

The Changing Face of Modern Leadership

Preface

“Reality is made up of circles but we see straight lines.” -Peter Senge

For too long, especially in the world of education, we have taken a linear approach to all that we do, from the classroom to school leadership. As a student, you begin a grade level, with the expectation that if you accomplish, at least adequately, what is required, then you will find yourself promoted on and forward to the next grade level at the end of the year. In much the same manner, we see the adults in our educational system cast forward into leadership roles in our educational organizations. You begin as a teacher, and if you do well in that role, you may very often find yourself being pushed into an administrative and leadership role within your school or district. The only problem...

Leading a school, leading a district, leading an organization, require very different skill-sets and leadership abilities that are often not necessary, needed or required in running an effective classroom. Unfortunately, many of those skill-sets, abilities, and learnings are not provided and planned for as those in our organizations work to cross the divide from one role to the next. And if research has told us anything, it has shown us that great schools require strong leaders, and the same rings true for great districts. Yet, we do little, if anything, to promote the necessary leadership learning and training in a system that is in dire need of strong, if not the strongest of leaders.

We have believed that equipping our school leaders with knowledge of the newest classroom strategies, walkthrough protocols, checklists, and required evaluation systems is enough to effectively lead our schools and districts forward into the 21st century. Unfortunately, that is no longer true, or enough...

We need systems thinkers equipped not only with strong leadership knowledge, skills and abilities, but the emotional intelligence and empathy necessary to build the systems and cultures that can create the schools and districts that our students and teachers not only need, but truly deserve.

Leadership no longer stands alone on rank, title or position, whether 5 or 55 people want their work, what they do, what they invest their time and energy towards, to have value. We live in an age where people are looking for relevance. They want to be intrinsically motivated and that takes a vision that stands bigger than any individual, team, school or district. People want to engage in work that changes lives for the better and today's leaders have the opportunity to create that environment, that culture, that vision.

Today's educational leaders have the opportunity, more than any other time previously, to change their schools, their districts, their organizations and, quite possibly the world.

And it all begins with that first step...

As you begin this journey, understand that this work is not a template, a model, or a plan, as much as it is a mental shove forward. It is meant to push boundaries and engage ongoing reflection. No points or areas of focus are more important than others. Rather, it is in determining and understanding your true reality, fully. Understanding that the whole is bigger than the parts. It is about being able to put yourself, those you lead, and your organization in a place of continual support and challenge, simultaneously.

It requires leadership that is both intentional and aware, never losing site of the vision, or of those you lead. To do this work requires strong connection and relationships. It requires leaders to engage the ideas, thinking, creativity, and innovation of those within their organization, as well as those from outside.

This is deep work and requires deep connection. Creating networks and systems that enable you to better trust and rely upon yourself, as well as others. Work that requires us to engage the spirit and mindset of a learner.

It is through these connections, these networks and systems, as well as the right mindset, that the fear of the unknown becomes less of a hopeless abyss, as an attainable and conquerable step into the future, our future.

It is here, in this mindset, that what seemed mentally impossible previously, is often shattered underfoot. Where impossible seems to become more and more possible...

For in the end, the consideration of what we determine to be possible is often a reflection of the caliber of ideas and thinking that we have and gain access, too.

So I wish you Godspeed in the change you seek and the change you are after. For in the end, the true learners will help each other to do just that, change the world.

Introduction

“We’ve lived under the benefactor of time, and unfortunately...time is no longer on our side.”

We talk about wholes, and yet, we function in parts. We work to be proactive, and yet we live in the reactive. We talk about making the conditions for our people, our teams, even our organizations better, but we remain fixed on mandates, command, control, and positional leadership to serve as the vehicle to drive us forward. Fixed on archaic leadership models that no longer function effectively in today’s modern world.

We’ve gone as far as we can, we’ve reached the edge and now have to determine if we are willing to not only face, but step off and out into the abyss of the unknown...

Or, do we turn back, back to the comfort and safety of what we’ve always done.

We have to acknowledge that what got us here, won’t be able to get us to there. In fact, it may actually hinder any and all progress.

But this is where we begin, vulnerable, facing a very different and a very unknown future.

For we no longer have the luxury of time that we’ve previously been afforded. The rate of change is cycling at faster and faster rates. We can no longer sit idly by and wait for the research and ‘*experts*’ to cut the way forward for us. We are going to have to be able to blaze our own paths, often without any clear direction or maps to guide and carry us forward.

Courage will be less in that strong, go it alone leader, as it will be in those that can stand courageous in the face of the unknown, in that naked vulnerability of

traversing new lands and new learnings that provide us the opportunity to stretch our thinking and lead us into places where we've yet to even consider. It will be those leaders who can navigate this new societal landscape through a willingness to be connected and collaborative that can and will effectively thrive. Leaders loaded with dollops of emotional intelligence and empathy that allow them to tap into and pull on those intrinsic strings that provide the people they lead with a vision that is bigger and better, towards a greater good, a stronger organization, and a better world.

Today's leaders are facing a very different world, and a very different future. You might even say, a very disruptive future. It will require leaders to move out from under the umbrella of safety and comfort of what they've always known, of what they've always done, from the binds of the status quo.

It will require engaging much less of an *'expert'* and much more of a *'learner'* mindset.

If you believe that leading change was difficult in the past, it will be much more disruptive, strenuous and taxing in the future. The rate, turbulence and chaos of change in the world today, makes leading more intense, difficult and even a bit frightening, as we will have to spend more and more time, not only standing at the edge and staring out into the abyss, but determining if we can and should jump.

However, it will be the leadership *'changents'* (change agents) that will be able to stand more comfortably in this formidable arena. In this place riddled with anxiety, uneasiness, and uncomfortableness. They will ultimately be the ones that can move our people and our organizations forward in the very face of the turbulent and chaotic forces of change that we must face and endure.

The Changing Face of Modern Leadership

Section

One

Setting the Stage

The Changing Face of Modern Leadership

Chapter One

Part One

As leaders, we are learning that we can no longer wait, we have to stand up against our fears and walk through the dark tunnel of the unknown, otherwise we will continue to find ourselves crawling back to the comfort and safety of what we've always known, of what we've always done, of where we've always been...

As leaders, we have to be very aware that the march of the tipping points is pushing down upon us, one that is accelerating and churning with great momentum. Past practice after past practice are being willingly lined up and hurled off the edge of the known, in favor of the vast open range of the unknown and the sweeping void of the unlimited possibilities that are now coming within our outstretched grasp.

Our current assumptions are being challenged and questioned with inquisitive ferocity as our narrow lens and views have diverged into a kaleidoscope of new panoramas and perspectives.

We lead and live in tense and volatile times, amidst a collision of 'old world' meets 'new world' thinking. It can be seen as a perplexing and disorienting time for those leaders who have comfortably remained within and relied upon a neat and orderly way of viewing our world and our organizations.

