Part One
Covid Book Series

Coming Down the MOUNTAIN

Coming out of this crisis STRONGER!

TRANSEARCH
YOUR WORLD PARTNER IN EXECUTIVE SEARCH

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ORXESTRA® INC.

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The TRANSEARCH
COVID BOOK SERIES

Welcome to the TRANSEARCH Covid Book Series. **Part One**, *Coming Down the Mountain*, looks at how to come out of this crisis stronger.

Recognising, as we move forward, how important organization culture is, **Part Two** outlines the *Culture Conversation*. **Part Three** explores the need for leadership agility and what that implies: *Leadership Agility and Learning – The Way of the Dolphin*. Drawing on the reality that tomorrow's organization will be a team of teams, **Part Four** examines what it means to be an outstanding team: *Great Organizations Are Made Up of Great Teams*. **Part Five** moves beyond leadership as a philosophy and drills down into essential skills – *When the Trees Get Bigger and the Forest Gets Deeper, It's Time to Sharpen Your Saw*.

The Organization That Got Us Here Ain't Going To Get Us Where We Need To Be

COVID-19 has cast a lasting shadow on our lives. At no time during the past hundred years has mankind been made to appear so mortal. And yet, the immediacy of this terrible scourge masks a different kind of human drama. One that has not been fully played out. One that has profound implications for our economic well-being.

Part of that backstory is to recognise that we are living "the new normal." Not sometime in the future. Now! And at the heart of that muted narrative? The organization that got us here ain't going to get us where we need to be. Not even halfway. In that beginnings start with endings, we need to first understand how we got here. The twentieth century was a hinge in history. It opened with the horse and closed with jet travel.

We accumulated more knowledge, gained greater progress and introduced more innovation than the combined history of mankind up to that point. We also did more damage to the planet than collectively had all those who had gone before.

The engine that moved the developed world from poverty at the beginning of the century to the extraordinary standard of living we currently enjoy was the, so-called, "modern organization." Hierarchical, control-dominated and ideally suited to a slowly unfolding world (built to last) it may have been but it created unprecedented wealth.

The dilemma? Breakthrough technology, uncertainty and the unprecedented and ever-increasing speed of change demand an organization that is a fit for the challenges of

the 21st century. We are describing not just a better, but a very different kind of way to operate. An organization built to change; one where disruption, agility and speed of learning dominate the leadership conversation.

Which brings us to the COVID-19 crisis. A crisis has three stages. Stage one: acceptance. Stage two: survival. Stage three: growth. And the winners will be? Those who do come out of this crisis stronger.

In a business environment where speed of learning is, arguably, the only sustainable competitive advantage, how you learn is more important than what you learn. No less significant, the learning approach taken now will set the stage for what is to come. Fall behind and the probability is you will stay behind.

All learning starts with an experience. Because we are "programmed" to seek meaning in our lives, a new experience provokes a question. The quality of the question, in turn, determining the richness of the learning. The resulting learning unfolds in one of three ways. Each stage of learning representing not only deeper but exponentially, faster learning.

Simple learning equates to doing what you have always done, but better. "We discovered that technologies such as Zoom are a great way to connect with our current and potential customers. As a result, outside of key accounts, we will incorporate video links into our sales process."

Learning how to learn is exemplified by addressing a central business issue. "We need to totally revamp the supply chain. We got through this crisis but we are clearly less agile than we need to be."

Learning how to learn, limited only by the imagination of those involved is, fundamentally, about transformation. Reinventing the business such that it creates value in a world where the benchmark of success is being strong enough to weather the unexpected and agile enough to take advantage of it. That's exactly how new market entrants will play the game.

Recognising that future business success depends on preparing all aspects of the business for a very different tomorrow ... then, "If not now, when?" Finally, in that the genesis of leadership excellence lies in **self-awareness**, "What are you doing personally to come out of this crisis stronger?"

CONTENT

Coming Down the Mountain

The Three Stages of Crisis

Some time ago I had lunch with a young woman who had recently climbed Mount Everest. I asked her an entirely predictable question, "What did you learn from climbing the world's highest peak?" With a totally deadpan face she responded, "Absolutely nothing!" And then, with a broad smile, she added, "Anything I learned occurred as I came down the mountain." Our ensuing discussion focused on the reality that in the midst of "crisis" there is no time for reflection – and without reflection there can be no learning.

There are three stages to a crisis.

- Stage one: Acceptance – shock, denial, coming to terms with the new reality.

- Stage two: Survival – pulling the needed resources together and navigating through the crisis.

- Stage three: Growth – thinking about the business differently. How do we come out of the crisis stronger?

That there are three distinct stages doesn't mean that they are necessarily sequential. While the main body of the organization is working its way through crisis it makes perfect sense to create an "away team."[1] A splinter group charting the course the organization should take as it comes down the mountain. A small sub-group focused on how to come out of this once in one-hundred-year-crisis better equipped than before.

Letting Go of Our Past

In that beginnings start with endings,[2] it's essential to understand how we got here. The recent evolution of the organization is, for the most part, an American story. At the opening of the last century, we inherited a way to think about the organization drawn from the American Civil War and the construction of the Transcontinental Railroad – the two nineteenth-century, large-scale organizations indelibly imprinted on the American psyche. That said, even Henri Fayol, a French mining engineer (1841-1925) and often described as the founder of the modern management method, used the army as his basic model for management (Planning, Organizing, Commanding, Co-ordinating, Controlling).

Thus, we entered the twentieth century with an organization model where hierarchy (decision-making in the hands of the few), control (the worker was not to be trusted);[3] and stability ("built to last" and not "built to change") defined the way forward. Profitability – replaced later in the century by shareholder value – being the only true measure of success.

It was, nevertheless, a century of accomplishment, advancement, acquisition, abundance and, in organization terms, no little financial adventure. In the first part of the century, ownership and management were recognised as being quite different; scientific management made further inroads (Taylorism/efficiency); the assembly line (Ford) brought with it mass production; the multi-divisional organization was born (Alfred P. Sloan); and we were introduced to collective bargaining.

Following WW2, we made major strides in better understanding the symbiotic relationship between the team and technology in the workplace;[4] were introduced to strategic planning; launched the matrix organization; through Peter Drucker, discovered management as a

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1   An away team was a team of specialised starship or star base crew members assembled to perform special missions, as per *Star Trek*, created by Gene Roddenberry.
2   Source: William Bridges
3   Even today, the performance management approach employed by many organizations is still more about the "normal distribution curve" than it is about purpose, engagement, ongoing coaching and matching capability with opportunity.
4   The research described was sponsored by the National Coal Board in the UK and focused initially on the coalfields of Yorkshire. Ken Bamforth and Eric Trist's studies at Haighmoor convinced them that there were viable (and better!) alternatives to those that were typical of mid-twentieth century workplaces. Those managing in today's hi-tech environment would benefit greatly from visiting this research.

discipline; and saw General Motors introduce the concept of Quality of Work Life.[5]

Towards the end of the century, we witnessed the flattening of the organization; the introduction of quality circles, Six Sigma, Kaizen, Muda, etc.; and the birth of the process organization – and with it the realisation that outsourcing anything that was non-core unlocked value. Least we forget, the microchip and the Internet introduced global connectedness, the potential for collaborative networks, speed as a competitive advantage and the organization as a community into the competitive arena.

The modifications we made to that basic hierarchical model amounted to one of the most creative things our kind has ever done. In the developed world, at least, millions of people were transformed from abject poverty at the beginning of the century to a standard of living that we now take for granted.

We also went from an orientation of think local and act local to one where every business, no matter its size, is global. One hundred years ago, the business you worried about most came from the other side of town. Today, the competitor who is about to disrupt the market is likely to be an unknown entity from a city your sales team has never heard of.

As for this century, we are experimenting with new organization forms (holacracy) and have watched as organizations such as Airbnb and Uber reinvented sectors that have been around for centuries. Accessing the *support of many* through crowdsourcing and crowdfunding have been no less dramatic. We have also observed the accelerated growth of technology: AI, machine learning, a faster Internet, data analytics, gamified assessment, blockchain, etc. The promise was, however, that by now these technologies would have already taken over our lives. Inroads yes; revolution – far from it. Why? The problem is implementation! McKinsey & Company have concluded that, at the highest level, it's a reflection of a failure to rewire the organization. "In our surveys and our work with hundreds of clients, we've seen that AI initiatives face formidable cultural and organizational barriers."[6] Trying to attach a rocket to a bicycle clearly doesn't represent a very workable business model.

Following a Script From a Different Century

We may have entered a new era but, arguably, little has changed at the top of the typical organization. In one European study[7] it was reported that only 10.59% of Board members were "very clear on our purpose, culture, long-term strategy and have actively checked that all are well aligned." Our own research is that only 20% of organizations "manage culture." The rest are caught up in a philosophy we refer to as "Culture drift." This refers to the

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5   The genesis of today's employee engagement.
6   "Building the AI-Powered Organization" *Harvard Business Review* (July-August 2019).
7   *"Board Leadership in Corporate Culture: European Report 2017,"* conducted by Board Agenda in association with professional services firm Mazars, and business school INSEAD.

assumption that "if we continue doing what we are currently doing we will magically end up where we need to be." Deloitte have evidence that only 19% of organizations believe that they have the right culture.[8]

In a truly comprehensive study of organization culture,[9] McKinsey & Company found that those CEOs who do insist on rigorously measuring and managing all cultural elements that drive performance, more than double the odds that their strategies will be executed. And over the long term, they deliver triple the total return to shareholders that other companies deliver. Additional evidence of being trapped in the past are not hard to find. Half the companies listed on the Fortune 500, at the turn of the century, are no longer there. In the US, according to *Fortune* magazine, 57 million employees have chosen to opt out of a traditional approach to work and are part of the gig employment market.

Lack of attention to organization culture goes a long way to explain why, after at least three decades of work on engagement, according to Gallup, the number of employees who are engaged hasn't risen above 38%.[10] It also surfaces three strategic, red flags. Questions where responsibility, ultimately, lies with the Human Resources Committee of the Board. Namely, if the work around organization culture amounts to conjecture, a best guess or based solely on judgement (devoid of any meaningful measurement): (1) how reliable is the succession process; (2) why are we pursuing a hiring policy for key leaders that embraces unnecessary risk; and (3) what is the source of the cultural premise that underpins the organization's investment in leadership development?

Only yesterday, the business press was dominated by robotics, cobots, machine learning, 3-D printing and their other tech play pals. The human tragedy that surrounds the COVID-19 crisis, as it clearly should, pushed that discussion into the background. And yet both agendas – one because it fueled the human imagination and the other because we are dealing with life and death – mask a very different human drama. Today's organization is shaped by unnecessary hierarchy, decision-making is still in the hands of too few and, as many organizations have discovered as they go through this global pandemic, a distinct lack of agility.

Based on pockets of success, we persuade ourselves that we are on the leading edge and, indeed, we have made great strides in some areas, but what got us here isn't going to get us to where we need to be! The overwhelming majority of businesses are trapped in a paradox – supported by the assumed efficacy of short-term results – following a script from

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8 2016 *Global Human Capital Trends Survey.*

9 Carolyn Dewar, Martin Hirt, and Scott Keller. *The mindsets and practices of excellent CEOs* (October 2019).

10 May 2020: 38% engaged, 49% somewhat engaged and 13% disengaged. Consulting companies in bundling engaged and somewhat engaged together may, in their own self-interest, make the engagement statistics look overly positive but, in truth, no organization should feel good that only a little over a third of their workforce are fully engaged.   Note: the US has the highest engagement scores of any developed country.
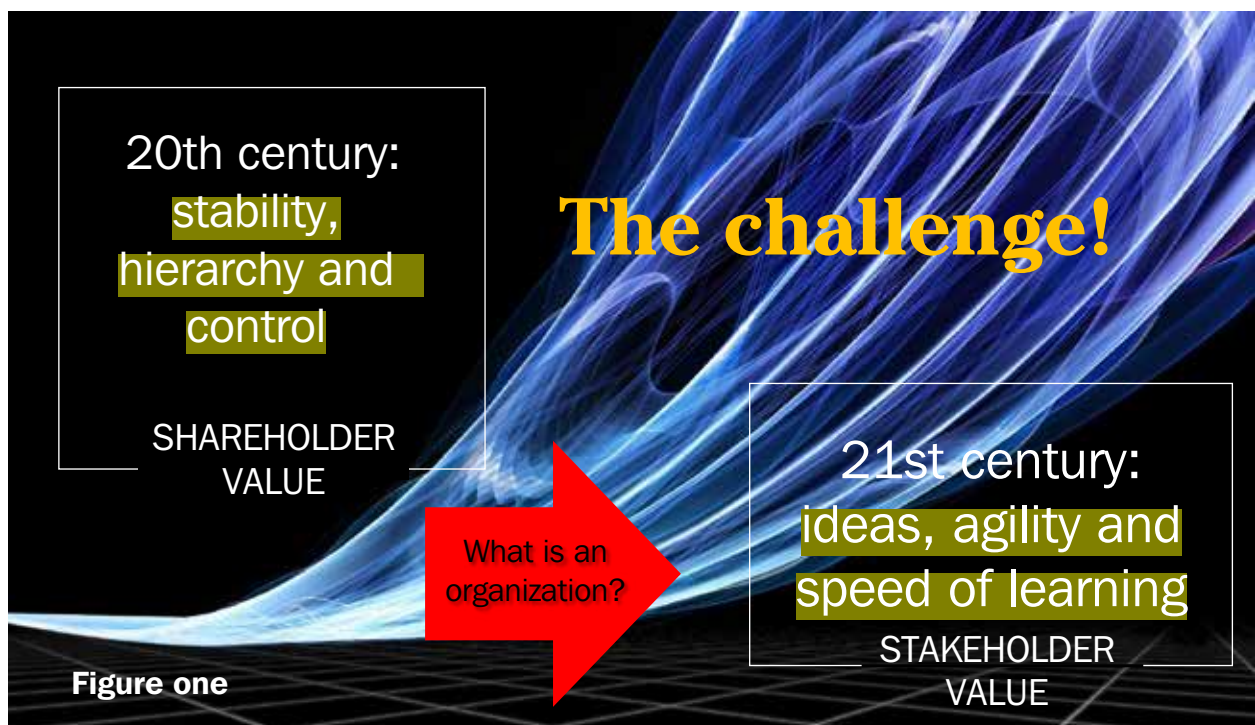
a different century. The organization that brought us this far may be in the third act of an outdated play but it still stands in the centre of the stage.

The New Normal

A good deal is being written describing the "new normal." There is no need to speculate. We are already living the new normal: ongoing disruption; a need for a different kind of leader; the challenge of implementing emerging technology; and recalibrating the organization's clock speed to a marketplace ever-demanding of shorter lead times.[11] Add: complexity; uncertainty; the challenge of a millennium workforce; gig employment; fractures in international relations; the existential threat we, in passing, refer to as "the environment;" a severe shortage of top talent; and you are starting to describe not the world as it will be, but where we are NOW!

The challenge we face isn't simply about skills and capability. The disruptive, tech-driven, speed-oriented world we have created demands a very different way to think about what it means to be an organization: ideas-driven, agile and built to learn faster than future competition. **See Figure one.**

20th century:
stability, hierarchy and control

SHAREHOLDER VALUE

The challenge!

What is an organization?

21st century:
ideas, agility and speed of learning

STAKEHOLDER VALUE

Figure one

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11 Today is the fastest things have ever been and the slowest they will ever be.

A word is required here about stakeholder value. Cynics may shake their heads but it's an idea being given a good deal of positive support by the who's who of US business. Following their meeting in August 2019, the Business Roundtable released a new statement on "the purpose of a corporation." Signed by 181 top CEOs, they committed to lead their companies for the benefit of all stakeholders – customers, employees, suppliers, communities and shareholders. That society is demanding a voice in the way businesses are run[12] is further endorsed by a change in corporate law, in the UK, in 2019. Companies on the London Exchange must now report on both the "Employee's Voice" and "Corporate Culture."[13] If that were not evidence enough, consider the impact on businesses, on both sides of the Atlantic, that the death of George Floyd[14] has had. Of course, it's not sufficient to know what's right – you have to do what's right. Meanwhile, businesses that are truly stakeholder-driven have no problem attracting and retaining top talent. Patagonia, for example, receives 9,000 applicants for every internship.

Stakeholder value is also changing how intelligent organizations think about branding. Brand is more than a symbolic representation of the product or service being offered – it's the organization's story simply told through compelling imagery and rich language. If, in the future, that story doesn't endorse the organization's social and environmental contribution know that consumers will look to a brand that does. George Wallace, Chief Executive, MHE Retail, put it this way: "Brands that can show they are putting people or the environment ahead of sheer profit will be rewarded by consumers and employees and enhance the way they consider the brand." Expect COVID-19 to transform a soft want into a hard need.

Although much still needs to be done around organization design,[15] the way forward is clear. The organization we need to have top of mind as we come down the mountain – enabling us to come out of the COVID-19 crisis stronger – must display five qualities: Fast, Flat, Focused, Flexible and Fertile (to new ideas). **See Figure two.**

We need to add "strong" because agility without strength is fragility – to break easily. "Strength" also implies a strong balance sheet, strong values, a strong brand, strength drawn out of diversity & inclusion and a strong team at the top. Being strong also speaks to the ability, especially in the most chaotic times, to make tough decisions. I coined the term "StrAgility" to convey being both strong and agile.

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12 Fairness is a driving force for change regardless of the age. A little over a hundred years ago, the unbridled power of the few was reined in by the Antitrust laws. The trade union movement wasn't far behind.
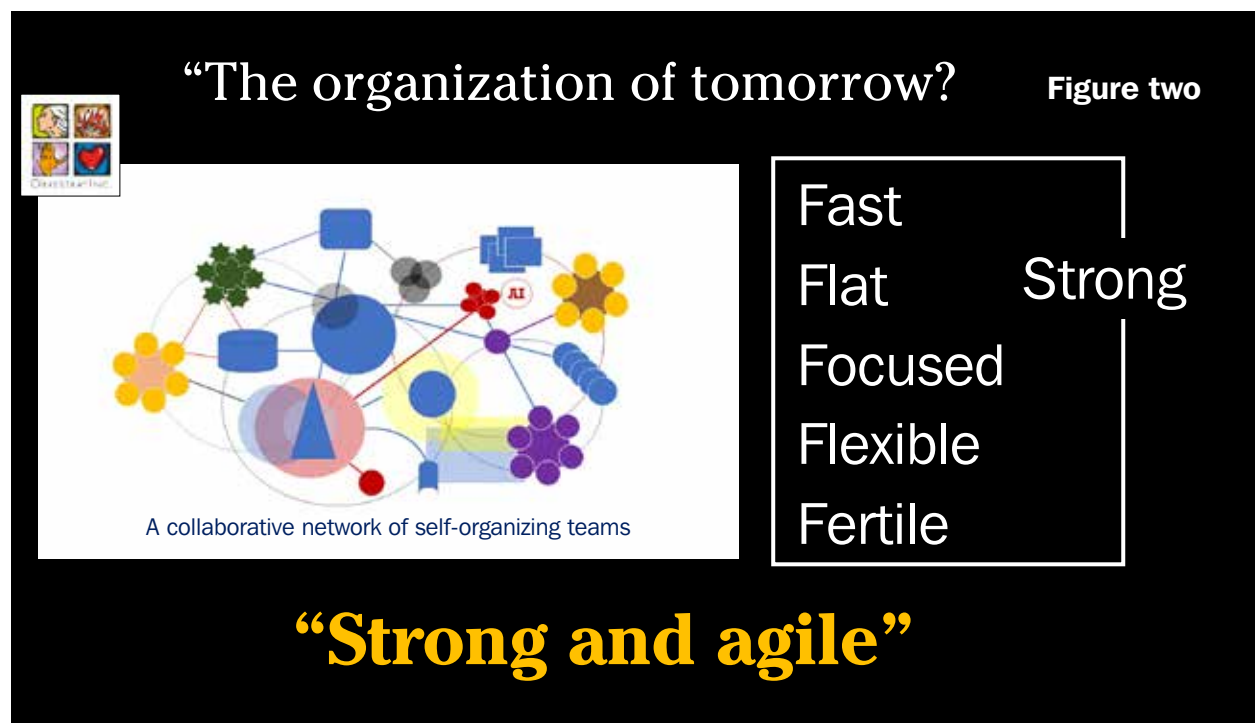
13 Expect Boards to be far more involved in organization culture in the future. Having run sessions on culture for Board members it's interesting to note that they quickly move from interest to enthusiasm once they realise that culture can (should) be measured.

14 The 59-year-old, African American who died in police custody in Minneapolis, Missouri – May 2020. Following his death demonstrations took place in cites on both sides of the Atlantic. The public outcry was such that large and small corporations alike took the position that the most damaging response was, no response.

15 For more on Organization design see *Tomorrow Will Be Different – Will You?* John O. Burdett (2020).

Generals, invariably, prepare for war with the most recent battles in mind. In WW1 we had the example of mounted cavalry attacking machine guns.[16] Leaders, similarly, faced with a new challenge, all too often default into what worked in the past.[17] The need for agility clearly isn't limited to the organization. And leadership clearly can't simply amount to more of the same.[18] The behaviour we celebrated in the past has to give way to a very different sense of what it means to be a leader. Optimism, hard work and passion,[19] as always, are the start of it.[20] Comfort with ambiguity, tech savvy, resilience, coaching mystery, the capacity to build great teams and cultural adaptability (work concurrently in different cultures) are clearly part of it. But leadership agility[21] is at the heart of it.

"The organization of tomorrow? **Figure two**

A collaborative network of self-organizing teams

Fast
Flat   Strong
Focused
Flexible
Fertile

"Strong and agile"

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16 In 1914, the 9th Lancers, a British cavalry regiment, charged German infantry and guns.

17 Our brain is wired to save energy. Faced with a new problem or challenge, the default response is to replay a past behavioural repertoire that was assumed to be successful. We have to train ourselves or be coached to see new issues in a new way (mindset), starting with letting go of what worked in the past.

18 It's often said that, "There is a shortage of top talent." The shortfall is in finding leaders who are a fit with the tech-savvy, fast, flat, focused, flexible and fertile business environment we are now in. In fact, there is a surfeit of talent. If by "talent" we mean an executive whose experience is limited to the kind of organization we are working hard to reinvent.

19 **PASS**-**I**nspiration-**ON**

20 In that the more things change, the more some things stay the same. One of the miracles of the twentieth-century was powered flight. Even a cursory look at what the Wright brothers achieved at Kitty Hawk on December 17th, 1903, reveals that the secret to their success was optimism, hard work and passion.

21 Leadership agility includes conceptual, practical, interpersonal, intrapersonal and learning agility.

Coming Down the Mountain

Learning is initiated by an experience. Experience, in turn, prompts a question. The quality of the question(s) dictates the value of the learning. To that end, learning unfolds in one of three distinct ways; each stage representing not only deeper but exponentially, faster learning:[22]

1. Simple learning – doing what you have always done better. Example: we found remote working especially useful and we will build on and improve how we connect with these employees in the future. Simple change. A tactical mindset.

2. Learning how to learn – exploring very different ways to do things. Example: working with our sales force during this crisis prompted us to think about a far more effective approach to business development. Transition. Transition assumes that there is time available to evolve to a new state. If there is time, it's certainly not measured in years.

3. Learning how to learn, limited only by imagination – a recognition that the world has changed and that the business model we have relied on in the past is out of step with today's reality. Example: organization design. Moving beyond a structure represented by a series of boxes that, to maintain the illusion of control, leaves decision-making in the hands of the few. Delivering a way to organize that emphasises agility, recognises the potential for teams to self-organize, and taps into the natural, innovative capacity of the human spirit. A way to compete where unanticipated, ongoing and sweeping disruption is the new normal. Transformation. Creating tomorrow's organization, today.

Change should not be confused with either *transition* or its time-truncated, tough-minded cousin *transformation*. Change is expressed by the actions we, or those around us, enact. Transition/transformation represents the psychological process that we go through that allows us to see the world through a different lens. Change is outcome. Transition/ transformation is a process. One is to **do** something differently. The other is, at its core, to **think** differently. Change can be represented by a small, even an insignificant, event. Transition/transformation must always: (1) address the culture we have and the culture we need; (2) involve working at the level of mindset; and (3) be a product of the quality of leadership available.

We will get through this crisis. Some organizations will struggle. Others will see sales increase. The winners, however, won't be those who merely survive, it will be those that come out of this ahead of where they were. The advantage of "an away team"[23] being that

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22 For more on Organizational Learning see *The A-Z of Organization Culture.* John O. Burdett (2017).
23 A small sub-group given a strategic mandate.

they can step outside of the tactical bubble that the rest of the team is trapped by. In doing so, they can start to think strategically; they can focus on very different questions.

A great question does three things: (1) asks for what you want – not what you don't want; (2) challenges the assumptions the listener has about the topic; and (3) introduces new language. The latter because the same old language results in the same old thinking. "New language" includes: metaphor, story and the value of a conceptual model. The more senior a leader is, the more likely it is that he/she is a "gestalt learner."[24] The closer you move to the top of the house, the greater the value of a conceptual template. The map itself can never be the territory but, to quote Kurt Lewin, "There is nothing so practical as a good theory."

After the harrowing journey we are going through, not a few leaders will opt for a tactical view of where to go from here. Others will be bolder and see this as an opportunity to address business fundamentals. A third group will recognise that there is a compelling need to take a twenty-first century approach to the business. Indeed, one could ask, if not now, then when?

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24 Gestalt learners are drawn, one might even say compelled, to find meaning in patterns. In visualising how all of the various pieces come together, they draw from the whole far more than the sum of the parts. Only those who can see what others cannot see, can do what others cannot do.

It's tempting to start by seeding ideas across the organization in the hope that they take root. This may create the appearance of momentum but it won't deliver any real movement. Hope isn't a strategy. And false hope is, at best, disengagement, disappointment and dysfunctional behaviour that hasn't yet happened. To change an established habit, we need to go deep. We need to address all of the forces that combine to make up the organization's culture.[25] With "StrAgility" providing an ever-present prompt, coming out of this crisis stronger is initiated by seven fundamental questions.

1. What strategic imperatives define future success? More specifically, what assumptions can we make about why customers will buy our product or service tomorrow? Think of this as your "business model."[26]

2. What culture do we have today (roots)? What culture do we need tomorrow (wings) to maintain/add to our competitive position? This implies: (1) the ability to shape the conversation such that informed dialogue[27] about culture emerges;[28] (2) that there is a robust, business-oriented measure of the culture we have and the culture we need; and (3) that the central role that mindset plays is fully understood. In my own work with major corporations on organization culture, the interventions that have been most effective, invariably, addressed mindset. For an appreciation of the different levels of culture and where mindset fits in see **Appendix one**.

3. What makes us special? What core business competency or unique capability can we ill-afford to dilute or lose? What supports our value proposition that is sacrosanct? Change that erodes the source of your competitive advantage is a Faustian bargain.

4. What technology shortfalls do we need to address? Where could we employ technology to give us an immediate competitive advantage?

5. Where and in what ways do we need to become more agile?

6. Moving forward, what leadership strengths are we able to build on? What succession concerns have emerged as a result of this crisis?

7. As we start to create tomorrow's organization today, are we meeting the needs of **all** of our stakeholders? Shareholders are well represented. Customers and, indeed, suppliers have their own leverage. A millennial/iGen workforce will ask, propose and then demand that the organization be more than a commercial enterprise – that it fulfills its twenty-first century role in society.

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25 Culture is a system and, like any system, only as strong as its weakest part. Addressing only part of the culture is likely to lead to future, unintended consequences.

26 Source: Peter Drucker.

27 The main reason top teams put culture on the back burner isn't lack of awareness regarding need. It's that, for the most part, they don't know how to have the conversation.

28 See *The Culture Conversation.* John O. Burdett (2020).

Why Culture Matters

The Russian poet Fyodor Tyutchev observed that Russia "cannot be understood with the mind." Measurement (of culture)[29] is essential but like an old sock, you need to pull the organization's culture on to truly know the way things really happen, where the holes are, what it is that makes your business strong. As you walk through an organization, you have to "feel" the culture, work your observation gene, interpret not only what you see but what you don't and become the alter ego of the middle manager, for only their full support can make the needed culture come to life.

There are two cultures … formal and informal. The latter is, ultimately, the more important. In moving forward, it's not enough to connect with those who shape the strategy. You have to inspire the organization's informal leaders, a new generation who now make up the majority of the workforce and, no less important, those who do work for you but choose to do so remotely.

It should not be assumed that the informal organization applies only to frontline employees and those who are assumed to have little real power. In reality, how decisions are made often happens outside of the discipline and rigour suggested by the organization structure. This is especially true if the team works remotely or in different locations. Indeed, if the intended lines of authority were strictly applied, the business would become a bureaucratic

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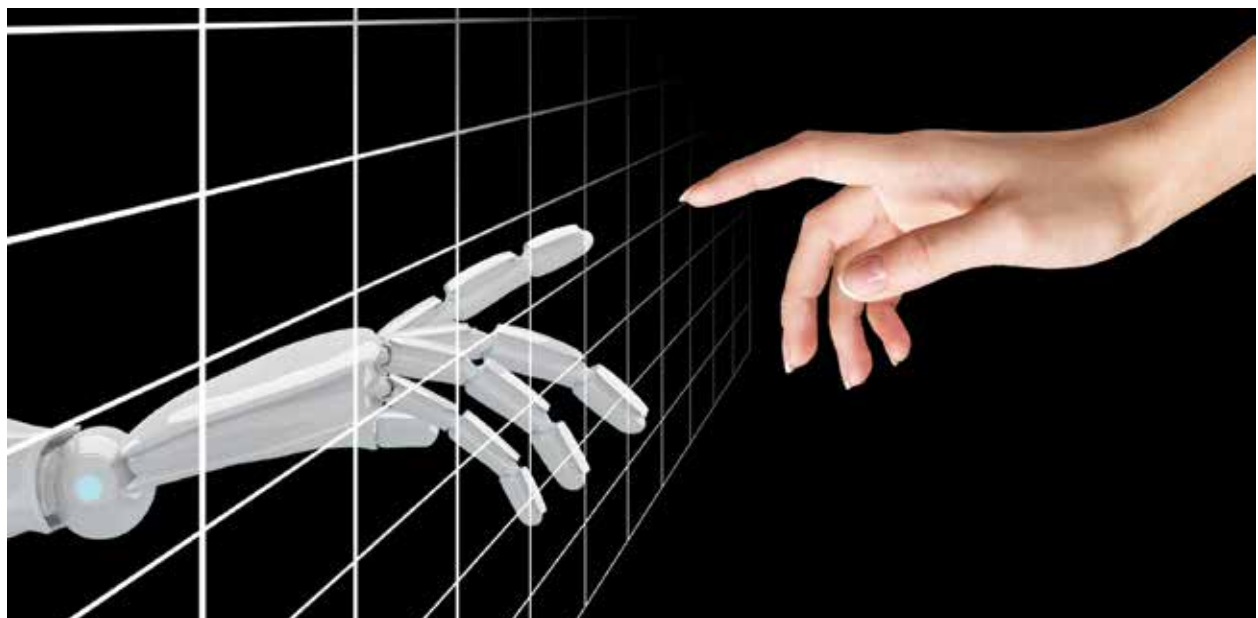
29 Measuring from "what" to "what," using business terms, aligned with the emerging context and pragmatic enough for middle management to fully contribute. If the language used sounds like it should be in a third-year psychology class, it belongs in a third-year psychology class.

quagmire in a week. Influence, informal relationships, caring, shared values and trust, not lines on a chart, are the real lubricant of leadership. And guess what? We are describing, precisely, the qualities needed to navigate through a crisis. This merely goes to endorse that the ideal organization, by way of design, would: (1) reflect how, given the opportunity, people would choose to work together; and (2) assume that the team leader works for the team and not the other way around.

In charting a course for a different future it's essential to: (1) be informed by the emerging social, political, economic and competitive environment for therein lie both what's demanded and what's possible; (2) recognise that developing strategic scenarios are essential; and (3) understand that you can't sprinkle agility onto the organization; it has to be fully embedded in the culture. No less important, in a world where even organizations with a reputation for legendary service have to compete on ideas, innovation is ill-served by a way to organize defined by a series of hierarchically arranged boxes. Indeed, the term "structure" conjures up unhelpful imagery and should, ideally, be replaced by what we really mean – "the performance platform."

As we seek to "reinvent possibility," technology clearly makes an enduring contribution. Here we need to recognise that, although not an end in and of itself (as many suggest), if it can be digitalised, it will be digitalised. Why the compelling need for digitalisation? Speed, simplicity and service are characteristics of competitive success that, more often than not, determines who wins and who goes home. If dissatisfied, customers are rarely without easy-to-access other options.

Next Steps

Amid the veritable avalanche of "me too" advice on how to get through this crisis it is easy to overlook two central questions. One: "How will your business come out of this stronger?" Two: "As a leader, how will you personally come out of this stronger?"

In support of both of those questions and in addition to points made in the body of the text, consider the following:

1. Appoint an away team. Make the mandate – coming out of this crisis stronger.

2. Measure both the culture you have and the culture needed to succeed in the future. What will you do to make tomorrow's culture start to come alive in the organization, today? Revisit the work on succession, leadership development and talent acquisition with tomorrow's culture in mind.

3. Review the organization's structure (platform for success). Where and how can the structure be retooled to: (1) push decision-making closer to the customer; (2) make agility a competitive strength; and (3) better complement the technology

being introduced? Culture is a system. Structure is an integral part of that system. Embed your drive for agility into **all** aspects of the culture. See **Appendix one.**

4. With tomorrow's success in mind, revisit the leadership competencies.

5. Initiate a robust conversation at the top of the house to identify the mindset demanded to thrive in a business environment marked by disruption. What needs to change? See the Mindset Assessment beginning on page 15.

6. Tomorrow's organization will be a team of teams. Define what it means to be a great team. Use the current emphasis on teamwork to: (1) measure how key teams are currently operating; and (2) use that measure as a benchmark for ongoing team development.

7. Have each key leader go through an assessment of resilience. Support the insights gained with ongoing coaching.

Crisis doesn't make a leader – but it does reveal who you really are!

3 X 3: CRISIS, CULTURE AND CHANGE

To come out of this chaotic period stronger you need to: (1) move through **all** three levels of crisis ; and (2) address **all** three levels of organization culture.

CRISIS

Stage one: Acceptance
Shock, denial, coming to terms with the new reality

Stage two: Survival
Pulling resources needed together and navigating through the crisis

Stage three: Growth
Thinking about the business differently. Learning how to come out of this crisis stronger

From strategic thinking to strategic doing

ORGANIZATION CULTURE:
WHAT IS SACROSANCT? WHAT MUST CHANGE?

Level one: Issues that are clear and obvious – overt behaviour, systems, technology, processes and/or structure.

Level two: Enshrined habits and the values being promoted – the underlying assumptions about what the company gets paid for, the brand promise and how it lives inside the organization, what does it mean to be a team, the support (or otherwise) from the informal organization, how key decisions are made.

Level three: mindset – the mental models people access to shape their reality.

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Will You Come Out Of This Crisis STRONGER?
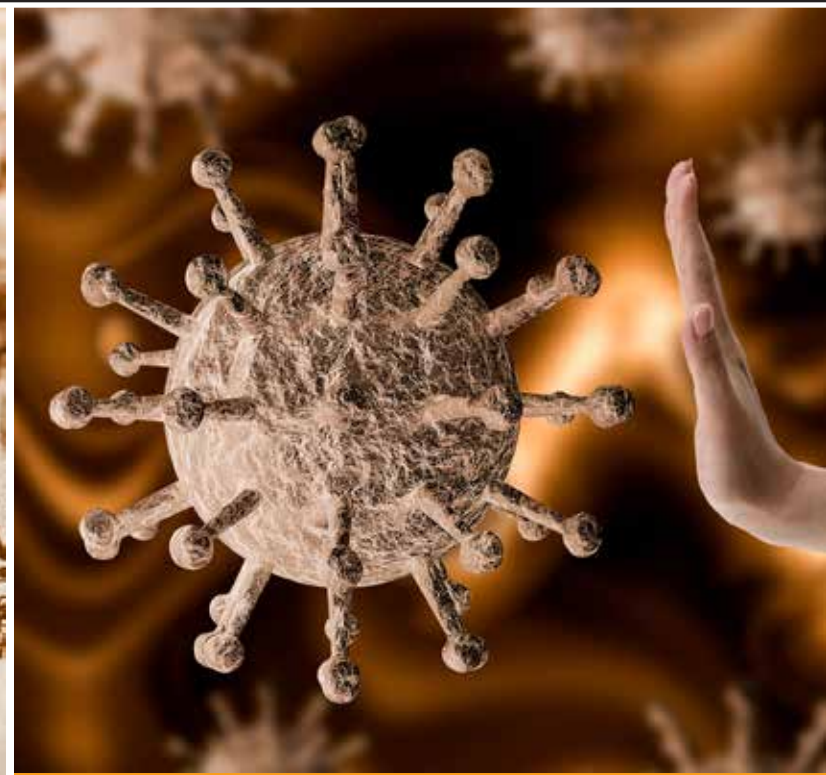
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John O. Burdett

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TOMORROW WILL BE DIFFERENT –
WILL YOU?

Coming Out Of This Crisis STRONGER

Ancient maps had beautiful imagery that captured, what was then, the "known world." Beyond what was known was left blank and described simply as "Here lies dragons." The coronavirus has moved us beyond everything we thought we knew.

Confronting those dragons implies a number of challenges: (1) rescuing the business; (2) recognising and celebrating that there is a new definition of what it means to be "a team"; (3) developing one, three- and six-month strategic scenarios; (4) partnering with customers (and invariably developing new digital platforms to do so) to develop the best way forward; and (5) regularly revisiting the question, "How **will we** come out of this stronger?"
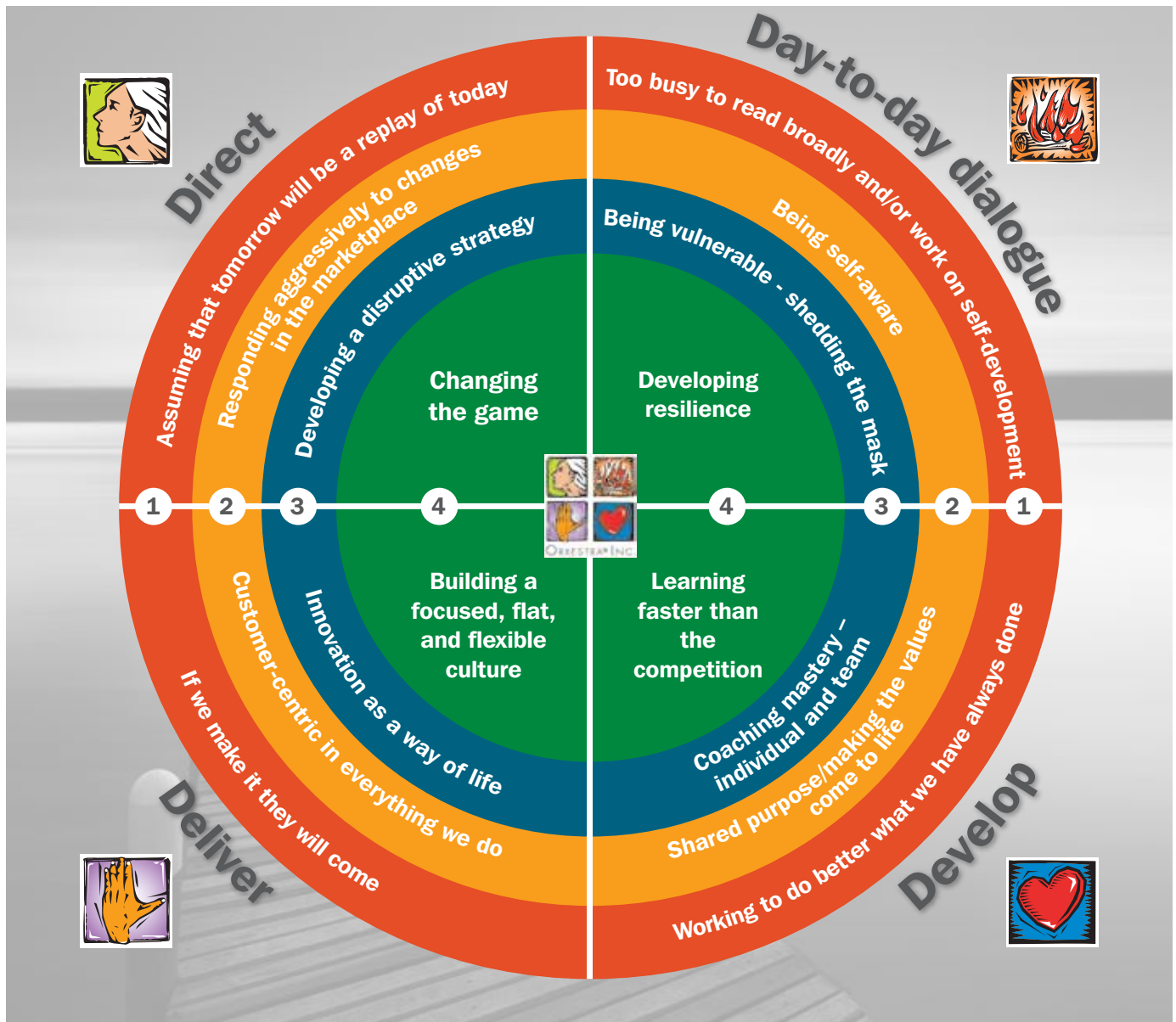
Moving beyond today's crisis – as indeed we will – isn't simply about having a better plan. To come out of this stronger **you** need to think differently about the business **that will emerge**. Our mindset will determine not only what is possible but, more importantly, what becomes possible!

Go through the simple assessment that follows. What state of mind shaped how you and your team made decisions in the past? Go through the assessment a second time (ideally with your team) and reflect on the question, "To come out of this crisis stronger, what collective mindset is demanded?"

Tomorrow **Will** Be Different – Will You?

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TOMORROW WILL BE DIFFERENT –
WILL YOU?

Direct

Day-to-day dialogue

Deliver

Develop

Assuming that tomorrow will be a replay of today

Responding aggressively to changes in the marketplace

Developing a disruptive strategy

Changing the game

Too busy to read broadly and/or work on self-development

Being self-aware

Being vulnerable - shedding the mask

Developing resilience

If we make it they will come

Customer-centric in everything we do

Innovation as a way of life

Building a focused, flat, and flexible culture

Learning faster than the competition

Coaching mastery – individual and team

Shared purpose/making the values come to life

Working to do better what we have always done

1 2 3 4 | 4 3 2 1

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Mindset: choose the one statement in each of the four domains of leadership that best describes how you made decisions prior to COVID-19. Scoring:

# of	x 1 =		# of	x 2 =		# of	x 3 =		# of	x 4 =	

TOTAL:

4	8	12	16
Wedded to the status quo	A recognition that tomorrow will be different	Working aggressively to become more agile.	Perfectly positioned to embrace a black swan event.

Agility/speed of learning →

Direct (Head)	Assuming that tomorrow will be a replay of today ☐	Responding aggressively to changes in the marketplace ☐	Developing a disruptive strategy ☐	Changing the game ☐
Deliver (Hand)	If we make it they will come ☐	Customer-centric in everything we do ☐	Innovation as a way of life ☐	Building a focused, flat and flexible culture ☐
Develop (Heart)	Working to do better what we have always done ☐	Shared purpose/ making the values come to life ☐	Coaching mastery – individual and team ☐	Learning faster than the competition ☐
Day-to-day dialogue (Spirit)	Too busy to read broadly and/ or work on self-development ☐	Being self-aware ☐	Being vulnerable – shedding the mask ☐	Developing resilience ☐

Coming Out Of This Crisis Stronger:

The assessment on page 3 reflects the mindset that dominated in your business prior to COVID-19. The simple chart on this page prompts you to think about coming out of this crisis stronger. Step one: from page 3 capture the dominant mindset before COVID-19. Mark with an (✘). Step two: recognising that tomorrow will be different, what mindset will be demanded to drive future success? Mark (with (✔). To lead is to start to make that change, now! How are you going to orchestrate that shift?

Note: There are three distinct levels associated with "getting stronger:" (1) addressing issues that are clear and obvious – overt behaviour, systems and/or processes; (2) the brand promise, enshrined habits and the values being promoted – how the brand promise lives inside the organization, why things happen, what does it mean to be a team, the role of the informal organization, what has primacy when it comes to decision-making; (3) mindset – the mental models people access to shape their reality. Together they define the "organization's culture." Successful leaders are already addressing the first two levels. Not to work on mindset, however, is to negate much of the value that comes from those actions.

John Burdett has worked in over 40 countries as an executive and as a consultant for businesses that are household names. He has worked on and continues to work on leadership development and organization culture for some of the world's largest corporations.

His ongoing partnership with the Bedford Consulting Group and TRANSEARCH INTERNATIONAL means that his proprietary work on talent acquisition, in any one year, successfully supports many hundreds of top leadership appointments on six continents.

He holds a doctorate in management development and since 2000 has published more than a dozen books (a number of them best-sellers) on various aspects of leadership and organization culture. His Talent Trilogy was completed in 2016. The first in the series, *Attract, Select, Develop & Retain TALENT,* was published in 2013. The second, *TEAM: Align, Build, Connect and Develop*, came out in early 2015. *The Empty Suit*, in 2016. *The A-Z of Organization Culture* came out in 2017. *Tomorrow Will Be Different – Will You?* was published in 2020.

John has a number of books available for download. Go to any of the major, online bookstores. Access using author's name: John O. Burdett

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Part Two
Covid Book Series
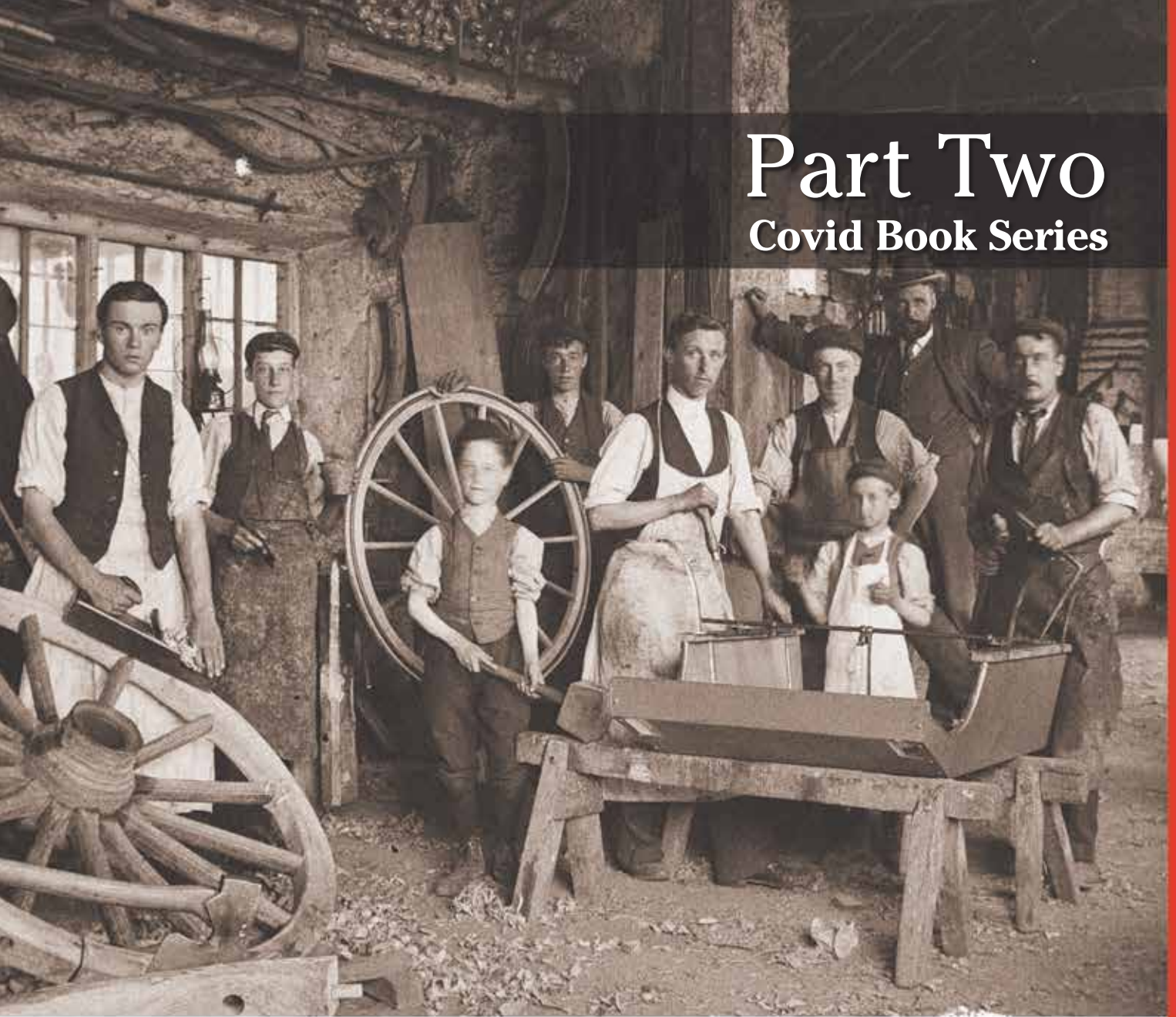
The Culture
CONVERSATION

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ISBN: 978-1-7773773-2-8

National Library of Canada Cataloguing

The TRANSEARCH
COVID BOOK SERIES

Welcome to **Part Two** of the TRANSEARCH book series. Recognising, as we move forward, how important organization culture is, **Part Two** unbundles *the Culture Conversation*.

