cultivated the skills of turning around any situation, instead of getting mired in it.

Like my little son who decided to try out the piano, his curiosity in this instrument that produced sound, helped him to explore the kind of sound being produced by the keys. Obviously the tunes he had heard were in his mind. And he was trying to match the notes in his little head with the sounds he was able to get from the keys. He felt he could take on one more step: rhythm. And so, he managed tiny sequences of notes, or tunes, with rhythm.

Engagement; engagement in the task in hand is what happens when we are curious.

As far back as 2006, a Gallup study found that leaders are increasingly looking to their employees, customers and partners for new ideas. They are looking for employees who are focused, who enjoy their work, and who react positively to ideas offered by their team members, because it is only engaged employees who can innovate. They are also clearly more productive, and better at creating strong customer relationships. A combination of an inspiring and motivating administration, with improved management and business processes, and engaged employees will create a great workplace, customer satisfaction, less turnover of employees, and a successful organization. The study found that engaged employees involved customers in the innovation and improvement processes.

In their book, Closing The Engagement Gap, Julie Gebauer and Don Lowman talk about how employees’ potential can be unlocked. They have 5 keys:

* Know them
* Grow them
* Inspire them
* Involve them
* Reward them

With these keys, employers would ensure that the employees were fully engaged: come every day, come on time, consistently do good work, and offer great customer service. Since they feel empowered, and work in a team, they also feel responsible for the company and help in innovating, managing costs, and making profits.

And so, true and lasting competitive advantage comes from having talented and engaged people.

The surest way to wither your sense of engagement is to curb your curiosity. Curious people are more competent, knowledgeable, and expert. Not only that, curious people have stronger relationships, more physical and mental resilience, and even cultivate a stronger sense of meaning in their lives.

Having a sense of engagement frees you, mentally and physically.

There is an incident of a person wanting to learn skiing. She goes to Gstaad, and through the hotel asks for a guide. Imagine her astonishment when the guide who came to get her the next morning was a 73 year old grandmother!! The lady did not know what to expect. After all, the guide was ‘old’. It took one run to prove her wrong. The guide was amazing. She was a breathtakingly beautiful skier, and an inspired teacher. It was supremely easy after that. So, age was not a barrier. It was the engagement with life and willingness to try that was of the essence.

So when we are trying to find more “engagement” in our work, or, as a leader trying to cultivate that high level of engagement, there are three clear variables:

* The right people
* Being in the right seats
* Doing what they are good at and love.

The three components to engagement look like this:

1. **Recognition of Role**: Everyone must have a clear understanding of what role they play in the larger context of the organization. Demographic studies suggest this demand started in earnest with Gen X. Gen Y refuses to be part of a work environment that isn’t entirely transparent.
2. **Executable Talent**: Show up with the skills you have. This is part talent selection, and part talent development. Every organization and leader must create an environment where curiosity and intellectual growth is expected.
3. **Passionate Commitment**: Parts 1 and 2 are important but for full engagement, a passionate belief about what the team, the function, and the organization as a whole are trying to do remain paramount.

Two out of three above are nice but insufficient. Someone with skills who lacks belief in the mission is a flight risk. The most intolerable might be the prima donna who refuses collaborative efforts. As John Tucci, CEO of EMC says, “I have taken very talented smart people who did not play on a team and shown them the door.”

Understanding context, building skills, and being passionate aren’t easy to have on a consistent and thriving basis but maybe the key is simply to remain curious. Everything else falls into place.

Here’s a tip that really works. When trying to build new knowledge, or figure out how to connect with someone who might be on the opposite side of your viewpoint, ask a simple open question that mines what they know about. This works on almost any topic: vegetarianism, the Iraq War, whether we should renew our catering contract, to name a few issues. Ask something open and probing, for example, “Help me understand why being a vegetarian is the best choice for our community.” You can fit your question into any context.

If asked in an honest inquiring voice, you are more likely statistically to be viewed as empathetic and even intelligent in your curiosity. Stay open, be curious, and enrich your life.

1. **Nothing is more Precious Than to Be Able to Decide**

When I set out to take Vienna, I take Vienna.  
Nothing is more difficult, and therefore more precious, than to be able to decide.

– Napoleon

In an interview with Dan Glaser, CEO of Marsh, he described an experiment Marsh constructed in Rotterdam. They renovated a warehouse and set up an open, non-tiered environment where associates could collaborate as appropriate, depending on what projects they were working on. There were no schedules, no punch-cards, and no mandatory office time.

However, Glaser visited their group and stated clearly that the office was accountable for results. They would need to demonstrate margins exceeding their peers elsewhere. If this experiment was a success, Marsh was committed to replicating the model.

Glaser went on to say that in his mind the three keys needed to effect a successful turn-around at Marsh when he took office in 2007 were, and still remain: Clients, Colleagues, and Performance.

**Clients**: Glaser walked the corridors of Marsh and asked associates, “Do you understand what the mission and values of this company are?” Quite often, he couldn’t get a clear answer. He would reinforce the importance of focusing on the customer, and solving what the customer was trying to accomplish. According to Glaser, if you do this, customer retention, revenue, and shareholder value will follow.

**Colleagues**: He gathered his top team in a closed session and emphasized that they needed to focus less on what people did, and more on managing the quality of the relationship. He described how new managers can get stuck wanting to be the go-to person to achieve a specific result. Ultimately, though, it is only by giving trust that you allow everyone working with you to shine. Marsh had also been a highly tiered environment, where associates often reported to up to four different directors. Consequently, there was differing focus and possibly competing objectives as well. Glaser was adamant in simplifying and cleaning the reporting environment so people developed clear focus.

**Performance**:  Focusing on customers is great, but not at the expense of sacrificing your business model. An overly eager group trying to fulfil customer demands and needs can shake the company and distract from the core operating model. Further, giving open entitlement to colleagues to work and execute on their own terms will definitely empower them, but the question is, to what end?  Communicating a shared vision of what success looks like is imperative. Performance naturally follows.

Dan Glaser restored performance discipline at Marsh and enjoyed seven quarters of increased performance.

True, he brought back the focus, but how did he achieve financial excellence? The secret to superior financial performance was: ‘let your leaders run.’ This was the expression he used when building expansion and opportunity at Marsh. It should be noted here that Glaser has been with Marsh 2 years. He has made inroads in the bureaucratic procedures of the 5B insurance giant with a few, but focused ideas. And, he doesn’t miss a trick!

This is how he did it:

* First, he went to the ground floor. He spent time interviewing and lunching with the people who work at Marsh. He would walk the halls and ask associates, “What are you working on?” and “How does that fit in our greater mission and values?” When he met people who reported to different heads, he saw that there was a conflict in their behavior and actions. Streamlining the reporting process was the only way to get people aligned with the projects, ideas that provide value to the customer.
* Then he asked his managers, whom he appropriately calls leaders, to pursue possibilities, not probabilities. Probabilities suggest what might happen to you, or to the organization ; what you might have to react to. It was a limiting and reactive mindset. Glaser asked Marsh leaders to look toward possibilities, not probabilities. Possibilities leave the future open to be created; the landscape to be defined by wide-open opportunity; the sky is the limit mentality.

However, though leaders at Marsh are offered the open leash to explore, they are indeed held to specific business initiatives which will create value for the customer, build growth for associates, and create shareholder value.

Glaser famously held his key leader retreat in a windowless conference room in their NY offices, not in a swanky resort, and built the culture that they intend to be a lean, highly performing, multi-national focused on delivering results and customer value.

Glaser’s dynamic views were reinforced in his address to a group of insurance industry leaders. His suggestions are valid and relevant for any organization.

* ‘View today’s challenging environment as an opportunity for differentiation, innovation and the creation of long-term value

He refers to this age as ‘an age of relentless acceleration’. There is greater interconnectedness, a shifting of power centers and a situation where a single event can impact on the world and the environment. Therefore:

* The need of the hour was:
* More product innovation
* Service performance
* Quality of personnel
* Quality of capital
* Breadth and clarity of policy

For decisions to be taken there needs to be:

* Increased application of necessary and relevant technology in order to get more comprehensive data

Thus, for success, innovation coupled with high qualityservice and competitive pricing is required.