As we question the frameworks and designs of our systems and organizations under the current speed of change, we often fail to include leadership in this equation. The necessity to re-imagine, re-define and re-cast the very face of leadership will be necessary to carry the torch of change forward. We have allowed leadership to lie stagnant for far too long behind a thinly veiled smokescreen of infinitesimal progress.

In reality, the current face of leadership will necessitate exponential shifts in thinking, skill-sets and capacity to remain agile to these modern demands.

The change forces facing today's leaders require us to move past just rethinking leadership. Rather, it will require us to re-imagine the very idea of modern leadership in a changed world.

The constant influx of data, information and ever-evolving knowledge will move us farther and farther way from the arena of the *'expert'* to the world of the *'learner'*. Leaders will need to be both adept and agile, as well as being able to accommodate, filter, and focus this overload to their advantage.

The future necessitates being able to lead forward with the knowledge that your leadership will often be riddled with the anxiety of not-knowing, of not having all the answers. The anxiety of knowing that we may have to spend long periods of time above our heads with our skills and knowledge stretched beyond their current capacity.

Modern leaders will have to channel this fear and anxiety, accepting that they will have to lead from a much more vulnerable place. And yet, along with this fear and anxiety, there will also be a great exhilaration of letting go of what we've known for the opportunity to grow and expand our capacity and capabilities.

Which underlines and highlights the notion that today's leaders will be requiring intense collaborative efforts and support to persistently push forward, deeper into the unknown world of what can be, if they are to overcome the current world of what is.

Modern leadership will need to move past just rethinking assumptions, beyond what we currently contemplate, to what we've yet to even consider. To ponder thinking, ideas, and even possibilities that may lie just beyond our current grasp.

Invoking questions that push us, and those we lead to new and different places of thinking and learning, beyond what we currently thought we were capable of achieving.

Under this pressure of change, today's leaders will have to refrain from holding on to the known, especially when stepping into the unknown is what is needed.

Reflection

As leaders, we are going to have to spend more of our time determining and engaging around the right questions, than trying to generate the right answers. This will be especially crucial, if we are going to move beyond our current ways of doing and operating, as leaders and as organizations. Leading in the future will require a certain tolerance for anxiety, as we will need to grapple with issues beyond our current understanding and capacity. The effective leaders will be those that are able to push through that anxiety as well as the chaos and turbulence created from this velocity of change.

Asking questions, often leads to more questions, often pushing us out of our comfort zone. However, it is in this place that the real, the vital, the crucial work of leadership takes place.

At this point, you might begin to consider some the following questions;

- *What current assumptions, ways of thinking, and ways of doing are you going to need to rethink, as a leader and as an organization?*
- *What are the current obstacles towards moving forward, will not only be difficult to overcome, but cause great anxiety even in the consideration of pushing past and over them?*
- *How are you connecting and collaborating to a network for access to an ongoing and fresh flow of ideas and thinking that push you past your current level of what you've considered possible for your leadership and organization?*

Chapter One

Part II

“The stream has an impressive ability to adapt, to change configurations, to let the power shift, to create new structures.” -Margaret Wheatley

As leaders, we don't often have or take the time to consider our systems, especially as dynamic, flourishing and changing organisms. As leaders, we have a tendency to view them through a more controlling lens, approaching them as stagnant, stationary protocols and processes to repress and restrain. As complex compositions that can run amok if not aligned in an orderly manner and fashion. As structures we interface at, instead of navigating and networking within as if they are living, developing and ever-evolving.

As we look to the future, that leadership mindset will have to change and will have to evolve forward.

Consider this, as a child, my friends and I loved to play and explore in the hills and mountains that lay behind our house. Especially after a heavy rain, the mud, puddles, and makeshift streams were irresistible sources of natural inquiry and entertainment. We especially loved to determinedly collaborate our efforts around damming up the water that streamed down the mountains from these heavy downpours. And most often to no avail, as our efforts were always in vain. The water would eventually find a way around or through our best efforts to contain it. We eventually faced up to the fact that we could not bridle, nor control those streams of water.

While we did not recognize it at the time, but we were learning very valuable leadership lessons from our play...

- **First, despite our best efforts, the water would not be controlled.**

- **Second, while the water would not be controlled...it could be guided.**

Once we determined that the water could and would not be controlled...we stopped putting all of our efforts into creating bigger and bigger obstructions to hold the water back. Instead, we reframed our efforts and our thinking. We stopped running back and forth plugging the holes that constantly and inevitably burst through. Instead...

- **We learned to guide the process, to guide the stream.**
- **We learned to approach the process through a new lens, with a new perspective.**

When we fail to recognize that our systems are fluid, rather than stagnant. When we fail to realize that our systems are constantly changing, evolving, and renewing, we end up spending our time vainly creating obstacles. We spend our time plugging holes.

Rather, we need to place our efforts towards creating the path for the '*stream*' by staying in front and guiding the flow. Instead of putting our energy into holding back its natural tendency and flow. Creating conditions that move the system forward, creating conditions that influence the path.

- **We must allow our leadership to serve as a support and guide, rather than a control to the system.**
- **Loosening our command and control grip will be necessary for, one way or another the system will eventually seep through and break past our grasp.**

Less time spent plugging holes. Less time attending to the urgent. Less time scrambling to keep those structures intact and secure and more time focused on creating currents and flows within our organizations.

Accept that our leadership is part of this living system and with any living system, the humanity and humanness has a way of leaking out. Seeping through despite our best efforts to keep it at bay. People are messy, as is life. So why would our systems be separate or any different? Our systems are made up of us and are a reflection of that...which can and will be messy. So instead of trying to contain it, welcome and embrace it. Celebrate it. Use it. And you will be able to engage more of the creativity and innovation that is inherent within and so necessary for our organizations to flourish and thrive in today's modern world.

We can continue to build and erect structures, walls, obstacles, and silo off our organizations to provide some semblance of control. Or we can accept the fluidity of our systems and determine to guide and direct them, loosening control in favor of better and stronger flows, and movement over stagnation. To effectively allow our systems to evolve, change, and even reinvent themselves, continuous and ongoing. Or we can continue to struggle to keep our organizations as they've always been, in a stagnant state, a facade of safe and controlled.

It may be worth remembering...

Systems are like children, they do not remain the little lovable bundles that were first placed into our arms. Rather, they grow and evolve into toddlers, teenagers, and eventually adults. We can't control that process. Instead, we have to engage and enjoy each level of the growth process, each stage of transformation. Guiding and coaching them forward at each level...

Reflection

So much of leadership today, still remains fixed on command and control, top down forms of leading our organizations. How are you moving past this archaic and outdated leadership style to meet the changing needs of our modern organizations and the people within?

As you answer these questions, think not only of what needs to be added, but what needs to be subtracted or eliminated from the system. Improving our organizational flow is as much about what we subtract, as what we add...

At this point, you might consider the following questions;

- *How are you creating collaborative flows, both within and outside of your organization, to create learning, capacity, and engage the ongoing growth of the system at all levels?*
- *What structures in your organization are inhibiting and holding back the flow and momentum of your organization and those within?*
- *In what ways is your time spent more on the urgent, than the important? How often are the structures in place responsible for this focus?*
- *How are your current structures hampering the natural creativity and innovation of people within the organization?*

Chapter One

Part III

The shelf life of our ideas, skills, frameworks, and systems now deteriorate at a much faster and more advanced rate...