Part one, *Coming Down the Mountain*, looks at how to come out of this crisis stronger. **Part Three** explores the need for leadership agility and what that implies: *Leadership Agility and Learning – The Way of the Dolphin*. Drawing on the reality that tomorrow's organization will be a team of teams, **Part Four** examines what it means to be an outstanding team: *Great Organizations Are Made Up of Great Teams*. **Part Five** moves beyond leadership as a philosophy and drills down into essential skills – *When the Trees Get Bigger and the Forest Gets Deeper, It's Time to Sharpen Your Saw*.

It's All About Culture

There has been a veritable avalanche of advice about how to get through the Covid crisis. The primary question being, "How do we manage our way through this?" It's a great question. The dilemma? It's incomplete. Two strategic (leadership) questions will, in the fullness of time, prove to be just as important. One: "How do we come out of this crisis stronger?" Two: "What do we need to start to do today, to create the business we need in the future?"

The majority of established businesses will find their way through this. The winners – those who steal a march on the competition – will be those that seize the opportunity to build a more competitive business. Which, in turn, means measuring both the culture as it is today and the culture the organization needs to support the emerging business model. The latter, a way to operate that delivers, at the right price, at the right time, what tomorrow's customers want to buy – and how they want to buy it.

Culture isn't an end in itself. It's the engine that enables the business to win in the marketplace. In a successful organization, it also shapes every aspect of the leadership conversation. And, if you get it right, it's the one thing the competition can't copy.

Moving beyond today's crisis isn't simply about having a better plan. To come out of this stronger means thinking differently about the business that will emerge. Some aspects, those that make the business special, must be protected. Other elements will have to be transformed. Elsewhere, the challenge means initiating "a new beginning."

Pulling everything together; the container that allows diversity to flourish; the system that provides meaning and supports momentum; the performance platform that enables a winning value proposition – are described by one simple term: "Culture." The challenge? The culture conversation we have now will determine not only what is possible but, more importantly … what becomes possible!

Culture Matters

Some time ago, I was asked to speak to an audience of CEOs about organization culture. I started by posing, to the 120 or so in the audience, a simple question. "On a scale of 1-10, how important is culture to the long-term success of your organization?" By a show of hands, the answer was, overwhelmingly, extremely important – 9 or 10 on the scale. "Now think about how much time the top team has spent on strategy, budgeting, financial planning and the like over the past six months. Score that a 10. By comparison, consider how much time the top team have invested in culture over the same period and, using the same scale, what would you judge that score to be?" By a show of hands, the response was 2 or 3.

Of course, there are always outliers – those who score the time invested in culture high – and in a smaller audience I get the opportunity to dig a little deeper. The reason for this response deviation lies mostly in the mistaken belief that the ubiquitous engagement survey is an effective measure of culture. The work on engagement (important though it is) addresses no more than 20% of the factors that make up the organization's culture.

Concerns regarding organization culture aren't limited to Europe and North America. In the fall of 2018, in Tokyo, I took a group of Japanese executives (from different organizations) through a workshop to explore the leadership competencies demanded of Japanese leaders in the future. The dominant theme (outcome)? The need, in Japan, to develop leaders who could "manage culture change." This from the country that brought us six sigma, kaizen and Muda, etc. When tomorrow will be different, it's not enough to continuously improve on what you have always done.

Two things are clear. One: today's leaders see culture as essential to future success. Two: though it may be important, top teams don't spend much meaningful time on it. The central question becomes "why?" That culture is perceived as a slippery and esoteric concept is the start of it. That measurement is largely ignored is also clearly part of it. But the heart of it? Top teams struggle in knowing how to have the culture conversation.

Seven Underpinning Truths

The book is about the culture conversation. As such, it covers a good deal of ground. Underpinning the book are seven fundamental principles. They are outlined here.

1. Horrific as the curse of Covid is, we will come down that mountain. The dilemma? The organization we created in the last century is a poor fit for the challenges we now face. Lack of agility, mismatched to the promise the emerging technology offers and struggling to keep abreast of social change, e.g., diversity, Black Lives Matter, social justice, the move to stakeholder capital – the organization we have come to rely on is linear and ponderous when compared to agility, responsiveness and speed of learning demanded. It's all about culture!

2. Culture is a system and, like any system, is only as strong as its weakest element. It's a mistake to work on one part of the culture (e.g., purpose, mission, values) without considering the rest of the system. Partial, incomplete or fractured cultural interventions will, over the longer-term, result in unintended consequences.

3. Power moves into a vacuum. If you're not managing your culture someone else is. A predatory supplier. A major investor. A group of senior executives who, because they created the organization as it is, would prefer things to stay the way they are. Middle managers who have been disenfranchised. A competitor with whom you are constantly playing catch up.

4. Our own research and that of others is that only 20% of organizations can be said to "manage their culture." The rest are caught up in, what is perhaps best described as, "culture drift" – the assumption that if we continue to do what we have always done we will eventually get to where we need to be. There is a reason why more than 50% of the organizations that appeared on the Fortune 500 at the turn of the century are no longer there.

5. Organizations that manage culture have significantly better results than those that don't. In the widest research study of its kind ever pursued, the evidence shows that CEOs who insist on rigorously measuring and managing all cultural elements that drive performance more than double the odds that their strategies will be executed. And over the long term, they deliver triple the total return to shareholders that other companies deliver.[1]

6. Responsibility for culture lies directly with the top team. Indeed, from my own experience, if culture is viewed as an HR project – essential though the HR team

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[1] Carolyn Dewar, Martin Hirt, and Scott Keller. *The mindsets and practices of excellent CEOs* (October 2019).

are in steering culture change – the CEO is putting his/her career at risk. The role of the top team in culture is mandated by recent legislation. In the UK, corporations quoted on the London Stock Exchange must now report both "culture" and "the employee voice." Australia is following a similar track. Legislation in other jurisdictions is unlikely to be far behind.

7. What you don't measure, you can't manage. Measuring culture, meanwhile, isn't simply a matter of one-size-fits-all. To that end, we have found it necessary to develop different measures for different audiences. The Board, top team, a wide canvas of the organization – each warranting its own, bespoke approach. At the conclusion of the book you will find a measure of culture, which will help you define: (1) where your organization culture is today; and (2) where your culture needs to be to compete successfully in the future.

CONTENT

The Culture CARRIERS

Ask … Don't Assume. Challenge … Don't Confront. Prompt … Don't Provoke

Michigan's Upper Peninsula penetrates its northern neighbour's vast land mass like an unwanted thumb stuck into someone else's mouth. Rich in biodiversity and wildlife, the Peninsula is, at the last count, home to 845 nesting bald eagles. In recent years, shoreline erosion has attracted the attention of the Michigan Department of the Environment. To both chart and monitor that concern, the Department found their newly acquired drones to be an invaluable resource. Such was the ongoing activity when a group of naturalists watched an avenging eagle do what nature has so perfectly equipped it to do – it struck back. In defending its domain, the eagle dispatched the drone to a dark and watery grave.

As indicated in Part One of this series, a crisis has three stages: coming to terms with the crisis, navigating your way through it, and seeking to come out of it stronger. This third stage we have defined elsewhere as "Coming Down the Mountain." And this is where managing "what is" must give way to strategic leadership, planning ahead and outlining "what needs to be." It's no longer a case of what do we do next. It's what kind of business do we need to keep, change and/or create to be successful 18 months, or more, from now? It's also a time to keep top of mind that nature is programmed to strike back.

No one knows how COVID-19 will evolve. Will it be, like the flu, an ever-changing and ever-present thread woven into the human experience? Will it, as was the case with the Spanish flu in 1918, return a year later with even greater potency? Will a vaccine be of value to older workers? Will the number of "vaccination deniers" limit the overall effectiveness of even a successful vaccine? Will the challenging refrigeration needs for

some of the vaccines limit their use to the developed world? Are we prepared for the next pandemic?

And lest we forget – the environment; breakthrough technology; robotics; cobotics; new materials; a reshaping of the global economic order; sluggish organizations that, by way of design, are out of step with our emerging reality; the unprecedented manipulation and mental health issues associated with social media; social justice; opioid addiction; extended periods of drought; the bleaching of reefs; a veritable avalanche of plastic; and a host of other issues will only become more pressing concerns.

The implications are profound. A linear, unidimensional approach to planning – one that limits future options – is clearly dysfunctional. When agility and responsiveness are demanded, a strategic "straitjacket" is to hand the baton of future competiveness to the competition. Conversely, a scenario approach must, of necessity, embrace both the best and worst of times.

Meanwhile, a plan that can't be implemented is just another … plan. Supporting the organization's emerging value proposition, making the strategy come to life, marshaling the forces that combine or create a winning performance platform is why now, more than ever, the culture conversation must be front and centre. And it starts with coming to terms with what the key players – the culture creators – think about the organization's culture.

That a business topic is commonly referred to doesn't mean that there is, per se, a great deal of common understanding. Artificial Intelligence is a good example. Like fish swimming in water, most executives are little aware, other than in general terms, of the cultural context they are immersed in. Don't assume, therefore, that because the leader in question talks with authority that he/she has a robust understanding of what organization culture is and/or how to address it. Central to the knowledge/experience shortfall being that, for the most part, organization culture is ignored, poorly taught or inadequately covered in much that is described as "management education."

It has been said that there are none so blind as those who cannot see. There is often a marked reluctance on the part of those who created the culture (culture carriers, those who have historically refereed how things get done) to challenge: (1) the culture that they created/supported; and/or (2) the culture that made them successful. Considering the echo chamber that exists at the top of many organizations, pushing back too directly is likely to derail the conversation.

The best way forward with reluctant culture carriers? Ask … don't assume. Challenge … don't confront. Prompt … don't provoke. Explore the scope and nature of change that society in general and business overall is facing. It's an undeniable reality that tomorrow **will** be different! Very different. A business can't thrive in a vacuum; it can't survive if a

philosophy of managing from the inside-out dominates the firm's thinking; if the status quo prevails.

The business press is quick to point out that there is a serious shortfall of talent. There is plenty of talent around. What's missing is TOP (tested,[1] outstanding, performers) talent – leaders who are equipped to deal with the reality that tomorrow will be different.

Leaders are readers. Leaders who: aren't naturally curious; find business reading a burden; are uncomfortable with ambiguity; lack resilience; lack digital literacy; don't embrace the maverick on their team; and are reluctant to challenge the status quo, are a poor fit for the world we are entering.

Key question(s): In simple terms, what is today's culture and, recognising that tomorrow will be different, what needs to change? What are key leaders doing to bring about that change? What leadership competencies describe a successful leader in your business three years from now?

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1   By experience.

Look, Listen, LEARN

Gossip is to Humankind What Grooming is to the Other Apes

Before delving more deeply into the culture journey, it is worth dwelling on the human condition, "How did we get here?" To understand today's culture we need to know who we were 40,000 years ago.

We descended from tree-bound habitats some four million years ago. For the next three million years, we existed (the operative word) at the lower end of the food chain. Our niche? Using rocks to extract the marrow from the bones of animals that large predators had abandoned.

We took a significant step forward 800,000 years ago when our ability to work with fire enabled us to predigest our food. The reduced digestive track, resulting in a larger brain. Unfortunately, a bigger brain afforded us little advantage over our, dozen or so, hominid competitors.

From that cultural soup, our kind, Homo sapiens, emerged 300,000 years ago. Sophisticated tools, the exodus out of Africa and being able to outcompete our various cousins, e.g., Neanderthals, still lay in our future. And then, 70,000 years ago, what emerged was, what evolutionary psychologists refer to as, "a cognitive revolution." No one quite knows why – possibly accidental genetic mutation – but we took the first critical steps that moved us to the top of the food chain.

Language that allowed us to think beyond the concrete (what you can see and touch vs. imagery that is creative and/or imagined) evolved to embrace, what today we would readily recognise as: story, negotiation, symbolism, myth, purpose, religion, values, loyalty, trust, leadership, collaboration and teamwork.

Who we were then is who we are today. The 11,000 years that have passed since we started planting crops represent but a punctuation point in a long essay describing our hunter-gatherer past. There are invaluable cultural insights we can take from all of this:

1. We are a team animal. While the cost saving in remote working is difficult to ignore (and essential during the Covid crisis), face-to-face interaction is not only an

essential building block in innovation and breakthrough thinking but an expression of who we are as a species. Every time you add someone to the team you have, essentially, created a new team.

2. Regardless of the activity, there is not much that can be achieved without trust. Trust is initiated, or not, in the first 30 seconds of meeting someone.

3. We explore the world through metaphor and learn through stories. Any intervention focusing on change that ignores the power of language is a mistake in the making.

4. We are "copying machines." Leaders live in a goldfish bowl. The more senior the leader, the greater the magnification. How those in key roles act is more (far more) than anything that they say. Arrogance, self-interest, lack of truth and/or ego-driven behaviour are to the organization's culture what a spoonful of strychnine is to a freshly brewed cup of coffee.

5. Gossip is to humankind what grooming is to the other apes. We are also great "at making stuff up." This speaks to the power of the informal organization and the need to keep people informed. Somewhere in that communication nexus is the reality that people don't so much resist change as they resent having new ways to act forced upon them.

6. The most effective form of organization follows a design that, given the choice, is how those involved would choose to work together. The size of a relationship-based organization tops out at 150 people or less. What allows us to organize communities/organizations comprised of many thousands is some form of imagined and shared reality. A combination of myth, vision, purpose, values, rules and/or reinforced norms become the glue that binds people to a common cause.

7. From our earliest origins, the tribe exhibited the need for a shaman. The shaman's role and title differed but might well include: healing (caring), sacrifice, maintaining tradition, interpreting unusual events and telling the future. You can make a case for leaders to meet each of these needs today … especially "telling the future." People want to know what's happening, how they are doing but above all else,

where they are heading. In today's world, "a visionary" takes people to places they would otherwise not go. Without a visionary that people can believe in, the team/organization is lost.

The balance of the chapter is an invitation to better understand the culture you are immersed in by looking deeper, listening harder and reflecting longer. In pursuit of that quest, it is helpful to keep in mind that, although the people you meet had a role in creating what you are observing, the underlying social architecture draws much from our ancient past.

There is a visceral, intuitive, practical aspect of culture. Simply put, understanding culture draws heavily on personal experience. For that reason, the initial interaction around culture should be a discussion focusing on "what the organization's culture is" – not conceptually – but pushing for a deeper understanding about how the business operates – Why do today's customers buy the company's product or service? What are the customer's future needs? What threats are on the horizon?

A new leader, HR partner, Board member, etc., is also advised to be something of a cultural detective. In this we are aided by the reality that culture is a hologram – scratch a part of it and you get a legitimate sense of the whole. Read between the lines on the annual report. As you walk into the reception area, what does it tell you about how things happen around here? Are the offices open plan? What is posted on the notice boards? Best of all, use the product, shop in one of the retail outlets, dig deep into their website, talk to past employees and connect with customers. And if you really want to learn something about the culture, get there early and watch people arrive at work. The energy level, whether people look happy to be there and, indeed, whether employees get there on time are invaluable expressions of the culture. Note: depending on where in the world you live, many of these options are, as a result of the Covid crisis, unavailable.

Here, I feel compelled to share an anecdote. My early career was spent in industrial relations in the UK and later in the US. In one of the plants I was responsible for there was an ongoing dispute about employees leaving early. The unions having vociferously denied this, we set up video cameras. Indeed, there were employees leaving early … but they were all "supervisors." We were guilty of being trapped by unhelpful assumptions. In the culture conversation, care should be taken not to categorise people, fall into the trap of bias, and/or be held captive by assumptions based on mental preconditioning.

Culture is made up of: artifacts (what you can observe, what is overt and obvious); the organization's underpinning values[2] (the pre-determined behaviours to influence how

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2   It's important not to confuse the organization's values with personal values. The former should be seen as "guiding principles." The notion, as some preach, that you can align the way the organization acts with the personal values of the people who work there may have merit in a truly homogeneous society but in a multi-cultural environment it is an impossible dream.

people make decisions – especially key leaders); and mindset (how people see the world, what they believe to be true). Two central factors are important to understand. One: the country in which the organization sits has a profound impact on the culture. A business that operates in both Canada and the US that, to all intents and purposes, looks the same will, in subtle ways, be quite different, especially when it comes to the implementation of new ways to be. Two: culture change that does not seek to address/reframe mindset is likely to be found wanting. It's not enough to know what's next … those involved in the change have to **believe**. See **Figure Two**, The Orxestra Change Model, at the end of the text (page 38).

Key question(s): If I was to visit one of the more difficult parts of the organization to get to, as I walked around, what would the environment tell me about the culture?

The Building BLOCKS

Culture is a System

Working on culture demands rigour. By way of example, it's essential to challenge views and opinions that trivialise culture. Culture is a dynamic system and, like any system, only as strong as its weakest part. Think of a clock (a fixed, mechanical system). If a piece is missing, no matter how well the rest of the clock fits together, it won't work.

Interventions that focus on only part of what culture represents (e.g., purpose, values, strategy)[3] can create the illusion that all is moving ahead meaningfully but the unintended consequences – of not considering all of the elements that shape culture – will almost certainly lead to commercial frustration.

This is not to suggest that you can work on everything at once. Initially, address those issues/processes that will create the greatest cultural impact, but keep all of the others in focus. Think about the last time you took a family photograph. Mom and Dad were at the centre but you needed to ensure that all of the kids were also in the picture.

In facilitating/introducing the culture conversation (especially at the top of the house), the following building blocks (of culture as a dynamic system) are important to understand.

1. Culture is the often overlooked, all-pervasive, enterprise-wide, changing, organizational DNA that dictates whether your strategy lands … or if your brand sustains. It's "a way to be" shaped by the past but continuously influenced by the emerging business, social, economic, political, technology and competitive context. Keep in mind that, although Uber and Airbnb are nominally in the taxi and hotel business, the reason that they have been able to reinvent the category is their innovative approach to the *knowledge of knowledge*. Think Bloomberg – not Hilton.

    The business does not (cannot) live in a bubble. The organization's culture will change whether you want it to or not. The problem? The overwhelming majority of organizations that find themselves playing "catch-up" … never do actually catch

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3   This is in no way takes anything away from the power of a compelling purpose, the need for meaningful values and/or the focus derived from a well thought through strategy.

up. Simply put: if the culture conversation isn't, in no small measure, focused on serving/creating tomorrow's customer, you are doing it wrong. In recognising the unprecedented upheaval that society is facing, that statement applies, no less, to the public sector.

Unless your name happens to be Steve Jobs, managing the culture from the inside-out is the commercial equivalent of driving down a busy highway wearing a blindfold. Xerox, Nokia, Northern Telecom, Kodak, Blackberry, Lehman Brothers, the record industry, Blockbuster, Carrefour, the Australian banking sector, British Home Stores, MoviePass, Google Glass and retail businesses reliant on "bricks" come to mind. In terms of their attempts to cheat the public regarding their emissions controls, you might want to add Volkswagen to the list.[4]

2. There are four essential, supporting pillars of culture: (1) Mission/compelling purpose (why do we do what we do?); (2) Diversity (diversity fuels innovation); (3) Brand (why buy from us?); and (4) Speed (**F**ocus – **A**nticipation – **S**implicity – **T**echnology). The four pillars act like the foundation of a house. If they are poorly constructed nothing will stand for very long. And ignore one and constantly recycling the past is the best that can be hoped for.

Purpose. Employees want their work to be meaningful; for their contribution to make a difference. They need to see the sightlines between what they do and who benefits. And the flatter the organization, the more agility is demanded, the further from the decision-making core of the business key employees are – the more important a compelling purpose becomes. You can't just conjure up "purpose." It's not the outcome of a weekend retreat (video conference). The "why we do this" has to be authentic, aligned with the brand promise, factored into how leaders make decisions and as clear to everyone concerned as the name on the masthead. Without a meaningful "why," the underpinning tenets of engagement and inclusion – intrinsic motivation, self-directed learning, loyalty, attraction and retention – are subject to how strong and from where the commercial winds happen to be blowing on any particular day. In the culture conversation, exploring "Why do we do what we do?" is the behavioural base camp in any attempt to move the organization

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4   Volkswagen's enormous diesel emissions cheating cost the company $18 billion in 2015 alone. VW lost far more than money, however. Reputation, once lost, is very difficult – if not impossible – to reclaim.

to higher ground. And, don't be surprised if those in key leadership roles have difficulty articulating the purpose.

Diversity. Why is diversity a cultural pillar? For a system to even sustain itself, it needs at least as much internal variety as exists in the environment in which it sits (context).[5] It's also the best way to purge the organization of institutionalised bias. To that end, culture is a container for diversity. If you look around your organization[6] or team and, for the most part, the people all look, think[7] and sound the same, know that you are ill-equipped for a changing world; for a business environment where creative tension and new ways to think are the lifeblood of tomorrow's success.

Brand. Marketing is the organization's lighthouse in the dark. Social media is the digital sheepdog that drives potential customers to your website. A winning brand answers a fundamental question, "Why should you buy from us?" Every single interaction with a client and/or potential client either reinforces or dilutes the brand message: **B**etter **R**esults **A**nd **N**o **D**isappointment. A winning brand is far more than a promise to the customer. Brand is the organization's culture brought to life. It's the organization's story simply told. If emotionally invested in that story, even when advised that there are better products/services out there, the buyer will continue to work with the supplier. Most important of all … if your brand doesn't live inside your own business … it cannot live in the marketplace.

If there is one thing that emerged at the start of the coronavirus it is that … every crisis represents an opportunity. An opportunity, that is, to show that you care! Appearing to care for your customers is an empty promise if you don't care – and show you care – about every member of your team. Product quality, similarly, counts for naught if quality of work life isn't a central plank in how every member of the team is treated. Key questions in the culture conversation. One: "Why do today's customers choose you?" Two: "How will that change in future and, specifically, what are you doing to meet those emerging needs?"

Speed. If your development cycle, lead times, speed to market and/or response to service concerns fall below the competition's offering, you don't have a problem … you have a crisis. Meanwhile, while you are still dealing with the shock of Amazon suddenly becoming a competitor, they are working aggressively to not only do what you do but to do it ever-faster.

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5   The Law of Requisite Variety, as formulated in 1956 by Ross Ashby (1903-1972), an English psychiatrist and a pioneer in cybernetics.

6   Especially at the top of the house and/or at the Board level.

7   Cognitive diversity.

Technology might well be thought of as a cultural pillar. Indeed, in a tech business it undoubtedly is. In a more traditional business, because the same technology is available to all, technology, although a critical culture driver, is not an underlying culture pillar. See #4.

3. The four pillars are braced – they are made stronger – by the organization's values. An organization without values is a ship without a rudder.[8] Values give people permission to act. They shape how decisions get made. They have primacy in making hiring, promotion and/or succession decisions. The values represent the CEO's and top team's leadership point of view. Co-creating the values – involving as many people as possible in drawing up the values – sounds like a good idea but there is a reason the expression "a camel is a horse designed by a committee" came into being. Ask, involve, confer and listen but don't abdicate.[9] That said, the organization's values must hold meaning for all of the stakeholders, especially the customer. Purpose without values is to understand the "why" but make the "how" up as you go. Diversity without values is confusion. Brand without values is "manipulation." Speed without values is an accident that hasn't yet happened. Culture conversation questions? One: "Describe a key decision you made recently where the organization's values were integral to that decision? Two: "Who was separated in the past year because he/she didn't live the organization's values?"

4. The four pillars, when married to the organization's values, frame the context – the broad cultural canvas if you like. The most impactful brush strokes on that canvas – the "culture drivers" – being: vision and strategy; measurement and rewards; the talent management system (e.g., who gets hired and/or promoted, the leadership development agenda); and technology (quickly becoming an irresistible force). Indeed, in a tech company it would be hard to ignore technology as one of the supporting culture pillars.

It was not the intent to do a deep dive into technology here. There are several important questions that come to the fore, however. What is the strategy regarding the organization's digital direction? What is the future potential for AI in the business? What is the organization's policy on security and privacy? Is the technology being developed in line with the organization's values? How is technology being employed to better understand who buys the company's products/services and why? How is data governance enacted? Does the organization design support/ fully enable the emerging technology?

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8 A good many organizations have values but, in many cases, they represent little more than window-dressing for their website.

9 To avoid the confusion between personal and organizational values, it's often a good idea to refer to the latter as "guiding principles."

5. Bringing the intended culture to life means working on: structure; product design; core processes; how people learn (learning how to learn, speed of learning); candour; and the nature and degree of freedom to act (how decisions get made and who makes them).

6. A "cultural anchor" is so called because it describes behaviour that, unless reframed with tomorrow in mind, puts a brake on progress. If the "culture anchors" aren't addressed, stasis is assured. Prominent amongst the things that will hold the organization back are: behaviour at the top of the house that is misaligned with tomorrow's culture;[10] mindset; myth;[11] metaphor; not letting go (as needed) of past history; symbolism; language; and storytelling.

7. In any conversation around culture, language isn't important … it's everything. Our mind works in a very specific way. Language creates imagery and imagery shapes our behaviour. Same old language … same old behaviour. The choice of language is, thus, essential. Although it's part of the established leadership lexicon, it's not always helpful to talk about "culture change." Imagine this scene: a new leader stands up at an all-staff meeting and tells those gathered, "We have to change the culture." First, the language used is both threatening and disrespectful to those who have invested part of themselves in making the workplace the way it is. Second, "change" implies being one thing one day and something very different the next. Culture evolves, we shape culture, we "align" how we work together with tomorrow's value proposition. We reimagine tomorrow's success, share that vivid imagery and then find meaning for all of those involved.

8. A vibrant and meaningful culture supports two value propositions. One: why you should buy from us. Two: why you should work here. Of the two, the latter is the more important. Without employee support; without commitment; without a culture that provides meaning, aligns capability with opportunity, delivers freedom to act and is customer-centric – the customer-facing value proposition amounts to little more than marketing hype, manipulation and/or relationship management. Adding, rather than creating value. Making the sale, not making the customer's business better.

9. Story is culture and culture is story. Everything outlined about culture so far folds into and supports the organization's story. See **Figure One**. At the end of the day,

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10 What leaders do is far more important than anything they might say. Top leaders throw a **much** bigger shadow than they realise.

11 An example of a myth that had a profound impact on culture was the notion that Donald Trump, in that he was a "successful" businessman, would make a great President. There is no evidence – in fact the research contradicts the view – that being successful in business equates to being an effective politician. Churchill was a terrible businessperson and Lincoln was no better.

customers don't buy your product or service; they make the purchasing decision based on whether or not they connect with your story. The dilemma? Even if you have a great story, you have to know how to share it. And it's not just sales that suffer from a poorly told story. Recruitment, retention and everything that falls in between are less than they might be if "the story" lacks authenticity with those the organization depends on most. And the individual whose role it is to surface, protect, share and nurture that story? The CEO and, by implication, his/her team. The CEO is the storyteller-in-chief, whose primary role is to breathe life into the organization's culture – present and future – every single day. To lead is to inspire. And in a departure from our past allegiance to shareholder capital – in the stakeholder environment we are moving into – to inspire means moving beyond simply employing the head and engaging the hand. It means also engaging the heart and enriching the spirit. Especially, to engage the heart and enrich the spirit.

10. Addressing the white space on the organization chart – the informal organization – completes the picture. That white space isn't a vacuum; it's full of noise – a cacophony of often confused and conflicting babble that you need on your side. If trust is missing not only are missteps magnified but the malcontents and

Figure One

miscreants gain the airtime needed to manipulate their peers. If you don't manage the informal organization, it will manage you!

Successful organizations don't work on culture simply because it appears to be the right thing to do. Outstanding leaders focus on culture because they understand that what they do today determines whether or not the business will win tomorrow. From a leadership perspective we are describing two essential, twenty-first century leadership competencies. The first is "cultural reach" – the ability to work successfully in very different cultures on the same day; the capacity to introduce, as needed, a range of strategic scenarios, structures, processes, measurement tools, leadership approaches and team interventions.

The second essential leadership competency is "culture savvy." Without curiosity we negate the ability to challenge our own thinking. When the status quo remains undisturbed, opportunity remains unfulfilled. As a species we are copying machines. What we observe shapes what we do. How we act shapes what others do. We capture "what's possible" through the metaphor(s) we introduce. We navigate the way forward through the stories we share. A compelling symbol cuts through the clutter.

A great question makes people think slower, in order that they can act faster. Where humility is missing, a helping hand comes across as hubris. Until we listen to others – really listen – we can't listen to ourselves. Without reflection there is no learning. When we coach others, we tap into the best of who we are. In affirming others, we give them permission to act. Wisdom is insight tempered by experience. To address ambiguity without wisdom is to court confusion without capability.

The term "inspiration" comes from the Latin *spiritus* – to breathe life into. Successful leaders breathe life into tomorrow's culture every day, in *every* way. Responding to that challenge may well be the single most important thing that a leader does.

We used to talk about management being about the "hard stuff" (a focus on results) and the "soft stuff" (everything to do with people). Well, we have entered an era where the soft stuff is now the hard stuff.

Key question(s): Beyond what is already happening, what would it take for the culture conversation to become a cornerstone in the organization's competitive advantage?

Is the Organization MANAGING Its Culture?

An Organization Doesn't Have a Culture, It is Its Culture

Is the organization in question currently "managing its culture?" The simple answer to that lies in the degree to which people from across the organization can answer five central questions.[12]

1. Where is the organization heading (critical, strategic priorities)?

2. Why do we do what we do (compelling purpose)?

3. What are the organization's values and can you give an example of a recent decision that was shaped by those values?

4. What makes the organization special (unique capability)?

5. How does the organization make a difference in society (giving back, the environment, building bridges to the local community)?

Who to ask? Clearly you want the top team to be in agreement. The acid test, however, is how middle managers respond. If they are not all on the same page, culture is, at best, an afterthought.

Who owns the culture? When I ask this in culture workshops the responses tend to be "everyone," "the top team" or "the CEO." My own response would have been along similar lines until we brought a puppy into our home. A cute little guy. What was difficult to ignore was his attachment to my wife. Wherever she went, along went the puppy. Why? The answer is simple: she feeds him. This begs the question, who "feeds" the bulk of the workforce? The answer: middle management. The most important group in the organization when it comes to actually delivering the needed culture? Middle management.

The dilemma here is that if one views engagement scores from both sides of the Atlantic, the group that is least engaged — middle managers. It's a group that, taken overall, is disappointed, disengaged, disheartened and discouraged. And when it comes to culture, if you don't get middle managers on board … no one is on board.

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12 The five questions posed are just as meaningful to a small consulting firm as they are to a multinational.

Why have middle managers become disconnected? Top leaders have forgotten the basic law of gravity: effluent flows downhill. And after the best part of a generation of downsizing, rightsizing and upside-down–sizing – where the "Middle Kingdom" is constantly asked to do more with less – the typical supervisor is standing knee deep in it. There is a simple message here. "Invest your next dollar, euro, pound, whatever, in the training, education and coaching of the one group that 'owns' the culture." Paraphrasing Winston Churchill, "Give them the tools and let them get on with the job."[13]

You can't meaningfully impact the role of middle managers without asking, "Are all of the communication channels – especially those preferred by employees who inhabit the informal organization – fully brought into play?"

The only time the formal hierarchy dominates the informal organization is for a brief time every 29th of February. And never before lunch. Perpetuated through a need for inclusion, self-protection and loyalty to one's immediate group, fluid and highly adaptable informal networks are remarkably effective. Lack of attention to these networks (informal communication channels) is a problem in progress.

Three issues are vital here. The first is the extent to which the business builds bridges to the organization's informal leaders. The second is to recognise that traditional, corporate-sponsored, trickle-down communication is like going into the fray armed only with a water

13 Churchill's Give Us The Tools speech. February 9th, 1941.

pistol when those who would seek a different outcome (malcontents and cynics) come armed with a fire hose (social media). The third is to act on the knowledge that millennials now make up at least half of the workforce.

An organization doesn't have a culture, it is its culture. Is the use of social media, blogs, interactive technology and any other means effective enough to provide the organization with a voice loud enough to interrupt the communication pollution that we are all drowning in? Is the "why" that points to tomorrow's culture clear? With a big enough "why" you can change the world. Where that "why" is missing, more of the same is the best that can be hoped for.

Leadership is a dream with a deadline.[14] Is that dream alive and well across the organization? In town hall meetings, is tomorrow's culture brought to life in the room? Are story, imagery and metaphor seen as invaluable leadership skills? Do the company's reception area, lunchroom, website, training sessions grab people emotionally? Do they capture the company's story? Do they remind front-line workers that without satisfied customers there would be no business? Do they build pride in what makes the organization successful? If not, there is work to do.

Key questions(s): How would those in the middle of the organization respond to the five questions outlined in paragraph one. Unsure? In an informed way? Consistently? How can middle managers be educated, trained, involved, supported and inspired in order that they will be able to successfully deliver their central role in creating tomorrow's culture?

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14 This is attributed to numerous sources. I first came across it from, the late, Warren Bennis.

What Makes the BUSINESS SPECIAL?

How Do We Make Money?

Culture isn't an adjunct, a sideshow or a sandbox for those with a love for all things abstract. Culture is real, practical and central to what makes a business endure. For the business to sustain, the culture has to attract top talent, retain outstanding leaders, provide the agility needed for different strategic scenarios to be realised, create the space for innovation, move best practice across the organization, accelerate learning, nurture risk, empower those closest to the customer to make key decisions, ensure that the environment is a priority and align the organization's resources with why the customer buys – today **and tomorrow**.

A business exists primarily to create tomorrow's customer.[15] Profit is obviously important but it's ultimately an outcome of delivering a winning value proposition. The organization's culture delivers both the *outward-looking* (why buy from us?) and the *inward-facing* (why work for us?) value propositions. Of the two, the latter is the more important.

If the customer-facing brand promise doesn't live inside the organization it can't live in the marketplace. If employees don't support the organization's promise within the customer space it matters not how strong the product or service offering is. As identified earlier, brand simply means **B**etter **R**esults **A**nd **N**o **D**isappointment. A disappointed employee = a disappointed customer. And based on the business sector, the multiplier effect (number of customers a market-facing employee can influence) may well be 50, 100 or even 1,000 to one.

If the inward-facing value proposition is found wanting, expect to spend more money on employee churn than on innovation; expect to lose your best people to a competitor who does have a culture that people connect with. In the complex equation that defines excellence in talent management, nothing is more important than an environment that builds a sense of belonging.

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15 Peter Drucker.

It's easy to become obsessed about "what we need to do differently." Indeed, the enthusiasm to create "the new" can easily obscure elements of the culture that have historically made (and currently make) the business successful. A man who doesn't read is no better off than the man who can't read. And an organization that loses touch with what makes it special is no better off than an organization that doesn't have anything that makes it special.

If you don't know what makes the business successful – assuming it's central to future success – you can't protect it. Why do people buy what we deliver? Why do our best people stay? What is our core competency? What has made us successful to this point? What is our distinct point of differentiation? What do we do that the competition doesn't? What is sacrosanct? How do we make money? And the answer to that last question isn't always clear.

Beginnings start with endings. Change is about letting go. In the culture conversation, the history that you need to move away from is always an important consideration. That said, if your business has been around for a while and you are still standing, something special brought you this far.

In extended culture workshops, to surface what participants hold dear, I ask teams to express their feelings/insights using images captured beforehand on individual smart phones. I also suggest, as part of that preparation, that they use their imagination. If it's an emotion or a concept, I prompt them to draw a simple sketch and take a picture of it. If it's a specific individual or team, I ask them to take a picture of that person/team. A unique product, a notice board, a letter from a customer, kids' pictures in the lunchroom … nothing is off limits.

In small groups, participants share and discuss the pre-printed images. They identify the six or seven images that carry the most meaning for the group. A plenary session follows. The resulting montage of images – often filling one wall – provides the backcloth to a unique and important conversation. One insight that often emerges, however, is that what those at the top suggest makes the business special isn't always what those on the front line take pride in.

None of this is to suggest that the organization's distinct competitive advantage is written in stone. Today's winning offering is often tomorrow's commodity. And customers certainly don't want a broader offering if it takes away from excellence in what you do best.

Key question(s): As you move forward on the culture journey, what attributes of past success are you working to retain? How have you identified what those key attributes are? What are you doing to nurture/protect/evolve what it is that makes you special?

One Culture or MANY?

Being Different But Being the Same

Is it possible for an organization to have only one culture? In a multidivisional organization, it can be assumed that the different divisions will have somewhat different cultures. It's also the case that, even within the same division, the likelihood is that there will be sub-cultures (manufacturing vs. sales). And in the network organization, different entities that do the same thing may well work *(successfully)* very differently. An international dimension only complicates things further. Where the businesses are very different there may well be a case to take a portfolio approach.

The assumption that different business entities – regardless of location, history, clock speed, product and/or customer base – should behave/operate in the same way is undesirable and unworkable. That does not mean that a degree of "oneness" cannot be achieved. A common, compelling purpose, shared values, an overall push for diversity, inclusion, being customer-driven, a mutual philosophy around collaboration, the discipline that goes into talent acquisition, support for the local community, the need for candour, pooled best-practice and leaders who care can all build "sameness" while still recognising the value of "difference." Conversely, attempts to enforce one approach with regards to, for example, compensation and/or talent management can create a degree of coercive tension that is less than helpful. "Tight – loose" is a useful metaphor.

Being "different but being the same" is found in African drumming. Firstly, the "ensemble" will be made up of different drums. At the same time, complex, changing and complementary rhythms can be heard from groups of different players. What brings it all together? What makes it work? Dominating everything is a bass drum that beats out the

time. Played by a master/lead drummer, the bass beats out a meta rhythm that all of the other drummers follow. Think harmony and not alignment.

A variation on the need to embrace different cultures is found in, what can best be described as, "parallel structures." A design engineer works within the established structure four days a week, but on the fifth he/she is given freedom to create customer value outside of any established goals, traditional boundaries and/or direct supervision (3M). An assembly line worker works a regular eight to four shift. Other than to stop the line when there is a quality or safety issue, he/she has little personal discretion. At the end of the shift, however, he/she joins a team of colleagues to "improve/change" the processes that dictate how they work during the course of the day (Toyota). Don't expect people to innovate if they have to work in a straitjacket. If you hire the best, if you have a stable of thoroughbreds, you have to let them run free, for at least part of the time.

Moving beyond the parallel structure we have the "alternative structure." Tomorrow **will** be different. We know we have to organize and approach delivering value for the customer differently but we can't simply throw all the cards up in the air and start again. And how do we move forward if we can't change everything at once? The answer? The "innovation garage" – a carefully chosen part of the business is parked separately to the rest of the organization. The goal? With tomorrow's customer in mind, explore and experiment with: (1) what it means to be customer-driven; (2) tomorrow's organization design; (3) future technology; and (4) the most effective way to work. In other words, create tomorrow's culture, today.

Attempts to build "one culture" may be a forlorn hope but it's important to identify and understand the different cultures involved. Measurement is a case in point. "Exactly what are we measuring?" See Chapter Seven.

Key question(s): Do you have one culture or many and, if the latter, how do you manage that difference?
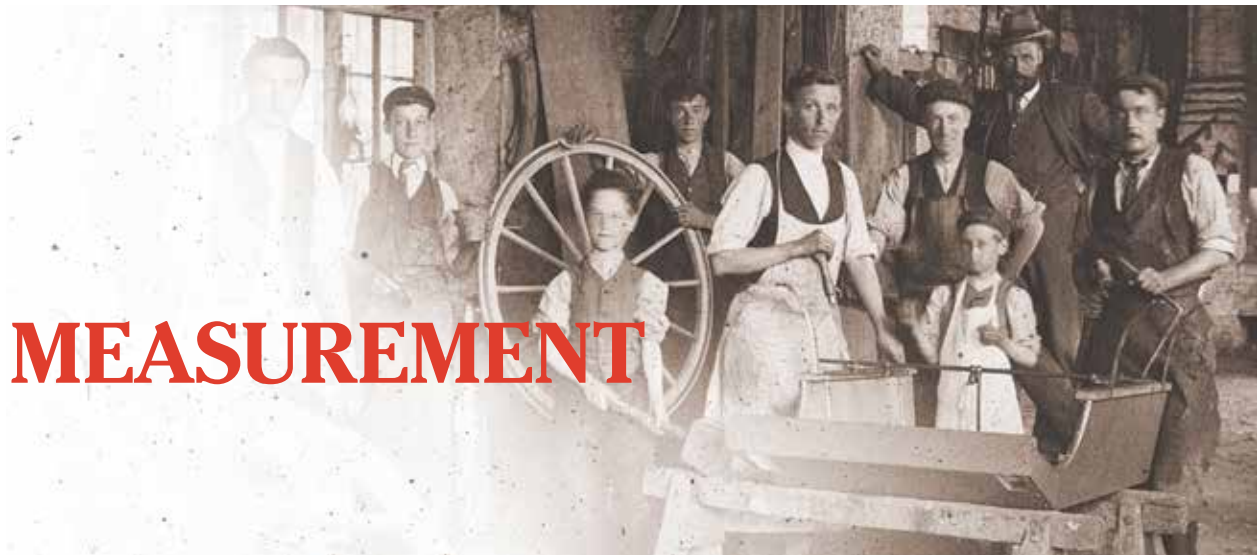
MEASUREMENT

Movement Without Measurement is Momentum Without Meaning

Historically, there have been three levels of change: (1) transactional – do more of what we have always done better; (2) transitional change – significant change but we have time to evolve; and (3) transformational change – reinvention and do it now. A fourth – exponential change – is knocking loudly on the door.[16] The latter is a series of continuous step changes, where each step is significantly greater in scope and intensity than the one that went before. Any successful change agenda that moves beyond being better at what you have always done is, literally, about changing the culture. The engine of that change? A leader who first knows how to successfully introduce the culture conversation.

How important is culture measurement? You can't manage what you don't measure. If you don't know where you're going … don't be surprised if you don't get there. No less problematical, it's difficult to raise the bar if you don't know how high it is. Think of it this way – not measuring culture is to buy something online with the assumed belief that if you didn't choose the size it will, nevertheless, fit you when it arrives. Without measurement, culture drift can be assumed.

In the culture conversation, it's important to relatively quickly capture the culture the organization has today (roots) and the culture that is **needed** (wings) for the firm to be successful in the future (two years out being a meaningful time-frame). A measure of culture that identifies today's culture but doesn't clearly capture where you need to be is just another way to say, "We know where we are, but other than that, we are pretty well lost."

Intellectually appealing as many of the sociological, linguistic and approaches focusing on values congruency may be, if the cultural journey isn't described in business terms, the top team – keeping in mind that most senior teams have a notoriously short attention span –

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16 Exponential change as it applies to developing technology describes today's reality. As it applies to *implementing* technology it is something of a modern myth. No matter how quickly new technology becomes available there will be a needed lag time for society to catch up. Think of a series of sigmoid curves and not a straight line. In supermarkets around the world, although autonomous technology to totally replace hundreds of thousands of check-out employees (cashiers) has been around for a number of years, it has yet to be implemented.

will quickly move on to the next topic. To wit, language that sounds as if it belongs in a third-year psychology class belongs in a third-year psychology class.

Today's level of unprecedented uncertainty, meanwhile, demands a culture that is both strong and agile (StrAgility).[17] Strong enough to build commitment to the culture the organization needs moving forward. Agile enough to "enable" the right change scenarios to unfold. In addition to measurement, a "strong" culture draws on: a compelling purpose; the organization's values; ensuring that "the customer" sits in every meeting;[18] a sense of urgency; middle managers who connect strategy with action; tough-mindedness when demanded; and clear goals supported by the discipline of delivery.

"Agility," meanwhile, draws on: trust; diversity; inclusion; the right organization design; an ethos of innovation;[19] psychological safety of the team; ongoing coaching; appropriate freedom to act; a risk-orientation; and leaders who know how to work at the level of mindset. As to the future, only an optimist standing on stilts would dare to even imagine that things are going to slow down any time soon.

It's not a matter of one-size-fits-all.[20] A conversation with the Board benefits from its own way to shape the conversation – and thus measure – the organization's culture. Working with the top team, similarly, must be approached differently. Assessing culture as central to talent acquisition? Here we are describing a third type of measurement. And when it comes to company-wide assessment of culture – again, its own measurement approach is necessary. See one such assessment of culture starting on page 41.

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17 "StrAgility" is a word created by the author to describe the emerging culture challenge.

18 With the customer in mind, I like the notion of having an empty chair at every meeting. A card with "the customer" printed on it, in front of the empty chair, acting as a constant reminder that being anything other than customer-driven isn't an option.

19 Innovation = curiosity x dissatisfaction with the status quo x creativity (conceptual and/or experimental) x propensity for risk x speed of learning.

20 We have evolved several unique and proprietary ways to measure culture. One approach works perfectly with the Board; a different process is perfect for the top team to go through (half-day Culture Workup); a third approach was designed for company-wide input; and a variation on the Culture Workup is central to culture fit in talent acquisition. For the new CEO, or the seasoned CEO who recognises that tomorrow's organization culture is a leadership imperative, the half-day, Culture Workup represents a one-of-a-kind opportunity.

The challenge implicit in any approach to measurement is to steer the conversation away from a discussion/assessment around an aspirational culture (what those involved would like to see … an easy trap to fall into) to one where the future being described is both pragmatic and meaningful. We **need** to make this change. Is the change outlined attainable? Are the priorities clear? Are the timelines outlined practical? Do we have the team to do this?

Key question(s): Movement without measurement is momentum without meaning. How do you measure culture?

Strategy VERSUS Culture

Culture Enables Strategy

How do strategy and culture complement each other? First, it's important to emphasise that in a world where today represents the fastest things have ever been – but the slowest they will ever be – it's untenable to think that strategy can drive culture. The new reality? "Culture enables strategy."