Mr. Glaser emphasizes that ‘reward and risk are bound together.’ For those leaders and entrepreneurs who are unafraid of taking risks and are excited by challenges, of a global economy, rewards can be in the form of:

* Growth of revenue
* Increased market share
* Territorial expansion
* Diversification
* Flow of commerce
* Regeneration of the world’s productive prowess

The Results-Only-Work-Environment is certainly on the rise but it doesn’t appear to be a new phenomenon.  In an interview with DirecTV President Bruce Churchill, he describes how years ago as a McKinsey partner, they had specific vacation requirements for executives. People, thus, dutifully filled out their paperwork and took their allotted vacation. Then McKinsey leadership communicated that executives could take whatever vacation they wanted; they were grown-ups and could manage their own time against obligations. The result was quite startling. The executives worked more, were more productive, and took less vacation. When treated as accountable governors of their businesses, they chose to take less ‘official’ vacation and created more integrated balance in their professional lives on a self-regulated agenda.

ROWE is a management strategy. In a ROWE, employees are evaluated only on performance, not presence. So, while the right climate is created for people to manage all the demands in their lives (including their work), the focus is only on results. This, naturally increases the organization’s performance.

The advantages of ROWE are:

* Great teamwork so that every member is engaged, and morale is high. This results in workers not being stressed out, overworked or guilty.
* People are in their places and there is no need for schedules. People have to decide what they have to do, where, how and when they are going to do it, and then deliver. Consequently, you can even work from home!
* Since people feel accountable, employees don’t waste either the company’s time or money.

The benefits of a ROWE are:

* Your company will attract and retain talent
* Employees are focused, energized, disciplined and flexible
* Employees have autonomy, and are accountable, hence are quite motivated and driven. Therefore:
* For the organization, employees perform with greater efficiency, show more productivity, and feel a sense of loyalty to the organization
* For themselves feel more in control of their personal and professional lives, are less stressed out, feel a sense of ownership towards the organization, and find work more fulfilling

1. **Trust, Proximity, and Track Record (can this be changed to Business is like life?)**

An academic and consultant Dr. Richard Pascale has worked closely with top management teams of many large companies. When Japan’s industrial superiority was being acclaimed, Pascale exhorted Americans to see what they were doing better, and learn from them. He thought that it was in the softer side of management that Japan scored highly, rather than in strategy and structure. Pascale’s ‘Honda Effect’ is worth looking at. He spoke to a number of Honda executives about Honda’s successful entry into the U.S. He found that in actual fact what happened was chance, a series of miscalculations, and quick re-adjustments. Pascale called it Organizational agility. He famously said that Honda exists “in a sort of restless, uneasy state, which enables it to get a great deal out of its people and itself as an entity”.

Pascale believed that:

* Prolonged equilibrium is a precursor to death
* Innovation occurs close to the edge of chaos
* All living things have the capacity for self-organization
* When you tamper with living things, you face the law of unintended consequences

Ronald Heifetz at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University draws a distinction between ‘technical work’ and ‘adaptive work’.

Technical work is what happens when a leader and an organization already know what to do, and how to do it. Routines and strategies are established and deeply ingrained. Those in authority find it difficult to change their thinking on their well-established, well-proven policies. In fact, this becomes a blind spot.

The trouble happens when a new problem or something totally unforeseen comes up. What would the solution be, then, in such a situation? Here, the leadership would need to frame the challenge and represent it to the employees in a way that would cause them to act promptly. Further the leadership must draw in the community that is directly affected by the problem. In effect, what is happening is that the leadership is acknowledging that it does not have all the answers, and that surely, collectively, something can be worked out to everyone’s advantage. Something beyond the experience of the organization and senior management has to be worked out.

Adaptive work involves employees. Naturally, this is not easy to either do, or get used to. But, the good thing is that it can be learned. In fact, it is imperative to learn how to be adaptive. To grow, an organization needs both good news and bad. Leaders have to look close to the ‘coal face’. These are people who are directly involved in operations, or face customers. Inputs from these employees would go a long way in opening up thinking and exchange of ideas.

Orthodoxies slow down and even obstruct change. They also don’t allow any kind of learning or new thinking to happen. Sometimes, even new ventures, and start-up companies get caught in the web of orthodoxy, informality, strong beliefs, and fixed systems. This is a recipe for failure, especially in this day and age of seismic changes. For instance, the enterprise may grow, requiring quick thinking and adaptability to a changing scene. If this does not happen, ultimately, the organization suffers.

In another instance, there may be need for the injection of new ideas, and the creation of new systems. The company: management and employees have to be open enough to bring in expertise.

The only way of coping with change and becoming a workplace of adaptive work, is for leaders to bring in the organization. Employees have to be tapped, and talent chosen, as well as recognized. Gen Y is more attuned to this style.

An example to prove this point is Royal Dutch Shell. This business has a large employee base and operations all over the world. In the early nineties, competition was squeezing their margins. At the same time, Asia, in which Shell has a major presence, was going through an economic upheaval. Everything that could possibly go wrong was going wrong, and no solution seemed to be working, till Steve Miller took over as managing director of Oil Products. His approach was radical, as opposed to the traditional approach the company’s leaders had been taking. He encouraged the teams in each country to identify the problems they thought were important and needed immediate attention. He organized workshops where the middle management of all the countries met. The problems were different, but the analytical tools were the same, and they were all working towards one common goal. The transformation was amazing. The success huge!

Pascale believes that organizations should be governed by the laws of nature.

For one, he believes in the concept of ‘positive deviance’. According to this theory, most organizations have isolated successes. The challenge lies in discovering these positive deviants, and determining whether the practices used can be replicated. This is opposed to imposing best practices that worked in one situation on the whole system. This never works, because it evokes a defense response from those sections that are not connected to the situation where these practices were successful. Positive deviance would change all this. The whole community would be engaged in inquiry, discover hidden wisdom, learn, and use what works.

Think of the most difficult problems in your organization. If you leverage positive deviants, a few individuals will be spotted who find unique ways to look at the problem. They see solutions where others see only an insoluble problem. This creates its own energy which spreads. Innovative designs are used to get into new ways of thinking, instead of going round and round in circles trying to think of a new solution. Positive deviance has worked in solving some of the world’s toughest problems.

Pascale says another lesson we can learn from nature concerns ’power laws’. Power laws explain the contagion effect. Think: avalanche. It is a natural phenomenon where a small disturbance can compound itself into a landslide. So, too in business. A small beginning can accelerate and multiply into something extremely large.

In business, there is an increasing inter-connectedness both through physical as well as electronic means. Consequently, we have to be aware of things escalating. It could be a small avalanche, or a massive one, but avalanche it is sure to be.

Naturally, in all these experiments, the bottom word is trust. There has to be trust. Only then will initiative and innovation flower and flourish. Further, if the company shows a track record of successful implementation of new ideas, it becomes a source of inspiration and impetus to further experimentation.

As it happens so often, just when you think you are all set: strategy, team, customer service are all in place, something unexpected happens. Pascale reaffirms that is so much like life. And, also like life, the first rule is: Adapt or die, because equilibrium equals death.

Pascale offers some tools that can be used to escape from the stranglehold or equilibrium:

* Are we generating clones? If survival threats are amplified, and disequilibrium fostered, then automatically, there is bound to be an injection of fresh ideas and innovation. Of course there will be a reaction from the old-timers, but it is only when outsiders are brought in that new ideas are generated
* Move to the edge of the chaos. This happens when:
* All the associates of a company are given permission to innovate. This encourages them to think laterally, think big, and be creative
* The leaders say that an error is a collective fault; it is not ascribed to one person
* The leaders keep a watch on how the teams are performing. If a team looks like it has hit comfort zone, the leaders step in and move them around, ensuring that there is always a stimulating environment

Pascale gives 3 guidelines that work together:

* Design, don’t engineer
* Discover, don’t dictate
* Decipher, don’t presuppose

Thus, while unforeseen situation and consequences are inevitable, the challenge lies in how to mutate-experiment-innovate so as to correct the course and get the desired outcome.