Under this new societal ecosystem, change and innovation has become the new fast and furious of our modern world. The cycle of these two forces can feel as if they are spinning recklessly near the brink of being out of control.

So, instead of here today, gone tomorrow, it has become a little more of here today, gone today...

Technology has ramped up this process considerably, with no foreseeable slowing. Rather, we probably see the pace increasing, exponentially. It is this constant fluctuation and incessant rate of change and innovation that is levying an intense strain upon leadership and our organizations. It is placing a great deal of stress and anxiety upon modern day leaders. Many of which who neither feel ready or equipped for what is coming at them daily and in the future.

Which has not been the normal operating system of the past...it is only in recent years that we have seen such a tremendous upheaval in the cycle of change.

For most of us, we grew up in a time where many of our organizations were huge Titanic's. Titanic's we believed would never sink (which modern times have proved otherwise). So there was little, if any need or reason, to make sure that we were creating organizations that were agile, equipped to pivot and change. But times have definitely changed...

Unfortunately, we still believe and work under the guise that the skills, frameworks, and systems that were developed five, ten, fifteen, twenty, and even fifty years ago still have the same shelf-life as when they were first developed.

And we treat them as such...

We have to clearly understand that not only have skill-sets changed, many of our frameworks have outlived their usefulness, and our systems which advocate archaic ways of operating are constantly coming into contention with our modern, changing world.

And it is not just in understanding that we need to constantly refresh the ideas, skill-sets, frameworks and systems within our organizations, but to clear away those things that are no longer necessary or needed. Or you might say, we have to unclog our organizational arteries.

Like the clogged arteries of people, our organizations can and have become glutted with the initiatives, goals, and visions of the past. We have a tendency to keep our plates piled high, trying to eat it all. And unfortunately, for all we add to our organizational plate, we have a tendency to never take anything off. So we push an unbalanced diet that keeps adding new without taking away the old. When what we need is a more balanced diet to restore order and flow to our organizational arteries. Providing the support and lifeblood to keep the organization running on all cylinders.

It requires leadership to control the means that provide a more balanced organizational diet. For leaders to be willing to say, *"We are not going to eat that anymore, it is not healthy or good for us or our organization. We are going to take it off the plate and throw it away. We are not going to serve or eat it anymore."*

When leaders take this approach, it brings back flow to the organization. It virtually unclogs the arteries of the organization. Clearing away the cluttered bits and pieces of the past that hinder clarity, focus and forward movement and progress.

Reflection

Today's leaders need not only understand the importance of refreshing ideas, skills, frameworks and systems within the organization, but also in determining which of those that have outrun their usefulness and are now clogging and impeding the flow and lifeblood of the organization.

At this point, you might consider the following questions;

- *In what ways has technology disrupted the ideas, skill-sets, frameworks and systems within your organization?*
- *How are you using technology to create more collaborative flows of learning, ideas, creativity, and innovation across the organization?*
- *How are you determining the balance and health of your people and organization in the face and pace of relentless change?*
- *How are you determining if you are taking away and adding the 'right' things?*

Once we determine the vision, the 'why' of where our focus will be placed, we must then determine the 'how' to take us there. Very often, it requires us to eradicate those obstacles that hinder and overwhelm our efforts to move towards the vision. There must be strong clarity around this process. At every level of an organization, clarity precedes commitment. Remember, transparency is not just about being *open*, it is also about being *clear*.

Chapter Two

Part I

In this world, to be a true changemaker or *changent* will require deep, steadfast belief in the change you are chasing after. It will necessitate courage, perseverance, endurance, as well as a bit of boldness to face the doubt, fear, and discomfort that will most likely plague your efforts.

Deep commitment towards change begins as an internal feeling, as much as being pushed by external forces. It wells up from your innermost being, a feeling from deep inside, a knowing, that this is both right and necessary.

Being a *changent* is not something you aspire to be, but a crusade that is birthed in the core of your being that spurs you onward.

For most often, you need to understand up front that your plight will not be a pleasant one. It will be fraught with push-back, rejection, ridicule, and even hostility. For great change is seldom embraced...most often it is quite the opposite.

The status quo will fight and push back every step of the way...

As you face these unstable and disruptive times and the velocity, turbulence and chaos of change, we are well to remember...

There is never full assurance you are right, sometimes there is just courage, courage to keep moving forward in the knowing that you are doing the right thing.

Just remember, being a changemaker or *changent* is not something that you do once in awhile, it is the everyday business and work of a leader.

To do this, requires keeping one finger on the pulse of the people and one eye on the horizon and next steps. While many consider these *changents* to be organizational disruptors, in most instances, they just have a tendency to see a different way forward. In fact, they seldom look only for broad, sweeping changes, most often they focus on small, subtle tweaks that allow the organization to constantly improve and evolve forward. They notice voids and chasms in the current ways of doing, and look to fill those voids with the ideas and thinking that advance those current processes.

These *changents* see conversations as transformational events, a forum where knowledge, ideas, and the seeds of change are being constantly planted. Where the current reality is pushed towards the vision.

We often have this erroneous idea that *changents* are only interested in creating new. When, in fact, they are engaging in a much more multidimensional and dynamic way of being and doing.

For these *changents* are noticers, adopters, creators, subtractors, directors, leaders, followers, and momentum builders.

Changents understand that change is not only in creating new, it is about creating movement, building momentum, and filling voids during this process of moving forward. It is both addition and subtraction.

It moves beyond creating and adding, as it requires engaging in eliminating those obstacles that hinder this movement and momentum. It requires engaging those processes and ways of thinking that slow down and even cauterize the forward movement, progress, and the progression of an organization.

Changents are not only those early adopters who push forward in an organization to engage and secure new ideas and thinking, they know just as well when to pull back,

slow down, and allow new ideas a chance to settle in and percolate. Which makes *changents* adept in the art of timing. They have the ability to determine whether the timing is right or not right to move forward. Being a *changent* is as much knowing what to do as it is in knowing what not to do and when.

Being a *changent* isn't just in driving change, steering the ship, it's being a vacuum and creating voids that spill the organization forward into new areas and arenas. A vacuum that not only creates voids, but determines those organizational structures and processes that need to be removed. Structures and processes that have run their course and bog down, rather than energize the environment and the progress of the organization.

***Changents* spend less time pushing and pulling change as they do creating and filling the voids and chasms that push the organization towards the vision.**

Changents are organizational adjusters. They act like organizational vacuums that create the void of and for change. They create the energy of notice. And that energy, that vacuum, has the pull to gain the notice of the whole organization. Which creates and enables movement in the organization in new directions that ultimately lead to and towards the vision.

Reflection

Being a changemaker or *changent* not only requires knowing when to advocate for and drive the organization towards change, but the awareness of when to pull back and allow new ideas and thinking time to settle in and gain deeper understanding.