What does "enable" mean? It's a mistake to even think about developing a meaningful strategy until you have first identified the culture you need to compete successfully in the future. In a turbulent world, strategy is, at best, a work in progress. It represents agreed signposts on the journey but the organizational path you have to create and follow is ultimately defined by your culture.

It would be foolish to suggest that you don't need a strategy.[21] It's just that it must always be subordinate to, and informed by, the culture you need (not want) to create in the future. What will be around long after strategy has been shredded is your culture. The implications?

1. Although it's been a mainstay of academic teaching for several decades, it's a misstep to define the strategy and then ask, "What sort of culture do we need to land the strategy?" If you seek to change the culture every time you have to revisit the strategy, fail now … it will save time later.

2. When subordinate teams lack insight and commitment – strategy is less impactful than it *might be*. When peer teams lack emotional buy-in – strategy is less effective than it *should be*. But when **tomorrow's** culture doesn't enable it – strategy amounts to little more than what *could be*.

3. A "black swan" (unexpected and sweeping economic disruption) running into the road is assured. If strategy and culture collide there will be only one winner.

4. Competitive advantage is fleeting. Today's point of difference is what it will take tomorrow just to get in the game. The only truly sustainable competitive advantage is how quickly the organization learns (culture).

5. In a business climate marked by turbulence, the value of developing strategic scenarios is compelling.

Key question(s): What role does culture play in the business when developing a winning strategy?

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21 Not having a strategy is like standing on the first tee and not knowing where the hole is.

A Team of TEAMS

If You Don't Grow the People in the Business, You Can't Grow the Business

It is already evident that there is a significant disconnect between the opportunity digitalisation offers (cost, speed, productivity and agility) and a way to organize that has its roots in the last century (hierarchical structure). It took a third of a century for new organizational forms to emerge in the twentieth century and, in like vein, it's still not clear what lies ahead for organization design in this one. In the meantime, overtures suggesting that the immediate future lies with the absence of hierarchy, self-managed teams and a "boss-less" workplace should be labelled "adopting this could be extremely dangerous to your organization's health."[22]

As technology becomes ever more pervasive, the meta question becomes, "What is an organization?"[23] What is clear is that tomorrow's organization will be Flat, Fast, Focused, Flexible, Followership dominated, and Fertile (to new ideas). It will also be a team of teams. Teamwork has always been a critical issue in building a successful organization. Moving forward, it will be even more so. Work on culture poses the following questions:

1. If you don't grow the people in the business, you can't grow the business. Is the coaching that takes part on the team – especially when team members coach each other – informed by the culture the organization is working to create? How could you ensure that is the case?

2. Is it normal for team members, regardless of status, to challenge other team members if the way that a colleague behaves or if the actions suggested aren't supportive of the organization's values? What would it take for that to happen?

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22 Formal or not, all relationships are about power. Assumptions that power can be distributed equally are naïve. The organization's vision, investment decisions, agreement regarding the strategy, hiring top talent, succession and when to move the production offshore demand an established hierarchy. As we move forward, it might need to change, but hierarchy is part of our nature.

23 There is already speculation regarding the, so called, "Decentralised Autonomous Organization." It's the year 2030. Imagine a technology enabled, crowdfunded business with no bosses, no staff (other than external auditors) and no debt – that provides 24-hour uninterrupted service. Think of a fleet of autonomous vehicles supported by blockchain-backed agreements and where the vehicles check themselves in for repair and/or service.

3. Is the hiring process (external and internal) appropriately skewed to deliver "team fit" – short and longer term? What actions, if any, are needed?

4. You can't manage what you don't measure! Is there an effective and proven way to regularly assess team effectiveness? Is it recognised that when someone new joins the team there is, essentially, a new team? What do you need to do to ensure that new hires understand the culture the organization is moving towards?

5. In developing business, a transactional mindset leads the seller to ask him/herself, "How do we make money from this?" In developing *the* business, the seller asks him/herself, "How do I transform this sale into a long-term relationship? Is it understood that developing a lasting relationship with the customer is a team game? How will you create that mindset?

6. Beyond some form of collective osmosis, it's pretty difficult to grow and improve as a team if there is no agreement around what team success looks like. Do teams across the organization have both *performance* and *team success criteria*? The latter describing four to six "descriptors" – developed collectively by the team – that capture the behaviour needed for the team to be successful. Team success criteria

should be posted in the room where the team meets, reviewed at the end of every meeting and revisited when someone new joins the team. It's entirely misleading to suggest you can change the organization one person at a time. Changing the organization one team at a time, however, is both possible and essential. How and when will you introduce team success criteria? Note: in meetings that involve team members working from home, the suggestions in this paragraph are more important than ever.

7. Is creating/nurturing psychological safety (comfort with speaking out, candour, challenging the status quo, asking tough questions) a performance requirement for even the most junior team leader? How will you make that happen?

8. Is it clear that in much that can be described as "leadership," the leader works for the team? This also implies knowing when to lead and when to follow. What needs to change?

9. Is it understood that in the "art of change," nothing is more impactful than "catching people doing it right?" What will you start to do tomorrow to bring the spirit of affirmation to your leadership?

10. Is the difference between cooperation and collaboration fully understood? Cooperation is two or more people sharing a common goal and where the assumption is that all of the parties will share, more or less equally, in the value/benefit/profit accrued. Collaboration is two or more people, sharing a common goal, where the underlying assumption draws on a good deal of altruism – "your success is more important than mine." Cooperation is a perfectly good way to respond to the customer's immediate needs. Breakthrough thinking, reinventing the game, creating the market – demand collaboration. How will you nurture collaboration?

**Key question(s):** Beyond the obvious (the results), how do you measure team success?

Without LEADERSHIP You Ain't Got Much

Leaders Must Lead!

There is no substitute for inspirational leadership: someone who takes people where they otherwise would not go; who employs the head, empowers the hand, engages the heart and enriches the spirit; who builds a great team; who creates tomorrow in the room today; who is skilled in orchestrating "change." To those core attributes add resilience, digital savvy, coaching mastery and all that is implied by the F word (focus).

Here the waters are somewhat muddied by a past body of work defined as "change management." Its origins lie in a time before digitalisation, before ongoing disruption, before today's blazing speed of change and before the need to continuously reinvent possibility. Still an overriding theme in many organizations and, no doubt, invaluable in the past, it is a body of work that needs to be revisited.

Change *changes.* As a measure of how the world has moved on, in his best-selling book, *Good to Great* (2001), Jim Collins points out, "We were quite surprised that fully 80% of
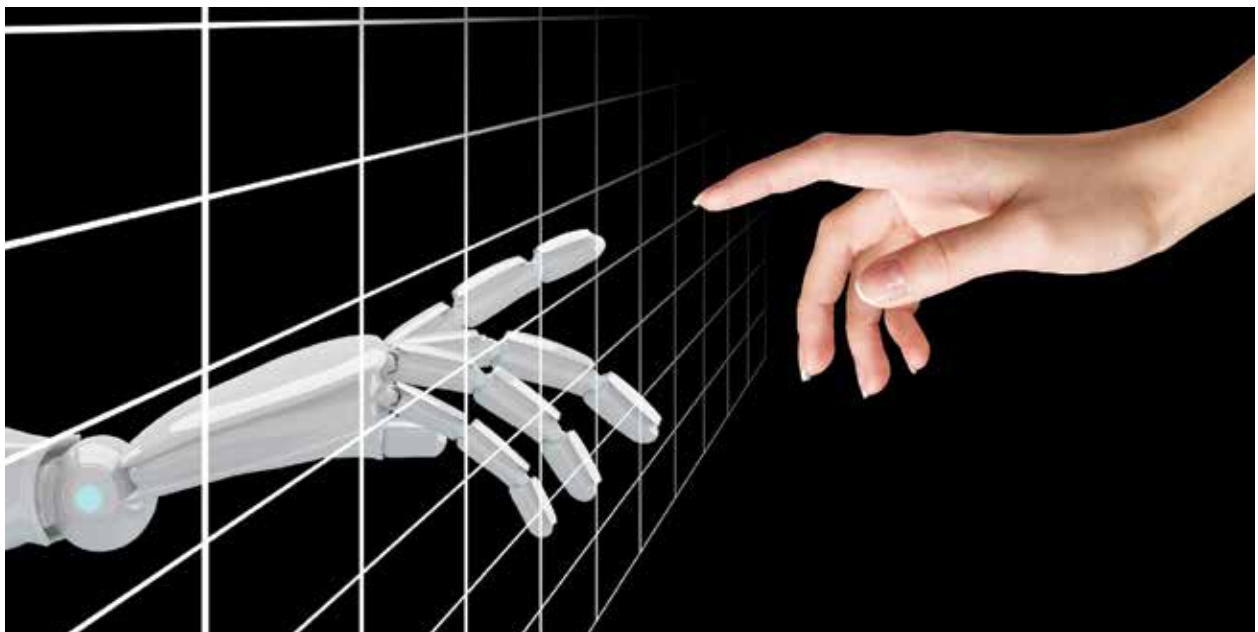
the good-to-great executives we interviewed didn't even mention technology as one of the top five factors in the transition."

Push technology aside today at your peril.[24] That is not to suggest – as many appear to do – that digitalisation/technology/AI, etc., are, on their own, a source of lasting competitive advantage. Culture is a dynamic system and technology an integral part of that system. Culture is the stage – technology one of the lead players. And sitting in the audience? The ever-vigilant customer.

The resilient nature of culture is that it is essentially a series of deeply enshrined habits.[25] And changing a habit doesn't happen overnight. Culture will thus, especially in the short-term, always have primacy. For that reason, launching new technology into a culture that doesn't fully support it is a pretty good way to destroy value. For example, although AI has the potential to move the business to a whole new level, implementation is lagging expectations. A 2019 *Harvard Business Review* article[26] notes, "Artificial intelligence is reshaping business – though not at the blistering pace many assume."   "Despite the promise of AI, many organizations' efforts are falling short."   As to why, the CIO 2020 executive survey reported the following – "disruptive technologies continue to represent a challenge for most companies, with 73.4% reporting an ongoing adoption challenge, and 90.9% citing cultural issues, including people and process, as the principal obstacles."

A further word about technology and change. Simon Sinec introduced us to his three concentric circles.[27] "What" being on the outside. "How" describing the middle circle. "Why" in the centre. Although in selling, framing their value proposition and in introducing change most leaders start from the outside-in (what we do), Sinec points out that truly inspirational leaders always start with why. In introducing breakthrough technology, organizations need to similarly start with a rich and compelling why. For an intervention that will, literally and irrevocably, change their lives – higher productivity, faster response times and/or a greater understanding of who buys the company's product and/or service are, on their own, a tough sell to the typical employee. Motivation without meaning is change without commitment.

Character is destiny.[28] There is a profound difference in the way the West views technological breakthrough and the underlying belief system in Japan. On both sides of the Atlantic, the message focuses on the tens of millions of jobs that will be lost. In Japan, technology is

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24 One need look no further than Boeing to see clear evidence of this.

25 "Changing the culture" means creating new habits. A new way to think about what it means to be a leader, reviewing the strategy, rebuilding trust, renewing the commitment to the organization's values, revisiting the performance management process, reframing the nature of candour, reworking the relationship with the customer, reinventing the organization (design), repositioning talent management, reengaging middle management, recalibrating the speed at which things happen, etc.

26 *Building the AI-Powered Organization.* November 2019.

27 *Start With Why* (2009).

28 From the Greek philosopher, Heraclitus

seen as an opportunity to reinvent society, to strip out soul-destroying jobs and to redirect labour into roles that have meaning and value. Two things shape this thinking. One: an aging workforce declining in size. It has shrunk 13% since 2000. Two: Shinto as an indigenous religion. In Shinto, all things – animate and inanimate – are imbued with a spirit – including rocks and robots. Robots aren't merely mechanical objects equipped with advanced software; they are viewed as a natural and readily accepted part of the world around us. If you visit a bank in Japan expect to be served by a robot.
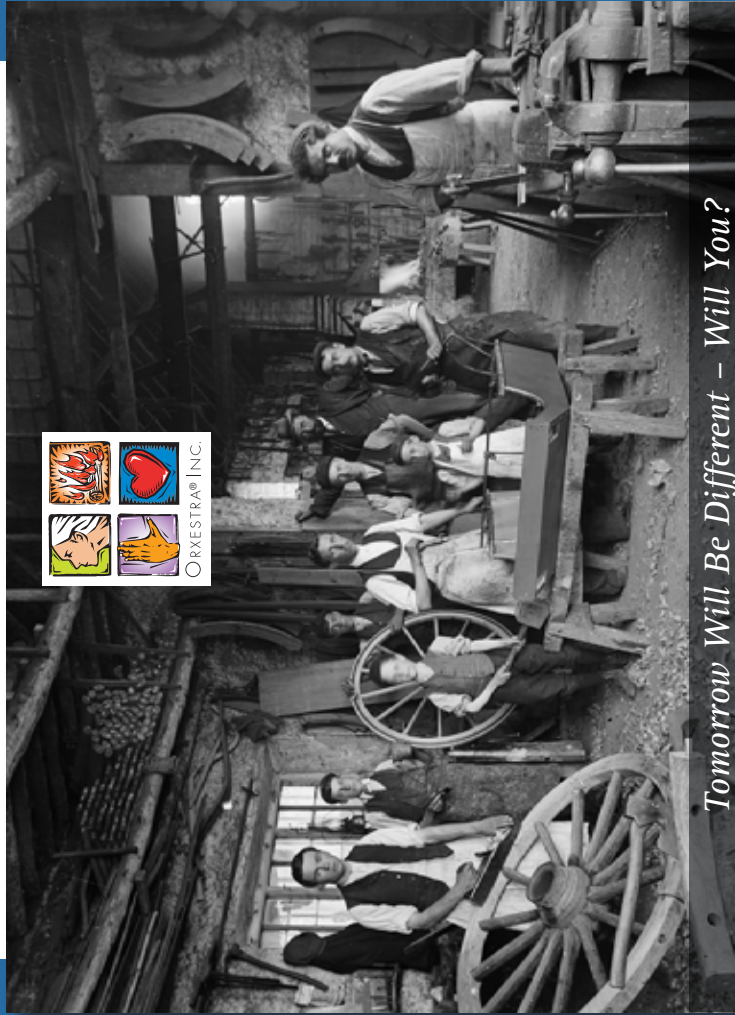
And what does a great *why* sound like? I recently asked a group of young executives in a bionics company in Toronto why they do what they do. They answered, "To make the wheelchair redundant." Where do I sign up?

None of this takes anything away from the value of a holistic template (model) – one that captures how all of the various elements of change come together. Indeed, the further you venture into the upper levels of management, the greater the degree to which *learning how to learn* comes to the fore. Provide that map but recognise that leaders must lead. Acknowledge that leaders, real leaders, do lead!

With the above in mind, see the Orxestra Change Model (Figure Two, page 38). Note the five key elements that are invariably missing from traditional change management practice: (1) The power of context; (2) Change must be future oriented and driven from the outside-in (e.g., tomorrow's customer); (3) The need for measurement; (4) the role of technology; and (5) speed of learning.

Key question(s): Assuming a focus on a successful tomorrow involves a degree of change – in all probability a significant degree of change – what interventions, processes and ways to move forward describe how that change will be enacted?

Knowing is not enough ... you have to BELIEVE!

"In a complex and turbulent world, to lead is to be in the emotional transportation business."

Tomorrow Will Be Different – Will You?

(Wider context + what will the customer be prepared to pay for tomorrow + dissatisfaction with the status quo + measure the culture we have and the culture we need + technology, innovation, structure, processes, talent and leadership needed to get there) x speed of learning

"Speed of learning is the only truly sustainable competitive advantage."

John O. Burdett © 2021

Figure Two

"An organization
doesn't have a culture,
it is its culture."

ORXESTRA® INC.

CULTURE ASSESSMENT

Creating tomorrow's culture, **TODAY.**

TRANSEARCH
YOUR WORLD PARTNER IN EXECUTIVE SEARCH

John O. Burdett

ORXESTRA® INC.

Coming Out Of This
CRISIS STRONGER

Assessment

There is a veritable plethora of advice about how to get through this crisis. These suggestions tend to run along the lines of, "How do we manage our way through this?" It's a great question. The dilemma? It's incomplete.

A follow-up, complementary, strategic (leadership) question will, in the fullness of time, prove to be even more important, "How do we come out of this crisis stronger?" We can assume that the majority of established businesses will find their way through this. The winners – those who steal a march on the competition – will be those that seize the opportunity to build a more competitive/agile business model.

There are three levels of "getting stronger" as a business: (1) addressing issues that are clear and obvious – overt behaviour, systems and/or processes; (2) why things happen – established habits, what does it mean to be a team, the role of the informal organization, what has primacy when it comes to decision-making; (3) mindset – the thought process people access to shape their reality. Together they define the "organization's culture."

Moving beyond today's crisis isn't simply about having a better plan. To come out of this stronger you need to think differently about the business that will emerge. The organization culture we shape will determine not only what is possible but, more importantly, what becomes possible! The assessment draws out today's culture (roots) and the culture needed (wings) to create and initiate tomorrow's success, today.

When we are through this – and we will get through it – how do you want to be remembered? As a "me too" manager who endorsed the status quo ... or a leader who made the business stronger? Following the band ... or enhancing your own brand?

Tomorrow Will Be Different – Will You?

Go through the assessment either individually or with your team. Review the assessment with two central questions in mind. "Where are we today on the 5-1-5 scale?" And using the same scale, "Where do we need (not want) to be?"

Consider, which descriptor best describes where your organization is today? Score (X) to capture your level of agreement with that statement (5, 4, 3, 2, or 1). A "5" suggests you strongly agree. Repeat to describe where you believe you need to be (✓). How far you look into the future is a factor of the business sector you are in. A good default assumption, however, would be 24 months. It is quite possible, that on any single question, where you are is where you need to be.

In thinking through "Where do we need to be?" consider the following:

- What did you learn from the Covid crisis?

- What is special about your business that you must retain?

- What do tomorrow's customers want to buy and how do they want to buy it?

- What would it take to attract the customers that are currently out of reach?

- What would it take to attract and retain the very best people?

- Digitalisation isn't simply a matter of investing in technology. How are you going to "rewire" the organization in order that you optimize the return on investment from that technology?

- What do you need to do to become more agile?

- What will it take to move faster?

It is also important to ask: "Do we have the leadership in place to make this happen?" "Are all of those in pivotal roles totally committed to this degree of change?" After going through the assessment (including any "From What to What?" dimensions you may have added) identify: 1. What elements of today's culture are critical to tomorrow's success (Roots); and 2. The five to seven key changes demanded if we are to start to create tomorrow's culture, today (Wings). More than seven will make the challenge overwhelming.

Joining the points that describe where we are and, similarly, joining the points that describe where we need to be, will give a very helpful, visual "map" of the cultural journey.

Tomorrow Will Be Different – Will You?

From What To **What?**

1. We have a history where performance slippage has become acceptable.

   5 4 3 2 1 2 3 4 5

   Across the organization, nothing less than performance excellence is acceptable.

2. Our vision is clear to those at the top but has less impact as we move down the organization.

   5 4 3 2 1 2 3 4 5

   Those who meet the customer every day understand and totally buy into our vision.

3. If they deliver results, we tend to tolerate those who don't always consistently live our values.

   5 4 3 2 1 2 3 4 5

   Regardless of level, we confront and, where no change occurs, move out those who don't consistently live our values.

4. People don't always feel free to speak up.

   5 4 3 2 1 2 3 4 5

   Even using a digital platform, team members feel free to speak up.

5. Because we lack a common purpose, teams and individuals have to find their own reason to be.

   5 4 3 2 1 2 3 4 5

   The "Why we do what we do" is clear. A compelling purpose underscores everything we do.

6. Our values amount to little more than a statement of intent that few buy into.

   5 4 3 2 1 2 3 4 5

   Our values are current, relevant and the bedrock of tomorrow's success.

7. Our leadership ranks are dominated by one gender and/or those with a similar background.

   5 4 3 2 1 2 3 4 5

   Recognising that it positively impacts business performance, we take every opportunity to build a diverse workforce – starting at the top.

8. We have a traditional, linear and unidimensional approach to strategy. One plan.

   5 4 3 2 1 2 3 4 5

   We recognise that disruption and uncertainty frame future success. As a result, we have adopted a scenario-based approach to strategy. Several future strategic alternatives.

9. The connectivity we need is handicapped by the technology available.

5 4 3 2 1 2 3 4 5

The technology we have access to is not only outstanding but the training provided is exemplary.

10. We focus all-too-often on what isn't working.

5 4 3 2 1 2 3 4 5

Affirmation and catching people doing it right is how we do business.

11. Our structure is centralized, hierarchical and overly influenced by a silos mentality.

5 4 3 2 1 2 3 4 5

Our structure is Fast, Flat, Focused, Flexible, and Fertile to new ideas.

12. We tend to be product-driven.

5 4 3 2 1 2 3 4 5

We are, unquestionably, customer-driven.

13. The employee experience: constrained, stifled, held back.

5 4 3 2 1 2 3 4 5

The employee experience: challenged, trusted, engaged.

14. Although there are lots of good ideas in the business, they either aren't listened to or don't get implemented.

5 4 3 2 1 2 3 4 5

Innovation is our stock in trade.

15. Fitting in, going along and swimming with the tide is how you get on around here.

5 4 3 2 1 2 3 4 5

We make room for people with unusual and/or creative gifts, for the mavericks and those who challenge the status quo.

16. The role of the centre is to monitor, measure and approve (or not) requests from the operations.

5 4 3 2 1 2 3 4 5

The role of the centre is to support the operations in their quest to become better businesses.

17. We are slow to respond to changes in the market place.

5 4 3 2 1 2 3 4 5

We are agile, responsive and create distinct value in the way we respond to the customer's emerging needs.

18. We all-too-often hire from the outside when faced with key leadership openings.

5 4 3 2 1 2 3 4 5

We act on the belief that to grow our business we must first grow our talent.

19. Too many rules and/ or inefficient processes for things to get done without delay, frustration and compromise.

5 4 3 2 1 2 3 4 5

Middle managers are stretched, trusted, encouraged to be decisive and given the freedom to act.

20. We recognise that as a business what we offer is basically a commodity.

5 4 3 2 1 2 3 4 5

Our unique point of differentiation is clear to suppliers and customers alike.

21. "Tell and listen" and "tell and sell" dominate the way leaders act.

5 4 3 2 1 2 3 4 5

Coaching mastery is alive and well across the organization.

22. Keeping employees informed: we rely heavily on "trickle down" communication from the top.

5 4 3 2 1 2 3 4 5

Keeping employees informed: we use social media, interactive websites, blogs and other tools to nurture the grapevine.

23. We are trapped by constantly fixing the day-to-day.

5 4 3 2 1 2 3 4 5

We have built the capacity such that, where and when needed, we reinvent ourselves.

24. Sustainability and the environment takes a backseat to short-term profitability.

5 4 3 2 1 2 3 4 5

Recognising its growing importance to employees, customers and the community, "being green" is a strategic imperative.

From What To **What?**

25. We have a "one-size-fits-all" approach to compensation, benefits and terms of employment.	5 4 3 2 1 2 3 4 5	Our compensation, benefits and overall terms of employment reflect the needs of different groups.
26. Decision-making rests in the hands of the few.	5 4 3 2 1 2 3 4 5	Wherever possible, decisions are made as close to the customer as possible.
27. Information technology focuses largely on becoming better at what we already do.	5 4 3 2 1 2 3 4 5	Information technology is the means through which we surface and then shape tomorrow's possibility.
28. Our thinking around brand is focused almost exclusively on the customer.	5 4 3 2 1 2 3 4 5	We act on the sure knowledge that if our brand promise doesn't live inside the organization it cannot thrive in the marketplace.
29. Top leaders tend to be isolated from the day-to-day and thus hear what people think they want to hear.	5 4 3 2 1 2 3 4 5	Top leaders, regardless of role, regularly meet informally with: (1) front-line employees; and (2) customers.
30. We tend not to celebrate success.	5 4 3 2 1 2 3 4 5	Celebrating success and a sense of fun define who we are.
31. Manage the business from the inside-out.	5 4 3 2 1 2 3 4 5	Manage the business from the outside-in.
32. We assume that if a team is delivering results it is operating as "a team."	5 4 3 2 1 2 3 4 5	We regularly assess (measure) how even our most successful teams work together "as a team."
33. We tend to be a predictable, steadfast, "steady as you go" organization.	5 4 3 2 1 2 3 4 5	A sense of urgency runs through everything we do.

34. We use traditional marketing channels to get our message across.

5 4 3 2 1 2 3 4 5

We use a range of marketing vehicles including: social media, e-mail, mobile marketing and unique applications.

35. A push to deliver the "numbers" (and not much else) is assumed to inspire people.

5 4 3 2 1 2 3 4 5

Successful managers bring the dream to life, they believe it will happen, are great storytellers and act as role models.

36. Our leadership competencies better reflect where we have been, rather than where we are heading.

5 4 3 2 1 2 3 4 5

Our leadership competencies are fully aligned with tomorrow's success.

37. We suffer from a "scattergun" approach to setting performance priorities.

5 4 3 2 1 2 3 4 5

We focus (laser-like) on those performance drivers that make a real difference.

38. "A collection of tribes:" sameness, protect your turf and a philosophy of exclusion – define who we are.

5 4 3 2 1 2 3 4 5

"Community:" diversity, cross-functional integration and inclusion – describe who we are.

39. We pretty well rely on tried and true ways to distribute our services/products.

5 4 3 2 1 2 3 4 5

We constantly seek more effective and more efficient ways to distribute our services/products.

40. Collaboration has to be pushed and shoved before things happen.

5 4 3 2 1 2 3 4 5

Collaboration and sharing best practice is the norm.

From What To **What?**

41. Hiring focuses on the role as it is today (a replacement mentality).

5 4 3 2 1 2 3 4 5

In hiring, we seek to identify those who will succeed in tomorrow's culture.

42. Design and development are almost exclusively carried out "in-house."

5 4 3 2 1 2 3 4 5

We utilize crowdsourcing and other tools to make the customer part of our business.

43. Our marketplace philosophy is that of "If we make it they will come!"

5 4 3 2 1 2 3 4 5

We lead our competitors in recognising the customer's desire for choice, uniqueness, and intimacy.

44. Far too many of those in key roles think of the organization as a safe and protected harbour.

5 4 3 2 1 2 3 4 5

Our managers think and act like entrepreneurs.

45. Teams are expected to find the way forward on their own. If they meet the goals established they are assumed to be operating effectively.

5 4 3 2 1 2 3 4 5

We regularly assess team effectiveness, insist on coaching excellence and can define, specifically, what each key team needs to do to move to the next level.

46. Our service mindset is all about how we respond when things go wrong.

5 4 3 2 1 2 3 4 5

Our success in delivering service excellence lies in anticipating problems before they arise.

47. As often as not, employees have little insight into how what they do impacts others further down the value chain.

5 4 3 2 1 2 3 4 5

Meaning: the sight-lines between the work people do and how that makes a difference in other peoples' lives is something we work at constantly.

48. Our approach to remote working, although fully addressing day-to-day issues, limits our future potential. Our people tolerate it.

5 4 3 2 1 2 3 4 5

Our approach to remote working endorses inclusion, stimulates innovation and embraces collaboration. Our people love it.

49. If it's not the safe option, risk free, and based on what we have done in the past, people will say, "It can't be done."

5 4 3 2 1 2 3 4 5

Our tolerance for ambiguity and a willingness to explore new possibility are extraordinarily high.

50. Although, as a business, we have a great story, we don't always tell it well.

5 4 3 2 1 2 3 4 5

Be it in recruiting talent, business development, our website and/or in communication generally, we present a consistent and inspiring story.

Creating Tomorrow's Culture, **Today.**

"The fight is won or lost far behind the lines, in the gym, and out there on the road – long before I dance under those lights."

Muhammad Ali

ROOTS: The Cultural Characteristics We Must Retain

Note: In addition to those characteristics brought up in the assessment, add any other cultural roots that have to be retained

_____

_____

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WINGS: The Change We Have To Deliver

Note: Add any "what to what" changes not covered by the assessment

1. From What To **What?**

FROM: _____   TO: _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

2. From What To **What?**

FROM: _____   TO: _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

3. From What To **What?**

FROM: _____   TO: _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

4. From What To **What?**

FROM: _____   TO: _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

5.

← **FROM:** From What To **What?** **TO:** →

_____   _____
_____   _____
_____   _____
_____   _____

6.

← **FROM:** From What To **What?** **TO:** →

_____   _____
_____   _____
_____   _____
_____   _____

7.

← **FROM:** From What To **What?** **TO:** →

_____   _____
_____   _____
_____   _____
_____   _____

Scope of change: **Check one (✓)**	**Transactional**	☐	Do what we have always done, better
	Transitional	☐	Orchestrate change – evolve
	Transformational	☐	Sweeping change – act now

Overall time line for achieving the above

☐ 6 months   ☐ 12 months   ☐ 18 months   ☐ 24 months   ☐ 30 months   ☐ 36 months

John Burdett has worked in over 40 countries as an executive and as a consultant for businesses that are household names. He has worked on and continues to work on leadership development and organization culture for some of the world's largest corporations.

His ongoing partnership with the Bedford Consulting Group and TRANSEARCH INTERNATIONAL means that his proprietary work on talent acquisition, in any one year, successfully supports many hundreds of top leadership appointments on six continents.

He holds a doctorate in management development and since 2000 has published more than a dozen books (a number of them best-sellers) on various aspects of leadership and organization culture. His Talent Trilogy was completed in 2016. The first in the series, *Attract, Select, Develop & Retain TALENT,* was published in 2013. The second, *TEAM: Align, Build, Connect and Develop*, came out in early 2015. *The Empty Suit*, in 2016. *The A-Z of Organization Culture* came out in 2017. *Tomorrow Will Be Different – Will You?* was published in 2020.

John has a number of books available for download. Go to any of the major, online bookstores. Access using author's name: John O. Burdett

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ISBN: 978-1-9990027-9-4

National Library of Canada Cataloguing

The TRANSEARCH
COVID BOOK SERIES

Welcome to **Part Three** in the TRANSEARCH Covid Book Series. **Part Three** explores the need for leadership agility and what that implies: *Leadership Agility and Learning – The Way of the Dolphin*.

Part one, *Coming Down the Mountain*, looks at how to come out of this crisis stronger. Recognising, as we move forward, how important organization culture is, **Part Two** outlines *the Culture Conversation*. Drawing on the reality that tomorrow's organization will be a team of teams, **Part Four** examines what it means to be an outstanding team: *Great Organizations Are Made Up of Great Teams*. **Part Five** moves beyond leadership as a philosophy and drills down into essential skills – *When the Trees Get Bigger and the Forest Gets Deeper, It's Time to Sharpen Your Saw.*

A Century of Change

It's fair to say that there was more change during the 20th century than there was in the previous 2,000 years. At the turn of the last century, even in developed countries, child labour was common with children as young as ten in full-time work. In fact, they represented 6% of the labour force. In the US, at the opening of the century, there were only 19% of women in the workforce. By 2000 the number was 60%. In 1900, in the US, 38% of the population worked on farms. At the close of the century that would be only 3%. The biggest shift, however, was from primary production jobs to professional and other service occupations. As we moved into the 21st century, 78% of all employees worked in service jobs. Demographic changes was were no less significant. The population aged and became more diverse. In 1900, the life expectancy of a newborn was 47.3 years; in 1999 it was 77.0 years.

Statistics don't truly reveal the stories behind the numbers. Let's look at one example. In 1900, there were over 11,000 hansom cabs on the streets of London and several thousand horse-drawn buses. Each of the latter needed 12 horses to get through the day. It is estimated that there were 50,000 horses on the streets of London each and every day. New York, reputedly, had a horse population of 100,000. When you consider that a horse produces between 15lb and 20lb of manure a day – to say nothing of the flies and spread of diseases like typhus – that's a lot of horse dung. In 1894, a *Times of London* headline read, "In 50 years, every street in London will be buried under nine feet of manure. In 1900, in the US, there were 3,400 companies making carriages and other

horse-drawn vehicles. A similar number existed in England. Producing a carriage was not only a highly skilled venture involving foundry, carpentry, wheelwright and machining skills but, of necessity, all of those involved had to work as an integrated team. In the political lexicon of this century, they were "good jobs."

A somber lesson to those somewhat skeptical about the speed of change in the 21st century, in less than a decade-and-a-half, the prophetic claim made by the *London Times* was proved to be, well – horse manure. A combination of the ability to refine oil, the internal combustion engine, electricity, the assembly line (1914) and the know-how needed (perhaps the biggest innovation of all) to build large-scale organizations meant that those who worked in the carriage trade – and many like them – were cast aside. Surplus to requirements. Between 1908 and 1927, Ford built 15 million Model T automobiles. The good news? Londoners didn't have to wade waist-deep in horse manure to get to work. The not such good news? The jobs that were lost were gone forever. How many wheelwrights, carriage drivers, blacksmiths, grooms, buggy whip designers and/or harness makers do you know? To complete the picture, we had the "war to end all wars" (1914-1918) and a pandemic, which took 50 million lives (1918/19).

We Must Address Covid – We Must Also Look Beyond It

The past is, prologue.[1] The parallel between the changes that ravaged society and reinvented business a century ago and what, in its own way, is being reenacted today, is too glaring to ignore. Except, the scope and speed of change today is, by a quantum step, far greater. And in the fullness of time, the potential consequences go well beyond societal and industrial change. We are facing an existential threat to not just a way of life but to, "life."

One of the lessons the Covid crisis forces us to face is that the future isn't linear. You can't prepare for heightened uncertainty with a single plan. "Scenario planning," meanwhile, should embrace both probable and improbable future events. Expect the unexpected. If your organization isn't wired to accommodate, adapt, adjust and even take advantage of the unfolding uncertainty, you don't have a problem – it's unlikely you will stay in business. There are implications here for investment. The Board supports capital expenditure when its members are confident that there will be a meaningful return on the investment. Confidence, in turn, is a product of: (1) the top team having delivered on past "promises;" (2) the quality of the supporting analysis/projection; and (3) that, in the way the business is run, unexpected problems/challenges will not derail the agreed way forward. To wit, expect in future that Boards of Directors will demand more than the traditional, unidimensional strategy.

The past is, indeed, prologue. Over four centuries ago (1599), Shakespeare wrote, **"All the world's a stage**, And **all** the men and women merely players;" … "And one man in his time plays many parts."[2]

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1 *The Tempest. Act 2, Scene I*, William Shakespeare (1610)
2 *As You Like It, Act II, Scene VII*

The stage: the environment, realignment of the economic order globally, breakthrough technology, new materials, robotics, cobotics, uncertainty, ongoing disruption **and** a global health crisis.   The latter, a human tragedy – the dark shadow of which will long loom large.

The players: *suppliers* who recognise that data is a competitive advantage – *customers* who demand more innovation, greater convenience, lower prices and ever-shorter lead times – *employees* who want to work for an organization that: (1) is built around a compelling purpose; (2) matches opportunity with capability; and (3) offers lifestyle flexibility – *society* where shareholder capital is viewed as both undeserved and unwarranted and where the collective voice of **all** of the other stakeholders is gaining political sway. Diversity, fairness, social justice, racial discrimination, access to education (starting with universal broadband) and the growing imbalance between the richest and the poorest amongst us being but part of that chorus.

Playing many parts: leaders who can work concurrently in different cultures, faced with very different problems and who bring to each challenge a range of tools, solutions and approaches. In the text that follows, we refer to this emerging leadership imperative as "The Way of the Dolphin." It's a 21st century leadership capability best defined by three terms: "Agility," "Speed of learning" and "Resilience."

See also the assessment at the end of the text that asks, **How Good a Coach Are You?** If you can't coach, you can't lead!

CONTENT

Leadership, Learning and Agility: the WAY OF THE DOLPHIN

Agility is a Way to Think

We have still to discover the extent to which COVID-19 has changed the business landscape. Clearly, office leasing, the recruitment industry, retail, and business travel will never be the same. Homes for the elderly, university courses, cruise lines, and distance employment will, similarly, be very different. We can also assume that the emotional impact of the Covid crisis will affect the business confidence – uncertainty just got more uncertain – for years to come. Beyond that, the road map is marked – "hazards ahead." The destination – "uncertainty." Welcome to the future!

When the next Black Swan lies in wait, organization agility isn't something that is "nice to have." It's about survival. The problem? Culture is a system and like any system only as strong as its weakest part. You can't sprinkle agility on the organization. You can't add agility piecemeal. Agility has to be embedded into every aspect of the organization's culture. Be it – scenario planning or systems; the brand or the behavioural interview; shared values or structure; problem solving or process; diversity or dialogue; compensation or competencies; mindset or measurement; talent management or trust; learning or leadership – "agility" must be a fundamental building block in the organization's DNA.

From my own work on organization culture, it's clear that the majority of organizations are far less agile than the emerging business environment demands. And as we come down the COVID mountain, that shortfall will become an ever more limiting feature of competitiveness. The question becomes, "Where to start?" Agility has to be integral to the organization's design. It has to be evident in the organization's value proposition. It has to be built into the value chain and be apparent in every sales and/or service interface with the customer. It's a process. It's a way to act. More than anything else, however, agility is a way to think. It's a mindset. As such, without "leadership" you still ain't got much. Not the leadership that got us here – but a way to be that exudes, encompasses, encourages, and expresses agility in everything the leader does. The Way of the Dolphin.

Bass and the Shark

Dan is big, gruff, and aggressive. Command and control are his two best friends. And yes, of course he is, in his own opinion at least, the smartest person in the room. In meetings, his favourite game is "Gotcha!" At work, it is said, one crosses him at one's peril. In life, he is treated with a mixture of awe, fear, and respect. Talented, experienced, and successful, on the surface at least, Dan simply consumes the weaker species he encounters. He just loves devouring these "bass." After all, Dan cannot deny his nature. He is a shark.

Identify a tough job – one where the nature of the problem means "going to war with the competition" or "taking the company by the scruff of the neck" – and the quest will be on to find a shark. Once hired, Dan, or someone much like him, is in business and look out bass!

This is not to say that bass are helpless. Bass have a whole range of defense mechanisms. There are a lot of them and, when faced with attack, they are capable of forming strongly bonded teams. Teams that develop strategies aimed primarily at warding off attack. Teams whose goal is to maintain the status quo and who take solace in describing why the suggested initiatives are destined to fail.

Nor, one should add, are bass stupid. Bright, articulate, and often highly educated, bass are particularly adept at either hiding in the weeds or muddying the waters in which they swim. Concealment is realised through a range of well-honed tactics but is especially effective when positioned as, "It may work elsewhere, but we are different." The conversation invariably starts with some variation of the phrase, "Yes, but …" Underpinning this approach is not the forlorn hope that delay, abstraction, or rumour-mongering will end in the death of the shark. As a ploy it's primarily about creating a vacuum of action, with the presumption that the shark will move on to new and different prey. It is also a defense that has historically enjoyed a good degree of success. One should never underestimate the power of the informal organization!

The human tragedy is that bass are capable of so much more. Within a truly agile organization culture and given work that matches opportunity with capability, bass will willingly move into deeper and more challenging waters. As a species, we are copying machines. Given the opportunity, bass will readily switch on their mirror gene and model the behaviour of the right leader. Meanwhile, if your middle managers are disengaged, disappointed, and disconnected, as engagement surveys on both sides of the Atlantic suggest, you are already putting the future of your organization in peril.

Why not hire a shark? If the competition are acting in a predatory manner, surely a shark is demanded?

On a *prima facie* basis there is, indeed, a case for a competitive, aggressive, action-oriented leader – even though he/she is likely to generate a good deal of interpersonal debris along the way. After all, shareholder capital still dominates how success is measured in the boardroom. Focus on short-term results and a shark is likely to be your leader of choice. "We have a strong bottom line. Creating tomorrow's customer; growing the business organically; attracting, retaining and developing talent; meaningful succession; competing on ideas; and building great teams are clearly important, but we will get to all that in good time."

I have deliberately described the shark using expansive language. Not all sharks are quite as crass as outlined. Many mask their more predatory instincts with a carefully crafted veneer of courtesy combined with the illusion of cooperation. Support, help, and/or enable a shark, and they can even be charming. Toxic behaviour isn't always readily apparent. Introduce crisis, conflict, and/or confrontation, however, and the inner shark will likely surface.

Is the term "bass" merely a literary device or are organizations, as the term conveys, regularly populated by large numbers of employees who amount to little more than pawns on a numbers dominated checkerboard? In support of the bass metaphor, it's worth pointing out that Gallup's most recent research into employee engagement indicates that only 34% of employees in the US were highly engaged. If you operate outside of the US, you can take little solace from that number. The US has the highest engagement scores of any country conducting meaningful research. And don't be misled by consultants conducting engagement surveys who provide feedback that 80% plus of employees are "engaged." They have a vested interest in making the client look good and they do so through the simple expediency of adding "somewhat engaged" and "fully engaged" together to come up with a generous, feel-and-look-good "engaged" metric.

A further word about engagement. In working with executive teams, we invariably ask, "To what extent do you perceive that you are managing your culture?"[1] It's an important question because the research provides clear evidence that, in managing all of the elements that drive culture, organizations are far better at landing the agreed strategy as well as significantly impacting the bottom line (no small thing).[2] In the sessions described, there is often the misplaced assumption that the engagement survey is a meaningful measure of culture. Nothing could be further from the truth. At best, the questions in the typical engagement survey make up no more than 20% of the factors that shape the organization's culture. There is a powerful lesson here. Working on engagement (invaluable as it may be) without addressing all of the other elements that make up the organization's culture is the business equivalent of trying to drive your car with three of the wheels missing. Just because you sense something is happening doesn't mean you are going anywhere. There is a good case to be made that the crew of the Titanic were "engaged." It still hit an iceberg!

Agility and Speed of Learning

Business leaders, in recognising a post COVID-19 world presents a significantly heightened level of uncertainty, have little choice but to forge, to the extent possible, alignment between the organization's emerging culture and (1) factors external to the business that cannot be anticipated (ongoing disruption), and (2) what tomorrow's customer will be willing to pay for (business model). To succeed and even survive, leaders must learn not how to manage change (an outdated and ambiguous term at best), but how to ride the crest of change, how to use the challenge inherent in uncertainty to propel the business into a successful future, and how to recognise the limits of coercion and harness the energy drawn out of creative tension and a compelling purpose.

In terms of day-to-day performance, creative tension involves two organizational imperatives – agility and organizational learning. First, agility and with it, by implication, the need to push decision-making as close to the customer as possible. When quality and service concerns from customers are met with a response along the lines of "that is not our policy" or "I will have to ask my supervisor," what you are hearing isn't merely a rehearsed response, it's the death-knell of your organization. Agility, meanwhile, no matter the form it takes, draws on the abiding quest for simplicity. That being understood, simplicity and, its alter ego, responsiveness are far more about mindset than, essential though it is, process reinvention.

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1 To answer this question, go to the TRANSEARCH International website. There you will find the *Are You Managing Your Culture?* interactive assessment. Even better, go through it with your team.

2 "CEOs who insist on rigorously measuring and managing all cultural elements that drive performance more than double the odds that their strategies will be executed. And over the long term, they deliver triple the total return to shareholders that other companies deliver." Carolyn Dewar, Martin Hirt, and Scott Keller. *The Mindsets and Practices of Excellent CEOs* (October 2019).

To be agile you have to program yourself to think "simple." But not too simple.

The second imperative, organizational learning, is a topic that has garnered a great deal of interest but is poorly applied. Without an inherent ability within the body of the organization to learn from experience, reframe established practices at critical points on the journey, develop a heightened capacity to act, and, as needed, reinvent how the business does business, tomorrow is destined to be a replay of the past. COVID-19 is many things but, perhaps above all else, it's a wakeup call for society and business alike. Make no mistake … tomorrow will be different! The pertinent question becomes, "Will you?"

Learning is initiated by an experience. An action which, in turn, spawns a question. The quality of the question dictating the nature of the learning. Learning unfolds in one of three ways. One: simple learning – striving to do what we have always done, but better (instruction). Two: learning how to learn – moving down a new path (exploration). Three: learning how to learn limited by the imagination of those involved – transformation, innovation, creative destruction, and reinvention (play). Each of those learning approaches shapes not only the outcome but at each stage the speed of learning increases exponentially. Arguably, the only truly sustainable competitive advantage is speed of learning. Conversely, learn slower than the competition, even for a short time, and it may be impossible to recover.[3] Without time set aside for meaningful reflection, of course, there can be no learning.

Learning to act and think about the world in a new way is not a linear process. It is much more like climbing a mountain. A base camp is established, and only once the base has been consolidated can the next camp be set up and supplied. Equally important, assumptions about what it means to be a leader have to be redefined at each stage of the journey. Agility and its handmaiden, learning, represent a journey, not a destination: a journey covering three Territories, (T1 – instruction, T2 – exploration, T3 – play); a journey dependent upon the right leadership; a journey punctuated by inherent discontinuity. See **Figure one**.

The three learning scenarios outlined are not merely devices to explain what, in the past, somewhat inadequately, was referred to as "leadership style." Indeed, the three scenarios portray how learning unfolds in virtually every walk of life. The world of art is but one example. In the 18th century, visitors to Venice – the wealthy, at least – patronised painters such as Canaletto. High on their list of "must have" purchases being a faithful rendering of an aspect of Venetian life, the Grand Canal being especially popular. There is no mystery, symbolism, imagination, or interpretation depicted in these paintings. They were simply a mirror of real life, the "postcard" of the day that just happened to be painted in oils. The viewer's experience? *Simple learning.*
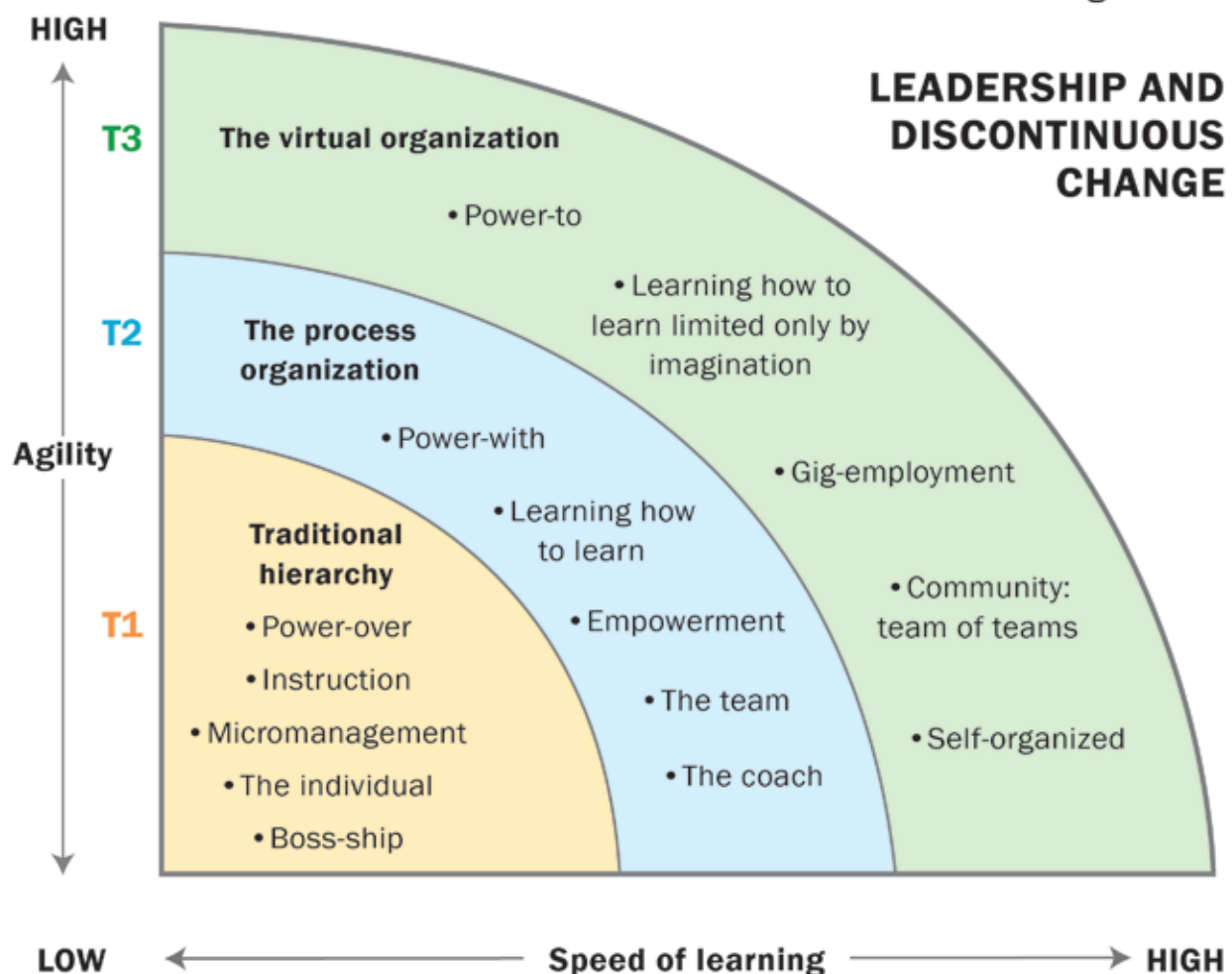
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3 One wonders to what extent today's Board of Directors is providing this kind of counsel. As we become fully immersed in this turbulent and rapidly changing business environment, there is a compelling case to revisit Board capability.