**Chapter 5 – The Change Artist**

* 1. **Just Below the Surface**

Sir Ken Robinson is an internationally-renowned expert in the field of creativity and innovation in business and education. He says that our education has resulted in our becoming good workers but not creative thinkers.

Robinson makes an analogy between human resources and natural resources. He thinks that there is a crisis in both.

On human resources, he feels that people’s abilities and talents are buried deep inside them. One has to dig to find these. All organizations have people with talent and huge potential. They have just never been discovered.

Robinson gives an example: when he was helping to set up the Hong Kong Academy, one member of the team was from Australia. He had been raised on a ranch in Western Australia (and ranches in Australia are vast). For years this gentleman had eked out a living on this land. It was difficult and not very profitable either. One year the rains failed and there were no crops at all. This was the last straw, as it were, and the father decided that they had to leave the ranch. In Western Australia, the law is that if you walk off the land, you walk away from your debts, but then the land goes to the government. That is what they did. They walked away and went to Perth, where they found jobs and started life over again. Towards the end of his life, the father wanted to have one last look at the land. So they drove out. But, as they drove along the highway, they could not find the road that led to the farmhouse. It used to be a dirt track, but there was no dirt track to be seen anywhere there now. The dirt track was now a new road. They drove down this road and when they came in sight of what should have been their farm, they saw that there was no farm. The old farmhouse was there all right, but there were other buildings and there was a sign which read: The Western Australian Nickel Company. Father and son walked into the reception and asked what was happening there? This is what they found: When they walked off the land, the government commissioned a geological survey. This was routine practice. The geological survey, though found that 18 inches below the surface was a huge seam of nickel. It was worth millions of dollars. Now they were mining Nickel. They were stunned. They thought, all the years they had been trying to make a living growing crops and raising sheep, just below the surface was this extraordinary resource. When the gentleman turned to look at the effect this news had on his father, he saw that the father was in splits of laughter.

The analogy is obvious. Very often people have phenomenal resources which are just beneath the surface. If leaders don’t look for them, they will never find them. Many organizations have people doing the same jobs they have done for years. No one has asked them if they would like to do something else; or if they were interested in anything else. Sometimes people don’t know their own strengths. They need to be put into situations, and thrown challenges that will draw out their latent talents and potential. Another thing that can be done is to put people with other people who would bring out different aspects in them. You would be surprised at the hidden depths in them.

This is where the whole idea of creativity comes in, and Robinson is an expert in the field of creativity. According to him, ‘Creativity is the engine of entrepreneurship and therefore of business and of economic growth’. Creativity is not a random process. It is the process of having original ideas that have value. And so, creativity is:

* A process
* About originality
* About things that are worthwhile

Creativity is all about fresh thinking and he feels that in this age of rapid change, we need more and more of this but we need to make it systematic.

Further, though there are many technologically advanced gadgets and tools, these actually offer opportunities for creative development, which are new. The tools in themselves are not creative. People have to develop the skills to make these tools helpful and useful. This means that you have to understand the process and have confidence in your own creative powers.

Robinson is deeply involved in education, and he feels that opportunities for creative work are actually declining in education, at all levels. So, while wonderful things are happening, there is also cause for concern, and this has to be addressed.

True, there are misconceptions about creativity and these are:

* Only special people are creative
* Creativity is about special things
* Either you’re creative or not

Robinson has knocked the base out of these. He says:

* What is needed is to develop the attitude and discipline to make this happen regularly
* You can be creative about anything. Every aspect of the company has creative possibilities
* Being creative is a focused process. No one is creative in the abstract. You have to be doing something, anything

Since creativity is a practical process, you have to get better at the skills the process requires. In effect, you have to strike a balance imagination and discipline. And of course, the basis for all creativity is imagination. Robinson feels that this is the single most powerful gift that human beings possess. Everyone has it, and everyone takes it for granted, but very few tap it or use it. Creativity is imagination at work. A creative team that works together is sure to produce excellent results. An example of a creative partnership is the Rolling Stones. Keith Richards comes up with fantastic opening riffs for songs. In his book, Life, he talks about how he comes up with a riff which he gives Mick Jagger, who works the melody around it and writes the lyrics. A team therefore starts with an initial idea, and then a process evolves and the ideas weave around and through to give you the desired end result. The members of the team have to have different strengths and different talents. The challenge of working together draws out all the potential that is just below the surface. Creativity thrives on different perspectives. The starting point is a problem or an idea and when people from different backgrounds, diverse talents and differing perspectives are put together, a great solution is the result. The only given is that the team keeps the organizations goals in mind. There is a lot of dynamism in a diverse team. And, it is only in this kind of team, where internal processes are such that everyone respects each other’s ideas and stays away from crippling critical judgment, that a whole new body of possibilities can be built.

Robinson gives an example of Pixar. They have a technique called plus-ing that is in effect in all their teams. Plus-ing means that no one is allowed to say ‘but’ and ‘no’. The words to be substituted are ‘yes and’. So every member accepts each other’s expertise and perspectives, and builds on it instead of contradicting it or blocking it. A team functions best when it is formed for one particular task. It produces the best results, and what’s more, produces them reliably.

While an organization needs to look below the surface, it is also a good idea for each employee to believe in his/her own possibilities. Each person needs to delve into his own depths as well. Each person needs to tap his own inner reservoir of creativity. And it’s all there! For those who are apprehensive, Robinson has this advice. ‘Go and do something you have not done before and try it’. How many times have we heard people saying that they never knew they had it in them. You need to give yourself a chance!

A journey of a thousand miles began with a single step.

* From the sayings of Lao Tzu  
  1. **Change is Inevitable, Growth is Intentional**

Change is inevitable, growth is intentional.

– Glenda Cloud

There are certain times in the year when we all make vows: for the New Year; on our Birthday; on our wedding day; or on some occasion that has special meaning and significance for us. Here is a piece of advice you might consider: Once you decide something – anything really – it sets a precedent for yourself and you are quite likely to repeat that decision regardless of the quality of the choice.

Dr. Dan Ariely, author of Predictably Irrational and The Upside of Irrationality, is absorbed with the idea that we repeatedly and predictably make wrong decisions in many areas of our life.

In Predictably Irrational: The Hidden Forces That Shape Our Decisions, he challenges assumptions about making decisions on rational thought. He has a short bit of advice warning us that we may be doomed to repeat what we decide once, regardless of the value of that decision.  It is therefore important to rethink what makes us and the persons around us tick. For instance, consider the common impulse to go to the packed restaurant, as opposed to the relatively less attended restaurant across the street, or across town.  Your impulse tells you that since many people fraternize that establishment, it must be better – and perhaps the crowd is right.  Barry Libert, James Surowiecki and others have built compelling arguments that the crowd knows far better than what you alone think is best, but Dan cautions against the inconsiderate repetitiveness of this kind of decision-making. For instance, Surowiecki demonstrates the wisdom of crowds by what happen in the show “Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?” 91% of the audience is more helpful than either the friend a participant phones, or the 50/50 option to reduce choices. Ariely agrees that the market, in general, can be a powerful ally in decision-making but this process must be revisited repeatedly to reconfirm whatever you decide.  So instead of effectively standing in line behind yourself, since you are following your first decision, his advice is to re-evaluate the quality of that decision each time.