At this point, you might consider the following questions;

- How are you building awareness, creating the why, as to how a change is not only necessary, but beneficial for the organization and everyone within?
- How are you determining not only if the organization and those within are ready for change, but the timing of these change efforts?
- How are you preparing people and the organization to make any change initiative or process manageable, as well as positive?
- As a *changent*, how are you utilizing technology and communication tools to create more awareness and access to those voids and chasms that your organization needs to fill and cross to move forward?

As a *changent*, you will need a bigger and deeper well of ideas from which to draw from...which provides the 'why' and necessity for connecting and collaborating on a much larger scale. How are you determining to create that bigger and deeper well to expand your level of thinking and ideas from which to draw from?

Chapter Two

Part II

Today's modern leaders must engage in a willingness to place themselves in a constant state of disruption, a constant reimagining of being and doing.

Some truths are endless...

Some leadership principles are timeless...

Yet, how we view and implement them are fluid and ever-changing. We must remember, what has endured is not always eternal, as the shelf-life of what we have always considered to be imperishable is being revised.

Our modern world is pulling the proverbial rug out from under those stalwarts and pillars of structure that have defined our society and institutions longer than most of us can remember. And whether this is good or bad is neither, as it just is.

As leaders, we can neither choose to hide from or ignore this reality.

The way we look at learning, at education, even the very notion of school is being reevaluated and reconsidered. From what we learn, to how we learn, to even where we learn. And it is no different in the world outside of the schoolhouse steps.

Upheaval and disruption of our current ways of doing and being are everywhere in today's world.

What we fail to realize is that this is not some new phenomena. This type of change process has been ongoing in the halls of history throughout time, the only difference...

We were never confronted with this type of pace.

Which is why leaders not only have to be more agile, they have to be more aware. Not only of the process of change, but the mindset, as well. As the world whirls around us, and change confronts us at every turn we have to be very aware of the mindshifts that have and are occurring.

From the classroom to the boardroom, disengagement is happening at an alarming rate. People are no longer willing to stand idly by and accept a “*sit and get*” or “*carrot and stick*” existence. Creating is the new consumption. People want to be intrinsically motivated, to be part of something that is bigger than themselves. People want to be tied to work that has real meaning.

As leaders, when we fail to recognize this shift, we elevate the disengagement factor with the people and organizations we lead.

Which is why awareness is paramount for today’s modern leaders. Not just in knowing and understanding those timeless leadership principles, but in being able to apply them in new and innovative ways. This will not only be needed, it will be necessary for 21st century, modern leadership.

The direction we go, the opportunities we create, will all depend on our perspective...

We can either choose to bury ourselves in the processes of the past or we can take the first steps to redefine and reimagine the world around us.

Reflection

The rate, velocity, turbulence, and chaos of change is not only affecting our organizations, it is affecting our leadership. Today's leaders can no longer, afford to just implement mandates and initiatives. They have to engage in ideas and thinking that not only re-imagine the very structures and processes of our organizations, but of our leadership and how that looks in today's modern world.

At this point, you might consider the following questions;

- How are you keeping your leadership and your organizations relevant in the face of this relentless pace of change in our modern world?
- What realities of change are you avoiding as a leader? As an organization?
- How are you keeping your leadership and your organization abreast of the many changes that are facing education and today's educators without overwhelming and paralyzing progress?

As leaders and organizations, inability and or unwillingness to face the realities of a change world will most definitely leave our leadership and our organizations irrelevant as we march into the future. Today's leaders must understand that they won't have all of the answers, they won't have complete understanding, but recognize and acknowledge that they have to move forward nonetheless. It will require our leaders and organizations to show courage, perseverance, and even vulnerability.

Chapter Two

Part III

We understand that leading in today's world requires us to be changemakers and *changents*. We also understand that the rate, turbulence and relentlessness of change are requiring us to rethink and reimagine our organizations, as well as our leadership. But even under the heavy weight of this knowledge and work, there remains another step for today's modern leaders.

If we are going to disrupt our institutions and organizations...we are first going to have to disrupt our own thinking.

If you have ever served as a leader, whether you want to admit it or not you have found yourself springing out of your sleep, breathless, at 2:00 am in the morning. Wrapped in sweat, panic-stricken, heart-pounding, on or near the verge of hyperventilating. Caught up and overwhelmed by all that you know that needs to get done, all that needs to happen and be accomplished. And at the same time, crippled by doubt, fear, and the overwhelming sensation that it all lays on your shoulders.

Objectives to be set. Goals to be met. Creating a path. Determining the direction. Setting the vision.

Overtaken by this feeling that you have to have all of the answers and why not? You are the leader. Isn't everyone looking to you to know?

Which is the mindset of most leaders. The belief that if they are not making it all happen, it won't get done. The belief that everything rests upon them, upon their shoulders. And as leaders, we buy-in hook, line, and sinker. We swallow that mindset whole.

So we stress, we fret, and we scurry about trying to get everything done. Making sure we are always prepared, always ready, the leader with all of the answers. The leader who can provide the organization with everything that is necessary and needed.

The 'fearless' leader...

Yet, we have to ask ourselves do we ever reflect on this mindset? Should we? Is this what leadership is all about? Is this the expectation of what a leader needs to deliver?

Is this truly what it means to be a 'fearless' leader?

Maybe a better question in our current situation and for our modern times is whether or not as leaders we can get comfortable with not always knowing? Can we learn to be more comfortable in our questions, than our answers? Can we learn to stand unwavering in the face of the unknown? Can we push our thinking to allow ourselves to get comfortable in a place that is uncomfortable? Or will the anxiety and pressure of having to know all of the 'right' answers (instead of having the 'right' questions) overwhelm us?

Will the fear of the unknown cause us to crawl back to the familiar?

A world where we have the answers. A world where we are able to fix all of the problems. A world where comfort overcomes our willingness to endure discomfort for growth and progress it will generate.

Can we enable ourselves to overcome this need and embrace what writer John Keats referred to in the 1800's as "*Negative Capability*"?

For Keat's, ***"Negative Capability, that is, when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason."***

Julie Bernstein, author of *Navigating the Creative Process* expands on this idea of "Negative Capability" as ***"this ability to stay in a place where you don't exactly know what is going to happen next. Willing to chase down ideas and also willing to understand that not all of them are going to lead somewhere but, the experience of pursuing an idea will influence the next idea."***

One of the most uncomfortable stances for a leader is to stand in the middle of this unknown without all of the answers. To place yourself smack in the middle of that unknown, that uncomfortability, for that takes us into the arena of vulnerability. A place that most leaders do not like to traverse. An arena that most leaders will refrain and refuse to place themselves into.

Embracing uncertainty and the unknown is downright uncomfortable, especially as a leader. However, in today's rapidly changing and morphing society, it is quickly becoming a much more common occurrence. A much more common position to be in.

Today's leaders are going to have to be much more accepting of the unknown, much more willing to embrace and become comfortable within it, especially if they are going to be able to pull their organizations through the murky depths of transformative and disruptive change.