Following the introduction of photography in the 1820s, the second half of the 19th century witnessed a new art form: the impressionist school. Journalists at the time wrote that it wasn't real art – "merely an impression." Exploring the effect of light, colour, and mood, impressionist artists painted with thick brush strokes applied quickly. The feeling the painting conveyed being more important than any sense of detail. From the viewer's standpoint, every time you look at an impressionist painting you are offered something new – *learning how to learn.*

The 20th century introduced abstract art. Jackson Pollock was once asked what one of his paintings meant. "What do you want it to mean?" he replied. *Learning how to learn limited by imagination.* The mind at play! As a point of interest, although there are exceptions, the market value of canvases in each art form (T1 – classical, T2 – impressionist, T3 –modern) rises exponentially.

Figure one

LEADERSHIP AND DISCONTINUOUS CHANGE

HIGH

T3 The virtual organization
- Power-to
- Learning how to learn limited only by imagination

T2 The process organization
- Power-with
- Gig-employment

Agility

Traditional hierarchy
- Learning how to learn

T1
- Power-over
- Empowerment
- Community: team of teams
- Instruction
- Micromanagement
- The team
- Self-organized
- The individual
- The coach
- Boss-ship

LOW ⟵ Speed of learning ⟶ HIGH

Much as one might peel an onion, beneath agility and learning lies individual and, by implication, the team's mindset: how each of us interprets the world – the mental model we access to define reality. Our assumptions about work and organizational success frame our behaviour. To survive in the white-water we have entered demands culture savvy and, above all else, an ability to quickly appraise and respond to the ever-changing world around us. The new reality? Personal survival is ultimately about how resilient and agile we are as a leader. And resilience isn't simply about "bouncing back." It means coming out of a world-shaking event like COVID-19 even stronger.

The journey from T1 to T2 and then on to T3 is not for every organization. Those operating within a commodity-type market, where the value proposition is exclusively drawn out of the price of the product or service, often decide that a T1 organization is an appropriate fit with a business model built around being the low-cost producer. Managing a group of young software engineers on another continent and a T1 approach may be the way to go. Operating a mine in a developing country where the work population is poorly educated and/or where they lack a common language, then T1 may well be a sound decision.

This does not mean that all T1 businesses eschew empowerment and employee involvement. Nor does it mean that a shark is the ideal leadership choice. Through an ethos of continuous improvement and employee development (instruction), a number of leaders have pushed the T1 model to the very edge of what is possible ("enlightened" T1). The dilemma being, because such organizations are very slow to change they are ponderous competitively. The very antithesis of agility.

A good many organizations (e.g., Toyota, 3M, Google) have evolved, what can best be described as, a "parallel structure" – organization forms where, although the day-to-day work gives little opportunity for initiative (T1), time is set aside to allow front-line teams to redesign the business process that contains the work being undertaken (T2), and/or are given the opportunity to help create tomorrow's product/service (T2/T3).

Other business sectors have little choice but to move to an organization form dominated by T2 and beyond. Here we leave the bass in the weeds and start to find a far more engaged and fully contributing employee. Teams who, as the culture moves into T3, start to self-organize. Organizations that embrace innovation and reinvention as an extension of the freedom to act that a T2 or T3 culture affords. Businesses where the design of the organization (structure) mirrors, given the choice, how people would choose to work together.

The ultimate arbiter of organizational effectiveness is the marketplace. Customers vote with their feet. Where the value proposition is based on a compelling customer experience, where the business model means the product or service must be continuously reinvented, or where access to intellectual capital defines market success, a T1 way of working will not deliver the level of innovation, organizational agility, or speed of responsiveness needed.

Artificial Intelligence/robotics[4] will change this assumption in the future but, as a simple economic reality, T1 work, everything else being equal, sooner or later migrates offshore to a low-wage economy.[5] Not so fast! The need to be close to the market, tax advantages, security, transportation costs, and a host of other reasons often mitigate against moving offshore. The T1 organization isn't a throwback. It isn't obsolete. Indeed, even in advanced economies, in more than a few business sectors, it is still the dominant form – and from our own work with clients, far more prevalent than you might think. Microsoft, Apple, and Google get all the publicity but, in truth, they are outliers.

If the journey being described (T1 to T2 and, where needed, to T3) is not a journey every organization will want to embark on, it is equally not a rite of passage that all leaders are

Figure two

WHERE BASS SWIM, SHARKS OPERATE AND DOLPHINS PLAY

T3

T2

T1

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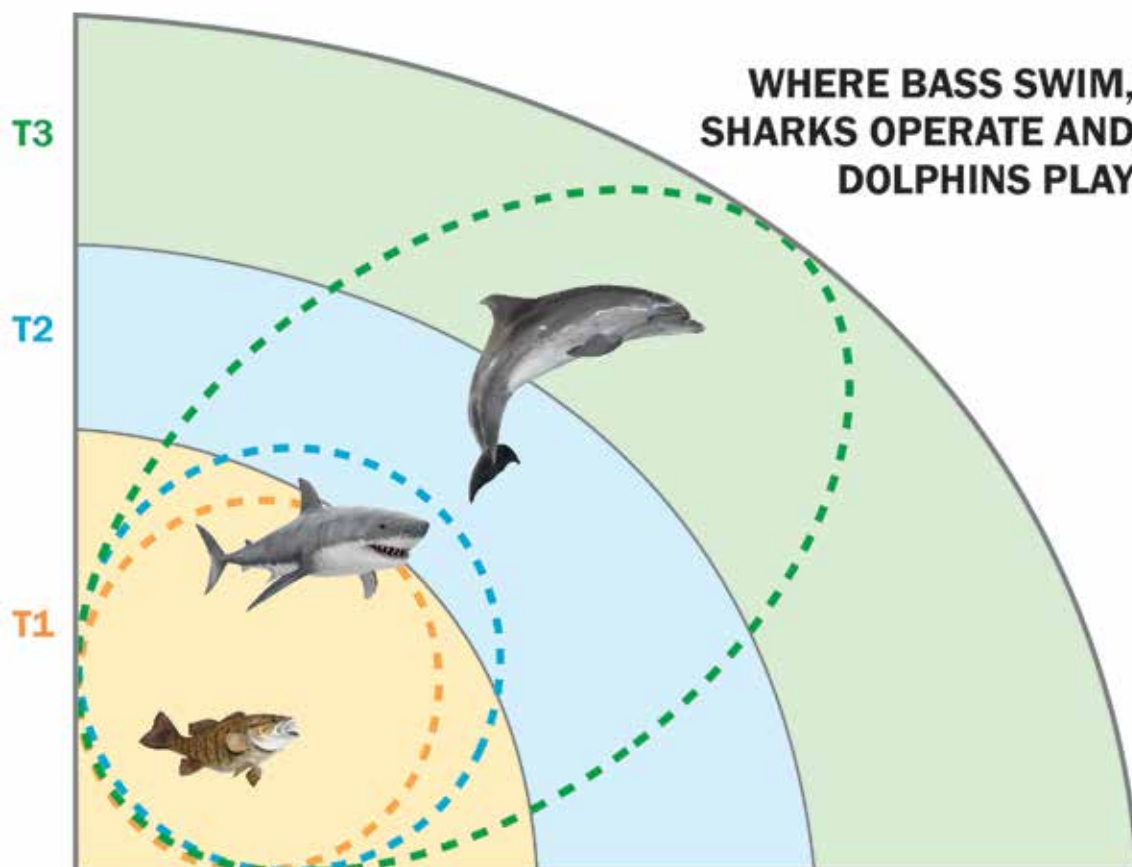
4   T1 work is the sweet spot for introducing AI/robotics.
5   A T1 mindset in a service/consulting business, similarly, opens the door to technology-based approaches. Without a distinct (ideally, unique), future-oriented, bespoke, value proposition – activities that amount to a commodity (easily replicated) are prime targets for those bringing advanced digital solutions to the marketplace.

capable of charting. Sharks thrive in a world of aggression, survival, one-on-one competitiveness, inflating one's worth, blaming everyone except themselves, manipulation, and revenge psychology. Looking good is, not infrequently, far more important than doing good. As such, they are ill-equipped to operate where empathy, listening, coaching, a serving spirit, inclusion, and stripping out the rules define what it means to be a successful leader. See **Figure two**.

As an aside, it's clear that since the turn of a new century, a number of those voted into very high political office, at a national level, represent the very epitome of what it means to be a shark. There is a never-to-be-forgotten lesson here. In a time of crisis, the very last person you want to hand power to is a shark.

The Way of the Dolphin

Elegant, highly intelligent, fast, and adaptive, the dolphin represents a powerful metaphor for today's leadership; an apt descriptor for an individual capable of moving, as needed, across all three of the territories described.

The dolphin seeks collaboration, looks to improve effectiveness by impacting the total system, and strives to expand rather than exploit its natural boundaries. The difference is most clearly identified in how a dolphin creates a powerbase. A shark reaches for the organization chart and emphasises title and formal authority. The dolphin asks a new question.

Apart from speed and elegance, the dolphin has a number of natural assets that makes it the true master of its environment. Comfortable swimming in harmony with others, it can communicate across all three territories. The shark, on the other hand, sees other species as natural prey who its kind are programmed to attack. Weakness and hesitation are a shark's lifeblood. Dolphins respond to signals of concern in an empathetic and caring way. As for bass, in a world ruled by a shark, they, for the most part, spend their lives complaining that things are not as they used to be.

Sharks are always on the move. Egocentric in their actions, they like to fill the room with the energy of their own voice. This is their hunting song. When listening, they do so not in a supportive, empathetic way, but with the self-interest of the hunter. Shark language is punctuated by the use of war-like and combative stories and metaphors which, in turn, are emphasised by the short, stabbing, finger-pointing or chopping motion of the predator delivering the kill.

Whereas difficulty with ambiguity and lack of a cohesive vision limit the shark to a relatively small part of the pool, the dolphin is quickly identifiable by its ability to traverse the water available – even expand the size of the pool. See **Figure three**. The language of the dolphin

is rich and compelling. The dolphin uses words to paint a picture not merely of the way things are, but the way things need to be. Through rich and vibrant imagery they create tomorrow in the room, today. A master of language and story, the dolphin's metaphors are inclusive, often encompassing humour and drawing examples from nature to reframe perception. The dolphin, unlike the bass, is also comfortable swimming at any depth and, with one thrust from its powerful tail, can move from the surface to the bottom of the pool and be equally comfortable – be it organizational level, dealing with concepts, international exposure, and/or involvement in operations.

If there is one significant difference between the shark and the dolphin, it's in the area of trust. People will respect a shark but they will never really trust them. By comparison, in that they put the needs of others first, trust is the abiding contribution that a dolphin brings to selling, the team, and building a constituency.

Loyalty is a somewhat different matter. From my own experience, I have observed that subordinates will often display what appears to be an extraordinary degree of loyalty to

their shark boss. This seems to be a contradiction in terms, that is, until you realise that the loyalty in question is a product of fear. Stripped of self-esteem, feeling unworthy, and bruised and battered by negative feedback, such loyalty is based on insecurity and the belief that working for someone else would likely entail unnecessary career risk. Paradoxically, the shark often displays loyalty to a few chosen "insiders." This would appear to contradict how you might expect a shark to behave. Until you recognise that what is involved is an unhealthy, mutual dependency that neither the shark or those chosen few he/she is loyal to

LEADERSHIP CAPABILITY

Figure three

BASS	SHARK	DOLPHIN
Orientation • Manages what has been • Stays within the established boundaries • Needs rules • When things go wrong, lowers goals	**Orientation** • Manages what is ("bass-ship") • Erects boundaries • Likes rules • When things go wrong, attributes blame	**Orientation** • Manages what can be • Plays across boundaries • Strips out the rules • When things go wrong, reinvents the game
Language • Passive	**Language** • Exclusive	**Language** • Inclusive
Metaphors and stories • Defeat • Survival • Why things will fail	**Metaphors and stories** • War • Combat • Sport	**Metaphors and stories** • Nature • Heroes/heroines within the enterprise • Reframe mindset
Quest: Avoidance of blame	**Quest:** Personal reputation	**Quest:** Balance head, hand, heart and spirit
Behaviour • Dependency • Lose/win	**Behaviour** • Independence • Win/lose	**Behaviour** • Interdependence • Win/win
Power base • Strength in numbers	**Power base** • Formal authority	**Power base** • Collaboration
Tools • Muddying the water • The enemy is out there • Resistance to change	**Tools** • Management by numbers • Short-term alliances with other sharks • Intimidation	**Tools** • Compelling purpose • Example • A serving spirit
Chemistry of success • Fear	**Chemistry of success** • Command and control	**Chemistry of success** • Speed of learning
Measure of success • Survival	**Measure of success** • Shareholder capital	**Measure of success** • Stakeholder capital

know how or want to break away from. If you are a shark you need someone around who, without complaint, you can use to regularly purge the worst aspects of your personality.

As indicated earlier, because what you see is not always what you get, a well-disguised shark can learn to come across, at least initially, as a dolphin. In case of doubt, the difference between the shark and the dolphin can be found in their approach to business development. The shark is, at heart, wedded to the transaction and making the immediate sale. How can we make money from this? A dolphin defines success in terms of value creation and lasting partnerships. What do we need to do to build a long-term relationship? Successful business development is predicated on building a value proposition focusing on where the customer will be and not where it's perceived that they currently are.

A further point of difference is that the dolphin invariably reaches out and asks to be coached – by another dolphin! The shark, meanwhile, sees coaching as a sign of weakness. It can be argued that, in an empowered workplace, leaders who can't coach can't lead. Put more pragmatically, a millennial workforce won't accept them as a leader. See the coaching assessment at the conclusion of the book: *How Good A Coach Are You?*

When things get tough, with practice, bass are easy to spot. They are the ones hiding in a hole in the coral. When a challenge is presented they ask, "Why me?" The bass is the one who comes into your office to complain but who personally doesn't want to do anything about the problem. Bass resolve conflict by appearing to go along. When the economy is bad, bass ask for contracts that guarantee security of employment. When the economy is good, bass start a chorus of why things are about to get worse.

The dolphin is perceptive and, with exceptional powers of hearing, is quick to identify the needs of others. The bass, hardwired to survive, has a sensory system that alerts it to the distress call of other bass; it is equally highly attuned kinetically to the physical and emotional noise emitted by the shark. The shark operates from instinct. If challenged, the shark attacks. If a high performing bass is the object of such an attack, the shark may well back off. After all, the bass can always be devoured at will. For the bass, this symbiotic interaction fuels reluctant and passive followership and with it the enduring belief that challenging the status quo is a career limiting initiative. For the shark, the behaviour of the bass is yet more proof that hierarchy, rules, and "bass-ship" (the need to dominate the bass) are essential ingredients in the leadership mix.

If the shark's need to attack uncovers a dolphin, it is only because the dolphin chooses to swim to those limited parts of the pool the shark inhabits. If attacked, like a judo expert, the dolphin uses the shark's negative energy against itself. The dolphin responds to problems by reframing the context, creating strategic opportunities, encouraging diversity, building the team, and welcoming constructive conflict as an opportunity to generate new ideas. All this

is performed with elegance and speed of action that the shark cannot even contemplate, let alone match.

Although it's possible to coach upwards, if you are being offered a new position and you are striving to hone your dolphin leadership capability, you should think twice before working for a shark. Dolphins confuse and frustrate the heck out of a shark, and a frustrated shark is not a happy shark.

Conclusion

Can sharks or bass become dolphins?[6] Each of us have elements of dolphin behaviour built into our psyche. It takes courage, however, to tear down the protective barricade of status and position. It takes tenacity to swim out into uncharted waters, to approach established problems in new ways, and to respond to aggression with compelling language, listening mastery, strategic imagery, and interpersonal subtlety. It takes a special kind of "leadership reach" to be able to successfully work concurrently in very different cultures. And it takes a true sense of caring to eschew power-over and enact a leadership approach based on trust – the assumption that, given the opportunity, people will get it right. None of this suggests that results aren't of paramount importance. Results buy the time needed to enact the leadership change being proffered. That's important because the time to change isn't when you stumble – but while you are still successful.

In a world marked by uncertainty and disruption, the needed shift to dolphin leadership is difficult to deny. Sharks will have to be confronted and coached such that they start to operate against their natural instincts. They will have to add heart and spirit to their head and hand view of the world. And they will have to bring inspirational and caring leadership to their managerial skill set. At the same time, to remain competitive, organizations must provide bass with the opportunity to move into deeper water. Fortunately, for all concerned, the dolphin is a wonderful navigator.

Ask virtually any human resource professional and he/she will point out that there is a shortage of top talent. In truth, there is no shortage of talent. The business seas abound with bass and sharks are commonplace. What's in short supply are those leaders who are a fit for the turbulent business environment we are moving into – who display the passion and capability described here as "the way of the dolphin." And, by the way, what kind of leader are you?

Following are five suggested action steps in addressing leadership, facilitating learning and orchestrating agility.

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6   Having created "Dolphin Camps" for top teams and/or organizations in different parts of the world and coached a number of "sharks," I can attest that even those long wedded to command and control often have, within them, a dolphin leader waiting to be given permission to play.

1. Work to fully appreciate the social, economic, and political issues that will impact future business. Invest time and money to ensure that you know (really know) what tomorrow's customers are willing to pay for (the emerging business model). Align the "service ethos" with tomorrow's customer. Make the brand promise live inside the organization. Introduce scenario planning. Invest in technical/digital acumen – especially for key leaders. Sharpen your business development saw.

2. Start to measure, using business terms, the culture you have and the culture you need. The latter should support tomorrow's success in the marketplace (value proposition). "Change" means factoring in **all** aspects of the organization's culture – but especially: (1) what it means to be a leader; and (2) how people learn. Working on only parts/aspects of the culture will result in unintended consequences. As step one, challenge, coach, confront and, if necessary, change leaders whose behaviour is out of step with tomorrow's culture.

   Of the several approaches we have developed to measure culture, one particular assessment *(the Culture Workup)* is built on the organization learning principles contained here. The assessment presents a compelling, yet simple, business-oriented, sixteen-dimensional profile of the T1, T2, T3 journey. Other culture assessment approaches in our portfolio were developed: (1) with work at Board level in mind; or (2) where involving large swathes of the organization is important.

3. Think about talent management strategically (future needs), not tactically (a replacement orientation). Ensure, for example, that attraction, hiring, the leadership competencies, what it means to be a team, succession, coaching and all aspects of leadership development are aligned with the culture, agility and approach to learning you need to create. In a post Covid-19 quest for excellence, anything less is to settle for mediocracy.

4. Take a hard look at the way the business is currently organized. Does the organization design support or mitigate against agility? If the design looks pretty much as it did a decade ago, you have work to do. Attempts to introduce the emerging technology (AI) into unnecessary hierarchy, top heavy decision-making, and unwarranted bureaucracy are the business equivalent of attaching a rocket to a bicycle. Recognise that organization design represents but one (albeit key) cultural driver and if you change one part of the system you impact the whole.

5. Step back and reflect on the mindset needed within the organization to support tomorrow's competitive success. Deliberately role model and amplify the desired behaviour. Start by sharing stories that capture the mindset needed. When early

examples of the mindset demanded emerge, fan the flames of that embryonic behaviour. Work to "catch people doing it right." Make use of the power of symbolism. Listen carefully to the metaphors that are introduced, especially by those in key leadership roles. Because the mind can't negate, ensure that the imagery created by those metaphors support the mindset demanded.

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John O. Burdett

THE WAY OF THE
DOLPHIN

Coaching: a leadership imperative

In a world where engagement and learning are central to competitiveness, those who do not or cannot coach are ill-equipped to wear the mantle of leadership. And it's not just individuals who benefit from coaching; extraordinary team performance is driven by extraordinary coaching, both from leaders and other team members.

The "golf course" gives you a benchmark against which you can evaluate your own coaching capability. Play your round of golf and mark your score after each hole. Where you shoot par or under – congratulations. Where you fall foul of a hazard, or make a bad shot, there is work ahead.

The questions and ideas have been drawn out of discussion with, and observation of, outstanding (business) coaches from around the world. Each question represents a key element of effective business coaching. The questions are self-explanatory. The "score card comments" have been included to enable those playing the course to better understand the thinking behind the design of each hole and the underlying learning suggested. Focus on how you believe others see you, not on how you would like to act. Keep track of your score. We have a clear sky and the forecast is that the rain will hold off. It's a great day for a winning round of golf.

The scoring is simple. If you score par on a par four hole your score for that hole is four. One over par and your score is five … and so on.

SCORE CARD COMMENTS #1

Coaching is not a cure all. It's about modifying behaviour, not about changing the person. It embraces understanding, caring, curiosity and listening, but should not be confused with counselling. Chronic absenteeism, anger management and/or personality problems lie within the realm of counselling.

This is not to marginalize the role of emotion in the coaching experience. There are two important qualifiers, however:

1. The coachee must be allowed to set the emotional agenda; the coach must learn how to follow; and

2. The emotions we are seeking to uncover are those that underscore possibility, self-confidence, pride, passion, determination and the will to win.

1

SUNNINGDALE
465 YARDS

STATEMENT — PAR 4

I clearly understand the difference between coaching and counselling.

SCORE

Always	☐ Par	
Mostly	☐ Poor lie	*Bogey (1 over par)*
Sometimes	☐ Sand trap	*Double bogey (2 over par)*
Hardly ever	☐ In the rough	*Triple bogey (3 over par)*

SCORE CARD COMMENTS #2

2

WINGED FOOT
453 YARDS

STATEMENT — PAR 4

My whole approach to coaching is skewed heavily to uncovering where the employee excels and then putting into place an agenda that allows him/her to do more of what they are already good at.

SCORE

Always	☐ Par	
Mostly	☐ Poor lie	*Bogey (1 over par)*
Sometimes	☐ Sand trap	*Double bogey (2 over par)*
Hardly ever	☐ In the water	*Triple bogey (3 over par)*

A winning coach creates value by tapping into the coachee's potential, by surfacing what he/she is passionate about and by inspiring the coachee to act. Coaching at its best is about uncovering and building on what's working – even if it happens only some of the time.

Focusing on what is missing is like colouring inside the lines; it hobbles the conversation and restricts what is possible. Mastery in coaching means accessing the whole canvas, moving beyond past practice and the status quo.

Coaching allows the employee to stand tall, and exploit his/her potential. Working to limit weakness is a great way to foster survival. Sadly, it does little to identify and nurture the capacity for excellence that lies within each of us.

The coach is faced with the reality that team behaviour, team norms, and team censure are powerful forces in shaping and reinforcing (or not) individual behaviour. Coaching at an individual level is significantly enriched where:

- The team's vision and strategy are clear;
- Psychological safety is a way of life;
- Each team member understands his/her own role; and the role of everyone else on the team;
- Speed of action and "stretch" are ever-present rallying cries;
- Trust underscores everything the team does;
- Team interaction is marked by respect, optimism, openness and candour;
- Self-serving agendas are challenged; and
- We measure team effectiveness.

3

ROYAL COUNTY DOWN
473 YARDS

STATEMENT **PAR 4**

I have a well-earned reputation for coaching the team.

SCORE

Always	☐	Par	
Mostly	☐	Poor lie	*Bogey (1 over par)*
Sometimes	☐	Bad swing	*Double bogey (2 over par)*
Hardly ever	☐	Lost in the heather	*Triple bogey (3 over par)*

4

CONGRESSIONAL
470 YARDS

STATEMENT **PAR 4**

As a coach I change my approach to reflect the coachee's life stage, learning orientation and the organizational culture out of which he/she operates.

SCORE

Always	☐	Great putt	*Birdie (1 under par)*
Mostly	☐	Poor lie	*Bogey (1 over par)*
Sometimes	☐	Sand trap	*Double bogey (2 over par)*
Hardly ever	☐	Two lost balls	*Quadruple bogey (4 over par)*

Cultural reach means recognizing that the career stage, multigenerational differences, approach to learning, energy, work-family balance and resilience are important coaching considerations.

Cultural reach also embraces the various sub-cultures inside the same organization. In one part of the organization, hierarchy, strict controls and short-term results rule.

Elsewhere a significant degree of freedom to act and a culture where new ideas, rather than short-term results, dominate.

In a third part of the business speed, extensive strategic partnerships, innovation, collaboration and temporary teams are the order of the day.

It is helpful to think about the coaching conversation as benefiting from one of four quite different approaches.

1. Those who deliver results and live the organization's values. The need: development coaching. *Challenge!*

2. Those who live the values but don't consistently deliver results. The need: performance coaching. *Coach!*

3. Those who deliver results but don't always live the values. The need: honest and candid feedback. *Confront!*

4. Those who neither deliver results nor live the values. The need: the individual in question is either in the wrong role or the wrong organization. *Change!*

5

WHISTLING STRAITS
584 YARDS

STATEMENT **PAR 5**

I know when to challenge, when to coach, when to confront and when to make a change.

SCORE

Always	☐	Par	
Mostly	☐	Poor lie	*Bogey (1 over par)*
Sometimes	☐	Sand trap	*Double bogey (2 over par)*
Hardly ever	☐	In the water	*Triple bogey (3 over par)*

6

OLYMPIC
437 YARDS

STATEMENT **PAR 4**

As a coach I am highly attentive to my language. And knowing how imagery shapes behaviour, I am especially attentive to the use of metaphor.

SCORE

Always	☐	Par	
Mostly	☐	Poor lie	*Bogey (1 over par)*
Sometimes	☐	Sand trap	*Double bogey (2 over par)*
Hardly ever	☐	Wild slice	*Triple bogey (3 over par)*

In a real sense no one can be coached. We can only coach ourselves. Thus, the role of the coach is to change the conversation the coachee is having with him/herself. A masterful coach influences this conversation by:

- Drawing out the emerging business context to show the coachee why change is needed;

- Bringing the voice of the customer to the table;

- Allowing the coachee to surface his/her own story;

- Encouraging the coachee to pay attention to his/her inner dialogue;

- Shaping a new lens through which the coachee can reframe his/her perceived reality, e.g., sharing best-practice, measuring the right things;

- Introducing enabling resources into the coaching conversation, e.g., appropriate imagery, language and new metaphors; and

- Asking breakthrough questions.

Everything the leader does is, in some respects, coaching. Attempts at coaching that are not rooted in authenticity become acts of manipulation.

The coach who emphasises listening but who isn't working to become a better listener is unlikely to be successful.

The coach who talks about commitment and focus but who is him/herself highly disorganized is open to ridicule.

The coach who emphasises the organization's vision and values but who him/herself doesn't live those values is part of the problem.

The coach who isn't him/herself open to being coached cannot grow as a coach.

7

ROYAL PORTRUSH
431 YARDS

STATEMENT — **PAR 4**

I often receive feedback that others find me authentic.

SCORE

Always	☐	Par	
Mostly	☐	Poor drive	*Bogey (1 over par)*
Sometimes	☐	Sand trap	*Double bogey (2 over par)*
Hardly ever	☐	Out of bounds	*Triple bogey (3 over par)*

8

BALLYBUNION
163 YARDS

STATEMENT — **PAR 3**

When I coach I go out of my way to express that I truly believe the coachee will deliver what is being suggested.

SCORE

Always	☐	Hole in one!	*Eagle (2 under par)*
Mostly	☐	Scrambled to save	*Par*
Sometimes	☐	Sand trap	*Bogey (1 over par)*
Hardly ever	☐	Behind tree	*Double bogey (2 over par)*

What the coach *believes* is what the employee literally *perceives.* No matter what the coach might say, if he/she doesn't *believe* that the coachee can and will move to the next level, the coach becomes part of the problem.

Conversely, when the coach *really believes* that the employee *will* succeed that, in and of itself, becomes a powerful and formative part of the coaching experience.

Masterful coaching cradles the conversation in self-fulfilling intention devoid of doubt. If you don't believe, you can't succeed as a coach.

There are six building blocks in a successful coaching conversation:

1. What is the issue/opportunity? (The issue first raised is often not the real issue.)

2. What does future success look like? (Make tomorrow come alive. Create the video. Be there!)

3. What is happening today? (Agree on today's reality. Wherever possible, build on what works.)

4. What is the one change that would make the greatest difference? (Explore the options but focus on one change at a time.)

5. What specific, time-bounded goals will lead to a move forward? (Push for action/commitment and allocate resources.)

6. Feedback. (Ongoing, authentic, catch 'em doing it right.)

Like a jigsaw puzzle, although you need all of the "pieces" (building blocks) to complete the picture, it matters not in what order the pieces go down.

9
PINEHURST
441 YARDS

STATEMENT — PAR 4

When I coach I use a robust coaching "template" that allows me to quickly evaluate and adjust where I am in the coaching conversation.

SCORE

Always	☐ Par	
Mostly	☐ Poor lie	*Bogey (1 over par)*
Sometimes	☐ Sand trap	*Double bogey (2 over par)*
Hardly ever	☐ In the trees	*Triple bogey (3 over par)*

10
SHINNECOCK HILLS
412 YARDS

STATEMENT — PAR 4

When I coach I feel that I am able to purge my mind of potential solutions.

SCORE

Always	☐ Par	
Mostly	☐ Poor lie	*Bogey (1 over par)*
Sometimes	☐ Sand trap	*Double bogey (2 over par)*
Hardly ever	☐ Out of bounds Lost ball	*Triple bogey (3 over par)*

Sooner or later in the coaching conversation the underlying issue surfaces. This is when the experienced coach steps back and passes ownership to the coachee. It is also when a coach with less experience finds his/her mind flooded with ideas and suggestions that he/she absolutely knows will work.

The dilemma? When we already have the solution, we stop listening. When we are trying to figure out the best way to persuade the coachee what he/she needs to do, we are no longer present. When we already have the answer, we are saying "no" to engagement and learning. When we rely on yesterday's solution, we limit tomorrow's possibility.

Mastery in coaching means developing an ability to enter into the coaching conversation with a beginner's mind. It means being open to being surprised.

Unless the coachee feels a sense of ownership of the agreed upon coaching outcomes, deep-rooted commitment is unlikely. Ownership is made more likely when the coach brings clarity to the conversation by:

- *Drawing out the real issue.* The issue that comes up first is often not the real issue. The real issue surfaces when the coach creates the space through silence, stillness, listening, and asking simple questions (e.g., "tell me more," "dig deeper") for the coachee to self-discover the underlying problem/opportunity.

- *Bringing tomorrow's success to life.* This happens when the coach encourages the coachee to step out of today and create, in as much detail as possible, a vivid picture of tomorrow's success. A "video" that allows the coachee to experience what success looks and feels like.

- *Uncovering the coachee's capacity to deliver leadership of self.*

11
MERION
471 YARDS

| STATEMENT | PAR 4 |

As a coach I am skilled in helping the coachee create a vivid and detailed "video" of tomorrow's success.

SCORE

Always	☐ Par	
Mostly	☐ Poor lie	*Bogey (1 over par)*
Sometimes	☐ In the brook	*Double bogey (2 over par)*
Hardly ever	☐ Wild slice	*Triple bogey (3 over par)*

12
RIVIERA
479 YARDS

| STATEMENT | PAR 4 |

I go out of my way to listen ... really listen.

SCORE

Always	☐ Par	
Mostly	☐ Poor lie	*Bogey (1 over par)*
Sometimes	☐ Hit "Bogie's Tree"	*Double bogey (2 over par)*
Hardly ever	☐ Out of bounds	*Triple bogey (3 over par)*

One of the fundamental building blocks of coaching is the leader's capacity to listen.

Listening is far from a passive activity. Really listening means entering into a behavioural dance where intonation, posture, pacing and presentation are at least as important as content. To listen is to be aware of what is not said.

To listen is to be able to interpret the meaning of what is being said by being able to see the world through the speaker's eyes. To listen is to step outside of the communication loop and "observe" what is happening. To listen is to give the gift of being present. To listen is an act of generosity that says, "I care." To be a successful coach is to care!

SCORE CARD COMMENTS #13

There are a number of legitimate and fruitful conversations that take place at work. The first is tell and listen: "I need you to do x by Friday." A second conversation is captured by the term tell and sell: "I need you to do x by Friday, because …" A third conversation, problem solving, runs along the following lines: "I want you and I to sit down and discuss x so that between us we can figure out the best way forward."

Although meaningful, none of these three conversations is about coaching. Coaching is built on one very simple, but essential, principle … the way forward lies with the employee. Put a different way, **coaching is an advice-free zone**.

As soon as the coach starts to give his/her suggestions ("Have you thought about…" "My suggestion is...") coaching is interrupted and problem solving has begun.

13
VALDERRAMA
368 YARDS
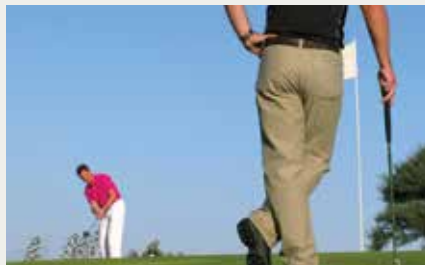
STATEMENT	PAR 4

When I coach I resist the temptation to slide into problem solving.

SCORE

Always	☐	Par
Mostly	☐	Poor lie *Bogey (1 over par)*
Sometimes	☐	Sand trap *Double bogey (2 over par)*
Hardly ever	☐	In the pond *Triple bogey (3 over par)*

SCORE CARD COMMENTS #14

14
AUGUSTA
440 YARDS

STATEMENT	PAR 4

When appropriate, I bring story and personal experience to the coaching discussion. I do so in such a way that the initiative remains with the coachee.

SCORE

Always	☐	Par
Mostly	☐	Poor drive *Bogey (1 over par)*
Sometimes	☐	Behind tree *Double bogey (2 over par)*
Hardly ever	☐	Lost ball *Triple bogey (3 over par)*

If the coachee is stuck, must the coach be limited to the role of a cheerleader/facilitator sitting on the sidelines? Is a wealth of experience to be set aside?

Enter story, and the role of the coach as mentor. When the coach offers input in the form of a story drawn from experience, the "advice" invariably lands in such a way that the initiative remains with the coachee.

What we are describing is a subtle shift from coaching to mentoring that allows the coach to put new ideas on the table (with discretion, and often as a last resort) without telegraphing a message to the coachee that says, "I am now taking control."

A successful coach displays mastery in asking great questions. A great question is one that changes the conversation the coachee is having with him/herself.

To coach is to know that language (e.g., a question) creates imagery and that imagery shapes our behaviour.

To coach is to also understand that the mind cannot negate. When we tell our eight-year-old not to spill the milk, what his/her mind conjures up is an image of the milk being spilt. The outcome: we increase the probability that the youngster will spill the milk.

To coach is to ask questions that seek (create imagery around) what we want.

15

ROYAL ST. GEORGE'S
453 YARDS

STATEMENT — PAR 4

In coaching situations I ask great questions. In particular, I am skilled in posing questions that ask for what is desired rather than those that reinforce what we don't want.

SCORE

Always	☐	Excellent drive Excellent putt	*Birdie (1 under par)*
Mostly	☐	Poor lie	*Par*
Sometimes	☐	Sand trap	*Bogey (1 over par)*
Hardly ever	☐	Great drive Terrible short game	*Double bogey (2 over par)*

16

CYPRESS POINT
231 YARDS

STATEMENT — PAR 3

I am highly attuned to, and quick to challenge, defensive routines.

SCORE

Always	☐	40 ft. putt	*Birdie (1 under par)*
Mostly	☐	Scrambled to save	*Par*
Sometimes	☐	Sand trap	*Bogey (1 over par)*
Hardly ever	☐	In ocean	*Double bogey (2 over par)*

Although stretch and agility are central to how an organization "wins," not all employees want to let go of the sense of security that the status quo (mistakenly) provides.

As a result, to coach is to be attentive to and challenge what can best be described as "defensive routines." These routines often surface as follows:

- *The real problem here is…* Response: "Let's focus on what **you** can do differently."

- *I will never be able to ...* Response: "What would be happening if you were able to …"

- *Everyone knows that x simply doesn't work.* Response: "According to whom?"

- *We already have an excellent approach.* Response: "Compared to what or whom?"

Coaching isn't a fad or an occasional activity, it's how excellent leaders win through talent. Coaching is a discipline where:

- Optimism, affirmation and the spirit of "catching people doing it right" energize the coachee.

- Not every coaching conversation needs to deliver a home run. Successful coaching moves the employee in the right direction.

- To be a coach is to be tough-minded. When faced with a difficult conversation, having the facts, timing, candour, openness and a focus on the need to act become essential coaching capabilities.

- Not everyone is open to and/or wants to be coached. No matter how successful his/her performance is today, an individual who resists appropriate coaching is about to become a problem.

17

ST. ANDREWS
461 YARDS

STATEMENT   **PAR 4**

I balance going out of my way to "catch people doing it right" with, as demanded, being tough minded.

SCORE

Always	☐	Par	
Mostly	☐	In the rough	*Bogey (1 over par)*
Sometimes	☐	Road bunker	*Double bogey (2 over par)*
Hardly ever	☐	Lost ball	*Triple bogey (3 over par)*

18

PEBBLE BEACH
543 YARDS

STATEMENT   **PAR 5**

As a coach, I take the time to follow up. Indeed, I always follow up. If I have a strength as a coach it is how I follow up.

SCORE

Always	☐	Par	
Mostly	☐	Poor lie	*Bogey (1 over par)*
Sometimes	☐	Front bunker	*Double bogey (2 over par)*
Hardly ever	☐	Out of bounds	*Triple bogey (three over par)*

If the agreement coming out of the coaching conversation isn't written down, it won't happen.

The coachee must understand that anything agreed upon during the coaching conversation is far more than the pursuit of possibility.

The outcome of a successful coaching conversation is a hard commitment. There is no "try" or "I will do my best" implied.

Coaching is ultimately, however, about the work. If someone is in the wrong role and/or engaged in work that provides little stretch, all the coaching in the world will be for naught. Similarly, if the new behaviour agreed on during the coaching conversation cannot be applied shortly thereafter, little value is created.

19th Hole

Going over your scorecard

Learning restricted to new knowledge is incomplete. Even practice, important as it is, doesn't deliver new behaviour. Change demands insight, practice **and reflection**. As you relax after your round of golf it will be helpful to reflect on the following:

HOLE   **YOUR SCORE**

1.	Coaching and counselling should not be confused	
2.	At its best, coaching builds on strengths	
3.	Coaching the team	
4.	A masterful coach delivers cultural reach	
5.	The four conversation themes: Challenge, Coach, Confront, and Change	
6.	To coach is to change the conversation the coachee has with him/herself	
7.	To coach is to be authentic	
8.	What the coach believes makes a huge difference to the coaching outcome	
9.	Knowing where you are in the coaching conversation is essential	
10.	A beginner's mind	
11.	Helping the coachee create a vivid "video" of tomorrow's success	
12.	A successful coach makes listening a key capability	
13.	Successful coaching moves beyond problem solving	
14.	Sharing your story (mentoring)	
15.	A successful coach asks great questions	
16.	To coach is to be attentive to defensive routines	
17.	To coach is to "catch people doing it right"	
18.	Follow up	

Today's score card

Under 72	**World Class!** You can work on anyone's team.
72 – 74	You are a good coach. You operate as a professional. This does not mean, however, that you should stop working on your game.
75 – 77	Work harder. Your basic technique is, for the most part, sound.
78 – 85	You must work on your coaching skills if you are to progress and succeed as a leader.
Over 85	You are communicating to others that when it comes to people management you are a "good amateur." Do not expect to seriously compete for a key leadership role with your current level of coaching competency.

Remember, the course has been scored with today's business context in mind. Increased competition, a changing environment and disruption generally will make the course far more difficult tomorrow. Even if you are at par today, continuous learning and improvement are essential. Read through all the questions and, in terms of your current situation and role, identify below the three areas where you must focus initially to improve your coaching skills. If you can't coach, you can't lead!

To improve my coaching skills I must focus on: (define the three most significant)

1 _____

_____

2 _____

_____

3 _____

_____

John Burdett has worked in over 40 countries as an executive and as a consultant for businesses that are household names. He has worked on and continues to work on leadership development and organization culture for some of the world's largest corporations.

His ongoing partnership with the Bedford Consulting Group and TRANSEARCH INTERNATIONAL means that his proprietary work on talent acquisition, in any one year, successfully supports many hundreds of top leadership appointments on six continents.

He holds a doctorate in management development and since 2000 has published more than a dozen books (a number of them best-sellers) on various aspects of leadership and organization culture. His Talent Trilogy was completed in 2016. The first in the series, *Attract, Select, Develop & Retain TALENT,* was published in 2013. The second, *TEAM: Align, Build, Connect and Develop*, came out in early 2015. *The Empty Suit*, in 2016. *The A-Z of Organization Culture* came out in 2017. *Tomorrow Will Be Different – Will You?* was published in 2020.

John has a number of books available for download. Go to any of the major, online bookstores. Access using author's name: John O. Burdett

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The TRANSEARCH
COVID BOOK SERIES

Welcome to **Part Four** in the TRANSEARCH Covid Book Series.

Part One, *Coming Down the Mountain*, looks at how to come out of this crisis stronger. Recognising, as we move forward, how important organization culture is, **Part Two** outlines the *Culture Conversation*. **Part Three** explores the need for leadership agility and what that implies: *Leadership Agility and Learning – The Way of the Dolphin*.

Drawing on the reality that tomorrow's organization will be a team of teams, **Part Four** examines what it means to be an outstanding team: *Great Organizations Are Made Up of Great Teams*. **Part Five** moves beyond leadership as a philosophy and drills down into essential skills – *When the Trees Get Bigger and the Forest Gets Deeper, It's Time to Sharpen Your Saw.*

The Covid Crisis Will End

Our attention right now, as it should be, is on this terrible scourge ... the lives taken, how to get through this and hopefully how to respond to the next pandemic. We will come down the Covid mountain. We will move beyond this. The emergency will end. This doesn't mean the world will be as it was. Indeed, Covid has truncated into months what would normally have evolved – especially in areas like remote employment – over the next several years.

There is no "new normal," only **the** normal. Now! That now is currently dominated by Covid. That's entirely undesirable but to think tactically is a pretty good way to describe what managers get paid for. Leadership, as it must be, is strategic. It's to step back, see the big picture and, to the extent possible, create tomorrow in the room, today.

That "big picture" includes: the environment; robotics; cobotics; the speed of change; breakthrough technology; new materials; a new workforce; ongoing uncertainty; the political push back against globalization; and a host of other truly dynamic factors. Moreover, because of Covid, as we have discovered, to our cost, everything is connected to everything else.

The dictionary definition of "chaos" is "complete disorder and confusion." We have been engulfed by a "hurricane." However, instead of, as one might expect, being greeted by a period of settled seas, our hurricane is but a harbinger of an even bigger storm. The good news? The more things change, the more they stay the same! In the midst of a storm there is always a calm. The calm at the centre of this storm, the consistent feature, the priceless gift our long past kith and kin passed on to us – "the team."

That's what this Covid book is about. And yet, as you move through the book, what unfolds is what might be called a "self-fulfilling contradiction." Other than in the introduction, we don't say much about Covid. And yet the book is all about Covid. Not Covid as a stand-alone issue. Not how to get through Covid. Not even the key questions executives should ask as they come down the mountain. But Covid as part of the biggest picture. As but one piece of a chaotic and ever changing political, economic, societal, business and interconnected leadership puzzle.

Make no mistake, technology has and will continue to change how teams operate. In the fullness of time, even in the virtual world, creativity will catch up with connectivity. And, yes, we will evolve organization forms that unlock the human spirit in full measure. Not tomorrow, but there is a generation at work, now in the majority who, as they move into key leadership roles, will push the boundaries that those who went before established.

At the centre of all of this is the team. "Team," being far more than simply a collective noun but as: (1) A way to think and act based on altruism and, given its competitive edge, through collaboration; (2) An enduring link to our hunter-gatherer past; (3) Deeply embedded habits; (4) Behaviour locked in our DNA; (5) A pre-programmed expectation enshrined in every group interaction – be it home, project, virtual, remote, self-organizing, operational, or executive team. In short … a basic and fundamental blueprint for organizational and personal success.

The Shamrock Organization

More recently, a number of invaluable team processes have emerged. Scrum technology, the team as being central to Holacracy and Miro (a virtual whiteboard), being examples. We can't rest on the hope that "fringe plays" find their way into the mainstream, however. With challenges that lie ahead, we can't afford to squander one of our most valuable gifts: working in teams. Step one? To reframe our basic assumptions about work and the organization and start to see our post-Covid agenda through a team lens.

In looking to the future, there are contingencies that lie over the horizon we can't know. The biggest surprises, however, are likely to be those things that we think we know that, as things unfold, prove not to be so. In thinking through how the Covid crisis has changed our assumptions about work, the following five examples are a good place to start:

1. There is a demand from employees to continue to work from home. Others find the stress, blurring of work and personal life and the sheer loneliness of it all carries an emotional burden that they want to put behind them. A third group who would like a blended work experience – part of the time in a traditional work environment and the balance operating from home. In the future this throws up a challenging recruitment issue – identifying and assessing the personality and personal situation of candidates with those three options in mind. Building the team? Challenging, because the legislation in some parts of the world, the US for example, make questions that delve into an individual's family background and lifestyle subject to legal action based on discrimination.

2. Continued work from home puts a premium on "leadership at a distance." This means: (1) reestablishing the meaning that lies behind the organization's purpose; (2) reinforcing the organization's values in everything the team does; (3) total clarity regarding goals and expectations; (4) communication excellence – especially listening; (5) finding new ways to unlock the team's creativity; (6) a degree of transparency that hitherto leaders have been uncomfortable with; and (7) changing the patterns of play – making what can quickly become a repetitive, daily Zoom existence interesting and, when appropriate, fun.