Some of points outlined in his book Predictably Irrational about how we take decisions are very enlightening:

* Break the cycle of relativity. People not only compare things, but also compare things that are easily comparable. Relativity, thus, helps us take decisions, but it also makes us unhappy, because we end up comparing ourselves to others. The idea is to break this cycle by focusing on smaller circles or changing the focus to a broader base.
* The fallacy of Supply and Demand. Supply and demand are mutually dependent, and it is demand that determines the market price. Ariely says that the value of an object is susceptible to irrational pricing. But people get anchored to this price and associate it other similar objects.
* The cost of FREE. People react to Free and Zero, and take decisions without rationalizing the outcomes of those choices. While all transactions have an upside and downside, the instant people see the word Free, they don’t see the downside. The concept of Free also applies to time. If something is free, we are willing to forgo our time in order to avail of that. In fact, we could very well be doing something else useful with that time. This could also be used in social policy to benefit people. Our decisions should be made keeping in mind the net benefits of our choices.
* Emotion in decision making. Our behavior is completely controlled by our emotions. Unless we are conscious of this, we end up making the same irrational decisions every time we are in the grips of high emotion.
* The Problem of Procrastination and Self-control. According to Ariely, there are two states in which we make decisions: hot state, when we are agitated and give in to immediate gratification, and cool state when we are in full possession and control of ourselves, and make rational, long-term decisions. With proper motivation and clear consequences, people would meet their goals, and deadlines, in a cool state.
* The High Price of Ownership. We overvalue what we possess, because the harder we work at something, the more ownership we feel about it. However, we also do not think rationally when it comes to our possessions. To avoid this it would be better to create a barrier between ourselves and the material things we are tempted by.
* The Effect of Expectations. Expectations influence every aspect of our lives, and can even override our senses blinding us to the truth.

Knowing these would help us to re-evaluate our decisions.

In the Upside of Irrationality, Dan Ariely exposes the surprising positive as well as negative effects irrationality has on our lives. He offers insights about what really motivates us professionally, how one unwise action can become a habit, and how we learn to increasingly love those we are with. His research shows that:

* Large bonuses actually make CEO’s less productive
* Confusing directions actually help us
* Revenge is important to us
* There is a difference between what we think will make us happy and what actually, really makes us happy.

He explains how, if we want to make better decisions, we need to break through negative patterns of our thought and behavior. We need to take a good look at ourselves at work and at home, and we need to be aware of the times we indulge in irrational behavior. That is the only way we can change ourselves.

Ariely’s test of how people respond when the meaning of their work is diminished, is referred to as the Sisyphusian condition. According to the solar theory, Sisyphus is the disk of the sun that rises every day in the East and sinks in the West. It is interesting to note that Albert Camus in his essay The Myth of Sisyphus personifies the absurdity of human life. He, however, concludes saying that ‘one must imagine Sisyphus happy’ since “The struggle itself towards the heights is enough to fill a man’s heart.” Ariely’s conclusions of the test are that:

* people work harder when their work seems more meaningful
* people underestimate the relationship between meaning and motivation

Ariely wants people to consider what they might do differently once they understand the way human nature functions. This has an increased significance in the light of the rapid changes that are happening globally, for, change is inevitable. But how we respond to these changes and stay on top has to be clearly thought out. If we leave it to our irrational selves, then the only result professionally and personally is disaster. If we understand the irrational workings of our mind and make deliberate and planned changes, then our growth will be an intentional one with all round benefits.

A wonderful example of Change is Inevitable, Growth is Intentional in the world of business is Actuant. They started small in Milwaukee as American Grinder Manufacturing Company in 1910. They have got to where they are today because of their foresight to reinvent themselves over the years. They acquired new businesses, and shifted their focus to deliver quality products and services to their customers. They found out what their customers wanted and adapted their procedures, systems and products accordingly. An overview proves this:

* 1910 – American Grinder Manufacturing
* 1925 – Blackhawk Manufacturing
* 1961 – Applied Power Industries
* 2000 - Actuant

They made continuous improvements to their business model as and when required. This is evident in:

* the diversity of their products, brands and customers
* philosophy of continuous improvement
* cutting edge manufacturing processes
* global focus

Today, Actuant Corporation is a diversified industrial company with operations in more than 30 countries. They are also well-poised to enter the new century with committed employees, customers and shareholders.

The stress, increasingly, is on knowledge; knowledge of how we function, how businesses and corporations operate, and how to grow in an ever-changing world.

* 1. **Quiet Your Mind and Your Space**

It’s not that I’m so smart, it’s just that I stay with problems longer.

– Einstein

Theresa Amabile, of Harvard and her colleagues conducted a study to see how time pressure in a corporate setting affects creativity. In her own words, they wanted to **‘trap creativity in the wild...’ They asked participants to reveal their activities in Daily Questionnaires throughout the entire project. The** surveys were aimed at monitoring what participants were doing, thus trapping the elusive critter (creature) in action, as it were.

The study revealed that according to conventional thinking imminent deadlines and crisis thinking would lead to more innovative and novel solutions. The power of urgency! But, as Theresa’s colleague Leslie Perlow demonstrated in a 1999 study, a vicious time-work cycle of crisis mentality, rewarding individual heroics, and constant interruption, is considerably less conducive to fostering real creativity and innovation, than good old-fashioned focus and uninterrupted attention.

In Amabile’s study she introduced a mandatory quiet time, followed by collaborative interaction, then another quiet period of work and implementation. Overwhelmingly, the engineers reported a higher level of both productivity and creativity when the strict quiet time was imposed. Sadly, six months after the study concluded quiet time had vanished, and within a year the old habits of constant interruption were back in force.

Quiet time is essential for 4 reasons:

* It is a time for regrouping our thoughts and ideas
* It is a time for refreshing and rejuvenating the mind
* It is a time for ‘incubation’ of our thoughts and ideas
* It is necessary to give the brain a break as it were

Constantly teasing a problem to find a solution only succeeds in complicating the issue. Stepping back puts into, and gives a clearer perspective of the task in hand. Very often when working on a problem or an assignment, there is a tendency to follow the ‘branches’ that crop up. If not careful at this point, one might lose sight of the goal. When members of a team are deeply involved in a project, it is up to the manager to call for time-outs so that they come back to the project in a refreshed state of mind. Maybe new ideas have come up which could be looked at in the context of the task in hand.

Another practice that helps is to keep aside a problem that you have spent a considerable amount of time on, and work on something else. During this time, you could work on something else, preferable unrelated. Solutions for the problem, as also new ideas and thoughts related to the problem, are bound to come into your mind. In effect what you have done is to create a quiet space around your problem.

Getting Things Done (GTD) guru David Allen says that GTD is an effective way to manage commitments, information and communication. It rests on the principle that a person needs to move issues out of the mind by recording them externally. This is done by taking an inventory of all the commitments you have, organizing them systematically, and reviewing them so that you can focus clearly on what needs to be done. This would further help you to make trusted choices about what to do or not do at that given moment. This naturally requires you to step back, and retreat into quiet time.

Then, when the pattern is clear in your mind, the mind is free to concentrate on doing what has to be done. As you start implementing your choices one by one, there is no feeling of being overwhelmed, consequently creative energy is released.

Therese Hoff Macan showed in a 1994 study that although time management training and tools could bring greater satisfaction, contrary to popular claims, time management training was not found to be effective in job performance.

Time management may help in reviewing and prioritizing tasks. Time management may also teach methods and techniques of maximizing productivity, but what has been proved to be really effective in job performance is taking breaks. The one feature that is of utmost importance in today’s global scene is quality. It is quality of thinking, quality of work, and quality of production that is negatively impacted on unless employees fit ‘quiet time’ into their daily schedules. No matter how well-planned your day is, working long periods of time without taking time out for quiet reflection, or just to be quiet is counterproductive to your work. It would be wise to remember that while working, energy is expended, and stress and tension accumulate. Quiet time enforces a change of pace, resulting in self-renewal.

Increasingly, in many corporate houses, employees are encouraged to do yoga or meditate. Just a few minutes are required for this, and employees return to their desks with a rested mind, and feeling more focused and more eager to tackle the work in hand. Quiet time is especially needed when handling difficult and demanding tasks.

People are increasingly experiencing the benefits of quiet time. Corporate heads sometimes lock themselves in their offices for a span of time, and ask that no one disturb them.

It is amazing how much just sitting quiet accomplishes. Besides self-renewal, you can work on something that you have been procrastinating about, or catch up with your favorite hobby. You can dream!

Everyone needs a few minutes alone, whether to think without interruption or to just enjoy the quiet. Quiet spaces are also needed when we need to work without interruption and full concentration.

In April 6, 2008 Careers section of the Boston Globe, writer Maggie Johnson suggests these methods for "hitting the pause button."

* Take breaks in small doses, starting with just a minute or two, till this becomes a habit
* Write small reminders to yourself to stop for a minute or two, and paste it where you can see it
* Keep a no-tech time when you disconnect from the tech world of computer, phone, and all electronic devices.