Or as John Keats imparted...***"The problems of the world cannot possibly be solved by skeptics or cynics whose horizons are limited by the obvious realities. We need men who can dream of things that never were."***

Reflection

As a changemaker or *changent* it will be necessary to put yourself into the unknown, into the uncomfortable more and more often as you face the rate, turbulence, and chaos of change as an organization and as a leader. This will require more experimentation and risk-taking.

At this point, you might consider the following questions;

- How are you preparing your organization and even your own leadership to be prepared for more questions than answers?
- How are you preparing your organization and those you lead to be able to withstand the possibility of failure, as you engage more experimentation and risk-taking within as an organization?
- The comfort of what we have always known is a difficult place to break away from...how will you determine to support and guide forward when the organization and people within reach back to the safety of the known?

As a *changent*, it will vitally important to connect with other *changents* who have either been through or are currently facing these same struggles around change and the unknown. It is these relationships and networks that will allow you support, guidance, strategies, as well as new ideas and ways of thinking. It will be that network support that will allow you to stand firm and strong in the face of the unknown, as well as carry the weight of the change forces that threaten to pull you back into the land of the known.

Chapter Two

Part IV

Ours is to engineer the future...in beta. A constant application of our knowledge, creativity, innovation, and ingenuity in a drive for better.

And for us to stand firm in this unknown, to lead change effectively within our organizations will require today's leaders to engage '*around the corner*' thinking.

As leaders, we have a tendency to lose focus on the long-term and visionary portion of our leadership when accountability measures and pressures take over our time and our calendars. We find ourselves just trying to keep the ship afloat and moving, let alone towards the place we've envisioned.

In fact, vision very often gets pushed aside in an effort to just keep our people and organizations moving from point A to point B. Vision very often takes a backseat to '*reality*'. We see a vibrant vision of our future slowly stunted by the allure of the short-term and '*pulling*' the organization to the next point. Ultimately, we find ourselves doing more managing than leading.

This is one of the struggles of leadership and one of the reasons that we struggle with change and the unknown. We have to realize that it is not just about staying current. In all actuality, staying current is a disservice to the organization and those you lead. Staying ahead of the curve and '*looking around the corner*' is an imperative of modern, 21st century leaders. It is about creating a mindset, an environment in our organizations that allow us to not only engage in '*around the corner*' thinking...but to act on this thinking.

However, don't be surprised when we create the environment and nothing happens. Creating a flow of ideas and a sense of excitement of what could be, doesn't not always translate into change.

Engaging '*around the corner*' thinking must be accompanied with an action. Ideas do not translate into change, if there is not an action to accompany them. Without an action, status quo and business as usual have a tendency to rule the day. Spending hours in meetings, discussing our findings, framing the problem or problems, issues and concerns endlessly does little if we walk away without a plan of action to move on our ideas and thinking. We end up leaving these meetings feeling good, knowing what we should do next and yet, nothing changes.

Pfeiffer and Sutton refer to this as the ***Knowing-Doing Gap***. Their research, in their book of the same name, points to this ***Knowing-Doing Gap*** '*malady*' being prevalent in many of our organizations, in every type of industry. Their research on the ***Knowing-Doing Gap*** relays that we most often know what to do, we understand what the problem is and yet, we fail to implement the correct actions to provide the necessary changes to improve our work and our organizations.

There is a key to bridging this "***Gap***" in our organizations and leadership. The key is action. No amount of talking, reading, training, planning, or strategizing will replace a lack of action. Without action, status quo will eventually overcome and reign us and our best intentions back in. Leaving an ever widening "***Gap***" or chasm between the vision and the reality.

However, we have to be aware as leaders, that it is not just action that will overcome the day. Action alone will not create change. When action lacks purpose, it can cause more chaos and harm than good. Rather, Pfeiffer and Sutton refer to the key as "***thoughtful action***". Especially if we are going to making those '*looking around the corner*' thinking and ideas come to life in our organizations.

Or as Pfeiffer and Sutton put forth in the ***Knowing-Doing Gap***, "***One of our main recommendations is to engage more frequently in thoughtful action. Spend less***

time just contemplating and talking about organizational problems. Taking action will generate experience from which you can learn."

Reflection

Just having a strong well of ideas to draw from, to disrupt your thinking is not enough, an idea remains just that, an idea, until we put an action to it. We will have to be focused on “*thoughtful action*” if we are to overcome our *Knowing-Doing Gap*.

At this point, you might consider the following questions;

- How are you networking from the learning and action of others to move your leadership and organization forward?
- How are you making sure that your meetings and planning is leading to action?
- How are you bridging the “**Gap**” from the reality to the vision?
- What “**Gaps**” and structures are inhibiting “thoughtful action” in your organization?

Chapter Two

Part V

And yet, as we seek change, as we determine to stand courageous and vulnerable in the unknown that our current change processes require, as we move to connect and collaborate beyond our current circumstances in order to engage '*around the corner thinking*', it will be as much, the level of our questions, than our answers that will push us forward. It will be those questions that will drive us beyond our current circumstances.

As leaders, we must constantly look to explore unknown waters...especially if we are going to ask those we lead to let go and swim away from the safety of the shore.

We are just now beginning to emerge from a long period of what I would term for our leadership and our organizations, as refinement. An age of improvement. A period that placed leaders in a doing mode, focused on quickness and efficiency. A time of organizational streamlining. Streamlining our practices, our procedures, and our policies. Constant refinement. Constant improvement.

And while that time may not be completely coming to a close...we are slowly drifting into new and uncharted waters. A new time, a new age...

While many leaders still choose to remain on the shore, some are slowly testing the waters. While others have chosen to launch right in, quickly sailing out and into these uncharted waters. And where they are headed, where they are going, has no maps, no charts, no directions, and most often no lighthouse to guide them on their way safely.

Those leaders who are willing to put themselves out in the unknown, into these uncharted waters, are leaving the safety and security of the swim-lines and buoys

that have them close to the safety of the shore. They are choosing to let go of the safety that the shore for the opportunity to explore unknown and uncharted waters.

For many leaders, this is a new age of exploration...

It is a movement led not for gain, but of inquisitiveness. A movement led by curiosity and fueled by questions. Questions that push us to places we have yet to explore, yet to discover, and very often, yet to imagine. Questions that push possibilities.

Questions that not only engage us as leaders, but those we lead as well. Questions that move us, move us from finding to seeking, from outcomes to possibilities. Questions that not only push and stretch our thinking, but pique our curiosity and push us out of the comfort of what is, too what could be.

Questions that scare us in the possibilities they provoke...

Creating a curiosity exploration movement within our organizations will not be enacted in the answers we provide, but in the questions we ask. It will be our questions that will invoke the curiosity that drive our organizations and people to explore these new and uncharted waters that push us into this new age of exploration.

Today's leaders cannot only be lone explorers, they must lead a curiosity exploration movement across the entire organization. Today's leaders must be catalysts of curiosity. Equipping their organization, their people, and even themselves to set sail to new places, new lands, even new worlds of thinking and ideas. All in the name of discovery.