3. The growth/expansion of contingency and Gig employment. Welcome to the Shamrock Organization: (1) full-time employment, working in traditional, face-to-face teams; (2) employees working remotely either part of the time or all of the time; and (3) contingency employees who, whether it be remotely or not, are only called up for a special project, work part time or engaged only during times when the demand from customers or clients makes it necessary.

   In the quest for flexibility and, indeed, to save costs, expect organizations to increase the number of remote and contingency employees. The natural evolution of this is to offer these employees very different terms of employment to those working in full-time, traditional, face-to-face teams. Expanding the virtual workforce has four key compelling benefits.

   i.   It expands the recruitment pool to include not only remote parts of the home country but offshore.

   ii. Organizations benefit from significantly reduced wage and benefit costs – especially if a large number of administrative roles can be moved offshore.

   iii. Remote work is far easier to monitor which, in turn, makes tracking productivity and delivery of key outcomes easier to follow.

   iv. By separating roles which are mission critical from those that are largely supportive/administrative, the number of those working in full-time, traditional, face-to-face positions can be trimmed to an absolute minimum.

   And the behavioral cost of the increased flexibility offered by the shamrock organization? Until the technology catches up – an additional layer of complexity, the erosion of trust, heightened uncertainty and confusion about what it means to be part of a team.

4. The video interview. The cost benefits, the time saved and the overall convenience will resonate long into the future. Having become comfortable with the format, the video interview is likely to herald an overall push to digitalise as much of recruitment as possible. Already well underway, assume further advances in specialised search engines, gamified assessment, dedicated chatbots, online psychometric testing and AI-based induction support. With advances in digitalised recruitment expect new, tech-enabled entrants into what is already a very crowded market.

5. Business travel and all forms of training. If you have any investments in the airline industry, move it to an online training organization. Business travel is costly, time consuming and, even where jetlag isn't a factor, very tough on the body. Once mastered, Zoom and other video conferencing techniques make attendance at many of past meetings unnecessary. For "meetings" read in-house training sessions, workshops and seminars. At senior levels, the personal interaction that some conferences and leadership development sessions provide can be invaluable but even there expect cost savings to override past practice. With universities and large swathes of society moving in the same direction, know that the supporting technology will move forward in leaps and large bounds.

Great Teams Don't Just Happen

It is little short of managerial incompetence how often internal promotions, hire decisions, coaching initiatives and, yes, issues such as the move to remote working, take place – without the key decision-makers stepping back to assess the nature, needs and norms that shape the behaviour of the team(s) involved.

What follows is intended as a practical guide for: (1) setting the scene for a virtual team; (2) a new or established leader who needs to take the team to the next level; (3) the executive who feels that, as the organization navigates the turbulent waters of change, the team is losing its impact; (4) the HR executive, division head or external recruitment specialist (e.g., the executive search consultant) who, in orchestrating team fit, needs to understand the team he/she is hiring into; and/or (5) a manager or external resource faced with the challenge of coaching the team.

Although the book is about "the team," I didn't want to simply jump into a dialogue about what it means to be a great team. It is important to set the scene. Without context, content is incomplete and often misleading. The first four chapters seek to pave the way, while the final chapter, on building the team, deliberately stands on its own.

Consider having the team go through the material and then use the insights gained to shape ongoing dialogue about how to become a better team. Even in a world where reading gets pushed to one side, the accessibility of the book's content makes this a practical option. Remember, those who don't read are little better off than those who can't read. Without meaningful stories you won't keep the dream alive. Without commitment you won't survive. Without hard work you can't thrive. Without a great team you won't arrive.

See also the team assessment that concludes the book. Take the time to go through it with your own team in mind.

CONTENTS

Who We Were is **Who We Are**

Connecting to Our Hunter-Gatherer Past

Four million years ago, we were the master of our domain – the humble tree. Life on the ground was more dangerous but terra firma expanded our ability to forage for food. The not-so-simple task of standing erect also gave us the ability to see over the tall grass and carry useful objects over relatively long distances.

About three million years ago, our ancestors added meat to their diet. Firstly it was the flesh of dead animals. We lived as scavengers. Two million years ago, we had evolved to the point where we started to hunt small and, eventually, larger prey. Bringing down larger animals was initially through traps and ambush.

Discovering how to "manage" fire – around 800,000 years ago – changed everything. Eating predigested food led to a shorter digestive track. Energy that previously supported digestion fueling a larger brain. The result? Better weapons and more effective ways to work together

as a team. And evolution being what it is, only those bands that excelled at teamwork – survived. You and I are here because in our primitive past there were great teams.

Our kind emerged 300,000 years ago. Language, myths, story, and worship of various Gods followed. The birth of Homo sapiens heralded in a hunter-gatherer era that, in large parts of the world, only came to an end relatively recently. It's a culture where every unsuccessful hunt was a crisis. Team-dependent behaviour that dominated our very existence until augmented by crop planting 9500 BC; supplemented by animal husbandry around 8500 BC; and in the earliest cities in Mesopotamia, replaced by specialised trades 7,500 years ago. Even then, hunting was needed to supplement the diet of all but the poorest city dwellers.

For the wealthy Babylonians, Egyptians, Greeks and Romans, "the hunt" became the one organized sport that bestowed "manhood" … as it was for the nobility in the middle ages. For the Colonists to the New World, your skill as a hunter was a matter of life and death. And anyone who has watched a traditional British foxhunt (now rightfully banned) quickly became aware of the overt symbolism, strict rules and elaborate protocols that dictated how that particular "team sport" was played. "A gentleman always knew the rules, of course."

After three million years of social evolution; after outcompeting others on the homolid tree (at least a dozen humanlike species competed for the same resources), in no small measure, because of our ability to organize – it would be naïve to even suggest that we are not a "team animal." And if you are of a mind that a hunter-gatherer way of life is currently restricted to a few primitive tribes in the Amazon, think again. Today, hunting and gathering is called "shopping" and "gambling." It is also found in the need for inclusion that makes Facebook and much of the rest of social media so addictive. Who we were, is who we are.

We are describing a precious heritage that, in the last century, business chose to set aside. There were pockets of interest, of course. The Hawthorne studies in the 1920s; the evolution of skunk works at Lockheed Martin in the 1940s; invaluable work on socio-tech in the 1950s; sensitivity training in the 1960s; Volvo's willingness to look beyond the assembly line and have small teams build cars in the 1970s; Toyota's use of teams to reengineer processes in the 1980s; and the full adoption of smart manufacturing in the 1990s – all speak to the power and value of teams. But these were team-based solutions to specific challenges. The individual ruled. And, even today, in many organizations (the majority?), the team is still not a central feature – a systemic building block – in the overall design of the organization. Think about your own team:

1. What you don't measure, you can't manage. Do you regularly **measure** team performance and, as a result, address where and how to take the team to the next level? "Team performance," in turn, meaning not just "results" – but how team members work with, support, collaborate and coach each other?

2. All (as in **all**) talent acquisition is strategic. Is "team fit" a critical dimension of the hiring process? This implies: (1) measuring both the culture you have and the culture you need in the future; and (2) access to the tools/capability needed to assess team fit. The major reason a newly hired leader fails is either: (1) he/she cannot adapt to the emerging culture; and/or (2) he/she isn't fully integrated into the team.

3. Diversity is the handmaiden of innovation. Does the team truly reflect "diversity?" And not just racial, gender and/or socioeconomic differences but representing a blend of cognitive diversity. If the majority of those on the team "think" and approach problems in the same way, you have stripped the team of a key competitive advantage.

4. Tomorrow's organization will be a team of teams. Is the performance management approach (including compensation) largely about individual performance or is team contribution a **significant** part of both the ongoing conversation and the reward system?

5. If they don't land, they won't stay! When someone new joins the team is a mentor appointed from within the team? Is it recognised that whenever a new team member is added, in many senses, a "new" team is formed? The implications for remote working and the need, as a result, to revisit "what is a team?" are no less profound.

6. How people learn is invariably more important than what they learn. Have team members been fully trained to coach each other? Do they? Recognising that as the team leader you work for the team, is "coaching mastery" how team members describe your commitment to their success?

7. The freedom to act unlocks the opportunity to create value. Is time set aside (one day a week?) for team members to step outside of the prescribed role? In doing so, are they given the freedom to act such that in concert with colleagues, they form self-managing teams? The role of the latter to create value for tomorrow's customer? Other than the need to seek permission to spend outside of agreed budgets, no other constraints exist?

It's All About CULTURE

The Soul Of the Organization

There are two distinct ways to look at culture: (1) as interpreted through the eyes and hands-on touch of the artisan or (2) through the feelings, holistic sense of harmony and interpreted drama of the artist. The world of the artisan implies the quest for truth, deliberate design, measurement, technology and transformative tools. The artisan observes/interprets culture through the artifacts that either deliver utility and/or inspire people.

The artist perceives culture as a constructed reality … a community bound by a common purpose and shaped by myths, beliefs, values, symbolism, ritual and story. As a contrived reality, however, culture is only real for as long as those involved believe that it's real. And it's meaningful and sustainable only for as long as those in key leadership roles reinforce that reality through their day-to-day behaviour. What a leader does is far more important than anything he/she might say!

Without effective processes that support a customer-centric, quality-driven, end-to-end value chain, confusion, conflict and lost capacity are inevitable. Without measurement, organization culture is destined to remain of secondary importance; overwhelmed by the operational emergencies that all too often dominate decision-making. And one need look no further than organizations that have survived down the ages – the Catholic Church and the Freemasons (early 17th Century) – to understand the power of myth, beliefs, symbolism, ritual and story. To lead, to inspire, to take people where they otherwise would not go is to be both artisan and artist. Think of these capabilities as the bricks and mortar (glue) of culture. To instill something that goes deep, to build something that lasts … both are essential.

Culture isn't out there. It's not of secondary importance. And it's not a project, a by-product of the engagement survey, the exclusive domain of the HR department, a silent drumbeat that echoes from the past,[1] a change management program, and/or "something we need to get to." It's now, it's practical and it's the very essence – one might call it "the soul" – of the organization.[2]

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1 Some might argue that is exactly what culture is. It's certainly a feature that has to be recognised and, where necessary, expunged but, as exponential change becomes the new norm, what worked (or didn't work yesterday) becomes less and less influential.

2 Indeed, that is exactly how the CEO of Microsoft, Satya Nadella, describes culture.

In his book **Team of Teams,** General Stanley McChrystal refers to the organization's "collective consciousness."[3] What does that mean? Think of the organization's strategy. The strategy, be it one page or an overly complex plan, contains within it deep-rooted cultural assumptions. All projects and/or strategic initiatives are imprinted by, intended or, more often than not, unintentional "messaging" that shape how those charged with delivering the strategy define success.

In an organization with a strong and agile culture (StrAgility), the signals that shape culture are deliberate, overt and consistent – that is, aligned with the culture the organization needs to create. In organizations that have fallen into "culture drift" – we might not invest much time on culture but there is an overall feeling that we are on the right track – the absence of the deliberate cultural intent carries its own message – "the status quo rules."

The dilemma with a philosophy of "more of the same" is that culture changes whether you want it to or not. And at times, dramatically. When he wrote **Good to Great** (2001), Jim Collins reported, "We were surprised to find that fully 80 percent of the good-to-great executives didn't even mention technology as one of the five factors in the transition." He went on to add that, "Only two executives of the 84 ranked it number one." The response today would be very different.

In an organization that "manages culture," the signals that emphasise "team" are integral to the organization's very DNA. To that end, consider the questions below.

- Is the strategic direction being driven into the organization a single, linear, unidimensional plan … or is "managing uncertainty" supported by a series of well-thought through strategic scenarios?

- In team review meetings, coaching sessions, business development approaches and all things to do with performance management, is the culture the organization needs to create: (1) aligned with what tomorrow's customers want to buy; (2) drawn out of sound measurement; and (3) fully supported by middle managers?

- Are the organization's values clear? Do those values reinforce the importance of teamwork?

- The real challenge with strategy is implementation. Meanwhile, turning direction into delivery rests, in no small measure, on buy-in from the middle kingdom. Is the strategy presented as a series of numbers and charts or has it been translated into a compelling story? Information, as the term implies, "informs." The right story inspires.

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3   General Stanley McChrystal with Collins, Silverman and Fussell, *Team of Teams* (2015).

- Do the stories that dominate celebrate the lone hero/heroine … or do they recognise that no one makes it on their own?

- Do the hiring, promotion, high potential and success processes emphasise team fit? As we move to more flexible organization forms – as the team becomes the basic building block of organization performance – success as both a team leader and a team player becomes the difference that makes a difference.

- Does the definition of "diversity" include not just gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation and the like but cognitive diversity? The latter recognising the need for teams to be made up of members who not only come from different backgrounds but who "think differently."

- Is it recognised that, without support and exemplary teamwork from those in the middle of the organization, the direction the organization needs to take is likely to remain little more than "what might have been?"

- Does the organization's design support or work against a strong team culture? Even a simple carpenter recognises how problematic it is to work against the grain. See Chapter Four.

"The way I think about culture is that modern humans have radically changed the way that they work and the way that they live. Companies need to change the way they manage and lead to match the way that modern humans actually work and live." Brian Halligan, CEO, HubSpot

If the competition is managing its culture and you are trapped by culture drift, no matter how good your product, you don't have a future … you have a problem.

Organizational **LESSONS** from Nature

We Are Part of Nature

It might surprise you to know that one of the largest living things on the planet is a tree. Well perhaps not a single tree but a colony of quaking aspens. Estimated to be over 80,000 years old, the colony in question has a root system weighing over 6,000 tons. And that's what makes it special – its extended and single root system. Meanwhile, a traveller passing through Pando (Utah) will see thousands of what appear to be beautiful aspens. In the fall they are truly spectacular. What is less obvious is that what is on display is, literally, only one tree ... with many erect stems (each of which look like individual trees). *It's a living example of nature ... as a network of networks.*

Not too long ago a remarkable discovery in Brazil unearthed an abandoned megalopolis. With vast subterranean roadways, hundreds of chambers, carefully constructed fungus gardens, air-conditioning shafts, planned transportation routes and rubbish pits … it was nature's version of a sophisticated underground city. To address the hazard it represented, it took ten tons of cement just to fill the air-conditioning shafts. Who built it? Hundreds of millions of leafcutter ants, each capable of carrying 50 times their own weight. Second only to human kind in terms of complexity and self-organization, leafcutter ants form enduring societies built around specialised roles … roles that adapt to fit the challenge at hand. ***Self-organizing groups can be extraordinarily effective.***

Wolves are magnificent creatures. They can also teach us a good deal about leadership. The size of the pack is an indication of how rich their prey base is. Even so, the pack often travels up to 30 miles (48 km) a day in search of food. They are superb hunters. In short bursts, when in pursuit of prey for example, the healthiest animals can reach 35 mph (58 kph). At the front of the pack is a very strong animal whose sole role is to create a path through the snow (the lead wolf). It's hard work. To take advantage of the established "track" the pack moves in single file. The older and injured wolves follow the lead wolf. Were that not the case they could easily lose touch with the pack. The "offence" – four or five wolves that are fast and healthy follow next. The main body – the majority of the pack are in the centre. Supporting and watching over the main body is a second small cadre of strong and healthy wolves – the "defensive line." Bringing up the rear is the alpha wolf (male or female). He/she sees everything. The older wolves decide on the pace. The healthy wolves are positioned to either respond to a hunting opportunity or defend against attack. And the leader, in seeing everything, serves the needs of the pack.[1] ***A successful team is made up of different team roles.***

During flooding in Houston (August 2017) two things were very apparent. One: in times of crisis, the tribe (the African American tribe, the Latino tribe, the Anglo Saxon tribe, etc.) quickly takes on the form of a community. Two: fire ants have remarkable qualities of survival. The rising water was a signal for the ants to escape their nests. Upon doing so, in as little as 100 seconds, using sticky pads under their feet, they formed water-repellent, buoyant islands … circular, pancake-like structures that float for weeks without drowning the ants. No less remarkable, upon hitting solid ground the same structure reforms in a structure not unlike the Eiffel Tower – up to 30 ants tall. Assuming that it is still raining this keeps the vast majority of the colony dry. Once built, the ants continue to work on the integrity of the pyramid-like structure. ***It's not the biggest or the strongest that survive … it's those with the capacity to adapt.***

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1   There is a good deal of debate among naturalists as to exactly how a wolf pack behaves. The scenario outlined is one of the more popular.

One of the most beautiful animals on the planet is the cheetah. Hitting a top speed of 70 mph (110 kph), it is also the fastest. Moreover, it has unbelievable acceleration: hitting top speed in just three seconds. That's faster than a Ferrari Enzo, a McLaren F1 and a Lamborghini Gallardo. Although something of a wimp in defending its kill, in full-flight it's an awesome sight. With incredible eyesight, an unbeatable ability to stalk their chosen prey (*focus*) and its turn of pace means that the chase rarely lasts more than 220-330 yards (200-300 metres). Simply put, the cheetah is the perfect predator. On the African savannah it's a case of … be fast or be last. ***Speed (in human terms – speed of learning) is the only truly, sustainable competitive advantage.***

"For the 99 percent of the time we've been on Earth, we were hunter and gatherers, our lives dependent on knowing the fine, small details of our world. Deep inside, we still have a longing to be reconnected with the nature that shaped our imagination, our language, our song and dance, our sense of the divine." Janine M. Benyus

If those you compete with work on the belief that the organization is a highly adaptable network of networks, built around self-organizing teams, where speed of learning is a competitive imperative … and you are still trying to drive a digital direction into a traditional, 20th century, hierarchical structure, no matter how good your product is you don't have a future … you have a problem.

The ORGANIZATION of Tomorrow

The "F" Word

Two things are perfectly clear. One: the 20th century organization that got us here isn't going to get us where we need to be. Two: to meet the needs of all the stakeholders, to be agile, to innovate, to respond faster, to deliver a "serving" and not just a "service" mentality – means greater involvement of more people, in more places, more of the time. A chain is only as strong as its weakest link. Unless everyone is given an opportunity to make a difference, no one can!

To support the organization forms we need to create to survive, let alone thrive, we must act on the reality that tomorrow's organization will, and must be, a team of teams. As if being pulled through a time warp, the primacy of the team – the very essence of who we are as a species – returns in full measure from our hunter-gatherer heritage. For the last six decades

we have talked up the team. The 21st century organization calls on us to now draw fully on the team DNA that made us who we are.

Language isn't important, it's everything. Those who see organization design through the lens of "structure" are trapped in a mental cul-de-sac of their own making. *Structure* summons up imagery of control, hierarchy and decision-making in the hands of the few. Conversely, the term "performance platform" describes an organization that is flat, where decision-making is pushed close to the customer and, of necessity, a team of teams.

In that, as a society, we are in the act of reinventing it, it's not easy to lay out exactly what tomorrow's organization will look like. Six things can be assumed, however. The organization of the future will, of necessity, be Flat, Fertile (to new ideas), Followership-based, Flexible, Focused and Fast … especially fast.

Flat: Tomorrow's organization won't look very much like the traditional hierarchical model – a mechanistic framework where every level doubles the noise and halves the effectiveness of communication and where every unnecessary level – and in most organizations there are more than a few – adds both unnecessary cost and puts a brake on the speed of decision-making. Indeed, if the heart of your organization is staffed by "information carriers" – organization levels made up largely of administrators – and your customers demand innovative products/services, rapid-fire decision-making and speed of follow-up action, you may not realise it, but your business is in decline.

Research at Cambridge University suggests that the degree of connectivity between nerve cells that make up the brain determines intelligence. The stronger the network the better the brain is at processing information! In like vein, think about the organization as *a network of networks.* A team of teams where people have the ability to act without asking permission. A risk-oriented, collaborative, ideas-driven culture that puts decision-making as close to the customer as possible. A business context where the space between teams is considered as important as the work that goes on within the teams.

Two challenges emerge. One: the stronger the network, the better the organization is at processing information and, in doing so, making decisions. Two: quoting Sloan Professor of Management Emeritus at the Sloan School of Management at MIT, Edgar Schein, "With the changes in technological complexity, the leadership task has changed. Leadership in a networked organization is a fundamentally different thing from leadership in a traditional hierarchy."[1]

Hierarchy evolved to transmit decisions made at the top. It represents a social architecture dominated by the few. Networks are dynamic, they are an enabler of change and they empower people to make decisions that eschew the long-established "ask permission"

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1   Edgar Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership,* 4th ed. (2010).

safety net. Hierarchy is about control. The network thrives on the freedom to act. If you like rules, the assumption of being in charge and have problems letting go, you are going to hate working in a network organization.

"Flat" doesn't mean an organization totally devoid of hierarchy. It's an idea that sounds good on the book circuit but it's impractical. "Vision" isn't a collective activity … and someone has to make tough decisions.

In that a system can never be more effective than its most recalcitrant part, it's important to recognise that where the organization operates as a team of teams, mediocrity from even one team impacts the effectiveness of the whole. No chain is stronger than its weakest link. Great organizations are built on great teams.

Fertile: The essence of a fertile organization – one where creativity is the currency of competition – is to distinguish between cooperation and collaboration. In confusing the two those involved perpetuate self-serving habits. As for the difference? Cooperation is two or more people who, in getting together to solve a problem or respond to an opportunity, assume that everyone will benefit from the outcome. Collaboration is two or more people who, in getting together to solve a problem or create an opportunity, work on the presumption that "your success is more important than mine."

Cooperation can work well in addressing an established challenge. An explicit customer request, for example, that involves several teams or divisions from across the business. Collaboration is demanded if you want to create something new. An offering, for example, that the customer hasn't directly requested or, in some instances, doesn't even know they need. Shades of Steve Jobs!

Cooperation demands the kind of trust that comes from everyone keeping their pre-agreed promise. The trust that lies at the heart of collaboration is far more about shared values and the spirit of altruism. When competing on ideas the difference is important.

We are describing an environment where loyalty to the tribe gives way to a true sense of community; where doing right is more important than being right and where a shared name gives way to a shared story.

Followership-based: The ideal organization design reflects how people, given the choice, would choose to work together.

As Russia discovered in the 1920s, when Stalin attempted to copy the highly integrated business model that distinguished the technological and production miracle unfolding in Detroit, an overdependence on centralised planning – especially when accompanied by ponderous hierarchy, rigid control and decisions in the hands of the few – resulted in only one thing – gridlock.

Every organization is a network of informal networks. If it were not … if the assumption were that the organization actually worked the way the organization chart described how it should work … it would close in a week.

There is a natural force inside every organization, large and small, for people to work together that, if afforded the opportunity, optimises their contribution. The organization form of tomorrow, in recognising that, strips out tribal boundaries (silos), rules, barriers, impediments and roadblocks that prevent that from happening. In doing so we are tapping into a survival instinct that goes back to our hunter-gatherer past. When how you work together dictates whether you will survive or not, you tend to figure out how to get it right.[2]

Given the opportunity – assuming the context supports it – few groups are more involved, inventive and innovative than a self-organizing team.

Flexible: The capacity to adapt speaks to a way for people to work together that allows leadership to emerge regardless of their functional role. Leadership is a response to a challenge and/or opportunity … not a title.

If everyone on the team sounds and acts the same, being adaptable is highly unlikely. This speaks to diversity. It also outlines the need for the team to contain within it the capacity to deliver a range of behaviours that contribute to the overall success of the team (team roles). A successful team is built around six distinct team roles: (1) Visionary; (2) Explorer; (3) Pioneer; (4) Warrior; (5) Maverick; and (6) Navigator. All six team roles are covered in more depth in Chapter Five – Building a Great Team.

Like a team of two horses pulling the same plow, flexibility and resilience travel in harness. Resilience isn't just adapting to change; it's facing a new tomorrow with a passion to learn. It's not just bouncing back after a setback; it's becoming stronger as a result of the challenges faced. And resilience isn't a solo endeavour; resilient leaders surround themselves with, and are strengthened by, resilient people on the team. Then again, perhaps Winston Churchill best described resilience, "Success is going from failure to failure without losing enthusiasm."

The capacity to adapt is, ultimately, a mindset. Andy Grove, a pioneer in the semiconductor industry, perhaps put it best, "Only the paranoid survive." Intel, the company he helped create, went on to become not only the largest chipmaker on the planet but one of the world's most admired companies.

Focused: Have you ever noticed how those who display mastery in something always seem to have more time? It's impossible to be fast at something you don't excel at. No less important … speed without clarity is the business equivalent of driving too fast while having a badly cracked windscreen.

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2   Larger organizations (settlements) drew on the written word, the ability to grow surplus food and shared myths. In particular, myths changed the perception of time such that "the future" became a tangible and meaningful concept.

When Bill Gates and Steve Jobs were brought together by their respective wives, they were each asked to write down on a piece of paper what it was that fuelled their success. Independently, they both wrote down one word – "focus."

My own experience is that leaders who have the laser-like focus demanded in a turbulent world do a number of things remarkably well. They know how and when to say "No." They don't let the immediate overwhelm the essential. They are curious. They constantly ask tough questions … deliberately go out of their way to meet those who have a different point of view … and seek new ways to penetrate the veil of tomorrow's possibility. As a result, they develop thoughtful and informed insight about *what* to focus on.

It seems like only yesterday that General Electric had six major divisions. Today it has only three. What does your organization, literally, do better than anyone else (your core competency)? Outsource, shut down or seek to off-load the rest. That doesn't mean that defining your core competency is always a straightforward exercise. It might be assumed that what makes Airbnb and Uber special is their respective expertise in the hotel and taxi business. It isn't. Like Bloomberg, they are in the knowledge of knowledge business.

A shotgun will hit the target. It's an excellent weapon when the target is standing in front of you. A rifle demands more skill and greater concentration. The benefit being is that it will hit a target some distance away. If you want to be successful in the short term, a scattergun approach may deliver early results. If you want to create tomorrow, today you need to be able to focus on both the immediate and the strategic targets.

Fast: Today is the slowest things will ever be. Technology, the aggression and agility of new market entrants and the ever-increasing clock speed that technology affords means that if you are not fast you are not going to stay in the game.

How people learn determines not only how and where future value is created but how the organization deals with uncertainty. In the world we are moving into, speed of action is a given. Even more important, however, is ***speed of learning.*** Indeed, how quickly your organization (collectively) learns is almost certainly the only sustainable competitive advantage. Put it this way – if the competition is learning faster than you are, you are falling behind. And if they learn faster than you for an extended length of time, it will be very difficult to catch up.

There are three dominant ways to learn. At each level the speed of learning increases exponentially.

I.   Simple learning … as in instruction. Simple learning is essential when it comes to issues like safety but if the learning orientation is limited to instruction (tell and listen and tell and sell), instruction begets only two things … incremental change … followed by the request for more instruction.

II.   Learning how to learn. In learning how to learn the learner is encouraged (given permission) to explore different ways to expand on the basic knowledge or skills. Different ways to deepen and expand his/her competency. You don't really learn to drive your car until after you have passed the test.

III. Learning how to learn limited only by the imagination of the learner. Think painting outside of the lines. Think breaking established patterns. Think being given the opportunity for part of the workweek to operate outside the restriction of a role, the agreed objectives and how things have always been done. Think about an organization that is naturally fertile to new ideas and where teams are encouraged to create the space for people of like minds to "bump" into each other.

Imagine buying a new table from Ikea. Simple learning is following the instructions. Learning how to learn is assembling it and then reading the instructions afterwards. Learning how to learn limited by imagination is deciding halfway through the project to use the materials to build something entirely different.

If you want to better understand the culture you have and the culture you need, explore (measure) how people in your organization learn.

"In a learning organization, leaders are designers, stewards, and teachers. They are responsible for building organizations where people continually expand their capabilities to understand complexity, clarify vision, and improve shared mental models – that is, they are responsible for learning." Peter Senge

If the competition is building an organization that is flatter, more fertile, to a greater degree followership-based, with greater flexibility, faster than you are, and with a laser-like focus on critical outcomes … no matter how good your product, you don't have a future … you have a problem.
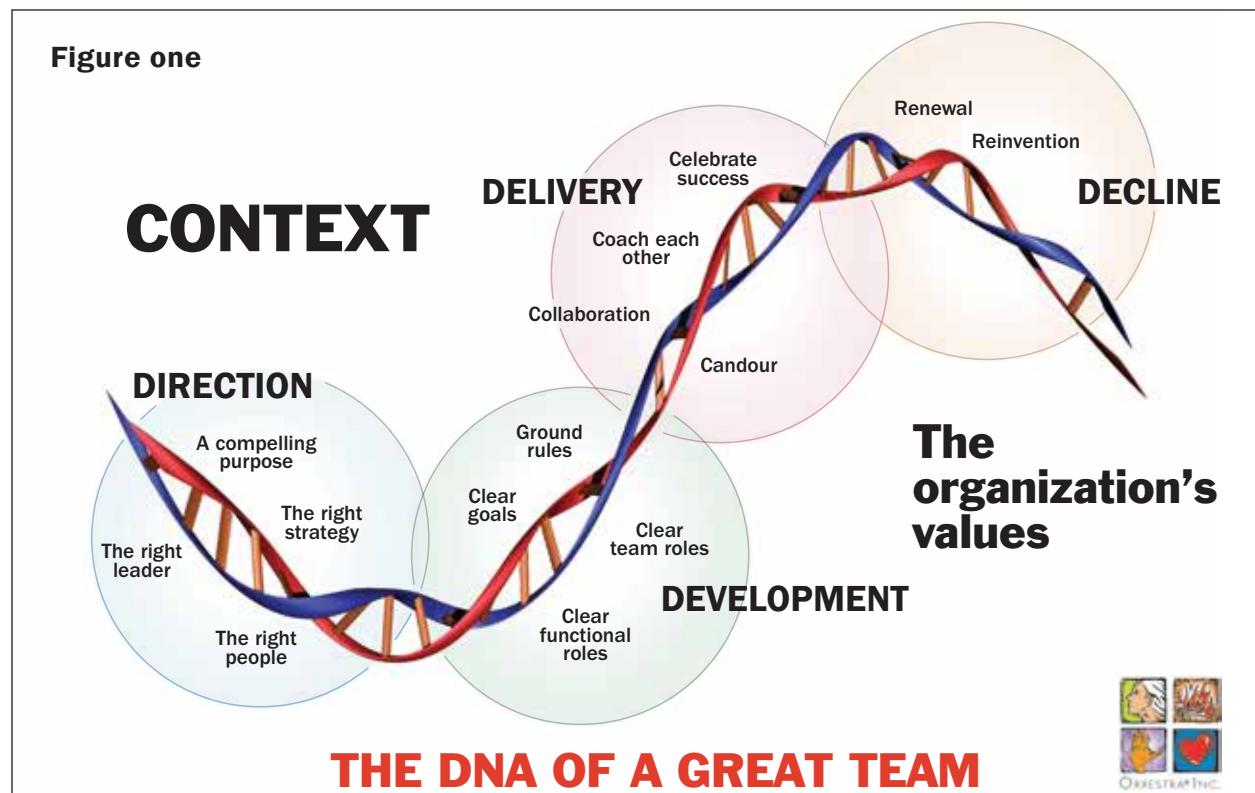
Building a GREAT TEAM

The Team DNA

Carl von Clausewitz made the point that the purpose of war wasn't to kill people. It was to forge a political solution that couldn't be achieved by any other means. Striving to create a great team isn't simply to end up with a nice, bright, shiny and highly admired group of people. The **only** reason for building a great team – the utility implied – is to better facilitate tomorrow's winning value proposition, create value, bring about change and retain talent. Anything less is to shortchange everyone involved.

It goes without saying that there are different types of teams: project teams, problem-solving teams, temporary teams, cross-functional teams, quality teams and virtual teams to name

Figure one

CONTEXT

DIRECTION
- A compelling purpose
- The right strategy
- The right leader
- The right people

DELIVERY
- Celebrate success
- Coach each other
- Collaboration
- Candour

DEVELOPMENT
- Ground rules
- Clear goals
- Clear team roles
- Clear functional roles

DECLINE
- Renewal
- Reinvention

The organization's values

THE DNA OF A GREAT TEAM

but a few. In reviewing the suggested team development steps that follow, one question quickly surfaces. "Are all these steps necessary in every type of team?" The answer is … "well, yes." Not necessarily in the detail outlined but, by way of example, consider for a moment a newly formed, cross-functional team that neglects or overlooks several (one even) of the building blocks described. The only thing more impactful than a great team is a group of highly talented individuals devoid of a purpose, fighting with each other and/or generally going in the wrong direction. Change is a state of affairs with two potential outcomes … one positive … the other not.

A word here about remote working. It's tempting to take a *laissez fare* approach to working from home. Out of sight, out of mind. There could be no bigger mistake. The more diverse, the more remote, the greater degree to which team members are separated by space and time – the more the right glue is needed to keep them together – the more the basic disciplines of teamwork have to be instilled – the more the DNA of the team has to be nurtured.

The emphasis on group dynamics is all prevalent in work around the team. Important as the chemistry of interaction is, it is no less important for those on the team to display the qualities of a successful team member. Five qualities in particular are a given: (1) loyalty; (2) commitment; (3) no games playing; (4) help each other out; and (5) to listen.

Figure one – The DNA of a Great Team – maps out the building blocks of a great team. Central to **Figure one** are two intertwined threads of DNA. One strand represents results; the other relationships. A successful team commits to and invests in both. Results and relationships are the central tenets in a series of synergistic sub-processes that move from **D**irection, to **D**evelopment, to **D**elivery and, eventually, to **D**ecline. As it moves through each of the building blocks, a great team leans heavily on these DNA markers.

Context: The influence of the team on individual behaviour is often (invariably) underestimated … as is the impact of the wider organization culture on the team. Attempts to transform the organization (or team) one person at a time are destined to be both time-consuming and, ultimately, frustrating.

The most powerful "change tool" in the leader's arsenal is to reframe the context. "Context" is found in – although not limited to – the emerging customer's needs, how the space is organized, the team leader's behaviour, who is brought onto the team and/or who is asked to leave, imagery, the organization's values, group norms, the degree of transparency, access to best practice, storytelling, the metaphors introduced, work that has meaning, the spirit of affirmation and giving back. For millennials, giving back includes a high priority to the environment.

- Do team members have a full and unambiguous understanding of the organization's values? Values aren't rules; they give people permission to act. Without shared

values, trust, collaboration and what it means to be "customer-centric" have to be constantly thought anew.

- Does everyone on the team fully understand the culture the wider organization is seeking to create?

- If the team is dispersed, how are team members who don't have day-to-day contact made to feel part of a team?

- Is it understood why today's customer buys and how and why that will change in the future?

- Brand means **B**etter **R**esults **A**nd **N**o **D**isappointment. Is the promise implicit in the brand integral to how the team faces new challenges and/or makes decisions?

- Is the team imbued with a sense of urgency?

- Is simplicity the watchword in everything the team seeks to do?

- Where English (French, German, Japanese, etc.) isn't a common language, what extra care is taken to explain the meaning (concisely) of those words that **must** have a shared understanding? The organization's values being a case in point.

- Is the organization's story clear? That story answers five important questions. Why do we do what we do? Where is the organization headed? What do we believe in? What makes us special? How do we make a difference in people's lives? A great team – as does a great organization – draws inspiration from a great story. Moreover, team members know how to share it (consistently). See also "Compelling Purpose," below.

- Trust is a huge issue on a successful team. In studying what makes a team successful, Google identified a special kind of trust – "psychological safety:" a feeling that it's comfortable to take risk; that you won't be punished for admitting mistakes, asking questions and/or offering ideas.[1]

- Psychological safety is especially important for those new to the team. If they don't land, they won't stay. They might be present physically for a while … but if a feeling of "belonging" isn't established quickly … expect an early exit emotionally.

Compelling purpose: The team's purpose is obviously drawn out of the organization's purpose. Purpose should answer two questions – one, essentially, a subtext of the other. Why do we do what we do? How does what we do make a difference in the world? I recently met with a bionics company. When I asked them about their purpose they answered, "To make the wheelchair redundant." Now that's a purpose! With a big enough "why" ordinary people can and do achieve the extraordinary.

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1   Project Aristotle.

- Does the "why" have real emotional impact … both within the business and with customers? Does it inspire people?

- In what ways does the purpose give team members a deeper sense of meaning?

- What unanswered questions does the purpose raise?

The right leader: To lead is to be the first one to smile and the last one to speak. Those who excel as leaders blend courtesy, compassion and comfort with ambiguity into an in-the-moment presence. Peter Drucker referred to courtesy as "the lubricant of leadership."

There is no such thing as a leaderless team. Power moves into a vacuum. Lack of a leader runs the risk of introducing the wrong leadership. That said, as the team matures, there are times when the leader has to follow and members of the team are asked to lead.

- Is there a clear leader? Is he/she the right leader? Who should the leader be? In the case of an outgoing leader, what was his/her most significant contribution?

- Does the team leader live the organization's values every day in every way? How does he/she deal with those who don't always live the values? A leader who doesn't live the values represents a dysfunctional role model for others … especially for young, high potential leaders. "That's how you get on around here."

- What is the team leader's leadership point of view? If he/she cannot articulate a clear leadership point of view, he/she either needs coaching or is the wrong leader.

- In the way he/she leads, does he/she deliver leadership "balance?" Balance implies – clarity of **D**irection – an unwavering focus on the **D**iscipline of **D**elivery – a commitment to **D**evelop self and others – and that the **D**ay-to-**D**ay **D**ialogue draws on humility, authenticity, resilience and caring. In my own work these four domains equate to the Head (direction); the Hand (delivery); the Heart (development); and the Spirit (ongoing dialogue).

- One of the leadership tasks often underestimated is the need to keep everyone on the team fully informed. Not only do team members give this a high priority but the depersonalised nature of digital connectivity only serves to emphasise the need for, and value of, face-to-face communication.

- More or less on a par with keeping people informed is that the leader "go to bat" for team members when criticism, concern and/or unhealthy politics arise from outside of the team. When and how does that happen?

- In the absence of an appointed leader, who takes the lead?

- How does the team leader deal with conflict? What conflict will a future leader need to deal with?

- How are rivalries dealt with?

- How much freedom to act do team members have? How much freedom to act should they have?

- How does the team leader delegate?

The right strategy: The strategy describes "what" needs to be achieved. The organization's values outline "how."

- Is the long-term direction for the team clear? Is it congruent with the strategy of key teams one level up?

- Are the delivery assumptions built into the strategy consistent with the organization's values?

- Does the strategy contain within it messaging that reinforces the culture the organization needs to create?

- In what ways does the strategy balance the short and the long term?

- Who, if anybody, on the team disagrees with the agreed strategy? How have they been given a voice?

The right people: Whom you hire and/or promote dictates what's possible. The default selection process in most organizations is skewed towards hiring the "best" person. Great teams are built on finding the "right" person.

Based on the situation, the right candidate will be someone who can grow and continue to grow in the role, who adds to the team beyond the horizons of the functional role and who is a natural fit with the leadership development agenda offered within the organization.

If you can't attract top talent, you can't hire top talent. Top performers are drawn to an organization with a great story.

- With the agreed strategy in mind, do those on the team have the basic talent needed to thrive? What's missing … as a team … and/or on an individual basis?

- Is the behaviour of those on the team aligned with the culture the organization – and by implication – the team need to create?

- Is there an obvious successor to the leader? How has the potential success of that individual been validated? What development steps are under way?

- How does the team add someone new? Is that approach effective? Talent acquisition is about fit. Fit, in turn, means a great story; a robust measure of culture (today and tomorrow); a balanced scorecard; role-specific leadership competencies; an exacting

assessment of the team; and a self-guided approach to integration that allows the recently landed candidate to manage his/her own integration. If any of these risk-mitigating steps are missing, the inevitable outcome is that talent acquisition becomes a beauty contest (the best candidate).

- Are those who make recruitment decisions fully trained in interviewing? In that key hire decisions at the top of the organization are worth many times the annual salary – at times they amount to betting the business – it is surprising (shocking) how few key decision-makers know how to interview. Uninformed practice doesn't make you perfect; it merely makes the value destroyed incrementally greater.

Clear functional roles: There is a distinct difference between a job and a role. The former is defined by standards. No matter who holds down the job, the expectations will always be the same. The role is defined, initially, by the requisite core (contribution) demanded from the role. Outside of that requisite core, however, the individual in the role is able, to a degree, to shape the nature and scope of his/her contribution. Jobs are designed to fit together like the bricks in a wall – no overlap. In a high performing team, as individuals expand their contribution, a degree of role overlap is both inevitable and desirable. It's the challenge, creativity and collaboration derived from this overlap that often transforms a good team ... into something special.

- Are roles and responsibilities on the team clear?

- Do those on the team know, with great clarity, the decisions: (1) they can make; (2) they cannot make; and (3) that are shared?

Clear team roles: In addition to functional roles, the team must cover off six critical team roles: (1) Visionary (bring tomorrow to life, today); (2) Explorer (business savvy); (3) Pioneer (new ideas); (4) Warrior (delivery ethic); (5) Maverick (challenge the status quo); and (6) Navigator (team process).

- In which role does the team leader excel?

- Are all of the six team roles present and accounted for?

- If one of the team roles is missing, how is that shortfall addressed?

- Note: in teams in the middle of the organization it's quite possible for a talented team leader and/or member to deliver more than one role. The more senior the team, the more mastery in each of the six team roles is demanded. At the top of the organization it is unlikely that a leader will be masterful in more than one team role.

Clear goals: Expectations must encompass both "the what" (results) and "the how" (behaviour demanded). According to UCLA Neurobiology Professor, Dean Buonomano, our

brains are hard wired for the here and now; the "vision" amounting to little more than, "a conversation with a stranger."[2] To turn the intangible into the attainable, means breaking the journey down into eminently practical steps. While it's true that the stonemason was inspired by the belief that the Cathedral was being built for the glory of God, he also knew that every morning, at the break of dawn, he had to reach for his hammer and chisel.

- Do people know what is expected of them?

- Is at least one of those goals strategic (beyond the next 12 months)?

- Is feedback ongoing?

- Is "feedforward" a common approach?

- Is the tough conversation alive and well on the team?

- Are those who don't live the organization's values separated?

- Not everyone wants to receive feedback in the same way. This is an especially important issue in a multicultural team. How is this managed?

Ground rules: Outstanding teams agree on both output criteria (results) and how to successfully work together (relationships). The former is taken for granted. The latter, more often than not, is given only passing recognition. You can't achieve what you haven't defined. If you don't know what you are looking for, it is highly unlikely that you will find it.

- In what circumstances does the team simply jump into the problem or issue?

- What agreed, four to six, easy to understand, team process criteria describe "team" success? How can those success criteria be introduced?

- Is time set aside regularly to review how the team is living up to the commitment framed by the agreed ground rules?

- Does the team take time out at the conclusion of a meeting and at the end of a project to discuss how they worked together?

- Is that learning folded into the next meeting/project?

Candour: Membership of a successful team isn't always a comfortable experience. High performers, when faced with an unexpected barrier, unwarranted resistance and/or a drop in quality, don't hesitate to use "their elbows" to achieve the outcome needed. Without candour the truth is destined to remain hidden. Without candour, manipulation, hidden agenda and decibel decision-making (who speaks the loudest) come to the fore.

Humour is candour's best buddy. Indeed, humour can be a powerful way to burst the bubble

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2   Dean Buonomano, *Brain Bugs* (2012).

of pomposity … but it has to be the right humour at the right time. Where humour is lacking, something important is missing from team chemistry. If you have just inherited a problematic team and humour is lacking … the team is in worse shape than you were led to believe.

- Does everyone on the team speak up? Who doesn't? Why?
- How and when does the team leader ask for/receive feedback on how he/she behaves as a leader?
- When and how are those on the team who don't live the values confronted?
- When and how does the team leader take on (or not) the tough conversation?
- How and in what way does humour surface?
- In a team that draws membership from different cultures, humour can be a very sensitive issue. Is that cultural dynamic fully recognised? Is it factored into how the relationships on the team are shaped?

Collaboration: Cooperation is two or more people working to solve a problem or build on an opportunity where all of those involved gain, more-or-less, equally in the outcome achieved. Collaboration is two or more people working to solve a problem or build on an opportunity where the success of the others on the team is more important than one's own success. Cooperation is about sharing the gain. Collaboration is, ultimately, altruistic. See: **Fertile** in Chapter Four.

- Do team members stick up for each other?
- Is the success of the team more important than individual success?
- Do people on the team care for each other?
- Is appropriate humour part of how team members work together?
- Do those on the team look like they belong and want to belong … or do one or two (possibly more) act as if they would rather be someplace else?

Coach each other: Coaching is *servant leadership* personified. And it is never about the coach. In today's business environment those who can't or don't coach are ill-equipped for any form of leadership that involves managing others.

- Is the team leader a role model as a coach?
- Do team members display coaching mastery? Do they ask to be coached?
- How and when do members of the team coach each other?
- Are "great questions" central to how team meetings move forward?

- Listening is a critical team strength. In what ways do team members go out of their way to listen to each other?

Celebrate success: If you don't use it, you lose it! Teams that don't celebrate success lose touch with the emotional impact of what it means to be successful. Celebration is defined by both the "end of project" event and ongoing affirmation.

- How do team members celebrate?

- Affirmation. Do team members go out of their way to "catch each other doing it right?"

- Are criticism and negative comments related to the goal sought and never personalised?

Renewal: Even the very best teams, at some time, lose their way. The time to address that loss of momentum is before it happens.

- What does the team need to stop?

- What does the team need to start?

- What does the team need to do differently?

Reinvention: Reinventing the team is, essentially, an act of creative destruction. With reinvention we come full circle. That is to say, we return to the first steps outlined in the team DNA.

- Does the team have a compelling purpose?

- Is the right leader in place?

- Are they approaching strategy in a meaningful and effective way?

- Does the team have the right people?

"Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around." Leo Buscaglia

If the competition is building stronger, more agile, faster learning and higher performing teams than you are, no matter how good your product, you don't have a future … you have a problem.

Conclusion

Faced with a raging storm, "the captain" has several options: stay in port and wait for the bad weather to pass; step back and develop a strategy that anticipates what tomorrow will bring; redesign the ship to enable it to ride the crest of the waves; replace those on board who aren't up to the task; retrain the crew such that they are equipped to deal with turbulent weather; and/or ensure that, working together as a great team, the crew displays all the attributes needed to respond to an environment where the unexpected can be expected.

Staying in port only makes sense if calm sailing can be anticipated. When faced with an unprecedented level of turbulence, as we are, the harsh reality is that today's storm is but a harbinger of the even greater storms ahead. Drawing on nature, anticipation, redesign, replacement, training and building a great team are clearly options … but only if they are forged into holistic, cohesive, unambiguous, meaningful and compelling action steps. Underscoring those critical actions is a mindset. As a leader, do I want be a follower or do I want to **create** the organization's – and with it my own – future?

Without meaningful stories you won't keep the dream alive. Without commitment you won't survive. Without hard work you can't thrive. Without a great team you won't arrive.