Here is a Time Management Tip. For just 20 minutes a day, make it a HABIT to:

* Read something unconnected with your work
* Go for a brisk walk/work out
* Do yoga
* Meditate
* Reflect
* Tend a plant
* Empty your mind

Bring back quiet time, and uninterrupted work. How we spend our day is how we spend our life. We are the sum of what we pay attention to. What we focus our attention on determines our skill, experience, knowledge, amusement, fulfillment, and joy.

* 1. **Make Innovation Accessible**

Management expert Gary Hamel believes that over the next few years we are going to see a revolution in management; a revolution just as profound as the revolution in management that gave birth to the industrial age. One of the primary influencing factors is the compounding rapidity of change we’re facing. Product innovation and speed-to-market lifecycles are compressing.

The 2 areas which have to be made innovation-ready are:

* The organization
* The members of the organization (all levels)
* The organization

In order to stay competitive, even relevant, organizations need to start constructing environments which allow product and service innovation to emerge organically. It is simply not possible to perform competitively in a tiered command-and-control manner any longer.  To be sure, seismic change efforts marshaled by Ed Zander of Motorola or Anne Mulcahy at Xerox, are indeed awe-inspiring. Remarkable corporate turn-arounds have historically been about executing on steely-eyed vision. However, this is not the kind of change that will bring lasting and sustainable competitive advantage.

The kind of culture needed to foster sustainable creativity and engagement starts with something Hamel calls “management innovation.” In his book, The Future of Management, he sets out an agenda for management in the 21st century. His blueprint for building companies is:

*As nimble as change itself,*

*Innovative from top to bottom, and*

*Awe-inspiring places to work.*

Then the process, product, and business architectures that create lasting competitive advantage start to emerge naturally.

The advantages of management innovation are seen when the innovation is:

* Founded on a novel management principle which questions and challenges some long-standing orthodoxy
* Systemic and includes a range of processes and methods
* Part of an on-going program where progress increases due to increases invention

It is also necessary to understand that the seismic changes we are seeing, and which are showing no signs of slowing down, are testing the resilience of individuals, organizations and societies. The good thing is that these changes and disturbances are creating both opportunities as well as challenges. This is where ‘Adapt or die’ comes in. Adapting to the changing scenario, will help organizations make the most of the challenges and opportunities. The option is not attractive.

The human qualities that modern management has to foster and reward are self-discipline, economy, prudence, orderliness, rationality, reliability, moderation, and fastidiousness. Matt May, recognized expert on change, innovation and design strategy talks about the importance of creating environments where people come not just to do their own work, but rather to improve the work of the organization.

Taking a cue from IDEO, some of these design principles can be incorporated into the workflow of the organization:

* Encourage wild ideas
* Build on the ideas of other people (look far afield)
* Share thoughts and opinions
* Be visual
* Do one thing at a time
* Stay focused
* Think quality

In 2006, Starbucks, Southwest, IKEA, and eBay all ranked among Business Week’s top 25. Four years later, none of these companies reached those heights. The reason? As they grew, these industry revolutionaries stopped innovating, even while remaining well-run companies.

Millions can be pumped into an organization, but if there is no innovation, then those organizations will never get to the top.

The workplace has to be designed to induce and stimulate genius.

* The members of the organization (all levels):

Matt May believes that innovation has to be made accessible at all levels of the organization. He demystifies common descriptors about innovation being incremental or evolutionary or breakthrough, and instead prefers defining innovation as simply doing something better than it’s been done before. This is what has to fuel everyone. Hamel adds to this by observing that you have to look far beyond today’s ‘best practices’. Employees have to be encouraged to look at unexpected places; for positive deviants.

In his bestseller The Shibumi State Matt May tells the story of Andy Harmon. Harmon is a hardworking family man who finds himself in a crisis when his company closes. The book is about how Harmon learns subtle Zen principles and understands that it is very often setbacks and trials that have within them the power to transform. Transfer these same thoughts to a company that is reflecting the seismic changes happening in the world. The challenges that these changes pose, also bring opportunities that have within them the seeds of renewal and transformation. All members of an organization, no matter at which level, can interpret this concept and fit it to themselves and their situation, thereby creating meaningful changes in their lives. Since you cannot compartmentalize the personal and professional areas of your life, it is inevitable that change in one will influence change in the other. This helps employees bring their whole selves (integer) into their work. The Shibumi State helps in navigating transitions that may be difficult if not traumatic, in taking decisions about changing direction, and in ‘growing up’ in spite of internal and external setbacks.

Organizations and individuals have to accept the fact that the conventional ways of doing things and rigidity in thinking only act as roadblocks, and harmful, destructive roadblocks at that.

Looking at some of the successful companies today, you see that they all have charismatic leaders; leaders who can inspire, motivate, and make possible. They:

* refuse to limit themselves to one strategy or one plan
* have firmly planted the idea of and insist on constant and continuous renewal

Amazon is a case in point. From being an online bookseller, has now become a web services powerhouse. Google has added a host of online services to its core competency. So too with Apple.

To be relevant and effective, leaders have to constantly renew themselves. They have to reorder their priorities, question orthodox and conventional thinking, and reassess their lifelong habits. And all within the company’s broader goals and values. In turn they have to facilitate and encourage bold, radical, out-of-the-box, or in-a-different-area-of-the-right-box thinking.

Managers of various departments in an organization have not lost their relevance. But their role has changed. Now they are required to:

* encourage creativity, radical thinking and innovation
* coordinate individual efforts so that they are aligned
* know how to build effective teams
* nurture the members of the team
* define the challenge clearly
* keep the objectives and goals of the project, and the goals of the organization within sight

There is one more area to be considered in order to make innovation accessible. Often there is human creativity, and there are also resources, so what then is the stumbling block for innovation? It could be that:

* Employees have not undergone training as innovators (to be able to sift through all that the mind throws up is as important as having an open mind)
* Employees do not have access to industry insights as well as customer insights
* There are too many bureaucratic procedures (maybe lingering red-tape, but red-tape nevertheless)
* There is no explicit understanding of the goals of the organization
* There is no accountability
* There is no mentoring by managers
* Performance is not linked with reward
* The metrics for tracking innovation have not been clearly thought out or implemented

**An example of complete conversion from orthodoxy to renewal is Whirlpool Corporation, Benton Harbor, MI. This organization re-crafted all its management systems and processes. The value of their methods of innovation increased from almost zero to more than $4 billion. Nancy Snyder, VP for innovation has given detailed guidelines for ‘how to’ in her book Unleashing Innovation.**

Since it is very much within the realm of possibility to create the right environment, innovation *is* accessible and achievable at all levels of the organization.

* 1. **Borrowing Brilliance**

In an interview with pro-blogger and marketing guru David Meerman Scott, I asked him, why my blog readers do not comment that often?  He said I probably wasn’t saying incendiary or controversial things, which is fine considering what I was trying to accomplish. What I’m really trying to achieve is the sharing of the insights and concepts of those with leading ideas.

To my post “Einstein: The secret to creativity is hiding your source“, I received some notes, and even a few comments on Facebook to the effect that I had lost my mind.  My favorite was author and innovation guru Stephen Lundin who wrote simply “Say what?!”  I’m quite certain when Malcolm Gladwell said in his New Yorker review that Chris Anderson was wrong in his book on Freeconomics. Then Seth Godin blogged that Malcolm was wrong. They needed email filters to manage the deluge! Tim Sanders recently posted a nice piece of advice that our digital footprint may need constant pruning.

I appreciate David Murray’s book, Borrowing Brilliance, because it helps to heighten our awareness that all great ideas are built on the shoulders of giants. It is a wonderful work dedicated to understanding that the current ideas recognized as original thought are, in fact, built on the strength of those before, who have, in turn, iterated on previous thought. We are all iterating on the great works of those before us, so beware those who claim pure original thought.

Here is a quote to celebrate the great history of innovation we are constantly building upon.