Today's leader's, are well to remember that explorers and explorations don't set sail with all of the answers. Rather, they set sail with questions, curiosity, with the hope of bringing back new learning, new knowledge. It is where we begin. It is where we plant the seeds of curiosity, the seeds of possibility. And it all begins with our questions...

As leaders, we will have the choice of letting go of the shore to test unchartered and unknown waters or we can remain on the shore and accept whatever washes up.

In the end, we have to determine if we are willing to ask these difficult questions, if we are willing to push our learning and the learning of those around us. If so, we must ask ourselves...

What is out there we are yet to discover?

Reflection

To lead any type of movement effectively, you will need to have followers. Which requires engagement and it is our questions, not our answers, that ultimately drive engagement.

At this point, you might consider the following questions;

- As a leader, are you monitoring the amount of questions you ask, to the amount of answers you are providing?
- When it comes to exploring new and uncharted waters, what waters do you need to lead your organization out and in to?
- How are you equipping those you lead to not only see the necessity, but want to explore and engage more inquiry and curiosity, as individuals, teams, and as an organization?

The Changing Face of Modern Leadership

Section

Two

Mindshifting

Create the Environment

Introduction

For all intents and purposes, knowledge is no longer a commodity as much as it is a collaborative tool.

The game has changed, exponentially. As has our world...

The future is no longer some far-away place rather, it is crashing down upon us in real-time. Engulfing us in its inclusivity. We are constantly mired in its embrace.

Some chose to immerse themselves in its downpour as it cascades down upon us, while others scramble for the umbrella to shield them from the downpour of their current reality. Whether we choose to dive in or avoid, the future will continue to shower down upon us, boundless and unremitting. A force uninterrupted.

A great opportunity for some and utter confusion for others.

And for those who choose to jump in...

We no longer have to wait to create the change we envision. We now have the tools and the access to recreate and reimagine our world, almost instantaneously. For so long the majority of us were relegated to being consumers, waiting on the research, waiting on the experts, waiting to consume what was being provided. Often, from just a very few.

We live in a world that no longer requires or allows us to wait and stand idly by. We no longer have to be the consumer, when we have the ability to be creators, to become '*architects of change*'. We have the tools and the access, as well as the ability to connect, in ways that allow us to create a much different way forward into the future. Invoking dynamic change is often just a connection away.

We live in a world where each of us is capable of creating a movement of global proportions.

Our world used to be a ladder, one that each of us climbed, rung by rung. Today's world is much less like that ladder and much more like a game of hopscotch. We no longer have to move in unison to the same tune, climbing that ladder rung by rung. Rather, much like that game of hopscotch, we can jump ahead spaces, have our feet in simultaneous spaces, or even skip spaces altogether. Moving at a pace and speed that we set. Our connected world allows us to get off that ladder and learn from one another in ways that not only speed up our learning cycles, but put us '*around the corner*' with our thinking.

What we are coming to understand is that we no longer have to wait to consume what we are being offered by a select few, a whole new world of learning and collaboration is being opened up to us.

We now have the opportunity to be the creators, the 'architects' of our own learning and opportunities.

Like no other time on earth, we have the opportunity to not only have access to multitudes of voices and learning from all over the globe, but we have the ability to lend our voice, our knowledge, and our learning to that very same conversation. No longer siloed to our current team, school, district or organization.

We live in a world that is much less stagnant, much more dynamic. Change is eminent. Change is constant. Change is rapid.

We can no longer sit idly by when these opportunities for connection are so vital to the progress and growth of our organizations and our people.

We have to become the tinkerers, creators, architects of this new and dynamic world.

Leaders who allow themselves to be overcome by the oncoming waves of this future will very well be crushed under the weight of the disruptive thinking required to navigate this new world effectively.

Leaders who are unwilling to capsize their current world view, whether that be their mindset or their ideas of *what was, what is, what can be, and how we will get there*, will lack the necessary agility to avoid extinction and irrelevance.

The future will require a certain nimbleness and agility. Organizations and leaders who are quicker, more responsive, lean and lively. Leaders who are willing to poke holes in the current cover of their reality. To do this will require new ways of thinking and doing. We are going to have to be able to tinker with our current ideas of what is and what could be.

It will require *'thinking'* our way into the future...

Remember, the more holes we are willing to poke in the ceiling of our current reality, the greater the glimpses of the many possibilities that have remained hidden from our current view and vision.

As leaders, we sometimes have to poke our way through the shell that engulfs us, especially, if we ever intend to embark on a journey that takes us beyond our current experiences, our current thinking, our current reality, towards a new and ever-evolving future.

The future will inevitably come to us, our responsibility is to engineer that future...in beta. A constant application of our knowledge, creativity, and ingenuity, in a drive for better.

Looking Forward

As we move into the future and truly look at our leadership and how to pave the way forward, we are going to have to shift some of our mindsets. And while there are a plethora of necessities and requirements for modern leaders, we will spend the remainder of this book looking at four specific mindsets and mindshifts; (1) the learner (2) the pioneer, (3) the innovator, and (4) the servant.

Mindshifting these mindsets will be very important and very necessary for today's modern, 21st century connected leaders.

Chapter 3

Part I

Leading in today's educational arena requires much more than making sure the lights are turned on, students and teachers are in the classroom, and the necessary resources and supplies are provided, and the school is functioning in a safe and productive manner. That is just the tip of the iceberg.

Today's educational leaders have to be able to decipher and utilize data effectively, monitor the level of learning across the organization, know when and where to initiate interventions or acceleration, as well as having a solid grasp of assessment and learning strategies. All wrapped up in the ability to lead initiatives, change, and an organization effectively.

Today's leaders will need to be able to create a healthy learning environment and culture for all stakeholders.

Educational leaders have to have a strong understanding of their organization's past, where they've come from, as well as where they are in their present circumstances, be that positive and/or negative, along with a vision of where they are headed in the future.

Today's leaders must be able to engage their own learning as well as provide their organization with that '*around the corner*' thinking. For, it is often this '*around the corner*' thinking that truly differentiates the good from the great educational leaders and organizations.

Which is why modern educational leaders have to be committed and (connected) if they are going to engage and acquire the learning and skills necessary to lead their organizations forward, especially at the pace of change that today's society is pushing. Which means moving beyond the walls of our schools, the walls of our

districts, even the walls of state and country. We have to take on a global perspective to learning.

Which can also mean pushing that learning beyond the realm of education, to gaining perspectives and ideas from thought leaders in other arenas, from business to design thinking. When education becomes a magnet for ideas, we incorporate more creativity, more innovation, more learning, and more ideas that enable our schools and districts to better serve the changing needs of our students, staff, stakeholders, and even our society.

And what better time than now, when we have not only open access to a deluge of great thinkers and ideas across a variety of platforms, but from such a wide perspective of areas and expertise.

It is a great time for inquiry, curiosity, and learning.

Which is why...

The constant influx of data, information, and ever-evolving knowledge has shifted our world from that of the 'expert' to that of the 'learner'.