Team Assessment

Great Organizations Are Built Around GREAT TEAMS

TRANSEARCH
YOUR WORLD PARTNER IN EXECUTIVE SEARCH
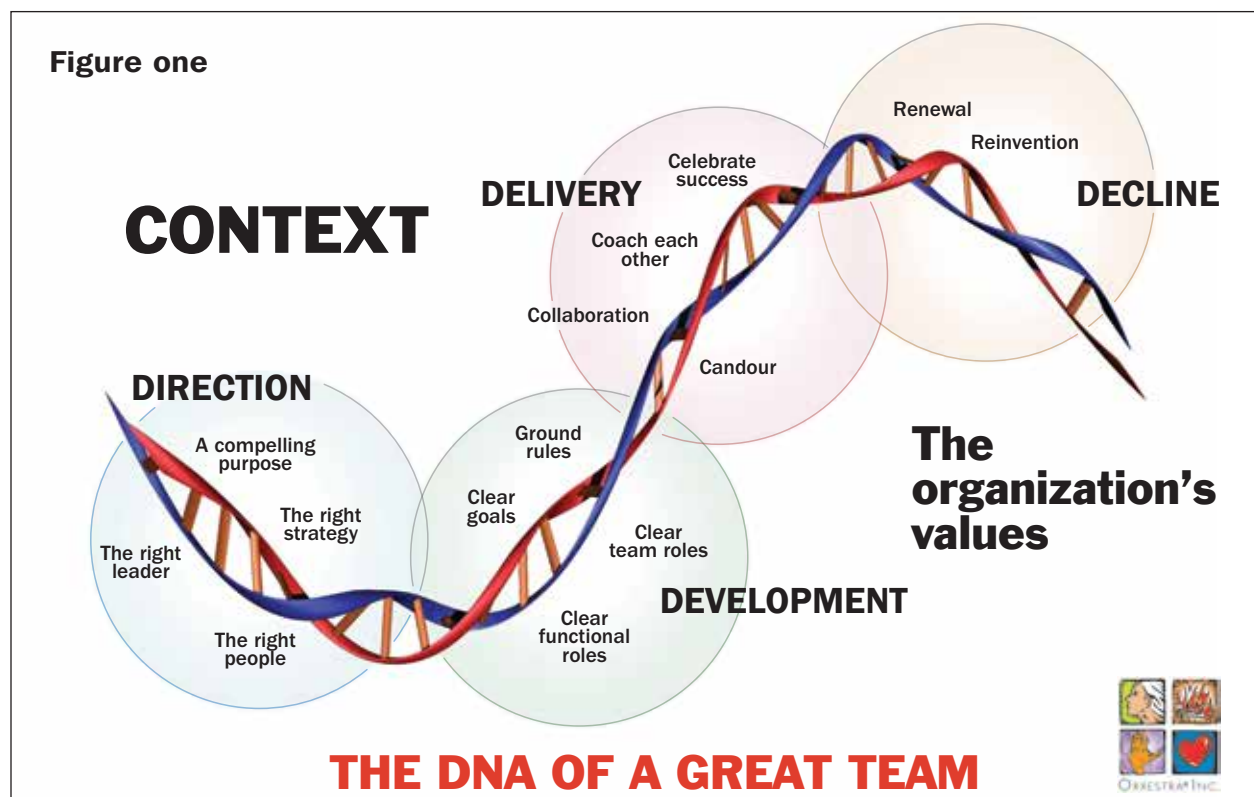
John O. Burdett

ORXESTRA® INC.

The Team DNA

Who: What follows is intended as a practical guide for (1) a recently appointed team leader; (2) the executive who feels that, as the organization navigates the turbulent waters of change, the team is losing its impact; (3) the HR executive, team leader or external recruitment specialist who, in orchestrating team fit, needs to understand the team he/she is hiring into; (4) shaping the effectiveness of a remote team; and/or (5) a manager or internal resource faced with the challenge of coaching the team.

A great team: **Figure one –** The DNA of a Great Team – maps out the building blocks of a truly successful team. Central to **Figure one** are two intertwined threads of DNA.

Figure one

CONTEXT

DELIVERY

DECLINE

Renewal
Reinvention

Celebrate success

Coach each other

Collaboration

Candour

DIRECTION

A compelling purpose

The right strategy

The right leader

The right people

Ground rules

Clear goals

Clear team roles

Clear functional roles

DEVELOPMENT

The organization's values

THE DNA OF A GREAT TEAM

Orxestra Inc.

One strand represents results; the other relationships. A successful team commits to and invests in both. Results and relationships are the central tenets in a series of synergistic sub-processes that move from Direction, to Development, to Delivery and, eventually, to Decline. As it evolves, a great team leans heavily on these DNA markers.

Take the time to get it right at the beginning. There are any number of characteristics of a truly outstanding team. Counted amongst them being the level of engagement, symbolism, courtesy, language, story, the use of metaphor, agility, comfort with ambiguity, leadership reach (working across cultures), speed of learning and taking advantage of the technology available. The assessment that follows, whilst not all encompassing, focuses on, what are deemed to be, the *essential* building blocks of team success. Think of them as the "backbone" of a great team. Without a sound base to build upon even the most elegant of interventions, processes and/or structures will fall.

Think slow in order to be able to act fast: Obviously there are different types of teams: project teams, problem-solving teams, temporary teams, cross-functional teams, quality teams and virtual teams to name but a few. In reviewing **Figure one**, a central question quickly surfaces, "Are all the steps outlined necessary in every type of team?" The answer is … "well, yes." Consider for a moment a newly formed, cross-functional, project team that neglects or overlooks several (or even one) of the steps described. The only thing more impactful than a great team is a group of highly talented individuals devoid of a purpose,

The need for agility, innovation and speed of action means that tomorrow's successful organization will, of necessity, be a team of teams.

unclear about the role each plays and/or generally going in the wrong direction.

Unless you change the conversation the status quo is assured. It is worth emphasizing that although, in any change agenda, knowing where you are is essential, the assessment, above all else, affords an opportunity to enter into a deeper and richer conversation about what it means to be a great team.

The assessment: Even though you are very much part of the team, you are encouraged to look objectively at the way the team behaves from a detached standpoint. Do your best to do exactly that, especially if you are the team leader.

Scoring: Consider the three statements in each of the 15 clusters (e.g., context, organization values, the right strategy, etc.) and determine (✓) which one statement comes closest to your current reality (a, b, or c). Not where you want to be (aspirational) … but where you are.

The assessment starts on page 34. Respond to all 15 clusters. Select only one statement in each cluster. Total your answers on page 42. Page 43 will explain what your result means.

"What holds people back isn't lack of desire or the need for a dream.
What makes the ordinary inevitable is being trapped by past success; by continuing
to do what we have always done; by taking the easy option."

MANAGING THE TEAM FROM THE OUTSIDE-IN

A great team is managed from the outside-in … but draws on leadership from the inside-out. From "the outside-in" equates to taking account of the social and economic climate, what's happening in the marketplace, the culture the organization needs in order to compete, successfully, tomorrow … and the values deemed to have primacy in shaping behaviour across the organization.

1. Context:

a. The team appears to be trapped by "culture drift" – the assumption that today's behaviour and thinking (the status quo) will, by default, support the culture the organization needs tomorrow. **RED**

b. Although no work has been done on culture measurement, any and all recent actions taken and/or deliberate changes within and by the team were fully mindful of the organization's intentional culture. **AMBER**

c. Measuring culture, and with it a focus on the culture the organization must have to remain competitive, is central to any discussion about future success – be it in support of the organization and/or for the team. **GREEN**

2. Organization values:

a. Although the team have spent time on the organization's values, not everyone on the team, if asked, could tell you what they are and/or exactly what they mean. **RED**

b. Although there is a consistent understanding of what the organization's values mean, the team doesn't always display the discipline needed to consistently bring those values to life. **AMBER**

c. If asked, everyone on the team would describe exactly what the organization's values mean. Indeed, they frame every decision, every action and every interaction. Simply put, the organization's values give people permission to act. Team members who don't live those values are quickly confronted and, if nothing changes, separated from the organization. **GREEN**

"Content without context is momentum without meaning."

DIRECTION

Direction is setting the stage. It's tilling the soil. It's giving the team a sound foundation. Teams that lack a compelling purpose, that want for the right leadership, that don't have a sound strategy and/or have even one person on the team who is a misfit are, at best, a disparate group going through the motions of being "a team."

3. Compelling purpose:

a. There is confusion around "the difference the organization and, by implication, the team makes in the world." The motivation behind "why" the team collectively do what they do … is equally unclear. Note: If the latter is simply to make money, expect a problem with retention. **RED**

b. Although most of those on the team are comfortable discussing how and in what ways the team makes a difference, an engaging "why" has yet to emerge. **AMBER**

c. Everyone on the team has a passionate commitment to both how the team makes a difference in the world and why the team do what they do. It's also clear that the "why" connects with what tomorrow's customers will demand. **GREEN**

4. The right leader:

a. A leader who, to an outsider, would appear to be trying to find his/her way. **RED**

b. An experienced and talented leader … who, although "successful," doesn't always deliver "leadership balance." By the latter is implied clarity of direction; the discipline of delivery; a commitment to developing self and others; and that the day-to-day dialogue draws on humility, authenticity, resilience and caring. **AMBER**

c. The leader is a clear role model in terms of embracing disruption, displaying resilience, living the organization's values and in being able to articulate a future-oriented, customer-centric leadership point of view. It is also very apparent that the team leader exemplifies leadership balance. **GREEN**

*"To be a better leader … **first strive to become a better you.**"*

DIRECTION (continued)

5. The right strategy:

a. Strategy contains three key elements: (1) strategic thinking; (2) strategic planning; and (3) strategic doing (delivery). In considering the direction being charted by the team, it's very apparent that one of these isn't fully present. **RED**

b. The strategy is clear. The balance between the short and long term is well thought out. If there is a deficiency it's that the "messaging" contained in the strategy doesn't always reinforce the culture the organization needs to create. **AMBER**

c. Not only is the strategy well thought through and "the customer's voice" fully present but all of the key constituencies needed to support and deliver the strategy are fully on board. In that middle management support is absolutely essential, the team leader, in particular, when sharing the strategy with those in the middle – through imagery, metaphor and story – makes tomorrow come alive in the room, today. **GREEN**

6. The right people:

a. Although team members are held accountable for short-term results, it's not clear that all of those on the team are currently equipped for the ideas-driven, fast-moving, digital, turbulent world we are moving into. **RED**

b. Assessment and meaningful coaching focusing on tomorrow's success is underway. If there is a dilemma it's that, in the hiring process, potential team members aren't always subjected to the rigor needed to effectively determine fit: the emerging culture (this implies measurement), a robust scorecard, role-specific leadership competencies and a deep understanding of the team. **AMBER**

c. The hiring process embraces all the critical determinates of fit. Ongoing coaching is anchored in future-oriented, role-specific competencies, there is a recognition that diversity and innovation walk hand in hand and a clear successor to the team leader is in place. **GREEN**

*"When the work to define fit is either inadequate or incomplete, the default action is to land on the best candidate. Mastery is to hire the **right** candidate."*

DEVELOPMENT

If direction is setting the stage, development is where the players learn their lines. When those on the team are confused about the scope of their responsibility, what it truly means to be part of a team, the outcomes demanded and/or how to surface and deal with conflict, they are turning their back on what is truly possible.

7. Clear functional roles:

a. From time to time, there is a degree of confusion regarding exactly who is responsible for what. **RED**

b. Team members fully understand the scope of their responsibility, the decisions they can make, the decisions that amount to shared accountability and the decisions that must be referred to others. That said, the thinking on the team tends to view individual roles as though each were a separate brick in a wall: clear boundaries, no overlap and "do your job." **AMBER**

c. Team members have a full understanding of both the scope of their responsibility and the decisions that they are accountable for. There is also a shared understanding that beyond those core responsibilities (what must get done), each team member has an opportunity to shape the nature of their contribution. The resulting role overlap is recognised as an opportunity for breakthrough thinking and innovation to flourish. **GREEN**

8. Clear team roles:

a. The team melds their skills and capabilities together without thinking too much about the "team role" each plays. **RED**

b. Although not always deemed a priority, there is a general understanding that a great team covers off six essential team roles: Visionary (a team member who looks to the horizon); Explorer (brings business savvy); Pioneer (new ideas); Warrior (drive to deliver); Maverick (challenge the status quo); Navigator (a focus on team process). **AMBER**

c. In meetings and on projects, if a key team role is missing, that role is allocated to a team member, e.g., asking a team member to deliberately play the role of "Maverick." **GREEN**

*"In a wired and connected world, you need super teams
more than you need superstars."*

DEVELOPMENT (continued)

9. Clear goals:

a. Team members know what is expected of them. If there is a concern it is that, with some individuals, slippage against the agreed goals is often tolerated for longer than it should be. **RED**

b. Clear goals, a tough-minded attitude to results and a recognition that "the how" is as important as "the what." **AMBER**

c. Stretch goals, ongoing feedback and a work climate where, based on capability, team members are afforded the opportunity to develop their full potential. It's a learning environment supported by masterful coaching. **GREEN**

10. Ground rules:

a. Faced with a challenge or a problem, the tendency within the team is to simply "jump in" and look for a solution. **RED**

b. The team have developed both output (results) and process criteria (when we will be successful as a team). As a result, four to six "ground rules" describe, specifically, how those on the team, when working together, commit to behave. If there is a dilemma, it's that those ground rules aren't always deemed to be a priority. **AMBER**

c. The ground rules are unambiguously defined. There is also a shared commitment from everyone on the team to ensure that the agreed team behaviour (consistently) shapes how team members support each other. At the beginning of every team meeting, for example, the ground rules are always quickly reviewed. **GREEN**

"Like a benevolent burglar, it's the listener who steals the show."

DELIVERY

Having prepared the ground a great team starts to deliver. This is where being part of something special starts to be recognised. This is where deep-rooted trust starts to emerge. The team can't reach this stage, however, unless setting the "direction" and putting in the work around "development" happens first.

11. Candour:

a. For the most part people don't speak up. **RED**

b. Speaking up tends to be situational and based, in no small measure, on who is in the room. Reluctance in speaking to power (upper management), waiting until others take the lead and/or relying on the team leader to challenge the way things are tends to be the norm. **AMBER**

c. Regardless of the context, people speak up. Challenging the status quo, comfort with expressing a personal point of view and "going to bat for the customer" are enshrined in the team's DNA. Moreover, appropriate humour is alive and well. **GREEN**

12. Collaboration:

a. Although some degree of cooperation is necessary, individual success often appears to be more important than the needs of the team. **RED**

b. When a challenge or problem emerges, you can count on team members to cooperate with others both inside and outside of the team. That cooperation tends to be driven by a degree of self-interest and the assumption that everyone on the team or project will, in some way, benefit/gain from the outcome. **AMBER**

c. Team members strive for and create opportunities for people both inside and outside of the team to collaborate. Collaboration is enacted not just as a response to a challenge or a problem but to create customer value in areas that the market hasn't yet asked for or to create innovative products/services that don't currently exist. The genesis of collaboration is the altruistic belief that "your success is more important than mine." **GREEN**

"Candour is made more likely when the team leader
is willing to be personally vulnerable."

DELIVERY (continued)

13. Coach each other:

a. Although there is a recognition that coaching is an essential leadership skill, for the most part, coaching is something that happens on other teams. **RED**

b. The team leader is an extraordinarily good coach. He/she sets time aside to coach, is both tough-minded and empathetic and can be counted on to help team members become the best version of themselves that they can be. **AMBER**

c. Not only is the team leader admired for his/her coaching skill but team members go out of their way to coach each other. It can truly be said, "the team have created a coaching culture." **GREEN**

14. Celebrate success:

a. Even when those on the team significantly exceed expectations or do something to collectively take pride in, little, if any, time is spent celebrating success. **RED**

b. The team always celebrate success … be it meeting a tough milestone, a major accomplishment or turning, what appeared to be, a losing hand into something memorable. **AMBER**

c. The team always celebrate important milestones and/or major achievements. Team members also go out of their way, each and every day, "to catch each other doing it right." **GREEN**

"In today's uncertain and rapidly changing business environment,
if you can't coach, you can't lead."

DECLINE

Decline is the inevitable conclusion of accepting the status quo as the natural state, a creeping sense of complacency, a softening of commitment and/or attempting to manage the team from the inside-out. At the end of the day, context is everything. If the customer's voice is muted, if emerging changes in society are ignored, if the value of diversity is discounted, if the competition is better equipped to deal with a turbulent world, and/or if the pace of learning on the team starts to slow, decline is inevitable.

15. Renewal:

a. There is a general sense within the team of being on the right track and that if the status quo is maintained the future is assured. **RED**

b. Be it in sports, in business, or in life generally, teams, no matter how successful, lose their way. If that does happen the team has the character to react accordingly. **AMBER**

c. Even great teams can find that their performance moves into a period of decline. The inherent passion, drive and commitment to act ensures that the team will act before that happens. To that end, the team regularly takes time out to challenge engrained assumptions, use a range of tools to assess team strengths and shortfalls and regularly ask for feedback from those served. **GREEN**

Reinvention:

If the opportunity for "renewal" is ignored, if reenergising the team happens too late and/or if team members lose the respect of those they serve, there will be little choice but to break the team up and, essentially, start again. Don't let that happen!

"The time to bring about change … is long before you have to change."

TEAM DNA: SCORING

From the assessment (✓) determine how you responded to each cluster. You should have identified only one response in each of the 15 clusters. If you have omitted or overlooked one of the clusters you will get a false score.

NUMBER	Red (a)	Amber (b)	Green (c)
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			
9.			
10.			
11.			
12.			
13.			
14.			
15.			
TOTAL			

"Even as we faced extinction on the plains of Africa, the best of us knew that out there, somewhere, was a better pointed stick."

TEAM DNA: RESULT

Transfer your totals from the previous page **Red**, **Amber** or **Green** to the chart on the right. Multiply your score by the factor given. →

| **Red**		**Amber**		**Green**	
x1		x3		x5	
=		=		=	

Add your three scores together

☐ = **TOTAL**

Apply your score on the scale below

CAUTION: What we are describing is a "middle of the road team." Unless an action-bias prevails regarding where and how the team needs to improve, mediocrity beckons.

Green

Amber

Red

15-25-30–35-40-45-50-55-60-65-70-75

STOP: In a world marked by uncertainty, speed of change and the need for organization agility, a struggling team is a competitive handicap.
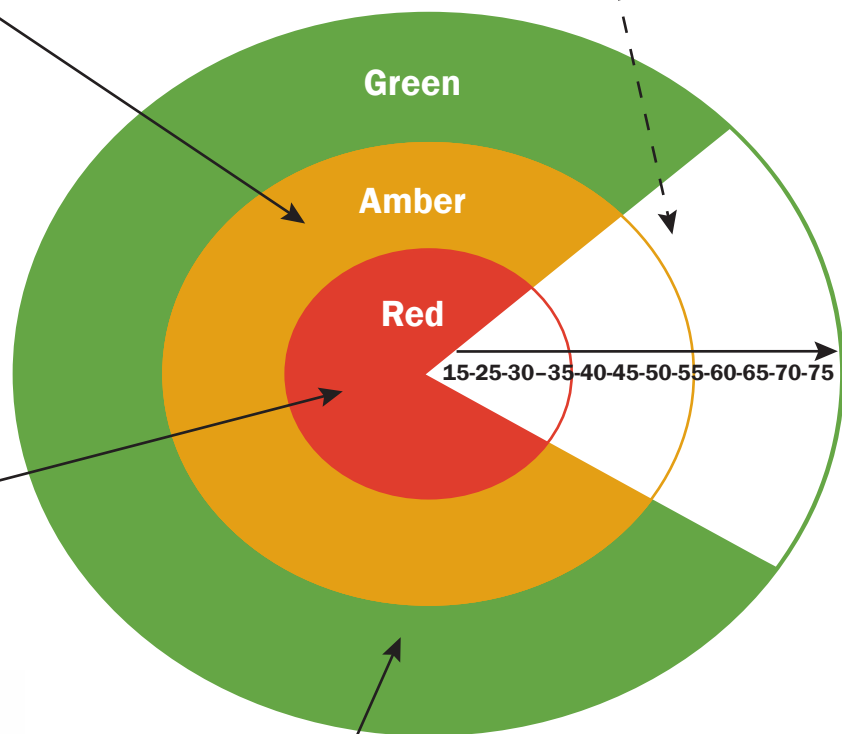
GO: The building blocks of a great team are in place. The challenge: There are still areas where the team can do better.

TEAM

ORXESTRA® INC.

For more on the issues brought up in the assessment see *Great Organizations Are Built On Great Teams.* John O. Burdett (2018).

ACTION STEPS

After reviewing the Team DNA assessment and with the wider business challenges for the organization that lie ahead in mind, consider:

Beginnings start with endings. What does the team need to stop doing?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Change means consolidating positive habits. What does the team need to do more of?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Change implies adopting new habits. What does the team need to start doing or do differently?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

"Yesterday's team leader was deemed to be 'in charge.'
Today, he/she works for the team."

John Burdett has worked in over 40 countries as an executive and as a consultant for businesses that are household names. He has worked on and continues to work on leadership development and organization culture for some of the world's largest corporations.

His ongoing partnership with the Bedford Consulting Group and TRANSEARCH INTERNATIONAL means that his proprietary work on talent acquisition, in any one year, successfully supports many hundreds of top leadership appointments on six continents.

He holds a doctorate in management development and since 2000 has published fourteen best-selling books on leadership, talent management, coaching and organization culture. His Talent Trilogy was completed in 2016. The first in the series, *Attract, Select, Develop & Retain TALENT*, was published in 2013. The second, *TEAM: Align, Build, Connect and Develop*, came out in early 2015. *The Empty Suit*, in 2016. *The A-Z of Organization Culture* came out in 2017. *Tomorrow Will Be Different – Will You?* was published in 2020.

John has a number of books available for download. Go to any of the major, online bookstores. Access using author's name: John O. Burdett
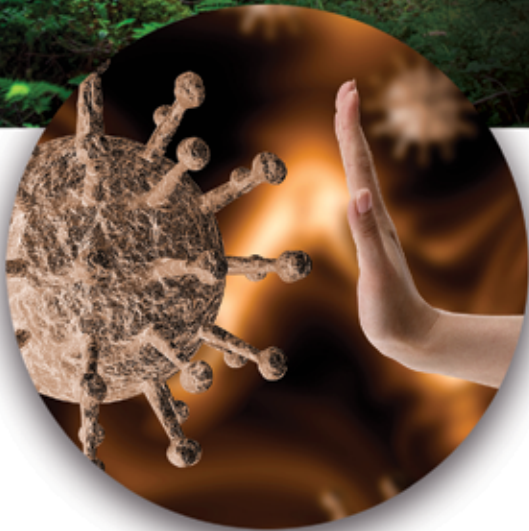

ORXESTRA® INC.

When the **Trees Get BIGGER** and the **Forest Gets DEEPER** – It's **Time To**

SHARPEN YOUR SAW

TRANSEARCH
YOUR WORLD PARTNER IN EXECUTIVE SEARCH

John O. Burdett

ORXESTRA® INC.

When the **Trees Get BIGGER** and the **Forest Gets DEEPER** – It's **Time** To

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John O. Burdett

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ISBN:978-1-7773773-1-1

National Library of Canada Cataloguing

The TRANSEARCH
COVID BOOK SERIES

Welcome to **Part Five** in the TRANSEARCH Covid Book Series.

Part One, *Coming Down the Mountain*, looks at how to come out of this crisis stronger. Recognising, as we move forward, how important organization culture is, **Part Two** outlines the *Culture Conversation*. **Part Three** explores the need for leadership agility and what that implies: *Leadership Agility and Learning – The Way of the Dolphin*. Drawing on the reality that tomorrow's organization will be a team of teams, **Part Four** examines what it means to be an outstanding team: *Great Organizations Are Made Up of Great Teams*.

The Soft Stuff … Is The Hard Stuff

In some senses, the title to **Part Five** says it all – *When the Trees Get Bigger and the Forest Gets Deeper, It's Time to Sharpen Your Saw*. Who can deny that this crisis has brought a recognition that, metaphorically speaking, the trees have, indeed, gotten bigger and the forest much deeper. Few are those leaders who don't need to sharpen their saw.

Complexity, ever-increasing speed of change, ongoing disruption, and the challenge of implementing new technology have had an indelible impact on the first two decades of this century. That said, when it comes to implementation, they carry a subtext that we can no longer ignore. The 20th century organization is a very blunt instrument with which to confront the challenge of this century. Moreover, when we add the human dimension a pandemic brings into sharp focus, it becomes patently obvious that moving forward is about far more than digitalisation, an improved supply chain and remote employment.

To come out of this crisis stronger means, paradoxically, drawing on a behavioural investment that has its origins in our hunter-gatherer past; a capability that business schools don't teach and few recruiters set as a priority. The very core of character that has, all-too-often, been described as "the soft side of leadership." Inaccurately portrayed, one should add, because – based on how effectively they are practiced – these *soft skills* are clearly, pretty hard.

As a result of the tragedy, trauma and mental health issues that define this crisis, it is clear that there has been a significant emotional shift in how many executives now view "leadership." Over the years, I have coached a good many senior executives. Part of that support has been to emphasise "leadership balance." By the latter is implied the need to build capability that moves beyond – essential though they are – a winning strategy and driving results into the business. That is to say, the need not only to employ the head and empower the hand – but to also engage the heart and enrich the spirit.

Of course, there is not much in life that is new. Aristotle believed that there are two virtues – intellectual and moral. Through his writing, he tells us that intellectual virtue is a combination of birth and teaching. Moral virtue, meanwhile, being dependent upon our nature and the habits we develop and adhere to. A more modern interpretation would view the head and hand residing in the neocortex; the heart and spirit drawing on the mammalian (emotion) brain. One is future oriented. The other, in the here and now. What does this all mean? The late Maya Angelou said it best, "People will forget what you said, they will forget what you did, but they will never forget how you made them feel."

Even though the weight of evidence points to followership, decision-making and both employee and customer "buy in" being dominated by emotion, the heart and spirit are not where leaders traditionally focus when it comes to self-development. It's work that even successful executives set aside as "something I need to get to." And yet, in the midst of this crisis, what a number of executives are sharing with me is that only now are they discovering just how **essential** leadership balance is. And that is what this short, four chapter book seeks to draw out.

Chapter One focuses on a truly pivotal question. "Are You the Leader They Need?" Here we examine the concept of "leadership balance." The chapter concludes with a unique assessment of "leadership balance."

Chapter Two introduces a statement that could be an anthem for our times … "If Ever There Was a Time to Listen – IT'S NOW!" This chapter isn't meant to be read and forgotten. A past client, who chairs five major Boards, shared with me that he keeps the listening material clearly visible on his desk. It's a constant reminder just how important listening is. At the end of the chapter there is a simple listening test.

Chapter Three focuses on a topic that rarely comes up in a performance discussion. Caring! Teddy Roosevelt is quoted as saying, "People don't care how much you know, until they know how much you care." And he wasn't exactly what you would call a "softy." In October 1912, on his way to give a campaign speech, he was shot in the chest by a would-be assassin. Although slowed down by the 50–page speech and the spectacles case in his breast pocket, the .38 bullet penetrated his chest cavity. He, nevertheless, successfully delivered his speech and only then allowed his staff to call an ambulance. To lead is to care! Now more than ever. Chapter Three concludes with "50 Ways to Show That You Care – In a Covid World."

Chapter Four emphasises that, although caring is about how we reach out to others, leadership is grounded in the conversation we have with ourselves. The theme of the chapter being that if you are not living your own story, you are living someone else's. The content explores how to connect with and celebrate your own story. It concludes with the 10 central issues that frame "Leadership of Self."

At the conclusion of the book, you will find the Resilience Assessment. Now, more than ever, there is value in stepping back to reflect on what you have found challenging, how you responded and what you learned about yourself as you navigated the pandemic. Part One in this series focuses on how to ensure that your business comes out of this crisis stronger. The Resilience Assessment provides insight into how you can personally come out stronger.

CONTENT

Are You The LEADER They **NEED?**

Are You The LEADER They NEED?

Employ the Head, Empower the Hand, Engage the Heart, and Enrich the Spirit

In our workshops, seminars, coaching and facilitated dialogue with more than 10,000 leaders and encompassing five continents one theme is ever-consistent. There are four things[1] an employee (regardless of level) needs – not wants, **needs** – from his/her immediate team leader.[2]

1. A clear sense of direction – where are we heading? How will the business environment evolve? Where and how is technology going to change the business? What will tomorrow look, sound and feel like? What is our unique point of differentiation? Who is tomorrow's customer? *The head.*

2. The discipline of delivery – a cadence, a rhythm, a regular and continuing pattern of behaviour where the agreed outcomes and feedback regarding those outcomes are always in sharp focus. It's about an organization that, by way of design, is agile enough to support tomorrow's needed speed of delivery. In performance terms, it's the need for everyone on the team to know where they stand. *The hand.*

3. To provide a learning environment – mentoring, coaching, stretch, building the team, a focus on learning how to learn. Currency in the job market. *The heart.*

4. That the leader in question is someone who everyone on the team respects and trusts – consistent, authentic, affirming, displays humility, keeps people informed, is tough-minded when he/she needs to be and, regardless of the circumstances, he/she listens, really listens. *The spirit.*

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1 The Head, the Hand, the Heart and the Spirit, when framed within a business leadership context, was first published in *New Role, New Reality*. John O. Burdett (2000). It has been a central feature in my work around leadership ever since.

2 This is an insight that is supported by my asking over 10,000 leaders in twenty-five plus countries, "As you look back, who was the leader, that you worked for or with, you admired the most? What was it about him/her that inspired you?"

A consistent and compelling performance ethos, day-to-day focus, an engaged workforce, and a sense of belonging – all draw heavily on the four leadership domains outlined above. Lack of leadership balance – behaviour skewed towards one of the above to the detriment of the others – and innovation and responsiveness become a lost cause. Meanwhile, failure to fully deliver against any **one** of these (four) leadership imperatives and for those you count on most, the grass will inevitably look greener elsewhere. Guaranteed!

To lead is to hire, promote and build for succession – at a level of excellence.[3] Anything less is unacceptable. Nothing is more important. To be in a position of responsibility and lack mastery in hiring is to actively mismanage a critical business asset. The head describes success in strategic terms. The hand outlines what, specifically, needs to be achieved. The heart captures the people management capability demanded. The spirit is all about character. Character matters. And in this Covid environment, it matters a lot. Talent acquisition, specifically, and talent management, generally, that fails to embrace all four leadership characteristics is a gateway to yet more recruitment.

It is obviously essential to be "customer-centric." But, what does that really mean? The head implies being fully informed as to where the customer's business is heading. It's to understand the customer's emerging value proposition. It's to see opportunity through the customer's customer. The hand means getting inside the customer's business processes, delivering on time and maintaining the highest level of quality. The heart recognises that the buy-decision is based on emotion. Selling is not simply how well you get across what you do or even how well you do it – it's, ultimately, how you make the customer feel. The spirit is found in truth, authenticity and living the organization's values. Spirit comes to the fore in passion, perseverance and, when needed, patience. It is also about challenging those on the front-line to improve the processes that dictate how the work gets done – and do so every day, in every way. Efficiencies that not only improve margins but, in the quest to remain competitive, enable the firm to pass part of the cost savings along to the customer.

In shaping the emerging culture, leadership that draws on the head and the hand can be termed as "cultural drivers." Meanwhile, the heart and spirit act like cultural anchors. If they are not present, in full measure, being who you have always been is the best that can be hoped for. Don't even think about implementing sweeping change (e.g., breakthrough technology) if the heart and the spirit are found wanting. From our own research and the work of others, only one company in five "manage" their culture. Then again, the organization's culture will change whether you want it to or not … if you are not attentive, in ways that are less than helpful.

So far so good, but even the leadership qualities outlined will likely not keep your high contributors on board should the right opportunity beckon. They need more … they need

---

3 TRANSEARCH International and The Bedford Consulting Group – both of whom I support – utilise the Head, Hand, Heart and Spirit leadership template in their unique and compelling approach to talent acquisition.

to be **inspired**. They need to believe that what we choose to call "work" is making the very best use of their time and ability. They need to be able to bridge the challenge they face today with what tomorrow's success will look and feel like. This equates to leadership of an altogether higher order.

It's not enough for the leader to communicate where we are heading. Gaining buy-in has to draw on language, imagery and story. To inspire is to make tomorrow's success come alive in the room today. If you can imagine it, you can implement it. If you can see it, you can be it.

The "F" word is integral to what it means to be a successful leader. That said, it's not enough to simply *focus* on execution. To inspire, the leader has to believe and convey with every strand of his/her DNA, not that this needs to happen – but that it will happen.[4]

It's not enough to push for development and growth. To inspire, the leader has to display a personal passion for learning. Leaders are readers. They give full reign to their own sense of curiosity and draw it out in others. They see resilience not as bouncing back after a setback but learning from the experience and, as a result, being better equipped than ever. They build great teams. They ask great questions and, in doing so, transform *what is* into *what can be.*

---

4   Having consulted to him for well over a decade, I am often asked, "What made the late (and legendary) leader, Sergio Marchionne, CEO of Fiat and Chrysler, special?" Simply put, he recognised that when faced with an unprecedented challenge, knowing what to do and how to do it doesn't necessarily get you to where you need to be – you have to believe. He made you believe.

It's not enough that the leader be respected. To inspire, he/she has to step down from the pedestal, look people in the eye and act in such a way that those he/she leads know, really know, that he/she cares more about their success than his/her own. To lead is to care. Caring is step one in engendering trust. Courtesy, meanwhile, as Peter Drucker pointed out, is "the lubricant of leadership."

For both the new and the seasoned leader there is some tempering news in all of this. Although faced with a pandemic the like of which we haven't experienced in the past 100 years, our fears and concerns are pretty much the same as when our kith and kin worried about sparsity of game, being a sabre-tooth tiger's lunch and/or the unknown visitor who just walked into the village with a very big spear. When we fail to deliver (1) a strategy that mitigates danger; (2) action that moves us beyond the crisis; (3) ongoing reflection such that we will learn from this; and (4) optimism, reassurance and a sense of caring – we fail as a leader. As would have been the case during any crisis over the past 40,000 years.

As we face the human adventures that AI, robotics, cobotics, blockchain, 3D printers, autonomous vehicles and their like represent – members of the team need to know where they are heading, how they are doing, that they are growing and that trust is ever-present. And, **in the midst of a crisis,** people deserve to know that those who are leading them will never stray from the belief that people are more important than profit. There is an enduring leadership principle here. "The **bigger the crisis**, the greater the degree of uncertainty, the deeper the depth of despair, the greater the need to engage the heart and enrich the spirit."

Finally, we come to existential threats (the environment), black swan events (the 2008 financial crash), and because it involves human suffering, the biggest leadership challenge of all – tragedy. When tragedy unfolds and the human side of that drama isn't the organization's number one concern – when the heart and spirit are missing – then everybody loses. "Never waste the opportunity offered by a good crisis," is a quote first attributed to the Italian Renaissance writer Niccolo Machiavelli. A crisis is indeed an opportunity: *To show that you care!*

The Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) being a case in point. How the organization deals with these unprecedented – in this case life-threatening – events remains, indelibly, in employees' minds. And not just for those most at risk. The question customers and employees alike want to know is "who are you?" At times like these, "what do you stand for?" Beyond the symbolism, the sharp marketing and the self-promotion, "what is the real story behind the brand?"

A crisis demands, more than ever, that to be a successful leader is to *employ* the head, *empower* the hand, *engage* the heart and *enrich* the spirit."

1. The future recast anew. As a priority, work to understand the customer's emerging
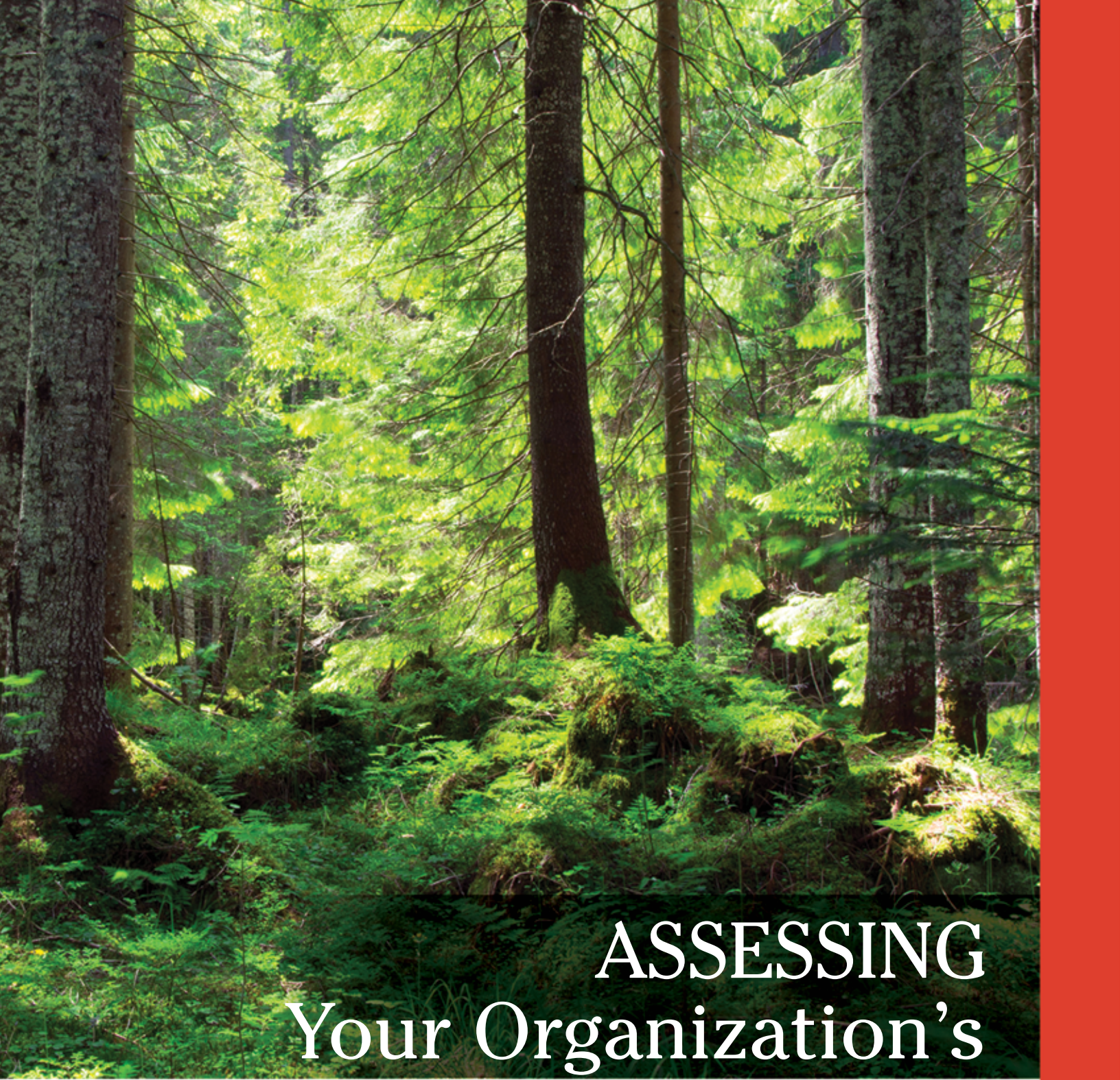
needs. The essential short-term actions must not take away from the compelling need to formulate the data/information and strategic insight demanded to put the business back on course as quickly as possible.   Revisit the business model. Meanwhile, time is set aside to build longer-term strategic scenarios – the *head*.

2. Fully acknowledge the scope and impact of the crisis, redefine critical goals, do what is necessary to protect the value chain, take advantage of the technology available, reorganise how the work will get done and do so at lightning speed – the *hand*.

3. Craft an empathetic and inclusive response that speaks to all of the key stakeholders. Act decisively while also recognising the organization's role as part of a wider community.   The investment in teams and cross-organization collaboration pays off. People, regardless of level, unite behind a common purpose. The support for working remotely builds on and further develops knowing that team members support each other. No one gets left behind – the *heart*.

4. Caring, listening and transparency are front and centre in everything the organization does and communicates. The alter ego of empathy is hope. Even during the darkest hours, people need to be able to see the first glimmering light of an early dawn. It is recognised that without reflection there is no learning – the *spirit*.

Good leaders will engage some of the team, some of the time. Conversely, it takes a leader who brings leadership balance to the role, who knows how to inspire, who does inspire – to instill a sense of lasting commitment from all of the team. Leaders must lead! Leaders do lead. Are you the leader they need?

"The privilege of a lifetime is to become who you truly are."

Carl Jung.

ASSESSING
Your Organization's
LEADERSHIP
BALANCE

Leadership Balance

Go through the fourteen matched groups. Determine which of the four characteristics in each group is the leadership characteristic you perceive to be the most dominant in your organization. Give it a score of (4). Score the next characteristic of perceived value a (3) and the next a (2). Score as a (1) the characteristic you deem is afforded the least attention.

Take into account what gets rewarded; the perceived criteria used in key promotion decisions; and the signals emanating from the top of the organization about what it means to be a successful leader. Indicate your score with a (✓). Go through the assessment a second time with your own leadership approach in mind. Indicate with (✗).

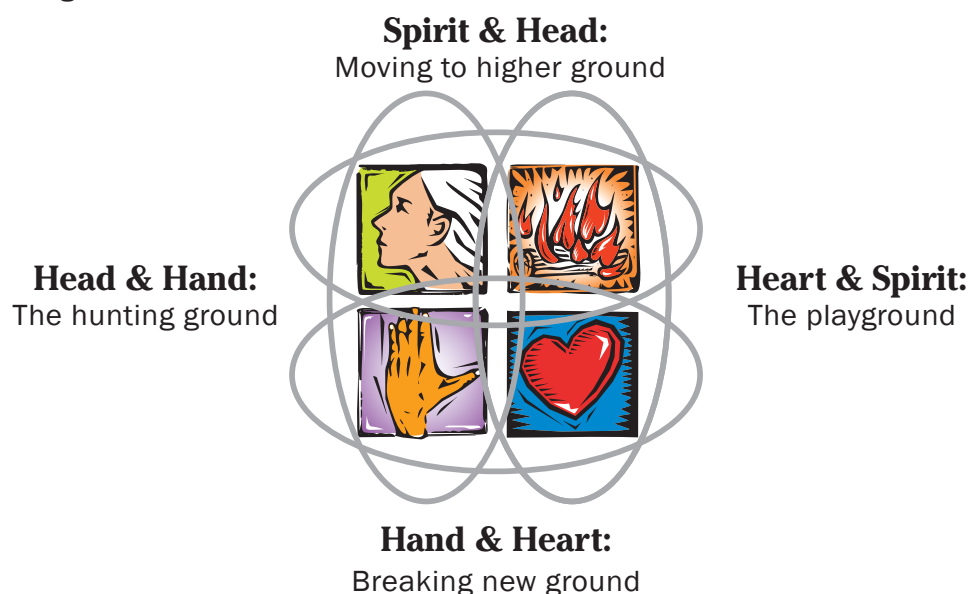|				
1.	Create tomorrow, today	The discipline of delivery	Developing others	Being a role model
2.	A thought leader	Business development	Mastery in coaching	Social responsibility
3.	Balance short and long term	Measure the right things	Speed of learning	Agility and nimbleness
4.	One direction, one plan	Speed to market	Orchestrates freedom to act	A track record of innovation
5.	Drive to win	Hire and retain the best	Team player	A sense of caring

6. ☐ See the business through the customer's eyes   ☐ Process innovation   ☐ Employee engagement   ☐ Integrity

7. ☐ Manage the business from the outside-in   ☐ Drive to do things faster   ☐ Work successfully across different cultures   ☐ Deliver diversity

8. ☐ Create and communicate a winning strategy   ☐ Tough minded; hold people accountable   ☐ Build a great team   ☐ Live the values

9. ☐ "Scenarios" – not a linear strategy   ☐ Understand how the business makes money   ☐ Challenge the status quo as a way of life   ☐ Creating tomorrow's culture, today

10. ☐ Shareholder value   ☐ Brand management   ☐ Bring the informal organization on board   ☐ Stakeholder value

11. ☐ Traditional hierarchy   ☐ Very flat structure   ☐ The organization – a team of teams   ☐ The virtual organization

12. ☐ Change – a project   ☐ Making the organization change ready   ☐ Embracing disruption   ☐ Being the disruption

13.

| Entrepreneurial flair ☐ | Sweat the details ☐ | Talent management a competitive advantage ☐ | The environment ☐ |

14.

| Technology ☐ | Continuous improvement ☐ | Measure culture ☐ | Change mindset ☐ |

| **OVERALL SCORE** | **OVERALL SCORE** | **OVERALL SCORE** | **OVERALL SCORE** |

HEAD **HAND** **HEART** **SPIRIT**

Go through your responses and total the score for each of the four columns. Transpose the overall score in each column to the simple diagram on the next page. Join up the datum points to create your organization's Leadership DNA. Go through the questionnaire a second time and define where your own current leadership priorities lie. Add your own score (in a different colour) to the diagram.

Spirit & Head:
Moving to higher ground

Head & Hand:
The hunting ground

Heart & Spirit:
The playground

Hand & Heart:
Breaking new ground

The Four Leadership Domains

HEAD

SPIRIT

MOVING TO
HIGHER GROUND

55 50 45 40 35 30 25 20 15 10 5

55 50 45 40 35 30 25 20 15 10 5

LEADERSHIP
BALANCE

THE
HUNTING
GROUND

PLAYGROUND

Orxestra Inc.

55 50 45 40 35 30 25 20 15 10 5

5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40 45 50 55

BREAKING NEW
GROUND

HAND

HEART
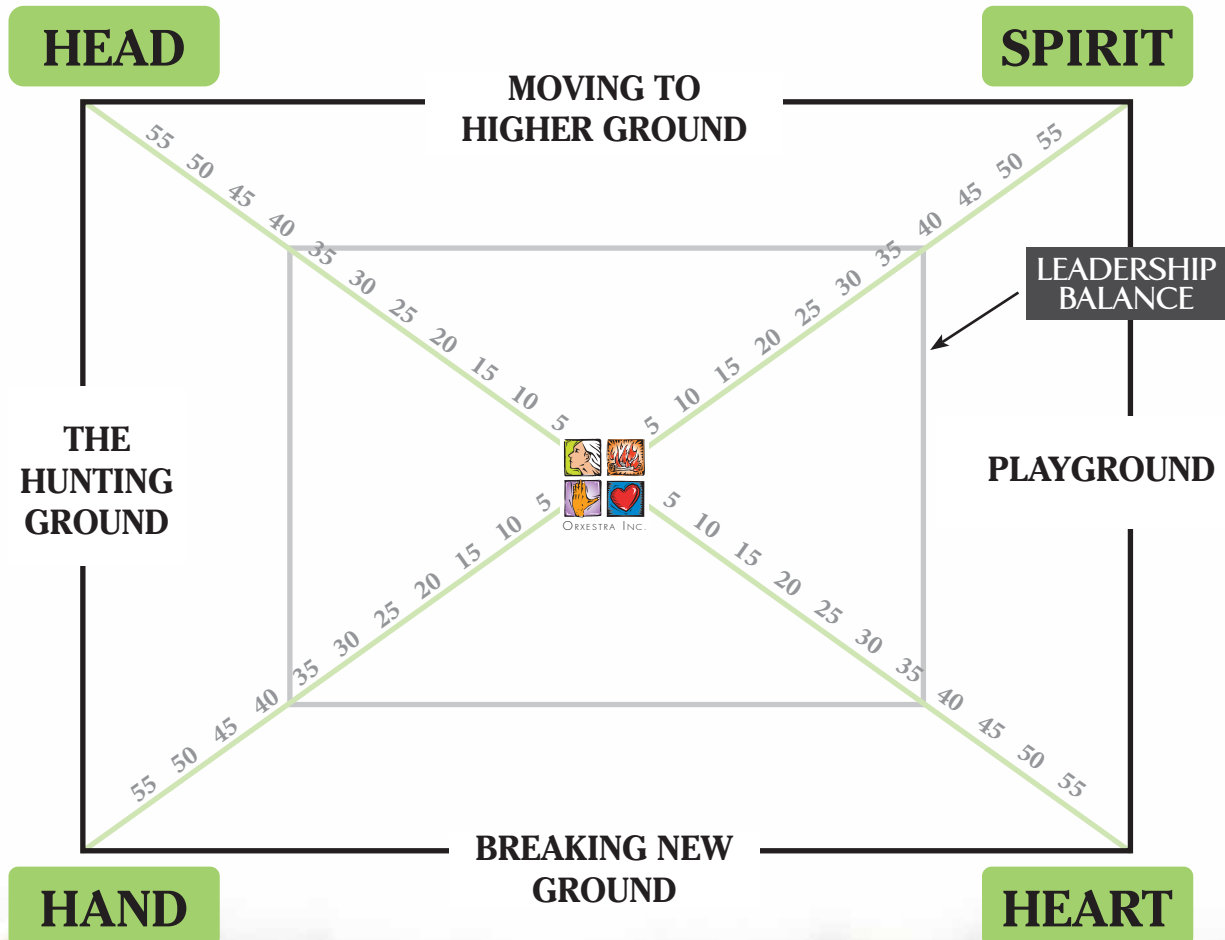
**Transfer your scoring from page 12 to the chart above.
Connect the datum points.**

Note: Feedback on the assessment may well be along the lines that you have achieved leadership excellence in all four domains. While there may be some truth in that assumption, it's tough to have 56 priorities. A forced ranking approach surfaces what your true priorities are.