The secret to creativity is knowing how to hide your sources.  – Albert Einstein

Apart from Einstein’s brilliance, he was famous for his wit. This quote of his is pure tongue-in-cheek:

“Whoever undertakes to set himself up as a judge of Truth and Knowledge is shipwrecked by the laughter of the gods.”

One of my favorite TED talks is by writer Elizabeth Gilbert, author of Eat Pray, Love. In this particular talk, she suggests that the current culture favors identifying individuals as Geniuses. Yet the etymology of genius is from Latin, meaning a guardian spirit or deity who watches over each person from birth and can, at times, emerge to influence the person’s works of art or labor.  Since ‘genius’ was a disembodied spirit, the author had no total claim over the quality or originality of the finished work.  Elizabeth likes this idea because it reinforces our mortality and fallibility, and to be elevated to the status of being a genius is an intolerable burden.

So what exactly is borrowing brilliance? It is a creative thinking technique.

Once you accept this as a given fact, you can go on from there. Your creativity becomes deliberate and intentional. Ideas give you your starting point, and maybe even the material, but that is not enough.

A word about ideas. Karl Popper, the scientific philosopher, claims that all knowledge begins from an observation. For instance, it was the observation of a rock rolling down a hill that gave the idea for a wheel. Ideas therefore are borrowed from observations as well. The plain and simple fact is that we all borrow ideas. We copy or even steal from competitors, co-workers, friends, children, friends of our children, to give a few examples. Murray goes on to say that this is the core technique. All creative thought comes from this. You have to construct something new from this, and build on it.

As we examine the ideas we borrow, we need to look at them from all angles. It would not be out of place to say that we have to be skeptical about the ideas that we have in front of us. We have to understand their weaknesses, so that we can develop them. The creative process is an evolutionary one, and the mechanism used to take it forward is judgment. Further, the value of an idea lies in its practicality, and whether it can be implemented. The best thing is that as you implement your idea, you will see that it evolves, because you are using the tools of skepticism and judgment, and are not accepting things at face value. You are questioning the validity of the idea and its usefulness, and whether it is needed and will enhance what you are doing.

Murray goes on to say that a great idea has its implementation built into it. It may not be obvious immediately, but as you work the idea, it becomes apparent.

The creative process therefore begins with the problem. The issues at hand have to be identified and understood. Then defined and re-defined. This is the crux of it. The problem has to be clearly laid out. The phrases used in defining the problem are important because they offer leads to ideas. The lucid defining of the problem forms the foundation on which to build your idea. If the problem is not defined the right way or is ill-conceived, then the solution too will be badly conceived. This is because as you study the problem, you realize the materials that you need. The problem also determines the criteria by which you are going to judge the ideas that you find as well as the ideas that evolve as you go along. If the perception of these is wrong, then the solution will not fit.

Once this is done, you look around for places which had similar problems, and see how the problem was solved in those situations. Thus, you are casting about for solutions, and you need to think far, think radical and think wild. The place you borrow from will determine the outcome of your creativity. For instance, if you are a software engineer and you have a problem, besides looking at other software designers, look at other professions. In other words, you start with your competitors, then look at other industries, and finally look outside the business altogether. See how they solve similar problems and study how each of these diverse people solved the problem. You’re sure to find kernels among these which when you connect and combine them, will grow into your own unique idea for a solution to the problem. It is a matter of building on the idea.

The evolution of the creative idea then follows a course of:

* Incubation: when you allow all the ideas to incubate
* Judging: when you identify the strengths and weaknesses
* Enhancing: when you eliminate the weak points and enhance only the strong ones

Keep in mind that there is nothing magical about the process of creative thinking. Creative thinkers have many failures. These have to be taken as pointers, and then there will be no looking back.

Brilliance is, and has always been borrowed. It is the law of cerebral physics.

In 1971 Ray Tomlinson was working on ARPANET and mashed up terminal networks with an existing application that allowed users on the same terminal system to share messages.  He wrote a script that allowed messages to distinguish between different machines and jump from one to another.  Bill Gates got the idea for Windows from Apple’s graphical user interface (GUI).  And Charles Darwin’s Origin of the Species didn’t arrive fully formed from the cosmic muse. The ideas were germinating from the influence of his grandfather Erasmus Darwin, who wrote The Laws of Organic Life in 1796, in which he suggested that sexual behavior and competition might affect species change.

Why is Steve Jobs so respected and revered? What sets him apart? The answer to these questions is: his ability for innovation, his ability to lead, and very specifically, his ability to recognize a good idea. In the 1980s, he saw a demonstration of the mouse and GUI (graphical user interface). He recognized it as the perfect combination for a personal computer. The result: Mac. In the 1990s, he saw a demonstration of a new animation software program developed by George Lucas and his company. He bought the company. The Result: he combined the software with storytelling, created Pixar and the first computer-animated film “Toy Story”. Ten years ago he saw the first MP3 player. What did he do? He combined it with an integrated website, ITunes and with cutting edge design from Jonathan Ive created the IPod.

While everyone cannot be a Steve Jobs, we can consciously try to develop these techniques. By being optimistic about new ideas, and at the same time pessimistic as we view it from different angles, we finally get to what is our own special creative idea.

According to Jonas Salk, the inventor of the polio vaccine, ‘Intuition will tell the thinking mind where to look next’.

* 1. **Bring on Type-Ts**

Type-T is a phrase coined by Frank Farley, University of Wisconsin, in the early 1990s. It describes people who seek out and participate in higher risk activities, and succeed because of these efforts. We all need heroes. We draw our inspiration from them. We may not hit the headlines, but we will certainly tap the potential that is probably hidden deep within, to get the most out of ourselves.

Frank Farley has a model we can all follow. He calls it his “5-D” model of greatness.

* The first D – Determinants. These are 6 character traits that capture the essence of heroism. Naturally, everyone cannot have all of them, but everyone can try to cultivate them.
* Courage and strength. Heroes:
* Are not cowards. They do not give up
* Remain calm
* Never lose their equanimity. They thrive in adverse physical, psychological, mental, emotional conditions/situations
* Honesty. There is no place for any kind of deceit: cheating, dishonesty, duplicity, insincerity or fraud in any aspect of our lives
* Kind, loving, generous. By all means fight, and fight fiercely for what you believe, but then afterwards be compassionate, generous, and big-hearted to friend and foe alike. About kindness, this is from Henry James: *Three things in human life are important. The first is to be kind. The second is to be kind. And the third is to be kind*
* Skill, expertise, intelligence. There is no such thing as happenstance. There is no substitute, either, for hard work to develop skills and expertise in your area of work. There are metrics for measuring intelligence, but there is no stopping a mind that is eager to learn and know all he can, especially of fields far removed from his own; to develop the powers of reasoning.
* Risk-taking. There are people who love taking chances and experimenting just for the happiness and pleasure it affords them. There are others who for the sake of their beliefs and values are willing and unafraid to take risks, and place their lives in jeopardy. There are still others who will not take risks in their own life, but admire risk-takers.
* Objects of Affection. Heroes win people’s hearts and minds. Mere admiration is not enough.
* The second D – Depth. This is that timeless quality: profundity. This quality sifts out the heroes from the celebrities, and the true heroes from the passing heroes. Depth in a person is something we instinctively feel. Depth is illustrated by a mind that is:
* Erudite
* Well-informed
* Thorough
* Positive
* Enlightened
* The third D – Domain. This is the field in which the hero makes his mark. The various domains are: politics, entertainers, family, religious people, the armed forces, and the fields of science, sports and arts. People are very quick to see if their heroes are open to bribes, or make monetary demands for something as innocent as signing an autograph, or are doing what they do only for the money.
* The fourth D – Database. This is Farley’s term for sources from where we can get information about those we admire. While the media gives us the information we are looking for, the place which ideally should talk about heroes are schools. Heroes who changed the world should be role models for children. Their lives need to be studied, so that children learn that these are ordinary people who did extraordinary things and were extraordinary people. Ways to change the world need not be violent. In fact it is the non-violent ways that really change the world.
* The fifth D – Distance. Heroes do not live on some distant planet. They are very real people living in our very real individual worlds. Could be Mom and Dad, or could be a favorite teacher, or a historical figure who impacts on our culture, and whose ways and thoughts are relevant even today.