For centuries we have relied on '*experts*' (*sustaining mindset*) to provide us with the necessary wisdom and knowledge to lead our organizations and institutions effectively. Not to say it hasn't worked up to this point. Knowledge requested, knowledge imparted, and knowledge implemented, which has allowed us to better run more efficient organizations and institutions.

Until now...

Very subtly and swiftly we have watched that world of efficiency yanked out from under our feet. For some, the disequilibrium is alarming, and for others it is seen as

an exhilarating time of change. Either way, it is disruptive. We are stretching into new and unknown frontiers. Stepping into the era of the *'learner'* (*disruptive mindset*).

For years we have relied on the luxury of turning to the *'experts'* to give us the answers, for time permitted and our world moved at a much slower pace of change. A world that no longer exists...

The cycle of information, processing, decision-making, and application necessitating change is crashing in and at our leaders and organizations at an exponential rate. The amount of data today's leaders are required to grapple with on a daily basis would be seen as unfathomable, even looking back as recently as five to ten years ago.

A cycle that is demanding today's leaders to push through into the unknown more and more often causing deeper levels of stress and anxiety than in any previous time or age.

The world is moving too fast to always rely on the current, sustaining knowledge of the *'expert'*. The pace is too intense. The cycle is too quick. The very idea of knowledge and learning is being challenged at an ever-increasing rate. What existed today, has morphed and changed by tomorrow.

Which means, for today's leaders, we are going to need to embrace a **'learner mindset'**. Especially, if we are going to disrupt our current notions of what is, for what could be. Working in an ever-evolving state of creating, re-creating, re-casting, and re-imagining the world around us. As individuals, as teams, as organizations, we have to begin to mentally disrupt our current processes, models, frameworks, and systems.

This era of the learner requires agile leaders and organizations, processing and responding quickly to a rapidly changing world. It is not just a necessity, it is imperative to the survival and success of our organizations and our leadership.

However, we have to realize that the change begins with and within each one of us. Disruption begins in our own mind, in our own thinking. It takes root in the ideas of what we've considered possible and stretching beyond what we have considered attainable.

As said previously, we cannot begin to disrupt our institutions and organizations until we first determine to disrupt our own thinking.

To move forward as leaders, we must be able to push through the stress, anxiety, chaos, and turbulence created from the velocity of change we are facing. We must not only ask deeper, more thought provoking questions of those we lead, we must ask those questions of ourselves. We must be willing to provoke and disrupt our own mindset of what we think is, should be, and can be.

We must have the mindset of a learner.

Reflection

As leaders, we should be in a constant search of and for ideas and people who are willing to disrupt and upend our current view of the world for a much bigger and better one. Always remember, our two greatest tools for change remain a disruptive 'learner' mindset and our conversations...

At this point, you might consider the following questions;

- How are you being intentional with your conversations to spread the seeds of change and possibility across your organization?
- How are you reviewing your structures and processes to make sure that the organization does not bogged down in inaction?
- How are you serving as an umbrella for your organization to cover your organization and those within from initiatives and minutiae that can not only slow, but derail your people and organization from the vision?

For us to engage and incorporate this disruptive, *'learner'* mindset, we need to create the right environment, the right conditions, the right culture. For that to happen, we are going to have to be courageous and take on some heavy-hitters that can inhibit and hinder this within any organization; namely fear, empathy and vulnerability. And while there are many other important factors, these three truly set the stage.

Let's begin with fear...

We most often don't fear trying, even possibly failing, what we do fear is how others will look at us and what they will say.

Fear.

Whether real or imagined, it exists.

In our minds, in our lives, and in our organizations.

The scary thing about fear, is just how big a role it still plays in our 21st century, modern organizations. And unfortunately, we do our leadership and our organizations a real disservice when we try to dismiss it away. Whether real or perceived, it is there. Waiting, lurking, in our organizational shadows.

It exists...

And when fear exists, learning and action come to a screeching halt for our individuals, teams, and our organizational work. Creativity and innovation are quickly replaced by status quo and self-preservation.

When fear exists, it causes anxiety, worry, hesitation, suspicion, and despair throughout an organization. When fear exists, innovation and change processes are replaced with self-serving mechanisms that support personal safety and survival.

In an environment of fear, the best ideas and thoughts are kept close to the chest. People determine it is better to fly under the radar, to lay low, to remain quiet and anonymous.

Which is why status quo and self-preservation are often found at the helm of those organizations where fear is pervasive.

And it is not just creativity and innovation that suffer at the feet of fear. According to Pfeiffer and Sutton in their work, ***The Knowing-Doing Gap... "Fear also inhibits the ability to turn knowledge into action because people are so afraid of their bosses that they do everything they can to avoid being the one delivering bad news about the company, even if they are not to blame."***

Great leaders understand that feedback serves as the cornerstone of individual, team and organizational learning. Growth and capacity-building happen in an environment where feedback can be seen as positive and supportive. And when that flow is cut-off, so is the lifeblood that feeds learning and growth to and within the organization. Fear paralyzes that process...

Knowledge, learning, creativity, and innovation are all vital to our modern, 21st century organizations. For these to occur and cascade across and through the organization, requires high levels of trust as well as strong relationships and connections. It is the foundation for the creation of collaborative flows within our organizations.

Unfortunately, when fear exists, those channels close up and close off...

When fear exists in our organizations, we lose focus on the greater good. We spend our limited time focused on our own self-preservation, instead of serving others, the vision, and next steps.

Because fear has a tendency to turn our focus inward...

Whether we are willing to acknowledge it or not, fear is prevalent and active in our modern organizations. Fear is not a force to be underestimated, it is an organizational driver.

The problem is that it drives the wrong things, dysfunction, self-preservation, short-sightedness, and status quo. And it will continue to drive our organizations in the wrong direction, until we determine to drive it out. As leaders, we must remember...

In a culture of fear...

We are afraid to ask for help. We are scared to ask questions. We are fearful of appearing as not-knowing, not having the right answers. We look to others for safe answers.

In a culture of fear...

We don't step outside. We learn to manage the same, rather than pushing for different. We keep the walls tight and closed. We silo ourselves off.

And while we understand that failure is often the greatest of teachers, we avoid it at all costs.

In a culture of fear, failure is not tolerated.

Reflection

As leader, we avoid the culture of our organizations at our own peril. Our organizational environments and culture require constant attention. The culture and environment we create as leaders determines the engagement, productivity, creativity, and even innovativeness of the organization. When fear invades the environment, the culture...learning and progress come to a screeching halt, which is why it is crucial to your leadership and your organization.

At this point, you might consider the following questions;

- As a leader, how are you providing 'permission' to those in your organization to be more creative, more innovative, to take more risks without fear inhibiting the process?
- A safe environment is very different than a comfortable environment...how are you creating a safe environment where inquiry and pushing past status quo (comfortable) are supported?
- If fear is prevalent in your environment and culture, how are you determining to drive it out?

And while fear serves as the great inhibitor of the '*learner*' mindset, empathy and vulnerability serve to engage and embolden this mindset within an organization.