Leadership Balance

The Spirit and Head

Moving to higher ground

Step 1. Transpose the results from page 13 to the chart below

Step 2. Consider the implications for ongoing competiveness and growth

Step 3. Without losing excellence in any of the four quadrants, what do you need to do to rebalance the business?

The Head and Hand

The hunting ground

The Heart and Spirit

Playground

SPIRIT + HEAD =

HEAD + HAND =

HEART + SPIRIT =

HAND + HEART =

The Hand and Heart

Breaking new ground

Reviewing Your Organization's Leadership Balance

What successful leaders do

We have asked 10,000 + leaders, in over twenty-five countries, a simple question: "What are the qualities of the best leader you have ever worked for?" Two key results emerge. First, successful leaders empower the head; enable the hand; engage the heart; and enrich the spirit. Lack of attention (or capability) in any one domain and team members/subordinates are shortchanged on all four. It matters not, for example, that you have a great strategy (head) if execution (hand) is found wanting.

The second insight speaks to leadership balance (coherence). Balance describes performance excellence in each of the four domains. It is also about how those domains combine. Specifically, how the head and hand; the hand and heart; the heart and spirit; and the spirit and head come together.

Why leadership balance is a business imperative

HEAD & HAND: *The Hunting Ground.* Theme: if you don't win today there will be no tomorrow. Actions: clear direction, the drive to win, customer focus, a differentiated value proposition, the discipline of delivery. Mindset: it's fun to win. Greatest potential disruption: lack of focus. Balance: without the head and hand, know that your future will be shaped by missed targets.

HAND & HEART: *Breaking New Ground*. Theme: doing what you have always done is a mandate for mediocrity. Actions: growth, stretch, business development, cost savings, continuous improvement, technology, redefining process, putting new learning into practice. Mindset: getting better every day, in every way. Greatest potential disruption: assumptions that competitive advantage has an extended shelf-life. Balance: without the hand and heart the status quo will inevitably rule.

HEART & SPIRIT: *The Playground.* Theme: if you don't grow the talent base you can't grow the business. Actions: pushing the boundaries, learning at the edge, teamwork, coaching, mentoring, collaboration, leadership of self, authenticity, caring.   Mindset: how you learn is at least as important as what you learn. Greatest potential disruption: a bully in the playground. Balance: without the heart and spirit expect to always be short of top talent.

SPIRIT & HEAD: *Moving To Higher Ground.* Theme: tomorrow's marketplace will be different. Count on it! Actions: rethinking possibility, forging a new direction, succession, innovation, risk, emotional buy-in, commitment, letting go. Mindset: entrepreneurial. Greatest potential disruption: lack of succession. Balance: without the spirit and the head, know that you are passing the baton of opportunity to the competition.

What Successful Leaders Do

From an organizational perspective:

Review the characteristics listed in each domain and identify what you now need to do as a business to deliver leadership excellence in:

HEAD: _____

HAND: _____

HEART: _____

SPIRIT: _____

From a personal perspective:

Review the characteristics listed in each domain and identify what you personally need to do to deliver leadership excellence in:

HEAD: _____

HAND: _____

HEART: _____

SPIRIT: _____

If Ever There Was a Time to Listen – IT'S NOW!

If Ever There Was a Time to Listen – IT'S NOW!

Don't just hear, LISTEN!

Listening is not a spectator sport. It's an intense, full-bodied, emotionally involved, empathetic experience. Listening is hard work. Then again, so is change. Habits, and especially social habits, once formed, are very difficult to reframe. No doubt some of the advantages of working remotely will remain but those who suggest that the COVID-19 crisis will totally reinvent the workplace as we have known it are surely going to be on the wrong side of history.

Make no mistake, the workplace will change. The urgent need to address the environment; artificial intelligence; the next generation of computers; ongoing disruption; the ever-increasing speed at which things happen; a move to stakeholder value; that, by way of design, the organization that created wealth in the last century is a total misfit in this one; and a host of other factors will combine to create organizations that are flat, fast, focused, flexible and fertile (to new ideas).

After 40,000 years of social evolution, what's not going to change is that our kind are highly social animals. It's clear from social media sites like Facebook that we are just as much a village today as we were before one of our kith and kin said, "Do you know

what, if that flat bit were round it might roll!" Dignity, respect, trust, caring, empathy, social kinship, storytelling, teamwork and the need to be listened to aren't going to be thrust aside – they define who we are as a species. Or, as Calvin Coolidge once said, "No man ever listened himself out of a job."

And what sort of listener are you? To find out, go through the rest of the text. Also, go to the Listening Tree on page 28.

The Listening Paradox

Niels Bohr, the renowned Danish physicist, was fond of saying, "A paradox – now we can really learn something." As we work our way through this COVID-19 crisis, we run full force into, what appear to be, contradictory outcomes: salvage the business from the financial wreckage while, at the same time, make empathy and caring the dominant priority; as a leader, feel the disabling effect of anxiety and uncertainty, yet present a confident and optimistic face to the world; push forward on projects that demand collaboration but, out of necessity, eschew face-to-face, social/team interaction; demand that business remain fully committed to customer service while being sensitive to the reality that a typical employee could well be working out of a small apartment shared by two young children, an out-of-work partner and a barking dog.

The learning that Bohr spoke of comes from seeing a paradox not as a binary choice between opposites, but as an inherent challenge about a need to see the overall challenge from a new perspective. By replacing "or" with "and," one is forced into not just a creative solution, but a different mindset. It's a way to view the world where awareness, agility of thought and the capacity to adapt comes from first knowing – really knowing – how to listen.

You can't listen in a vacuum. Or as the late Peter Drucker pointed out, "Fifty years ago a leader knew the answer ... today he or she asks great questions." Asking a great question without a comparable skill when interpreting the answer is about as useful as throwing an anchor over the side without a rope or chain attached. As for the paradox, to add texture to the current crisis, at no time in our history have leaders been faced with today's volume of background noise, with the present blend of speed and complexity, and with the current reality that to lead invariably means being less knowledgeable than those being led. Yesterday, the team worked for the leader. Today, the leader works for the team.

When you step back to reflect, what becomes patently apparent is that at no time has listening been more important. At no time has your team needed you to listen more than they do now. At no time have those you rely on the most had a greater need for you to hear what they have to say. At no time, however, have there been more physical and emotional barriers. The good news? As we move forward, a crisis can be a learning experience like no other. The not such good news? Don't expect simplicity, sagacity and stability to break out any time soon. Believe it or not, when we look back, today may well seem like the good old days.

To add to the challenge, every decade or so, those smart enough to design the protocols necessary to conduct listening tests with leaders announce that our listening proficiency is, more or less, dysfunctional. Numbers that describe overall listening proficiency of 30 per cent, or less, are commonplace. Put another way, as our need to listen goes up, our listening efficiency goes down. In the past, moving on to the high potential track was, all too often,

based on easy-to-identify attributes – overall image, use of language and skill in front of an audience. In an era defined by ongoing disruption, listening, speed of learning and the capacity to let go of the past are far better indicators of future success.

Why Don't We Listen?

Trust, rapport, personal connection and mutual respect can't move beyond intent if one of the parties is emotionally absent. The average person talks at a rate of about 125-175 words per minute. Meanwhile, we can listen at a rate of up to 450 words per minute. We fill that "vacuum" by daydreaming, attempting to both be in the conversation and elsewhere, and by thinking about how we are going to respond when the other person has stopped speaking (script writing).

We don't listen when we make subconscious choices about whom we perceive as being not worth listening to: people who we deem to be less educated, less experienced, who have only tangential knowledge of the issue; who are from a different culture, who don't share our beliefs or whose use of language is less developed – particularly when lack of time and/or crisis frame our lives. We don't listen when we make the (invariably misguided) assumption that the speaker's contribution to our well-being is likely to be of "marginal value."

We tend to avoid those who make our life difficult, those who make us angry, those who ask the questions that make us uncomfortable. Communication enacted through Zoom creates yet one more excuse. To be a leader is to actively seek out those who disagree with you. To be a leader is to make the first call of the day – both video and voice preferred – to the person you least want to talk to. To be a leader is to listen hardest to the person on the team who frustrates you the most. We invariably gain most by listening to those who are most unlike us. Personal breakthroughs happen when we afford others the opportunity to challenge our way of thinking.

Someone who comes to the issue for the first time brings not just a fresh perspective but, as often as not, a new way to see what is possible. The customer that we can learn from is not defined by those we currently serve. Important as it is, new insight is not limited to listening to the customer we lose. It is the customer we have never landed, the one who rejected our offering out of hand that often offers the most compelling evidence of new opportunity. The paradox: the people we reject as being those who offer little value are very often those from whom we can learn the most.

Innovation is often spoken of as if it were magic dust that the idea fairy sprinkles on those so blessed. Innovation is a combination of curiosity, creativity, challenging the status quo, concept generation, customer awareness, choosing the right project, collaboration and commitment to the craft, which we refer to as "teamwork." Meanwhile, the element that is often missing, the leadership lubricant, the innate ingredient that turns ideas into a winning investment costs little and yet reaps huge rewards? Listening! Listening to the markets. Listening to the customer. Listening to those who have to build or sell what others imagine. But most of all – listening to each other. If you want greater impact from innovation, start by making listening a core competency.

Generally speaking, women are better natural listeners than men. Indeed, nothing strikes greater fear in the average man than those four words, "We've got to talk." The terror emanates not from "talking," but from the implied subtext, "You've got to listen." It turns out that the differences between the sexes are not just the obvious physical ones; our brains are also wired differently. PET scans suggest that during human interaction there is 15 per cent more blood flow in the female brain. The outcome is that the emotional centre of the brain is far more active in women, with the result that they take in more of the conversation.

The assumed superiority of the speaker is compounded by an educational system that presents listening as the passive role. When, for example, did you last read a school report that commented on your child's skills in listening? All relationships ultimately are about power. Unfortunately, the "power role" is mistakenly assumed to be the one in the spotlight, the actor who delivers the soliloquy, the leader presenting the information. Nothing could be further from the truth. The appearance of power is not the same as actually having power.

A professional actor will be quick to point out that delivering the lines is the easy part and that the real "art" lies in how the other players listen.

If you are still in doubt about the relationship between listening and influence, watch a top salesperson at work. To the inexperienced, selling is a form of tonsil tennis. To those who build long-term relationships, it's a behavioural ballet where listening is little short of an art form. The next time you are in a meeting, take a mental note of who is doing the listening. That is where the power lies. Like a conductor with a hidden baton, it is the masterful listener who shapes the outcomes – who, unobserved, uses the subtlest of signals to steal the show.

Becoming Better Listeners

There is a positive side in all of this. In much the same way that we know most of us are poor listeners, we know what it is that outstanding listeners do that makes them special. We know the difference that makes a difference. And lest we forget, if you want someone to listen to you, first you have to show that you can, and do, listen to him or her.

How do we become better listeners? Getting rid of distractions is the start of it; using our whole body as an antenna is part of it; but being there, really being there, is the heart of it. We listen when we make an emotional commitment to be fully present – to be in the moment. We listen when we put a hold on likely interruptions and spend a few moments clearing the clutter from our mind. We listen when our self-talk moves to full volume with a message that emphasises, "The next few minutes are an invaluable learning opportunity." We listen when we put the needs of others ahead of our own needs. If you are operating in virtual space, double down on each of these behaviours. If you are on Zoom or some other video connection, especially if your face is full-screen, set the scene for exemplary listening – take the clutter out of the background, avoid casting shadows on your face, adjust the camera to be near eye height (buy a stand for your laptop).

Claude Debussy once remarked, "Music is the stuff between the notes." Masterful listening implies "listening for" and not "listening to." It means listening not just for what is said, but also for what is omitted. It means hearing the silence. It means interpreting the message in the space between the words. It means, when emphasis adds to the understanding, making the silence louder. It means, when faced with a tough negotiator, forging the silence the way a blacksmith wields a hammer. It means being tuned into the subtleties of the speaker's body and the sub-text in the language. The payoff? When we are fully engaged we start to hear not just the speaker's intentions, but the meaning behind what is being presented. And in that meaning we can start to understand the speaker's true intent and state of mind.

Professional rally and race car drivers do something intuitively (at a level of excellence) that the rest of us do only after a fashion. They understand that simultaneous use of our hands and our eyes (hand-eye coordination) is how we are naturally wired. They, however, take that capability to a whole new level – to the point that where they look is where the car steers, not a split second later but, literally, in the moment. Leaders who are attentive listeners, in like manner, "tune in" all of their other senses. As a result, they are especially good at picking up subtle clues of disagreement. Here we face another paradox. Everyday logic would suggest that "agreement" is a prerequisite of progress. This ignores the gift of disagreement. Conflict is an idea in the making. That is why diversity is so important. That's why, especially in this current environment, listening in the way you have always wanted to be listened to has the capacity to turn concern into the art of the possible.

Great listeners develop "peripheral awareness." The message is important. But no less important is sensing how the message lands with everyone else in the room – virtual or otherwise. To listen is to be an active partner in the communication dance – with all the dancers. To listen is to be the master of both content and context. Listening is not exclusively a real-time experience. Mastery is to develop a "listening memory." It is a memory that builds a pattern of understanding around what the speaker is passionate about, for there lies untapped energy. It is a memory that builds understanding around what the speaker

gets angry about, for there lies insight into what the speaker fears most. It is a memory that builds awareness as to what the speaker seeks to avoid most, for there lies insight into the speaker's capacity to lead. It is a memory that builds insight into the speaker's authentic-self, for there lies his/her true path to mastery.

To Listen is to Care

To listen is to care. Not to listen, to half-listen and to "script write" (to think about what you are going to say while the speaker is talking) are arrogant and overt acts of disrespect that carry an unambiguous, collective message, "Get on with it, my time is more valuable than yours." And does the other person (and everyone else present) pick up on that message? Every time!

We improve the quality of the listening experience immeasurably when our body language says to both the speaker and those present, "What you are saying is important to me." When we lean in slightly and maintain good eye contact, we signal that we are fully present. When we reinforce key statements with positive body language, such as a slight nod of the head, we are letting the speaker and everyone else present know that the message is landing.

And when we allow the speaker to pause and we resist the temptation to jump in, we show respect. The intensity described comes with a soft edge. When we appear relaxed, we make the speaker more comfortable. Our willingness to smile is a measure of our openness. When we use a gentle voice, we are emphasising that this is a shared experience. When we paraphrase, restate and, as appropriate, summarise what the speaker has said, we are saying that we care. Even when it is clear that the speaker has concluded, when we wait two beats before giving our own response (or question), we give emphasis to the speaker's message. Video conference? Do everything outlined but do so a little more deliberately.

Masterful listening is to listen without biased judgement. It is to be receptive not just to new knowledge, but to new ways of being. Listening without judgement means that we must first strip away our own mask of self-judgement. It is a level of listening that draws on a willingness to be vulnerable. It is a level of attentiveness that is only possible for those who have the capacity to be emotionally "still."

Listening mastery means constantly striving to reach the next level. It is ongoing learning that starts with a simple question, "What is the one thing that I can do that will make the greatest difference to my ability to listen?" To grow as a listener is to write at the top of every page on the note pad or screen you are using, "I will listen." To grow as a listener is to self-rate oneself at the end of every key meeting or coaching session. Learning also means feedback from others. It means a willingness to appear vulnerable. It means being humble. It means asking others on the team how he or she would rate your listening skills. It means seeking input from the customer. More than anything else, of course, it means acting on the input.

None of this implies that to listen we must lose, or mask, who we really are. Listening is not an act of manipulation. When someone else turns up, when any attempt to listen more effectively distorts our sense of self, we take away from – rather than add to – the listening experience. To become more effective as a listener is not about learning how to act in a way that contradicts our sense of identity. It is far more about reaching within and discovering/ amplifying qualities we already possess. When we listen to others we listen to ourselves. In listening we, thus, discover our authentic-self. By comparison, poor listeners struggle with leadership-of-self, generally, and resilience, more specifically.

Five simple action steps.

1. Next time you have a meeting spend five minutes ahead of time to reflect on how the session will benefit from a personal investment in listening.

2. Take a pad with you to the meeting. Write at the top a message to yourself "I will listen."

3. After the meeting, score your "listening" out of 10.

4. List three things that would take your listening to the next level.

5. Make this a habit. Repeat this activity every time you have an important meeting.

The Listening Tree
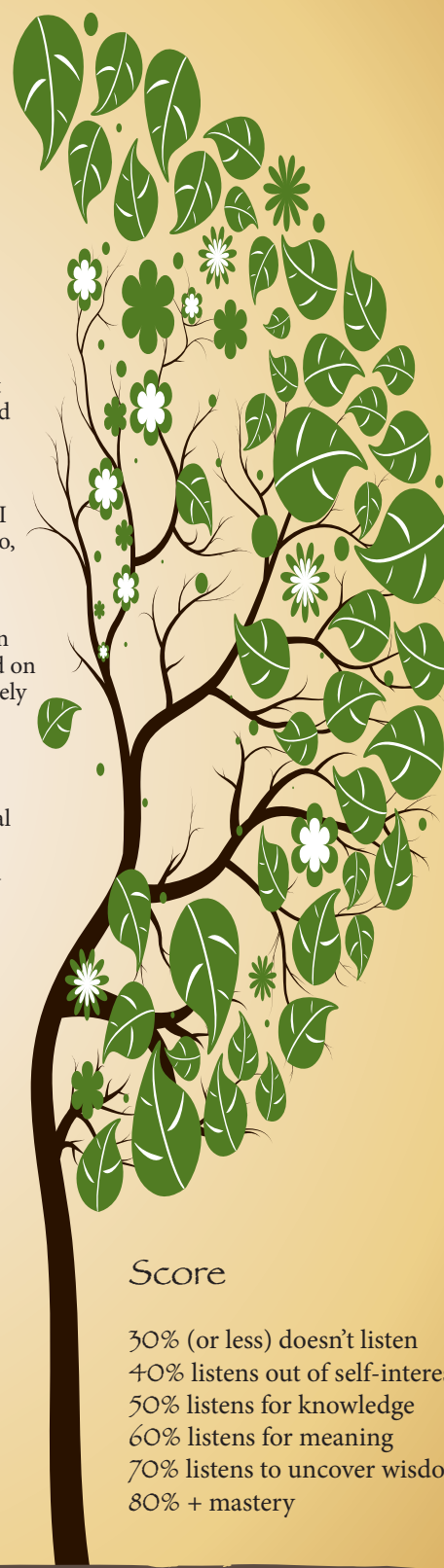
10
I ask for feedback on my listening.

9
I listen not for what is said, but for what is intended.

8
As a signal of respect, I go out of my way to use the speaker's words.

7
I pay attention to the speaker's non-verbal language and I do not interrupt.

6
I consciously do not allow myself to "script write" i.e., I do not think about what I intend to say while the other person is talking.

5
After listening to what someone has to say, I wait for two beats before I speak. In doing so, I am signaling that I am listening.

4
To listen is to be there! When I know that an opportunity to listen is coming up, I put a hold on interruptions and spend a few moments actively clearing the clutter from my mind.

3
As part of my listening agenda and, when possible, I go out of my way to build physical rapport with the person speaking. This includes maintaining good eye contact and adopting a complementary posture.

2
I listen not just with my ears but with my whole body. I make this apparent by giving affirmative, physical cues to the speaker: leaning in slightly, reinforcing key statements with a slight nod of the head, smiling in appropriate places, and maintaining listening intensity even when the speaker pauses.

1
Before any conversation, I remind myself that prejudice, past experiences with the individual, and assumptions that you already know what the person is going to say, severely limit listening effectiveness. I also remind myself that listening, far from being a passive role, is the power position in any conversation. Thus, if the speaker is unable to get his/her points across, **I** have failed.

Self-Assessment

Think about a recent conversation and review your listening at each level (1-10). For every level where your response is "that's absolutely me" you gain 10%. If in any doubt, or if the statement describes you "sometimes," you do not score at that level.

Score

30% (or less) doesn't listen
40% listens out of self-interest
50% listens for knowledge
60% listens for meaning
70% listens to uncover wisdom
80% + mastery

John O. Burdett

Chapter Three

To Lead Is To Care

To Lead Is To Care

People Need to Know That You Care

We won't discover the true impact of the COVID-19 virus until much of the current trauma is behind us. What can be said, with certainty, is that the world of work will never be the same. A Gartner poll, for example, suggests that post COVID, 48% of employees will likely work remotely at least part of the time, compared with 30% prior to the pandemic. A Harvard Business School working paper reported that before the coronavirus hit, 5.2% percent of US employees reported telecommuting most of the time, while 43% percent worked from home at least some of the time. The actual number currently working remotely, other than it has clearly skyrocketed, is hard to assess.

There is no question … tomorrow's workplace will be different. It's a mistake, however, to think that employees come to work to simply do the work. The traditional workplace is a rich social and cultural petri dish – where employees are exposed to new ideas, exchange experience, learn from each other, share stories and, yes, where gossip (gossip is to humans what grooming is to our ape cousins) is part of what makes it special.

The face-to-face work experience not only delivers a sense of belonging, it provides meaning in people's lives. Meanwhile, if you imagine the way the organization actually functions is

represented accurately by the lines and boxes on the organization chart, think again. Informal networks, non-verbal cues, personal/team loyalties, past history, accidental innovation (people and ideas bumping into each other) and the interpersonal factors that establish trust have far more influence on how things happen than the most compelling organogram – behaviours that are extremely difficult to replicate remotely. You can't override 40,000 years of social evolution and not lose something of who we are.

For the introvert who can shape the nature of his/her contribution – work that is defined by a role and not a job – remote working can be somewhat desirable. Assuming the individual in question is well organised, that is. If you work out of an apartment, have young children, a barking dog, a refrigerator on the blink and no access to a garden, we are describing a grating, "get this over with," gut wrenching, never-ending grind. The greatest concern to many?

The inevitable blurring between who you have to be in the workplace and who you would like to remain – as a private person. Wrap everything outlined in a big red bow marked "help!" and, in far too many cases, mental health issues, addiction and marriage breakdown become the inevitable consequences.

Employers need to recognise that not only have the terms and conditions of employment changed but the emotional compact between the company and its workforce has been cast anew. The nature of trust, goal setting, delegation, the freedom to act, feedback, collaboration, holding a meeting, being a great communicator, listening, "workplace" safety, and what it means to be a team are not as they were. Nor will they ever be again!

For the team leader empathy, transparency, flexibility, resilience and patience move centre stage. It's been said that "come the crisis, come the leader." It might be more accurate to suggest that a true emergency surfaces who we really are. As outlined in the introduction, however, the more things change the more they stay the same. The context may change, the storm may have reached a higher water mark, the alarm bells may be louder but outstanding leaders have a common response. It's an unwavering and timeless leadership attribute. Abraham Lincoln, Bill Marriott (Marriott Hotels), Martin Luther King, Princess Diana, Bill Gates and Satya Nadella are pretty good examples. Leaders put **people** first. Even when the decision appears to be entirely commercial, the question that always surfaces is, "How will this impact our people?"

What makes a leader? High on any agenda - using a term coined by Warren Bennis - is that, "Leaders are dreamers with a deadline." One is immediately drawn to **John F. Kennedy's** audacious goals for NASA. Authenticity and humility loom large … **Gandhi**. Compassion and a generosity of spirit … **Nelson Mandela**. Energy and passion are clearly essential … **Belinda Gates**. Mental toughness and tenacity are important … **Jeff Bezos**. The deep-rooted and unshakable belief that no matter what the pundits, critics and naysayers might suggest - it will happen … **Sergio Marchionne**.[1] And in a boundaryless world, the capacity to operate in different cultures cannot be ignored… **Sheryl Sandberg**.[2] What makes a leader? To create and share the dream, authenticity, humility, energy, passion, mental toughness, tenacity, belief, and cultural agility are clearly part of it.

But what lies at the very heart of leadership? What is it that takes people places they would otherwise not go? The overwhelming evidence is that when everything else is stripped away, when you get to the very essence of what it means to be a leader, to lead is to care! "People won't care how much you know until they know how much you care." Teddy Roosevelt." (Already mentioned on page iv).

The text that follows looks at caring from two distinct perspectives. One: caring as an enduring and essential leadership capability. Two: at the conclusion of the chapter, 50 Ways To Say You Care – In a Covid World.

Leadership is, and has always been, about followership. As such, leadership is a sacred trust. A trust that has to be won every single day. Especially now. People follow a leader who cares; someone who is more than a figurehead, more than an instrument of shareholder value, more than the manifestation of a set of competencies. Not someone who cares one day and not the next. Not someone who cares for some people and not others. And not someone who thinks that they care. If you wear the mantle of leadership, people need to **KNOW** that you care.

Tomorrow will be different. To care is to know that as we move through unprecedented societal change – accelerated by COVID-19 but by no means limited to the fallout of the virus – the forces of reinvention are both overwhelming and unrelenting. It is to recognise that the organization of the last century is misaligned with the challenges of this century. It is to work from the belief that "agility" – and an overreliance on hierarchy and centralized decision-making are incompatible. It is to make the organization's values a centerpiece in giving frontline employees the freedom (permission) to act.[3] It is to realise that, although

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1   The late Sergio Marchionne was the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Fiat Chrysler Automobiles. A long-time friend and client, his inspiring belief that "it will happen," was a constant, driving force for change.

2   Chief Operating Officer of Facebook.

3   A host of businesses have "values" but for most they amount to little more than "best intentions:" toothless symbols that have little influence on day-to-day decision-making.

issues such as compensation and benefits are important hygiene factors,[4] without a compelling purpose, without leadership rooted in "why do we do what we do" something essential will always be missing.

In the last two decades, information technology has dramatically changed the nature of work. As we move forward it will redefine "the organization." Digitalisation isn't an end in itself, merely a means to compete in a world where shorter lead times, accelerated product development cycles, responsiveness and speed of decision-making separate the best from the rest. Artificial intelligence, cobotics, machine learning, newer and better ways to connect, blockchain and a host of other innovations represent both a threat … and an opportunity. To care is to manage the former with sensitivity and face the latter with an open mind. It is to equip employees at all levels of the organization with the skills, insights and know-how needed to thrive in an uncertain future.

To care is to strip out boundaries that limit what is possible. It is to act in the belief that unnecessary organizational levels destroy value, that the informal organization is always more important than that implied by the formal structure, and that failure to cultivate the grapevine is to provide a forum for those who may not care. To care is to work from the assumption that the most effective way to organize reflects the way that people, given a choice, would organize themselves. It is to understand that merger, takeover, and acquisition are exclusively financial terms and that when two (or more) enterprises combine, a new entity **always** emerges.

To care is to fully embrace the view that there are five distinct dimensions of intelligence. One: cognitive intelligence and the ability to manage complexity. Two: practical, hands-on intelligence that some call "street smarts." Three: interpersonal intelligence – how we relate to others. Four: intrapersonal intelligence – how well we know ourselves. Five: ecological intelligence – our full appreciation of the footprint we leave on this planet. In all the discussion over the past two decades on emotional intelligence what has, invariably, been pushed aside is ecological intelligence. What indigenous peoples around the world put

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4   A term created by Frederick Herzberg. His research postulated that two sets of factors influence behaviour at work. The first: "hygiene factors" (extrinsic) – issues such as salary that, if not properly managed, generate dissatisfaction. The second: "motivators" (intrinsic drivers) – that influence employees such that they want to give of their best, e.g., the relationship between capability and opportunity. Herzberg scoffed at the notion of trying to motivate through money. He called it "jumping for the jelly beans."

at the very centre of their existence we have foolishly chosen to push to one side. To care is to realise that we live in a fragile ecosystem where every act has long-term consequences. It is to fulfill the responsibility that goes with being a citizen of planet Earth. To care is to leave the planet cleaner than we found it and build a world for our children that we can be proud of. "The Earth does not belong to us. We belong to the Earth." Marlee Matlin.

Who you are is who you were when you were growing up. To care is to recognise that a new generational cohort now dominates in the workplace. Caring is thus about recognising that different generations come with different life experiences and expectations. Know that if you are selling to millennials the same way as you have/do to Boomers and Gen. X clients you are out of step with reality. Two words should reframe your thinking … "social conscience."

To care is a deep-rooted, authentic, consistent way to be. Moreover, the greater the pool of knowledge that rests with those who inhabit the lower echelons of the organization, the greater the need for caring leadership. To care is to work from the assumption that the world will (not might!) unfold in unpredictable ways. It is to realise that sustainable competitive advantage is often fleeting and that unbridled belief in "the plan" is to be wedded to yesterday's solution. It is to know that only those who can see what isn't there can deliver what cannot be done. It is to anticipate where your best competitor is headed and get there before them.

To care is to act in tune with the rhythm of the marketplace. It is to realise that the only thing that is unchanging is the increasing speed of change and that victory is the prerogative of those who embrace and relish change. To care is to work to become ever more adaptable, flexible, and fleet-of-foot. It is to know when and in what ways to trust our intuition. It is to understand that in a world where change is an ever-present reality, in-depth and/or extensive analysis is all-too-often an emotional safety blanket that handicaps the ability to compete. To care is to discover new ways to learn. To compete is to be faster to market than the competition. "The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn." Alvin Toffler.

To care is to recognise that the customer's emerging needs dictate *the what*, values underscore *the how*, pragmatism orchestrates *the where*, opportunity dictates *the when* … but it is integrity that dictates **the why**. Integrity is manifest in high ethical standards, an emphasis on personal responsibility and a supportive work environment. Integrity is caring for the workers in an outsourced factory in Honduras no less than for those who work in the company's own plants. It is asking the questions that some would prefer to avoid. It is a compensation approach that rewards contribution, not the size of the office. It's treating everyone the same, regardless of background, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, role or level. Honesty, transparency, moral courage, independence of judgement, impartiality and fairness are words that capture the spirit of integrity. Power without its alter ego, integrity, is exploitation. Leadership without integrity is a broken promise.

To care is to dream. It is to know that to lead is to compete for other people's dreams. Caring is thus a quest that seeks to rid the workplace of work that strips people of dignity. Caring leads to the assumption that, given the chance, "people will get it right." Caring embraces employee engagement not simply as a means to improve productivity, but because it nurtures the human condition. It draws on the belief that people want to produce quality work. Caring builds on the assumption that, given the opportunity, front-line employees will always strive to simplify/improve the processes that dictate how the work they do gets done.

To care is to have an unrelenting drive for improved results. It is to be committed to goals that others merely aspire to. It means that a commitment is absolute and that growth, in its many forms, is the wellspring of sustained success. To care is to make the discipline of delivery a drum beat that is echoed in every presentation, team meeting and/or coaching conversation.

To care is to have top of mind that what a leader does is far more important than anything he/she may say. It is to be always conscious of how even small acts will be interpreted. To care is to be a role model. It is to challenge the status quo and, in doing so, give others permission to explore new ways to act.

To care is to appreciate that because something is difficult to measure doesn't mean it should be judged purely by how the tide of uninformed, subjective opinion happens to be running at the time. Culture, the sense of urgency, tenacity, trust, motivation, teamwork, leadership potential and the human behaviour that drives innovation are all fundamental building blocks of organizational success that, although difficult to measure, with flair and creativity can be, and should be, regularly assessed. Conversely, to care is to know that just because something can be measured doesn't necessarily mean it should be. To care is to recognise that more measurement means less meaningful measurement. To lead is to regularly review and decide specifically what needs to be measured and, just as important, what measurement is no longer of value. If you don't measure it, you can't manage it.

To care is to understand that, paradoxically, selling is never about selling. Great selling is to care more about what (and why) the customer wants to buy than it is about what the vendor has to offer. It is to uncover in what ways the seller can make the customer's business better. It is to coach the customer such that he/she better uncovers new possibility. It is to listen, really listen. It is to talk the customer's language and in doing so gain insights into the customer's world. It is to anticipate the customer's emerging needs. It is to uncover why the customer chose you. It is to respond with not just a solution, but with the *best possible* solution. To care is to always deliver a little more than that agreed upon. "People don't want to buy a quarter inch drill. They want a quarter inch hole." Theodore Levitt.

To care is to question conventional wisdom, to embrace new ideas and to provide space and freedom in order that the imagination of those who serve the customer can take flight.

To care is to support those who have the courage and daring to go where others have not walked. To care is to bring the customer's voice to every key decision. It is to stand behind the brand. It is to make the brand live not just in the customer's eyes, but in the hearts and minds of everyone in the seller's organization. It is to act on the belief that *serving* is more important than *service*. *Service* determines how the seller responds. Serving determines how the customer feels.

To care is to have pride in the product and share that pride with others. To care is to know that product reliability is sacrosanct. It is to bring truthfulness to the sales process and to honor the spirit, not just the letter, of any and all promises made. It is to continuously explore ways to enhance the utility of the company's product and/or service. To care is to act with the knowledge that reputation is hard won but easily lost.

To care is to strip out the barriers between supplier and customer. It is to recognise that in some situations collaborating with the competition (co-opetition) is the best way forward. To care is to know that to be a partner is to share not only "the how" but "the why." It is to keep any and all partners fully informed and to provide real-time access to information that is critical to the customer's needs. To care is to build organizational capability that focuses on the knowledge of knowledge. It is to ensure that when seasoned performers move on or retire, hard won insights about the business are not lost.

To care is to be committed to the belief that the efforts of people working together far outweigh the value of any individual. To care is thus to work collaboratively, to enrich global networks and actively share experiences to better satisfy the customer. In that the creativity of the human mind can always find ways to circumvent the unnecessary and the unwanted, to care is to know that even well meaning attempts to control others are always self-defeating. To care is to eschew the trappings of proclaimed self-importance. To care is to know that "status" is a state of mind that insecure leaders seek in order that they can maintain the illusion of being in charge.

To care is to constantly seek ways to simplify. For those who care, simplicity is found in unambiguous goals; policies and procedures that prescribe only that which is absolutely essential; and feedback that focuses on issues that the receiver can influence. Simplicity is realised when the customer finds the product/service easy to access and straightforward to use. To care is to understand that simplicity is, in the first instance, a state of mind. It is also to know that there is a world of difference between simplicity and simplistic. One is to strive for elegant solutions. The other is to create a simple product/service but in doing so forgo fitness for purpose.

To care is to know that it takes the capacity for self-critique to wear the demands of leadership with humility. To care is to have a teachable point of view. It is to work on the assumption that how people learn is more important than what they learn. To care is to coach. It is to

be open to be coached. To care is to find the time to be *available* and the state of mind to be *present*. It is to ask questions that allow others to see the world through a new lens. To care is to create the context such that people coach themselves. To care is to be a mentor. It is to develop a successor who will be more successful in the role than we are.

To care is to act on the belief that leadership is about building community. Community, in turn, speaks to how people share ideas; how groups with a common interest build on each other's success; and how the collective spirit of competition propels people to the next plateau of performance. Caring is to emphasise that community is not about everyone being the same, but about the coming together of those who share a compelling purpose. It is to recognise that diversity isn't a legal requirement, it's simply the smart thing to do. To care is to know that the organization cannot thrive in a vacuum and that the road to societal and customer rejection is littered with those who attempted to gain competitive advantage by riding roughshod over the public good. "Without a sense of caring, there can be no sense of community." Anthony J. D'Angelo.

To care is to know that any and all shortfalls in the talent management system are multiplied many times over. It is to strive to identify world-class, talent management partners. Caring is manifest in the passion to hire and promote the right candidate. Caring is found in the knowledge that every hire decision is central to the legacy that a leader leaves behind. It is to work from the knowledge that anything less than best-in-class expertise on the part of the hiring manager, in defining and orchestrating leadership "fit," amounts to a breach of fiduciary responsibility. To care is to provide unstinted support in order that those who are new to the organization land without breaking stride. "I'd rather interview 50 people and not hire anyone than hire the wrong person." – Jeff Bezos.

To care is to communicate not what people need to know, but what they have a right to know. It is to ask people how they feel. It is to share feelings. It is to find the time to listen. It is to listen *for* and not to listen to. It is to see the world through the eyes of others. To care is to be vulnerable. It is to ask for help. It is to offer help. It is to be compassionate when others stumble. It is to offer advice only when it's asked for. "Leading by example is the most powerful advice you can give to anybody." N. R. Narayana Murthy.

To care is to be approachable. It is to be human. It is to be humble. Humility is stepping down from the podium that others would have you stand on. It is putting the needs of others first. It is being comfortable saying, "I don't know." It is to know when to say no! To care is to take pride in the success of one's colleagues. It is to know that no one makes it on his/her own. To care is to live up to the expectations of others on the team. It is to be the first to accept accountability when things go wrong and the last to seek praise or personal reward when a successful outcome has been delivered. "Great leaders don't need to act tough. Their confidence and humility serve to underscore their toughness." Simon Sinek.

To care is to be fully aware that without investors there would be no organization. It is to honor that trust and make each and every decision transparent. To care is to work diligently to create value for shareholders. It is to hold in high esteem those whose own hard work and continued support allow the organization to be sustained.

To care is to respect the truth. It is to live in truth. It is to be open and honest even when political expediency means that silence is the option others would choose. It is to realise that timing is everything. To care is to act on the belief that confronting a problem is the first step in overcoming it.

Caring is about balance. It means working to build alignment between strategic thinking and strategic doing but recognising, at the same time, misalignment and the tension that results are often the source of breakthrough ideas. Balance means striving for excellence but at the same time fully appreciating how the marketplace is unfolding. It means thinking slow and acting fast. It means giving equal weight to short-term actions and long-term thinking. It means embracing the future that we are part of creating whilst honoring the past. It's realizing that we can't step into new shoes until we take off the ones we are wearing. It is the wisdom to know that what isn't said is always more important than what is. It is to bring people onto the team who act and think differently than the way we do.

Caring is to realise that the organization isn't a homogenous and self-perpetuating force of nature working tirelessly to make your life difficult. It is to know that you are the organization and that armed with tenacity and a dream you can make a difference. To care is to stop expressing frustration about what you can't do and start to focus on what you can do. It is to understand that even those in secondary roles, if truly committed to the cause, can inspire others to join them on a quest that has meaning. Caring is to quickly assess the differences between someone who challenges the status quo and a team member stuck in complaint mode, by simply asking, "what are you going to do about it?"

To care is to strive continuously to be the best we can be. It is to ask for feedback. Not only from those who see the world the way we do, but from those who walk a different path. Caring is to act on that feedback.

To care is to realise that leadership demands stamina. It is therefore to take health, fitness and wellness seriously. To care is to exercise and eat right. To care is to provide the opportunity for others to do likewise. To care is to take all of your vacation days.

To care is to make leadership of self our single, most important priority. It means having the courage to live our own story; to become our own hero/heroine. To care is to know that when we look back on a race well run, lifestyle, family and integrity will be deemed far more important than financial rewards. Leadership of self means letting the ones we care about know that we care - and do so often. To lead is to care.

Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter." When we stop caring we stop being a leader. When we stop caring about others we stop caring about ourselves. To be a leader is to care. To be an outstanding leader is to care deeply.

50 WAYS To Say You Care – In a Covid World

To lead is to care. The actions listed below outline 50 ways for you to think about what it means to be a caring leader – simple suggestions that will make a difference. Important as caring was in the pre-COVID environment, it is now more important than ever. Go through the list carefully and reflect on what you can do differently on Monday.

1. Provide the resources. If people are being asked to work from home ensure that you support them fully. Video meetings are, literally, twice as effective as traditional conference calls. With that in mind, allow employees to expense, where needed, fast-internet access and/or a computer/software upgrade. The environment we are in is, for most, extremely stressful. Poor internet access and/or inadequate technology add unnecessarily, often exponentially, to that level of stress.

2. Make priorities clear. In times of crisis, priorities change quickly. Make it a habit to start the day by identifying what is essential and that which is merely important. Make the first action/call of the day in pursuit of a goal or solving a problem that is essential.

3. Be real. In these difficult times, making a personal connection is essential. Learn the names of the children of those who work directly for you. Uncover what the people who work for you are passionate about. Ensure that presentations reflect the multigenerational mix of the audience. Share something about yourself that resonates with team members and their background interests.

4. Agility is as agility is seen to be. In the team meeting, learn to move beyond solving the immediate problem. Balance tactical dialogue with strategic thinking. In pursuit of the latter, ask great questions. A great question is one that asks for what you want – not what you don't want. Learn to let go of the need to be in charge. Move facilitating the meeting between different team members.

5. Be there! When you ask someone to call you back, leave a time when you will be available.

6. What people don't know, they make up. It's called "human nature." Key actions, changes and important news must come from the team leader first. Keep the team up-to-date with a dedicated blog. Don't use social media for that purpose. The lack of face-to-face interaction makes keeping people informed an imperative. Ensure that the blog focuses on what people want to know – not on what you want to tell them. Remember, it's not about you!

7. Surprise supports a sense of being special. If possible, stop by people's offices/ workstations unsolicited and ask them how they are doing, what they take pride in, what suggestions they might have. Call remote workers with the same objective in mind.

8. If you don't coach, you can't lead! In view of the reality that the *workforce* is now dominated by millennials, work to become a great coach. Be open to be coached. Encourage team members to coach each other. What a leader does is always more important than anything he/she might say. For that reason, much of the learning that takes place at work is based on role modeling. In remote working much of that opportunity is lost or is defused. The result? In the digital world, coaching takes on even greater importance.

9. Make people feel safe. It starts, of course, with masks, social distancing and hand washing. Beyond that, whether the environment is physical or virtual, make health and safety a priority. Fund wellness and online fitness classes. In a traditional meeting, start by making sure everyone in attendance knows where the fire exits are. Ensure electrical leads are taped down. Hold regular fire drills. It's not just a matter of avoiding personal risk – the underlying value is in making people aware that people's health and safety is something you care about. Introduce appropriate safety checks when the team is operating remotely. It might sound like an intrusion into people's homes at first but small acts often have very beneficial consequences. It's not so much what you do, it's how you make people feel. Let them know that you care.

10. Celebrate curiosity. The evidence is that remote working inhibits innovation and stunts collaboration. When the team works from home it can easily default into a digital and remote bureaucracy – addressing problems and not much else. Go out of your way to draw out and listen to new ideas. Start from the point of view that you will look for ways to make the idea work and not dig for reasons why the suggestion being made is flawed. In organization life there is no shortage of great ideas. What's missing is a forum where these ideas can be surfaced. In the words of Captain Picard, "Make it so."

11. Be transparent. Know when and how to apologise. Be vulnerable. Admit mistakes. Share with your team the times you stumbled ... and what you learned from the experience. Ask for help. Learn to say you don't know. Admit when you are wrong. It may well mean dialing in your vulnerability gene but without openness and transparency a digital platform tends to dial down sincerity and dial up resentment.

12. Communicate from truth. Make candour and straight-talk central to how you think and act. Confront those on the team (one-on-one) who, when the tough conversation or new ways to act are needed, deliberately muddy the water and/or default into games playing. The temptation for some remote employees to obfuscate, confuse or hide behind weak excuses must be addressed early.

13. Become an extraordinary listener. Listen in the way you want to be listened to. When we are operating face-to-face, listening is an essential skill. In a virtual space, its importance is even greater. See Chapter Two.

14. Recognise that the basic currency of organization success is the team. Take time out as a team to reflect on how to take the team to the next level. Great teams develop criteria for both the results to be achieved and the four to six behaviours that describe "team success." Essential for intact teams that physically interact, establishing "needed" team behaviours for teams operating from a digital platform is even more important. Involve the team in establishing "team" success criteria. Have a quick review at the conclusion of each meeting. Act on the feedback. If you don't know how you are doing, it's difficult to see how you can ever improve. The technical term is, "you're stuck!"

15. Emphasise growth. Reward extraordinary performance by allowing the individual(s) in question to choose/attend a leading-edge, on-line workshop. Have him/her share the insights gained with the rest of the team.

16. Leaders are readers. Share your learning. Encourage others on the team to read. Choose a relevant book and, as a team, review and reflect on the insights gained one chapter at a time.   A learning agenda can both energize remote work and build an invaluable personal habit.

17. Help new members to the team find their way. Five issues, in particular, are important to someone joining the team: (1) the strategic imperatives of the team one-level-up; (2) the culture the wider organization is seeking to create; (3) why others, new to the organization, have stumbled; (4) the protocols that define team success; and (5) who on the team will be his/her integration mentor.

18. Dialogue disrupts discontent. Organize small virtual groups with little or no agenda – where the purpose is to ask people how they feel about: (1) the organization today; (2) the work they do; (3) their ongoing personal growth and development; and (4) concerns about the virtual way of working.

19. Don't rely too heavily on the virtual format that focuses exclusively on the whole team. The more meetings take place remotely, the greater the need for one-on-one interaction. Open, honest, freewheeling, candid, growth-oriented conversations with each team member should be part of a leader's ongoing routine.

20. There is a practical side to empathy. Learn what it's like to be on the front-line. Especially now! Regularly spend time in the trenches: the call centre, serve in the retail outlet, work on the front desk, go on sales calls, wait tables. Be humble. Go to learn. Write down what people tell you. Be seen to be writing it down. Now go to the smallest room in your house, close the door, play pre-recorded sounds of young children fighting with each other and a small dog barking … and then connect with your immediate team leader on a Zoom meeting. Just kidding … but at least set time aside to imagine what it would be like.

21. Delegate. Agree outcomes and then step back and allow the employees to get it done. Don't phone to simply ask how they are doing. It seems like support but it comes across as a lack of trust. Move from management by exception (personal involvement only when things go wrong) to management of exception (look for the opportunity to give high performers more responsibility).

22. Cameo capability. Actively promote talented members of your team to other leaders in the organization – especially women and minorities. Find ways to accelerate the experience track of your high performers. Provide international experience for high-potential employees early in their career. Look for meaningful ways to "test" a potential successor(s). Become a mentor. It is not only a truly meaningful contribution to the business, it's the best way imaginable to know what's really happening inside the organization. Identify a bright, young employee to mentor you. You have no idea what you don't know about – how the next generation view work, emerging trends on social media and/or the conversation you are currently not having that is really important.

23. Sharpen your saw when it comes to the hiring process. What amounts to a poor hire decision for the organization is often a life-changing event for a candidate who stumbles. Make diversity central to who you hire. Make your team an integral part of the hiring process. You are not looking for consensus but listen to the input they provide. Compared to its "live" predecessor, the video interview is something of a stunted tool. Preparation is key. Avoid the temptation to personally dress down. Start and finish on time. Recognise the difference between the *best* candidate and the *right* candidate. The former is the outcome of a "beauty contest." Identifying the right candidate means honing in on, specifically, what it takes to succeed in the role today … and in the future. That implies assessing behaviour against: (1) the culture the organization has and the culture needed to support future success; (2) the performance scorecard; (3) role-specific leadership competencies; and (4) the team challenge. If you haven't been trained recently in how to conduct the recruitment interview, make the investment. Take advantage of the opportunity a virtual format provides. With permission, record a typical interview and have an "expert" review it with you. "Excellence" in the integration process is a "must." If they don't land, they won't stay!