Since we are responsible for the generation that comes after us, we need to ensure that these Ds are fostered and nurtured in them.

There are people who, if they avoid self-destructive Icarus behaviors (think Keith Moon, Janis Joplin, Howard Hughes, though each in their own right redefined music and entrepreneurialism before flaming out), go on to invent cars, build businesses, construct new surgical techniques, and much more. Big-T people like Erik Weihenmeyer or Richard Branson redefine our understanding of the limits of possibility, while creating businesses, inspiring people, and building jobs and value.

An entrepreneur who is a hero today is Mark Zuckerberg. Inventor of Facebook, Zuckerberg was voted *Time* magazine’s 2010 Person of the Year, for ‘connecting more than half a billion people and mapping the social relations among them (something that has never been done before). Zuckerberg has shown that it is not enough to take risks or be achievement-oriented. It also means learning techniques and approaches for identifying, creating and evaluating opportunities. It also involves being able to transform resources and build an effective team. Entrepreneurship can take place in any context. According to Candida G. Brush, Professor and Chair, Entrepreneurship Division, Babson College, U.S., ‘entrepreneurship is a mindset’.

Type-Ts aren’t always about more, faster, higher, but also about reinventing and redefining the how, which leads to invention. Type-Ts are our primary Creators.

Did you know 52% of the IT start-ups in Silicon Valley and 25% of all new business in the U.S. are created by foreign-born nationals like Indians, Pakistanis, Chinese, Vietnamese, and other people from around the world? They have been coming to the U.S. for decades for the promise of education and entrepreneurialism. They have earned science, engineering, and math degrees, and created a tremendous amount of U.S. jobs, inventions, and competitive wealth. Recently, the U.S. has sharply limited the number of H1b visas, granted to foreign-born applicants, from 200,000 to 65,000. Currently there is a waiting line of over 1 million applicants. There is no guarantee, though, of being granted a visa. Applicants may still be turned down for a job from leading U.S.-based multinationals due to some newly instituted policies favouring the hiring of domestic U.S. citizens.

The world is changing and if we persist in this xenophobic manner, we will alienate some of the very best and brightest Type-T talent from around the world, eager to bring their energy and intellect to bear in the U.S., to create wealth, jobs, opportunity, and innovation.

Labor and innovation can be sourced anywhere. In fact, in this age of increasing interdependence, where countries impact on each other, collaboration is absolutely essential if solutions to world problems are to be found.

It would not be out of place in this context to mention InnoCentive. This is an organization whose Global Solver Network finds new and innovative solutions to world issues and problems. They have realized that the need of the hour is new ways of thinking to deal with the challenges that organizations face; tap as many diverse minds as possible for solutions, so that you can avail of the best ones. Crowdsourced innovation is the next concept to be used in problem solving. Some projects where InnoCentive has brought the best minds together are:

* A challenge by Scientists Without Borders to find solutions to combat the critical malnutrition problem of folic acid deficiency in women of child-bearing age in developing countries of the world.
* A challenge posed by Toyota where customers are invited to find new, non-automotive applications for 5 Toyota technologies.

It is imperative to encourage innovation and entrepreneurialism to burgeon in the U.S. We need to attract the brightest minds, and find ways of retaining them instead of creating motivators/situations that will make them take their best ideas back home to China, India, Brazil, Eastern Europe and beyond. When the best young minds leave they don’t just take their bank accounts, but also their energy, creativity and value-creating capacities that create jobs and prosperity. We need to, in our own best interests, remain open, embrace intellectual diversity, and participate in the collaborate effort.

The division of the world, because of the seismic changes and the direction in which the world is moving, is not going to be based on the boundaries of nations, but between those who refuse to recognize and adapt to change, and those who accept change as a challenge and work out creative and innovative solutions to deal with all the issues that change causes/brings.

* 1. **Inspiration Favors a Prepared Mind**

I was reminded of a story Stephen Lundin shared with me a while back. On the 18th hole of the British Open a few years ago, Gary Player was mired 8 feet deep in a greenside bunker without even a view of the flag. From this preposterous position he opened the clubface and pitched the ball straight up over the wall. After bouncing twice, it rolled into the hole. As he approached the flag to retrieve his ball a fan yelled out, “Hey Gary, you gotta admit that was a pretty lucky shot.” Gary replied, “Yes, but I find the more I practice, the luckier I get.”

I read an article recently about Malcolm Gladwell, who was answering a question from an awed audience member. He said, “I know it may not look like this. But it’s all scripted. I write down every word and then I learn it off by heart. I do that with all my talks, and I’ve got lots of them.” Nick Morgan, a gifted speaker and mentor to aspiring speakers, said much the same thing in a rebuttal to Seth Godin. He said that essentially, to be able to perform in the moment, you can’t ‘psych yourself up’ but need to prepare diligently for each engagement.

Think of the same analogy in preparing your business plan. Jeff Joerres, CEO of Manpower, is a strong proponent of job training and workforce development initiatives. He likens developing employees at the point of execution of a project to training pilots after taking delivery of the airplanes. He advises a more strategic workforce development plan, in which we grow our people now, and always for tomorrow’s challenges.

Training and preparing people for the job they have to do, makes sense from a business development standpoint. It also makes sense from an engagement standpoint. Remember, people innately want to learn and grow, and the greater opportunity we provide, the more likely people will stay on the bus.

Jorres also believes that the modern labor market is truly global. Very often, bright people may not have the skills for a particular job opening. They may, though, have all the other qualities including right attitude, adaptability, keen interest in learning, and desire to take on problems. He feels that with training they will prove to be assets to the company. Further, their contribution to the economy of the country cannot be entirely disregarded.

In line with the preparedness of prospective employees, Manpower is working with technical education institutions to make sure that individuals learn the skills needed to be a part of the global workforce. Unemployment is a serious issue. There are also many people whose skills are not relevant today. In fact, there are not enough people with the right skills in the right place. It is important that new skills are taught and developed so that these people can become contributing, productive members of society. This can be done by employing people and training them, and also by building a talent pool, so that they can be moved to where the demand is.

That there is no alternative to the prepared mind is borne out by this statement by Louis Pasteur, 19th century scientist. He said that “Chance favors the prepared mind”. It was only Pasteur’s prepared mind that helped him accomplish so much; from studies of crystallization and fermentation, to his work with germs and micro-organisms.

The prepared mind is what characterizes the 21st century person, no matter which rung of an organization he/she is on. Broadly speaking, the prepared leader knows what he is looking for, takes informed decisions, and simplifies the most complex conditions in order to take clear action. There cannot be too many unknowns in any given situation. Since preparedness of mind is within our control, this is what we should concentrate on. The rest could then be handled.

The prepared mind is not a matter of chance. It is a matter of resolution and intention.

Work environments are becoming dynamic. There is plenty of opportunity for growth. There is no one single right way; there are many ways, new ways, and innovative ways. But the mind has to have the necessary skills to be able to take these challenges on. For instance, the one most important skill required in the global world is to know the English language. There is so much talent in the non-English speaking parts of the world. If they are taught the language, imagine how much they would be able to contribute to the world economy. It is the same for technology. If basic skills can be learnt, they soon become a platform and growth can be exponential. Preparedness added to raw talent is a powerful combination. People who learn skills also learn the art and necessity of being patient. This is a necessary quality for any kind of success. People who learn skills are also not afraid of going beyond their boundaries and job descriptions to experiment and take risks. A prepared mind understands the importance of practice. When you know that it is only your state of preparedness that will ensure your place in a highly competitive world, you will make sure that you practice the skill that you have learnt so that you also learn all its nuances; all that it has to offer; all that it can lead to. Learning to prepare is such a valuable skill in itself, that it removes all fear of failure and builds fantastic self-confidence. You are not afraid to take on any task, simply because you have the tools to get yourself ready and fully prepared for the task.