24. Go out of your way to find out why your best people stay. With retention in mind, have the team suggest what they/the organization should: (1) stop doing; (2) take pride in; (3) start to do. The bigger the business challenge; the more marketable team members are; the greater the difference in cultural context that separates team members from each other – the higher the bar is set in retaining top talent.

25. Give primacy to the organization's values. Challenge those who don't live the organization's values. Part company with – regardless of the results delivered – a subordinate who consistently acts with self-interest in mind. The 21st century organization gives employees unprecedented freedom to act. Organization agility and personal freedom doesn't, however, mean a world without boundaries. Culture can be viewed as a "container for diversity." Diversity lacking the means to "knit" different groups together invites "tribal conflict." Too little diversity and innovation becomes what the competition is good at. What shapes diversity? What gives people both permission to act and dictates how they do? The organization's values.

26. If you are a leader you live in a goldfish bowl. Know that you are a role model. Emphasise, exaggerate and reinforce, through example, the behaviour needed to succeed tomorrow. Model the change you want to bring about.

27. Health matters. The virus has obviously disrupted most people's notion of work-life balance. That doesn't mean that lifestyle and health goals can't be emphasised. Be a good example to the team. In doing so, you give each of them permission to orchestrate their own approach.

28. Expand your constituency. Reject job applicants with professionalism and respect. Reputation is hard won but easily lost. Stay in touch with employees who have retired. Let them know what's going on. Similarly, stay connected to the great candidate who didn't get the job. They represent an investment you haven't yet drawn on – both in terms of goodwill and as a future candidate.

29. Asking the right question is far more important than having the right answer. When someone approaches you, know that most of the time they already know the answer. They are looking for permission. Permission, in turn, strips the decision of risk. When an employee seeks an answer to a question that hasn't been addressed before, insist that he/she have at least one potential solution. If not, adjourn and ask him/her to return. Even if it's not the solution you would have chosen, assume that, given the chance to act, the individual in question will get it right.

30. Culture matters and in a world changing in an unprecedented manner it matters a lot. If you operate at the top of the house, measure the culture the organization has and the culture the organization needs. Only then can you successfully address attraction, transform talent acquisition, conduct coaching, manage mentoring and succeed at succession.

31. Go to bat for the people who work for you. Let those around you know that you believe in them. Believe in yourself. Display that belief by the simple act of letting go.

32. Listen to the customer. In particular, work assiduously to understand what tomorrow's customer will be willing to pay for. At the end of the day, to create/serve tomorrow's customer is what business is all about. To keep the customer top of mind, on every virtual meeting consider setting an empty seat aside for "the customer."

33. The power of "why." Ensure that the team understand the organization's compelling purpose: "Why we do what we do." Remote working demands discipline and self-imposed commitment. Without a compelling why, it's easy for "the right way" to become "the easiest way."

34. Practice servant leadership. If you are the team leader, remember you work for the team. Think about yourself as first amongst equals. To be a leader is to step forward when criticism is being tabled and step back when praise is being divvied out. The proudest moment an outstanding leader has is when one of his/her team is standing on the winner's podium.

35. If you are the team leader, let people know (with as much clarity as possible) where the team is headed. Through imagery and compelling language, make tomorrow come alive, today. If people don't know where you're going, it's a naive assumption to assume that they will follow you.

36. Become a great storyteller. Share positive stories. Encourage others on the team to share positive stories. A good way to start virtual meetings is for one or two participants to share a story. It can be a work-based or perhaps, even more interesting, a story about how participants are coping. Keep in mind, negative stories can inform but only positive stories inspire.

37. Be consistent. Paradoxically, agility has to be built on a platform of stability. In the midst of a storm there has to be a sense of calm. Establish at least one day a week without Zoom meetings. Whether virtual or not, attend and start meetings on time. Close them on time. In the midst of much that is uncertain, do what you can to provide a sense of continuity. Make sure meetings have a clear agenda. Communicate it ahead of time. Exhibit a positive mindset. Don't let tangential concerns or personal frustration show through. When you smile people realise that you are happy to be there. When you frown you are signaling that you would prefer to be someplace else. Don't assume. Use humour with caution. It could be that the dog just threw up on the carpet and the new baby has colic. Not the best time for the wrong kind of humour. Summarise exactly what is expected following the meeting. Make follow-up a way of life.

38. Without trust you ain't got much! TRUST implies **T**he ability to build rapport – **R**especting individual differences – **U**nderstanding the other point of view – **S**hared values – **T**he commitment to deliver on the promise.

39. Have an eye for signs of stress. Be sensitive to what people on the team are struggling with. Remote working can be stressful. On Zoom meetings, look for signs of that stress. Follow up one-on-one. Invite a health professional in early. Go the extra mile when a team (or a member of his/her family) is dealing with serious health issues.

40. Work with the team to build the team's story. Ensure that the team's story is aligned with (complements) the organization's story. Customers don't buy your product or service – they buy (or not) your story. The reason strategy fails isn't a lack of effective buy-in from the team or problems with alignment from the top down. Strategy fails when peer teams are less than fully supportive of your business and strategic objectives. The way to truly connect with peer teams isn't to simply spend more time explaining your strategy. They will buy-in (or not) based on how compelling your story is.

41. Make meaning matter. Strip away the boundaries between the work people do and how their contribution makes a difference. Work to find ways to bring meaning to those in support roles, e.g., invite such members of the team on sales calls, have them attend meetings they otherwise would not be part of, ask for their ideas about parts of the business they are not part of. Know that our quest in life, in no small measure, is the search for meaning. If people don't know how and where what they do makes a difference, why would they?

42. Adopt a cause where the team can make a difference, e.g., organize a class at a local high school, support a seniors home, build a kids' playground, attend a tree planting day as a group. Where none of this is physically possible, think of creative ways where "giving back" can happen virtually.

43. Respect people's downtime. Call a team member at home as a last resort. During the COVID-19 crisis, allowing employees to enjoy their downtime is especially important. There is evidence that remote employees are already putting in an extra 10 hours a week. Blurring the line between work and home life is what concerns employees working from home the most.

44. Fan the flames of early success. There is a big difference between coercive and creative tension. One is based on a conversation where the subtext spells out "you will or else!" Creative tension is about stretch, growth and positive reinforcement. If the future you are seeking doesn't exist someplace, some of the time, it's very difficult to create. Go out of your way to catch people "doing it right!" Affirmation is to start to create tomorrow, today.

45. Meeting mastery. Courtesy is the default behaviour of management that matters. On virtual meetings emphasise inclusiveness. Close with class. Go out of your way to say, "thank you." Make it a practice that everyone on the team interacts with respect. There are three ways to "turn up" at your next virtual meeting. One: a focus on "my needs." Two: working to see the challenge and/or opportunity through other people's eyes. Three: being both in and outside of the team. Inside the team means being fully present and doing everything you can to move the agenda forward. Outside the team implies being able to step away from the ongoing interaction and observe what's really going on. The dilemma? Far too many attendees spend virtually all of their time concerned about "their needs." The ability to see the team from the outside-in allows the individual in question to not only be a better participant but to subtly shape/facilitate a richer interaction. It's called "mastery."

46. Be optimistic. The absence of optimism allows fear to flourish; invites stories without heroes, emphasises problems that defy solution and supports a narrative replete with excuses. By comparison, optimism provides an arc of hope that energises the enthusiastic, inspires the innovative and captures the committed.

47. Match opportunity with capability. Being "out of sight" starts to stretch the very fabric of trust. The great temptation with virtual work, therefore, is to simplify expectations. The problem? Work that lacks stretch is every bit as stressful as work that is misaligned with the employee's ability to deliver. Constantly look for ways to ensure the work people do: (1) is unambiguously defined by way of goals and responsibilities; (2) is aligned with the individual's capability; and (3) evokes stretch and challenge. If not, expect to spend a lot of time hiring.

48. All change starts with challenging what is. Create an environment where challenging the status quo is the natural way to think and act. A mindset that leads people to believe "we have arrived" is a precursor to a conversation about the competition that starts with, "If only we had thought of that."

49. Change the patterns of play. Virtual teams that stay together, play together. Stress is amplified when every day is the same, when people have little to look forward to and humour is pushed aside. Mix up regular video meetings with a dress-up evening with drinks. Have participants bring something that means a lot to them to meetings and say why. Organize a quiz session. How about a team wager on an upcoming sports event? Continue to mix it up by inviting a customer or supplier to the meeting, introduce assessment tools into key sessions and/or use video to bring ideas to life.

50. In your ongoing dialogue with members of your team, emphasise and support leadership of self. In particular, expose them to an assessment of personal resilience. We can learn to be more resilient but people need to know where to start. Make resilience a team discussion. The traditional definition of resilience emphasises the capacity to spring back. It's a definition born out of a steady state world. A more apt way to think about resilience is by both adapting to the challenge **and** adopting new behaviour. Resilience devoid of the capacity to learn and grow from the experience is a mandate for mediocrity.

See the Assessment of Resilience at the end of the book.

If You Are Not Living Your Own Story, You Are Living **Someone Else's**

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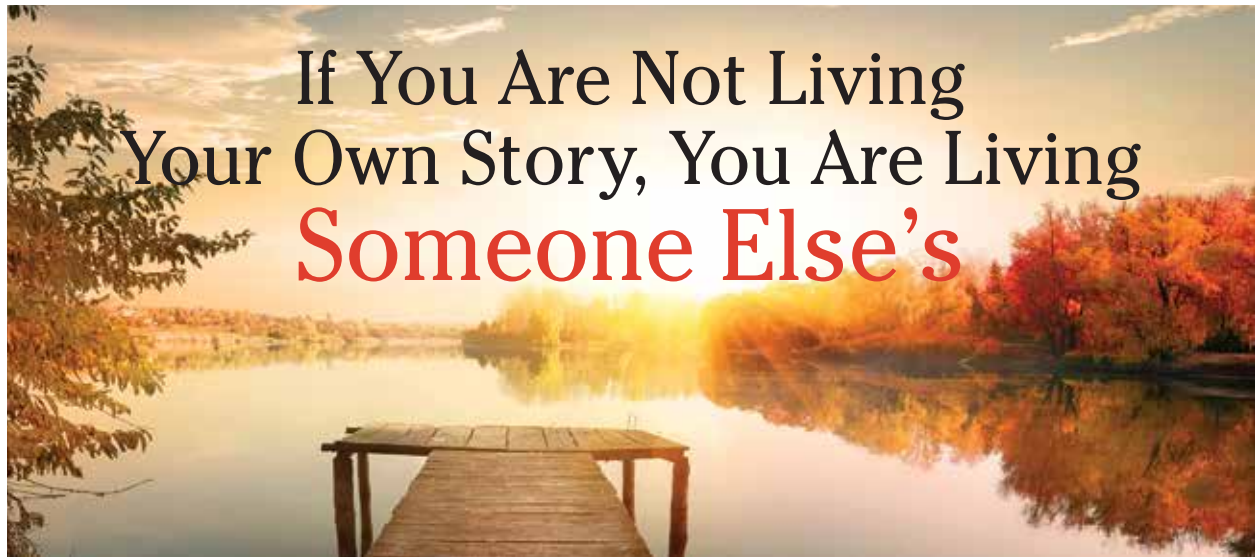
The Golden Thread

A good deal has been written about career planning over the years. Much of what has been suggested makes perfect sense. A key assumption that underscores this work is, however, open to question. The prevailing logic goes along the following lines. Step back, understand your strengths (essential), come to terms with what you are likely to be less successful at, define where you want to be and when and then develop the skills and experience needed to move step by step along the path to your career goal. An exercise in simply ticking the boxes. The career plan!

It all sounds like perfect advice. Except that when you interview those who have reached the upper echelons of top organizations it didn't quite work out that way. They had a plan; a way forward supported by ongoing coaching and, in many instances, career input from a seasoned mentor. What that thinking didn't factor in was the unexpected. The unanticipated disruption that derailed the plan. The opportunity that came from left field. Changes in the competitive environment that demanded new ways to think about resilience and risk.

On reflection, in discussing their success,[1] the executives I spoke to (on a number of occasions coached) suggested that there were three things that allowed them to successfully navigate the path they hadn't expected to travel.

1. Although they hadn't realised it, in many senses and in their own way they were ready. An openness to be coached. Disciplined reading habits. An unbridled curiosity. Comfort with ambiguity. And a willingness to challenge the status quo … meant that preparation for the "next step"

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1 These conversations embraced leaders from many different countries.

became an ingrained habit. Being ready is more than simply a way to act … it's a way to be.[2]

Being prepared: Leaders are readers! What do you read? People who don't read are no better off than those who can't read.

2. In a world shaped by an unprecedented level of change, those who grow and thrive **know** that tomorrow **will** be different. They don't think it might be different. They don't focus on being better today in the hope that, somehow, magically, it takes them to where they need to be. And they don't live with the naïve notion that they will be able to change when they have to. When, of course, it's too late. When you know (not simply think) that tomorrow will be different it redefines who you bring onto the team, the coach or mentor you choose to work with, who you build relationships with out of work (your network), the books that you read, and the investment you make in self-development. Being ready means skiing the black diamond slopes of resorts you haven't been to before, not skating round and round on the same rink … one that you already know very well.

Being prepared: Was the most recent person you brought onto the team hired (1) to fill a gap that had opened up (replacement); or (2) were the criteria that defined success framed three to five years out (hired with tomorrow in mind)? When did you most recently attend a learning event, workshop, seminar, coaching session or experiential experience that took you to the very edge of your comfort zone? What have you read recently that forced you to challenge what you are currently doing? How and with whom have you shared that reading with? What have you/the team changed as a result? Not what you have talked about doing … what have you actually done? Can you outline, with great clarity (this implies measurement), the organization culture you need three to five years out?

3. Risk tempered by what's important in our life. Opportunity shaped by our values. We understand what's possible by working from the outside-in. We define our priorities from the inside-out. We stumble, we lose touch with our story, we become less than the best version of who we are capable of being if we subvert or pay less attention to either of those two themes. The relationship between knowing that you have tapped into your potential and emotional well-being is well established. You never work a day in your life if you love what you are doing. On the other hand, no one on their deathbed has ever suggested that they wish they had spent more time at work.

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2   Boston Consulting Group studied 4,000 major businesses and discovered that 58% of those organizations suggested that there was a significant gap between their leadership development and longer-term strategy. Rosalinda Torres, *Ted Talk*, February 2014.

The way through a minefield of competing interests lies with connecting with what is referred to, in **Figure one**, as "the golden thread." Think of the golden thread as your unfolding story. A story full of meaning can't be static. Nor should it be self-centered. And without risk we are defining a life that is imprisoned by the status quo. The tragedy for many – and it is a tragedy – is that they have lost touch with their own story. And if that's the case, by default, you must be living someone else's story.

Being prepared: When everything is stripped away, career planning can be translated into one compelling question, "Am I living my own story?" Are YOU living your own story?

Figure one

YOUR STORY
The golden thread that connects who you are with what you are capable of becoming.

BRAND
Your brand is not something you can invent, make up or fabricate. It's about connecting with, investing in and communicating in a compelling way your own story.

The unfolding business environment, tomorrow's opportunities

Lifestyle choices, values, beliefs, personal drive, investment in learning

IDENTITY
(Who am I?)

FAMILY PRIORITIES

CAREER CHOICES

COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTION

Uncertainty, disruption, technological breakthrough. Tomorrow Will Be Different.

The power of a positive script

To connect with your own story is to walk your own path. It's to see each twist in the road not as a problem … but as a way to better understand who you are. It's to know that without facing the challenges you have already overcome you would be less than who you are.

Becoming the best version of yourself is to take pride in what you have achieved. It's to think of yourself – not as getting older but getting better. Success isn't a destination. It's a state of mind. Take joy in the belief that the best thing you have ever done lies in the future. Know that tomorrow will be different. Be prepared. Above all else, don't get in your own way.

Empirical evidence suggests that success is far more about building on strengths than it is about avoiding weaknesses. The sense of self-confidence drawn out of a focus on strengths provides the emotional energy to face up to our performance blind spots.

Sustainable success also demands that we discover what sort of track suits us best. It means drawing out and learning how to play to those strengths. My own experience is that those who fail to reach their potential don't lack information and/or capability. Their shortfall is that they create self-imposed limits drawn out of a mindset that continuously poses the question, "How can I avoid failure?"

When the conversation we have with ourselves is dominated by the negative, we form the self-fulfilling belief that being a casualty is our destiny. A good example: the response to 360° feedback.[3] The warning sign that we are thinking like a victim: when we ignore the positive comments and put all our emotional energy into the one negative remark half-way down the second page.

Playing not to lose is an inevitable outcome for those who see the glass as half-empty. The result? Catching a peer or, even better, a rival doing it wrong becomes the highlight of the day. And when "gotcha" becomes a way of life know that resilience is spelt "resistance." Meanwhile, those who wallow in their own sense of mediocrity have little choice but to mask their true self. Conversely, when we start to listen to our own positive self talk, when we start to think about where we need to be and not what's holding us back, we condition ourselves to draw out the

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3   Because 360° feedback is inviably based on "what's happening today" it, all-too-easily, can provide false positives.

best in others. And nothing is more impactful and enriching than "to catch those around you doing it right."

If your thinking tends to be skewed to things that aren't working, don't be hard on yourself. All of us have been trained to solve problems … it's what leaders do. And in solving problems – the first thing we invariably ask is, "What's wrong with this?"   It has been thus since the 17th century when we were introduced to the "scientific method."

In seeking to grow as leaders it's important to know what we have to stop doing and what we have to do differently. If we stop there, however, if we don't seek to make a step-change based on what we excel at, we trap ourselves in a cycle of activity where more of the same is the best we can hope for.

When we seek excellence, we have to focus on excellence … we have to recognise when we are in flow … we have to discover how to put ourselves in that situation more often. In Spanish there is a word drawn from Flamenco, *duende*. It describes the moment when the dancer loses him/herself to the rhythm and passion of Flamenco. It means being at one with the dance. It is being the dance. *Duende* is when the self within the self is who we truly are. We do our best work when we touch *duende*. We thrive when the challenges we take on allow us to express who we really are.

And it starts with the conversation we have with ourselves. It starts with listening to our own story. When we lose touch with our own story we lose touch with who we really are. When we lose touch with our own story we ignore that which drives us on … our own intentions. And when we lose touch with our own story we follow a script written and narrated by someone else.

Listening to your own story

Charles Handy makes the point that all learning starts with a question. Such it is with surfacing your own story. What follows is a simple activity designed for you to draw out and listen to your own story … an engaging conversation where you will be asked to surface where your real strengths lie. It will also provide you with a unique sense of your potential as a leader.

Director's notes

Invite a colleague or a friend to work with you. Your colleague's role as facilitator is to ask questions that allow you to better understand your personal journey: to probe without pushing, to challenge without forcing, to inquire without intruding. Your challenge as the storyteller is simply to be yourself, to be authentic. To truly touch the essence of who we are is, of course, at the heart of what it means to be a successful leader. Welcome to your story.

Rapport

Sit facing each other. Push any physical barriers out of the way, e.g., a desk. Sit comfortably. Empty your mind. Know that how you listen will shape the outcome at least as much as, if not more than, the questions asked. Get to know each other. Build rapport by sharing something about yourself (to each other) and generally share where each of you are in your life.

Tips on asking questions

- The questions outlined later are suggestions only. Choose the questions that best fit the conversation. Create your own questions. Draw on the moment. A great question makes the silence louder.[4]

- Keep the questions simple. Simple means that each question has a single topic.

- Avoid, "Why?" It tends to make people defensive.

- Wait two or three beats after the speaker has finished before asking the next question. It reinforces the fact that you are listening. Listen. Be there!

- Practice good eye contact which, in turn, provides positive reinforcement.

- Follow up. Pay special attention to those events and decisions that moved the story in a new direction (transition points).

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4   Japanese proverb.

Your Story

Setting the stage:

- Where did you grow up? Tell me briefly about your schooling.

- What are your values?

- What are the top three priorities in your life?

- In terms of how you live your life, what do you not want to let go of?

Scene one: apprenticeship

- What were your expectations as you entered the world of work?

- What was your first position? As you look back, do you feel you made the right career choice? What would you change?

- In what ways do you think that first organization shaped your thinking/standards about work? How have you built on that … changed?

- Talk about your first boss. What was he/she like? What qualities did he/she bring that you admire to this day?

- Describe other early work experiences. If you moved to a different organization, why did you move? What was different? What aspects of the new organization did you admire? Who did you admire?

- What personal experiences, life challenges, family and/or societal responsibilities shaped your apprenticeship?

Scene two: early development

- Describe your first important/significant organizational position. If you were given the responsibility to be in charge of people, how did you adapt to that challenge? What aspect of leading others did you instinctively feel you were good at? What did you take from that first role of significance that you draw on today?

- As you started to grow, what were you engaged in when you felt that you were at the top of your game?

- What coaching and/or guidance did you get from your team leader at that time? How did that change you? Describe the single most important person to you in your early career. What contribution did he/she make?

- Describe a time when you stumbled. What did you learn about yourself from that experience?

- What personal experiences, life challenges, family and/or societal responsibilities shaped your early development?

Scene three: hitting your stride

- When did you start to feel that you were hitting your stride? When did you start to feel that you could really handle the responsibilities being thrown at you? What was the role?

- Talk about the teams you have been part of. What marked the good teams from those that struggled? What role do you tend to play in a team? What sort of people do you tend to partner with most easily on the team?

- Describe the best team leader you have worked for. What made him/her special? What do you take from that experience that you use today? How are you like him or her?

- Looking back over your career, talk about the positions where you feel you made the greatest contribution. What did you take from those situations? What risks did you take? What did you learn about yourself? What feedback did you receive that you can look back on with pride?

- Who did you build into your network? If you were to go back who would you, ideally, build a relationship with? Greater diversity? People who challenged you?

- What personal experiences, life challenges, family and/or societal responsibilities shaped your early development?

Scene four: bridging yesterday with today … and looking forward

- As you look back on your career, what three or four critical decisions (transition points) brought you to where you are today? What lay behind those decisions?

- Who were the three or four key players that influenced how you came to be where you are today? In what way did each of them inspire you? Who do you admire today? In what ways are you like – want to be like – that person?

- Describe your present role. What aspect of that role do others suggest you excel in?

- Capture a "golden moment" in the past few weeks when you were truly in flow. Describe a time when your performance was so effortless (*duende*) in its execution that time seemed to stand still. What personal qualities/strengths underpinned those golden moments? What have you learned about how you learn?

- What personal experiences, life challenges and/or responsibilities shape where you want to go from here? What is your compelling purpose?

- What changes do you see on the horizon – emerging technology for example – that will have a significant influence on your story?

- What do you need to let go of? Start to do? Do more of?

- How would you describe your "brand?"

- What and how do you give back? Do you need to do more?

Reflection

Facilitator

- Without reflection there is no learning.

- What do you understand are the storyteller's values, lifestyle choices and priorities?

- How did the storyteller's apprenticeship shape who he/she is today?

- What feedback (affirmation) can you give to the storyteller about his/her **strengths**? Avoid generalizations. Be as specific as possible. As you go through the conversation, giving affirmation at each stage, or as and when appropriate, is extremely helpful.

- Please note the difference between praise and affirmation. Praise tends to be a general, often all-encompassing, statement about someone's qualities ... "You seem to be good at managing people." Affirmation (reinforcing strengths) describes feedback that is totally authentic, highly specific and grounded in easy-to-identify performance situations ... "Your ability to deal as quickly as you did with the marketing problem Tony brought up shows you are an outstanding listener."

- Determine what pivotal issues (work and non-work) appear to have been influential in determining where the storyteller currently is in his/her life. What should he/she be proud of?

- Brainstorm with the storyteller on how and in what ways tomorrow will be different.

Storyteller

- What significant life events have shaped your career choices? What are your personal/family priorities moving forward? As you continue to grow and develop, what aspects of your personal/family life are you totally committed to?

- If you "derailed" at any point in your career … how did you get back on track?

- What do you currently need to let go of? Think of both work and personal issues.

- What strengths have brought you to where you are? Identify three or four "special" capabilities that resonate with how you see yourself.

- Suppose you were fully utilizing those strengths. What would be happening that isn't happening today?

- In making better use of your identified qualities (when you are in flow), what can you do more of?

- What do those qualities mean to your future career direction? How can you build on them? What do you need to do to become the best version of yourself?

- What's possible? When you look back a decade from now, what do you want to have achieved?

Note to the storyteller: If you don't have "a facilitator" you feel comfortable with, find somewhere quiet and become your own facilitator. The conversation does not need to be completed in one session.

Conclusion

In making career decisions there are clearly a good many factors to consider. The timing, family responsibilities, emerging technology, the state of the economy and location, for example, obviously loom large.

As pointed out, successfully navigating the challenge of personal growth, development and transition means managing opportunity from the outside-in but, at the same time, recognizing that to meaningfully exploit our potential lies in working from the inside-out. The good news is that at the centre of this "storm" lies an area of calm … a golden thread that we can draw on to better make career decisions.

Although described as "your story," it might well have been framed as the path to mastery or simply better knowing ourselves – "Who are we?" If you don't know who you are … if you are not connected to your story … if your path to mastery is unclear … you are, metaphorically, embarking on a journey without a map. In that case, getting lost is pretty nigh inevitable.

And it starts with the conversation we have with ourselves. It starts with listening to our own story. When we lose touch with our own story, we lose touch with who we really are. When we lose touch with our own story, we ignore that which drives us on, our own intentions. And when we lose touch with our own story, we start to live a story written and narrated by someone else.

What is your story? When do you experience *duende*? If you are not at one with your path to mastery … if you are not living your own story … you will always be less than you are capable of becoming. Nothing is more tragic. Go ahead, inspire yourself. Become the hero/heroine in your own story.

LEADERSHIP *of* SELF

NUMBER	SECRET TO SUCCESS	WAYS TO ACHIEVE
1	**Put your family first**	• No one on his/her death bed says, "I wish I had spent more time at work" • Know that work-life-balance is not only possible, it's essential to your well-being
2	**Your language shapes your perception**	• Interrupt, and purge self-defeating language from the ongoing conversations you have with yourself • Go out of your way to be affirming of others • Spend time with positive people
3	**Know that if you are not living your own story, you are living someone else's**	• Surface your own story • Learn to build on what makes you strong • Never (ever) compromise your personal values
4	**Work from the belief that action trumps strategy**	• Set truly "stretch" goals - hold yourself and others accountable • Make collaboration central to what it means to be a "winner." Know that the mark of a great player is that he/she helps those around him/her play up to their potential • Become a great coach both at work and at home
5	**Be authentic**	• Know that authenticity is the one thing you can't fake • Listen to others in the way you have always wanted to be listened to • Always speak from truth

LEADERSHIP *of* SELF

NUMBER	SECRET TO SUCCESS	WAYS TO ACHIEVE
6	**Learn to access your non-conscious mind**	• Trust your own experience • Be willing to take risks • Follow through on ideas that resonate in your "gut"
7	**Know that meaning is the greatest motivator of all**	• Strive to find work that makes a real difference in people's lives • Volunteer for a worthy cause
8	**Learn to let go**	• Know that beginnings start with endings • Sit down regularly and uncover what you need to let go of. Wherever possible, include in the latter anything that harms the environment
9	**Let others know that you care**	• Start with those closest to you. Move on to the rest of those around you (including those at work) who make a positive difference in your life
10	**Count your blessings**	• Start every day by reminding yourself what you have to be grateful for

Resilience

Coming out of **COVID-19 PERSONALLY STRONGER**

John O. Burdett

TRANSEARCH
YOUR WORLD PARTNER IN EXECUTIVE SEARCH

ORXESTRA® INC.

Ongoing Disruption: the new reality

Tomorrow will be different, will you?

ORXESTRA®INC.

The Disruption Dynamic

Everything impacts everything else

- Social media
- The cloud
- Cyber security
- Robotics
- Artificial intelligence
- Crowdfunding, crowdsourcing
- The internet of things
- Privacy concerns
- Terrorism
- Diversity, inclusion
- New organization forms
- Gig employment
- Greater access to talent pool
- Shortage of top talent
- A new workforce
- Social media manipulation

- New delivery platforms for entertainment and advertising
- Global health: COVID-19, Ebola, Zica
- Big data & predictive analytics
- The expansion of deserts; the world's water crisis
- Perceived lack of integrity on Wall Street/uncertainty in China
- Global warming, pollution (environment/food chain)
- Technology enabling new forms of collaboration
- The movement of high value jobs to countries such as India
- Uber and other community-based economic models
- Emerging territorial conflicts, e.g., the Arctic
- Continued conflict in the Middle East & Ukraine: refugees
- Biotechnology breakthroughs changing medicine
- Fluctuating energy & resource prices
- Nanotechnology, 3-D printers & new materials
- The Diabetes "epidemic"
- Social & economic inequality in developed countries

Even without COVID-19, the current and projected level of social and economic disruption dramatically changes, irrevocably, what it means to be successful both as an organization … AND as an individual.

Ongoing Disruption: the new reality

What is resilience?

Traditional thinking around resilience defines it as "absorbing change and bouncing back." It portrays the human spirit as a kind of behavioural elastic band – it stretches and then when the tension is released goes back to where it was.

In a steady state world, "bouncing back" is an apt description. Unfortunately, we don't live in a steady, consistent, unchanging world. Today's environment is marked by disruption, uncertainty and, where technology is involved, exponential change.

In any process seeking to bring about "change" … self-reflection isn't important … it's essential. Without reflection there is no learning. Meanwhile, with ongoing "black swan" events likely to become the new reality, resilience seen as a way to return to the status quo isn't very helpful. Indeed, it's misleading.

A more relevant approach presents resilience as pushing to the edge, being comfortable with being uncomfortable, adapting to the new state, reflecting on the experience and developing new ways to behave. It's a dynamic rather than a static process. It's about leading and learning; not absorbing and then acting as before. Resilience means not only weathering the storm … but being strengthened by it.

Moreover, in assuming that resilience describes an individual's personal resources – as is invariably the case – we miss an important piece of the puzzle. Context matters and the right network, a support system and being around positive people make a difference. Tomorrow's successful leaders will surround themselves with people who are resilient.

Accepting the plasticity of the brain, we can learn to become more resilient. There is a link, for example, between resilience and the research on positive psychology. If you are overly anxious, risk-averse, trapped by yesterday's success, have difficulty facing adversity or are overwhelmed by life, resilience is spelt "resistance."

Ongoing Disruption: the new reality

COVID-19: coming out of the crisis stronger.

Think about how you adapted to the COVID-19 crisis. With that in mind, the questions, from an individual perspective become, not simply "How resilient am I?" but "What can I do to become **more** resilient?" The assessment builds on four aspects of resilience:

1. Mental toughness

2. Leadership of self

3. Flexibility/adaptability

4. A passion to learn

The questions that follow will allow you to step back and better understand how you deal with disruption. You are invited to go through the assessment with one or more of the following in mind: (1) as an exercise in self-reflection; (2) to provide personal input into a coaching and/or mentoring conversation; (3) to facilitate supportive dialogue within a team working their way through a crisis; (4) because our most meaningful learning happens as we make our way down the mountain, to reflect on and, thus, come out of a crisis, stronger.

The best way to complete the assessment is through the eyes of someone who knows you really well: your spouse, a coworker, your team leader, a best friend. In stepping outside of the "self-talk" – the conversation we have with ourselves to protect our own sense of self – we bring a refreshing honesty to the assessment.

Note: this approach to resilience is not suitable for third party assessment, as part of the selection agenda and/or any process where the underlying rationale is anything other than self-reflection.

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Resilience

	Never. Occasionally. More often than not. Nearly all of the time. Always.

1. I excel when working with people who are very different to me.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2. When given something new to do, I love painting outside of the lines.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3. I have a healthy diet, exercise regularly and always get a good night's sleep.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

4. When bumping into a new idea, I always ask myself, "How can we do this?" ... rather than saying... "This would be difficult to do because...!"
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

5. I am tough-minded in the way I assess my strengths. I am creative in the way I build on those strengths.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

6. I wait for others to challenge the status quo before I voice my concerns.
   10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

7. I have very clear – short and long term – career objectives. I regularly review how I am doing against those objectives.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

8. Rather than step away from or avoid conflict, I embrace conflict as an idea being born.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

9. For some reason, I am slow to ask for help.
   10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

10. The bigger the challenge, the greater the potential gain … the more optimistic I become.
    1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

11. When faced with something I have never done before, I let what could go wrong limit what is possible.
    10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

12. Away from work, I find it difficult to disconnect from what is going on in my job.
    10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Add the score for this page

Resilience

Respond not as you would like them to be, but how you perceive things happen now. Answer all of the questions.	Never.	Occasionally.	More often than not.	Nearly all of the time.	Always.

13. I feel my life is on track and moving in a direction I can take pride in.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

14. In confronting COVID-19, my first thought was, "How do we get through this?" I am now asking, "How can I come out stronger?"

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

15. If I disagree with a decision, regardless of the status or position of the individual making the decision, I am quick to speak out.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

16. In meetings, I shut out all distractions and, as a result, listen not only to what is said but what isn't said.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

17. I am a reader. Faced with a new challenge, I read about who or what organizations have excelled.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

18. Rather than being proactive and asking to be coached, I tend to wait for my team leader to approach me.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

19. I have a strong mentor outside of work who I can, and do, turn to.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

20. I come up with innovative ideas and suggestions.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

21. When working with a new team or project and before jumping into the challenge/goals … I deliberately set time aside to get to know those involved.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

22. I go out of my way to look for ways to affirm others (team and peers) doing it right.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

23. I excel in projects where managing conflict is the hallmark of success.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Add the score for this page

Resilience

Respond not as you would like them to be, but how you perceive things happen now. Answer all of the questions.	Never.	Occasionally.	More often than not.	Nearly all of the time.	Always.

24. I have a strong network of people I can go to if I want advice, guidance or simply someone to talk to. It's a network I take full advantage of.

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

25. I am fully conscious of the extent to which the language shapes a common mindset around what is possible. As an example, I am especially cognizant of the metaphors used both within the team and in discussions with others.

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

26. I know how important trust is in team success. I go out of my way to win trust. In meeting someone new, extending trust is my default position.

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

27. In the way I communicate, I take account of multigenerational differences (e.g., with customers, peers, suppliers and/or front-line employees).

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

28. When people describe me, they say that disappointment or an early setback only make me more determined.

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

29. Although incidents and comments at work sometimes upset me, my first question is always to ask myself, "To what extent was I responsible for that conflict?"

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

30. When the unexpected derails carefully developed plans, my first response is always to ask, "What can we learn from this?"

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

31. I wait for others to adopt new technology (e.g., using speech and video platforms) before I jump on board.

   10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

32. I take time out for reflection. I consider the challenges faced, the arguments made, what actually happened and what I can learn from it.

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Add the score for this page

Resilience

Respond not as you would like them to be, but how you perceive things happen now. Answer all of the questions.	Never.	Occasionally.	More often than not.	Nearly all of the time.	Always.

33. I can be counted on to ask questions that change the way things are done around here.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

34. When a tough decision has to be made, I find my own emotions can get in the way.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

35. Self-confidence is born out of getting it right. Character is moving beyond the fear of getting it wrong. I am comfortable making bold decisions.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

36. Counting my blessings is part of my daily routine.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

37. I am remarkably well organized. I border on the "ruthless" in the way I set priorities. This can mean saying "No" to activities that are immediate but less important.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

38. I am a storyteller. I collect stories. I use stories to get my ideas across, to bring strategy to life, to make presentations memorable, to leave a lasting impression with the customer (internal/external).

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

39. When faced with a new challenge, I deliberately seek out others with a very different perspective.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

40. It's very easy to fall into the trap of living through someone else (e.g., spouse, children). I can put my hand on my heart and say with total confidence, "I am fully living my own story."

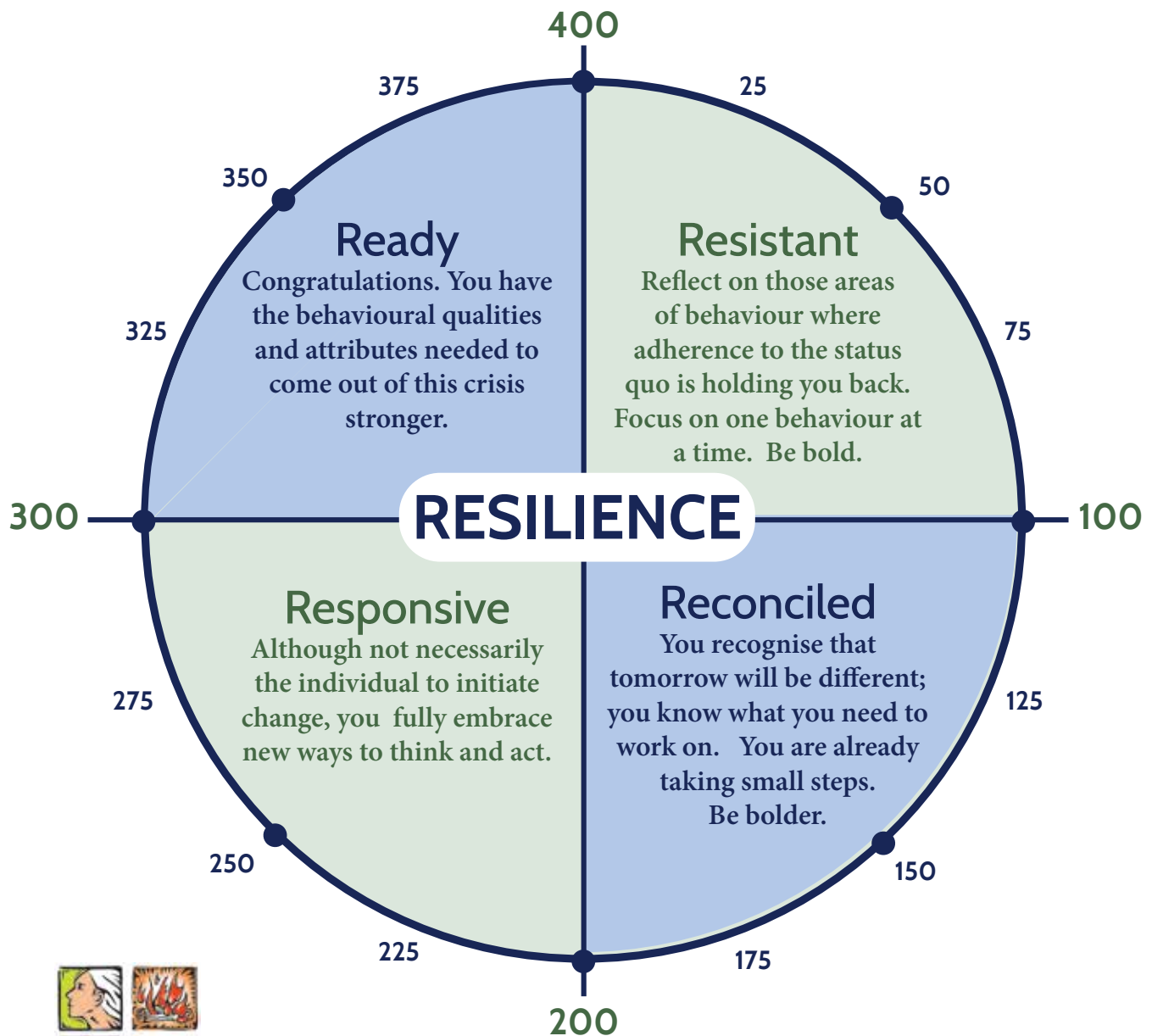**1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10**

OBSTACLES

Add the score for this page

Overall scoring

1. Go through the assessment and total your score on each separate page
2. Total the scores for pages 71, 72, 73 and 74.
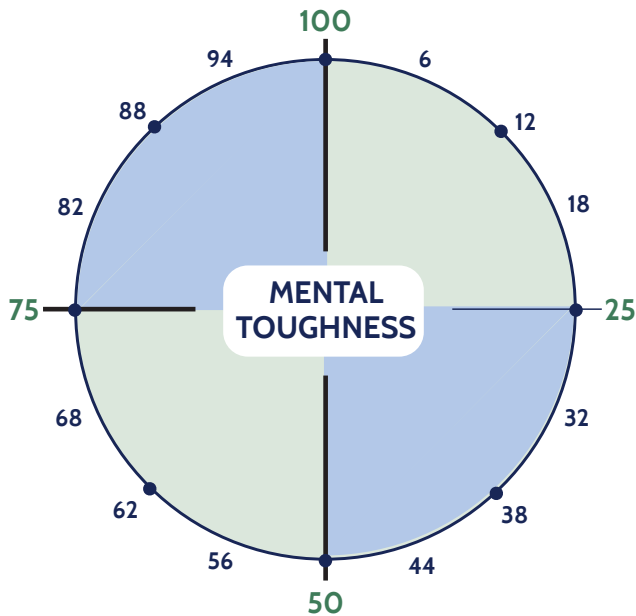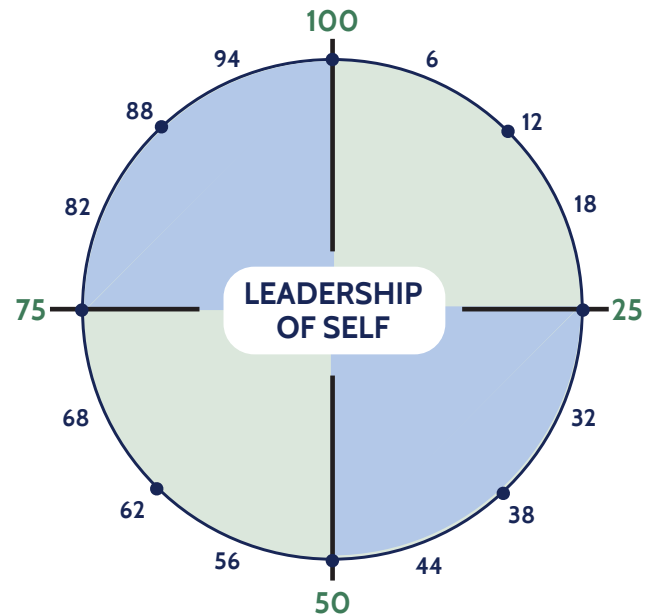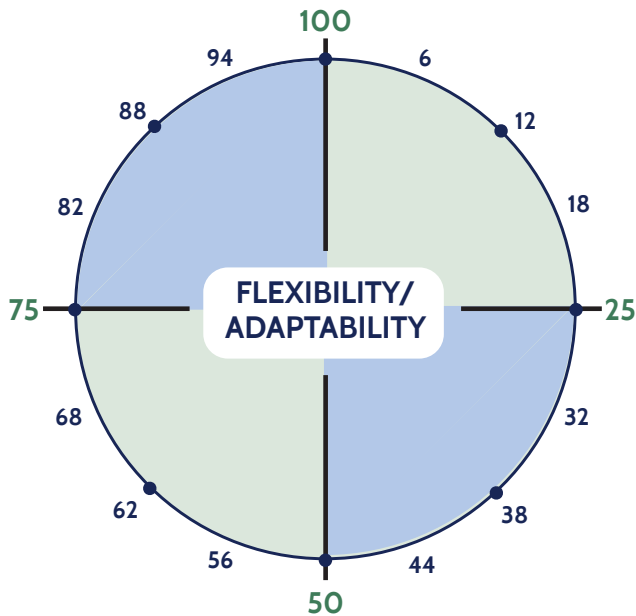3. Write the total score in the box below

Total out of 400	

400

375   25

350   50

Ready
Congratulations. You have the behavioural qualities and attributes needed to come out of this crisis stronger.

Resistant
Reflect on those areas of behaviour where adherence to the status quo is holding you back. Focus on one behaviour at a time. Be bold.

325   75

RESILIENCE

300 —   — **100**

Responsive
Although not necessarily the individual to initiate change, you fully embrace new ways to think and act.

Reconciled
You recognise that tomorrow will be different; you know what you need to work on. You are already taking small steps. Be bolder.

275   125

250   150

225   175

200

ORXESTRA INC.

Stages of resilience

Domain scores

MENTAL TOUGHNESS

| Score positions | 100, 94, 88, 82, 75, 68, 62, 56, 50, 6, 12, 18, 25, 32, 38, 44 |

6, 11, 12, 15, 16, 22, 28, 34, 35, 37 = _____

LEADERSHIP OF SELF

3, 7, 9, 13, 14, 26, 29, 36, 38, 40 = _____

FLEXIBILITY/ ADAPTABILITY

1, 2, 8, 10, 18, 21, 23, 27, 31, 39 = _____

A PASSION TO LEARN
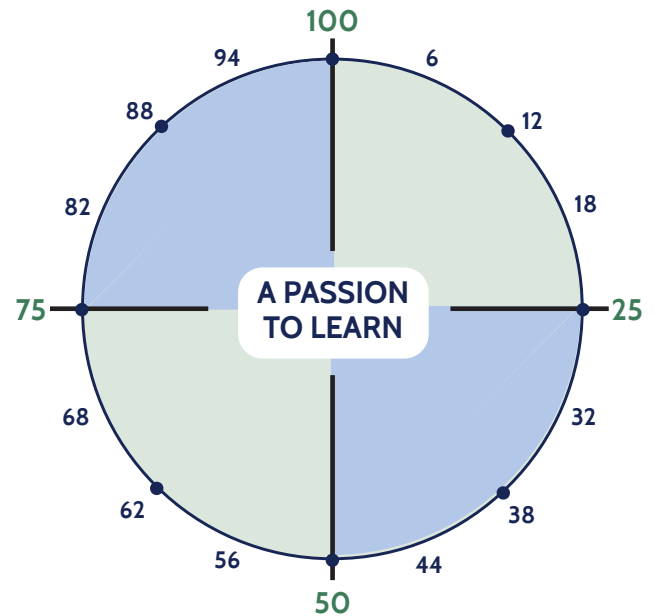
4, 5, 17, 19, 20, 24, 25, 30, 32, 33 = _____

In that resilience is ultimately a blend of different characteristics, the overall score is perhaps the most helpful. That said, in working on resilience it can be extremely helpful to understand if there is one domain, in particular, you should focus on. Adding your scores (from the assessment) as indicated above will give you your domain scores.

Building resilience

Notes: in reflecting on how you adapted to the COVID-19 crisis – and having been through the assessment – what three or four adjustments in your approach to life and/or work would build your resilience quotient? Going through the domain scores will be very helpful.

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John Burdett has worked in over 40 countries as an executive and as a consultant for businesses that are household names. He has worked on and continues to work on leadership development and organization culture for some of the world's largest corporations.

His ongoing partnership with the Bedford Consulting Group and TRANSEARCH INTERNATIONAL means that his proprietary work on talent acquisition, in any one year, successfully supports many hundreds of top leadership appointments on six continents.

He holds a doctorate in management development and since 2000 has published more than a dozen books (a number of them best-sellers) on various aspects of leadership and organization culture. His Talent Trilogy was completed in 2016. The first in the series, *Attract, Select, Develop & Retain TALENT,* was published in 2013. The second, *TEAM: Align, Build, Connect and Develop*, came out in early 2015. *The Empty Suit*, in 2016. *The A-Z of Organization Culture* came out in 2017. *Tomorrow Will Be Different – Will You?* was published in 2020.

John has a number of books available for download. Go to any of the major, online bookstores. Access using author's name: John O. Burdett

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