Broadly speaking, there are 8 skills needed to prepare the mind:

* Study. Alertness and awareness are a part of observation. It is observation that will give us the information that we need. A problem or an issue has to be studied from all possible angles. This means that we have to open our minds, clear out all mental blocks, be alert and aware and allow information to flow in. This is not the time for sifting information. All possible information has to be garnered through observation and study.
* Reasoning. You have to make sure that you have right as well as workable answers to the question ‘Why?’. Questioning the information you have will help in getting the answers you need for your specific problem.
* Imagination. This is of the essence. Since there are no boundaries to your imagination, giving free rein to your imagination will help in freeing the mind to seek solutions from the most unlikely of sources, and see solutions where there seemed to be none.
* Challenging assumptions. Never accept anything at face value. The validity of all assumptions has to be tested thoroughly and then established. That is the only way the weak links and flaws will come to light. Mid-course corrections are easier to do rather than have an entire project trashed just because we took some point for granted, or assumed that this was the only way. In fact we can never take assumptions to be the truth. The greatest danger is when we assume something based on incomplete data, and establish that as a fact for a future decision or action.
* Decision-making. Employees either have to take decisions, or actively contribute in a team decision making process. Decisions lead to action, and there cannot be any progress without action. To take decisions, the mind has to have all the data possible, relevant, and irrelevant.
* Acquisition of knowledge and Learning. Your state of readiness depends on your knowledge and your learning. You are where you are today because of this. More knowledge and more learning will open many more doors and opportunities. Learning and gaining knowledge also helps us to assess what we know. It helps us keep up with the times, and on top of our work. It helps in forming perceptions. It widens and broadens our mental horizons.
* Creation of an enabling environment. Everyone works better in an enabling environment. While organizations have to create an enabling environment, employees need to know what kind of environment will draw the best out of them.
* Reflection. This is where quiet time comes in. A time for reflection is an absolute must. It is not only necessary for rejuvenation, but also for gathering our resources, aligning our thinking, allowing thoughts to incubate, and refreshing and renewing our mind.

A state of preparedness is the basic requisite for inspiration. If your mind is a prepared mind, then you will know how to use all the ideas that flow around you. You will be ready for that ‘click’!

* 1. **Medicine is for the people, only after will profits follow**

We try never to forget that medicine is for the people.  It is not for profits.  The profits follow, and if we have remembered that, they never fail to appear.

– George Merck II

In 1995 CEO Ray Gilmartin described the principle driver for Merck as growth. Not profitability, not cutting edge scientific breakthroughs, nor medicinal innovation or R&D… No... But... Growth.

That intent continued into 2000 when the chairman’s letter to shareholders stated, “As a company, Merck is totally focused on growth.” Merck had good reason to believe it could, in fact, accomplish this goal. They were on the cusp of releasing the FDA-approved and PTO-patented drug Vioxx.  By 2002, Vioxx sales worldwide approached 2.5 billion, which, weighed against a 25 billion company represented significant growth indeed. But in the same time period studies were finding an alarming relationship between Vioxx and an increase in ‘cardiovascular thrombotic events’: heart attacks and strokes.

In 2008 the New York Times published an article revealing that research papers on Vioxx were often ghost written by Merck writers and then published under the byline of prestigious doctors and scientists. This was done in an effort to substantiate the value and public perception of Merck and Vioxx.  By early 2005 the FDA had officially attributed up to 139,000 deaths to Vioxx. Unofficial estimates ranged upwards of 250,000 globally, although statistics are difficult to gather in developing nations.

And while Gilmartin, laudably, ordered Merck to voluntarily remove Vioxx from the market in the fall of 2004, sending Merck’s stock from $45 to $33, one must wonder if Merck’s goal in the product Vioxx served the vision of George Merck II. Jim Collins reminds us in **How the Mighty Fall** that the pursuit of profit over value and of growth over service can destroy even the mightiest of companies.

As it always happens when there is a disaster, organizations, and countries have to accept and face unpleasant and unhappy facts. In the case of Merck, the question was: how much truth is there in what is supposed to be legitimate research conducted by the pharmaceutical industry. Merck had to acknowledge that it hired outside medical writers to draft the research reports before getting doctors to sign their name to these reports. This in itself is a direct violation of ethics in medicine. The results, very naturally therefore, were damning.

Often the marketing division of organizations too put their finger in and ‘suggest’ that certain phrases and results be included so that the copy *looks* authentic. This kind of marketing strategy, based on untruths or half-truths can never pay in the long term. Even though there may be short term gains, the damage in the long term cancels and counters all the gains.

Medicine has to be for the benefit of people’s lives, and not for profit. The truth is that if medicine, i.e, medical practices and essential medicines are made accessible to people, the profits will follow. The only thing is that these profits are not instant. But, they do happen. Mr. Eli Siegel, American philosopher, in a series of lectures, as far back as May, 1970 explained that the world model where profit economics became the order of the day, and where the goods and services that people need in order to live, are controlled by private organizations, could not work any longer. According to Siegel, the profit system is based on contempt. His definition: the addition to self through the lessening of something else. Ellen Reiss, of Aesthetic Realism goes on to say, ‘Once you are after profit, you can’t be too interested in what people deserve…it will cramp your ability to make money from them.’ And further, ’Economics has to be different from what has been in the world before. It has to be in keeping with the justice to people as described in our Declaration of Independence and Constitution’.

One of the young idealists invited to ‘give the talk of their lives’, at the 1st Annual Terry talks conference at UBC, on 22 November 2008, was Mike Gretes. He spoke passionately about the importance, and very real need to make sure that the medicines developed at universities be made accessible and affordable to people worldwide. Mike envisions ‘essential medicines messenger’ disseminating information about the accessibility of medicines. According to WHO, ‘Essential medicines are those that satisfy the priority health care needs of the population. They are selected with due regard to public health relevance, evidence on efficacy and safety and comparative cost-effectiveness.’ These medicines are intended to be available ‘at all times, in adequate amounts, in the appropriate dosage forms, with assured quality and adequate information, and at a price that the individual and community can afford’.

This says it all, and yet the inequities are striking. In developing countries, even today, a full course of antibiotics costs so much that either the patient’s family gets only a few tablets, or none at all. In fact:

* How many people can afford medical insurance: Adults, children and the elderly?
* How many can afford good hospital care?
* How many get any kind of medical compensation from their places of work?
* How many elderly people can afford basic medical care?
* How many of the older population have access, at all, to medical care and medicines?

Among many other countries, medical inequities are based on:

* Gender
* Race, and overall insurance coverage based on race
* Minorities
* Socioeconomic status. Those who have low status have low insurance coverage and less access to health care. Further, they may be in jobs which do not have any health or benefit plans

This goes to show that medical care is a social, public and national responsibility.

A big question is: are there enough drugs, or have they been pulled out of the market, on economic considerations. Drug companies usually charge outrageous prices, claiming that they need to cover the costs research and development.

Is it surprising then, that there is growing outrage against the entire medical industry (including the pharmaceutical industry) as people increasingly feel that they are being viewed as a means of profit.

One shining example of health care to the uninsured is the Casa de Salud, the ‘House of Health’. It is a family health care clinic which has been providing low cost, high quality health care for Duke City, for over 5 years. The medical professionals who work here are aiming to raise $400,000 so that they can expand their services, which integrate acupuncture, Reiki and nutritional guidance with Western, Eastern and traditional medicine, and care for more people.

Every person deserves full health coverage, including pharmaceuticals, from birth at affordable prices! The profits will follow. If the profit motive is against the health and well-being of people, it needs to be examined.

One way in which organizations can ensure good health among their employees is to offer free medical check-ups. The cost of expensive medicines, if required, could be subsidized. There fall-out: A healthy and loyal workforce.

Medical institutions have always been seen as charitable, non-profit establishments. However there are:

* Medical institutions that are exclusively for profit, and may even have hospital chains. There is no place for ‘nonprofitable’ patients, here.
* Medical institutions that use their large profit margin to help those who cannot pay the full fee
* Medical institutions that are purely non-profit organizations
* Medical institutions that refuse to do any work in R&D saying it is not profitably viable
* Medical institutions that though non-profit, do a lot of research, but are in dire need of funding if they are to stay afloat and continue their work

People should not have to choose between the cost of medicines and the cost of food

Merck’s lesson then and now is: remember the core vision and values, money will follow