If you want to create an organization, an environment, a culture where fear is trampled upon and stamped out, it is imperative that you infuse trust. Trust is the antonym of and the antidote for, fear. As individuals, as teams, as organizations, trust is not just a by-product of a great organization, it serves as its very foundation.

What we often fail to understand or notice, is that empathy, compassion, understanding and vulnerability fail to exist in an environment where trust is non-existent. The courage necessary for empathy and vulnerability to exist, tend to regress in environments where trust is lacking or non-evident.

And you may be asking yourself, why empathy? I get trust. But why is empathy, even vulnerability, so important for modern day, 21st century learners?

In all facets of their work, leaders have to be able to not only understand, but to see and feel from the perspective of another, to see and feel as that person sitting in the chair across the table or desk from you, to 'feel into' their perspective.

For, as a leader, empathy isn't only in trying to place yourself in the shoes of another, it is realizing that what you do as a leader influences and impacts that experience, their experience.

Acknowledging that level of influence and impact is a gap that many leaders fail to close, let alone attempt to cross. And for that reason, chasms form, chasms between leaders and the people and the organizations they lead.

Empathy serves as the bridge that crosses that chasm, closes that gap.

It is also very important that leaders don't confuse empathy with sympathy, for they are not the same. We have a tendency to use the words interchangeably and they are not the same. While we don't always readily notice, the main differentiator between sympathy and empathy is how these words serve, from self to others. Sympathy has an inward focus, it is something you gather from others. While empathy incorporates an outward flow, it is something that you project towards others. And while it might appear subtle, it is an incredibly important difference.

Which is why empathy is and remains a necessity for leaders to effectively serve their organizations and those within, for when leaders lack empathy and emotional intelligence, they have a tendency to create a '*we*' vs. '*them*' mentality within the organization. And when that mentality exists, people draw lines in the sand, and trust slowly erodes and evaporates across the organization.

If we are going to break down the walls and mental silos towards collaboration that exist in our organizations, it will require leaders who create environments of trust, infused with empathy and understanding. It is only within these environments and cultures will strong connections and relationships flourish and grow.

It is within these environments, this type of culture, that people have the ability to be vulnerable, to be open about their strengths, as well as their weaknesses. To share how they can help, and where they need help. It is in these trusting, empathy infused environments and cultures, that people can be vulnerable and honest. It is here that true reflection and learning can happen. Where people feel safe to not only ask for help and assistance, but to take risks and move out of their comfort zone and the rut of status quo.

It is in these environments we raise others up and create cultures of support and success. For when we become passionate in supporting the success of others, we develop empathy, create better environments, and build stronger communities.

When a leader plants the seeds of inquiry, when they open themselves to being vulnerable, and model the expectations for being a learner, they allow others to be vulnerable. Eventually creating greater capacity and learning across the organization.

Reflection

It is only when transparency, clarity, communication, trust, and safe environments exist will we allow ourselves and others to be vulnerable. It is here that we create organizations that will have the ability to reach their full, and often untapped potential.

At this point, you might consider the following questions;

- How are you creating an environment, a culture where trust and support allow people to be at their best?
- Leading any type of change or initiative requires being able to understand the perspective of others, which requires empathy. How are engaging empathy as a leader and an organization?
- How are you creating an environment, a culture where people can not only be open about their strengths and weaknesses, but utilize that to the advantage of each individual, team, and the organization as a whole?

Chapter Four

Part I

Once trust exists, once we are able to create environments and cultures where trust not only exists, but are infused with empathy and understanding, we not only have the ability to allow ourselves to be vulnerable, to be the learner over the expert, to focus on questions, rather than just providing answers, then we have created the environment and the culture where people are able to engage in risk-taking, to experiment, to blaze new paths through uncharted lands. They have the opportunity to tune in and engage in a pioneer mindset.

Disclaimer: very few individuals are willing to incorporate a pioneer mindset in an environment, in a culture where fear pervades, where trust is lacking or non-existent, where empathy and vulnerability are not only not infused, but frowned upon.

And why is this?

The life of a pioneer is fraught with risks and push-back. Being a pioneer requires moving out and beyond mainstream thinking. Requires thinking different, doing different, and every often, existing as an outlier for long periods of time. Not an easy way of doing, being, or existing.

If we have learned anything from this modern, change world, is that we can ill afford to remain static or stagnant, as leaders or organizations.

Our foundations are trembling and shaking underneath our very feet. Movement, motion, and action are not just necessary, but vital. Much of what we have previously taken for granted sits precarious, often overwhelmed by the oncoming tsunami of this future that is racing towards us. Technology is disrupting our

current circumstances at an alarming rate. We can almost stand by and watch as it engulfs much of what stands in its path.

The pace of our times is hectic. Rest is not always an option, and can quickly lead to irrelevancy. We can choose to pretend the world hasn't changed, isn't changing, or won't change. We can hide our head in the sand, and like hitchhikers on a freeway, we will most likely find ourselves passed by and left behind.

Yet, the issue that many of us face is that we don't want to be the first one through the wall. And why should we? The risks are enormous and the outcomes are often dire. It is never easy to determine to do something that has never been done, to consider tackling the impossible, even if it is only within your own organization.

It requires a pioneer mindset...

And like many pioneers, you don't always get to ride the wave with the group. To do this you will likely have to spend time as an outlier, swimming against the tide through deep, unknown, and uncharted waters.

Sometimes, doing what has not been done before requires persevering through some dark and difficult days. Days where no one believes in you, and at some points, where you don't even believe in yourself. Which makes for an easy time to give in and give up. Which is maybe why so few are able to really push through to the other side.

However, what becomes of us when we choose not to push through, to not serve as pioneers and catalysts of our own ideas?

We lose our momentum. We become cold. Static. We cling to what we've always known, what we've always done. We choose the known over the unknown. Instead

of pushing through the noise and chaos that change invokes. Causing us to recoil, remain, status quo and stagnant.

Movement. Motion. Action. All will be necessary, necessary to keep us from becoming static and stagnant.

We can no longer cling to what we've always known, what is safe.

We exist in a world that has become increasingly more scripted, risk averse and safe. Just follow the script is the message, stick to the lines, and we will get the results we seek. If we completely control the conditions, we will remove mistakes and failure. Yet, it never seems to work out like that in the end. The problem is that it lacks authenticity, lacks passion, lacks what is necessary of a leader. Why? Fundamental and simple...

Leaders go first!

Leaders go first!

Leaders go first!

A cardinal concept that must be ingrained deeply, locked down and fully understood, one that a leader must comprehend on and at a deep level, of what that means and requires.

It requires risk. It requires uncertainty. It requires ambiguity. And it requires stepping out into the unknown...], breaking new ground.

Going first means leaving the script behind, no map, no diagram, and very often, no directions.

The difference between a pioneer and a settler. An explorer and a colonist. An innovator and an implementer. Or very often, between a leader and a manager.

A seeker. A searcher. A discoverer. A trailblazer. A pioneer mindset mandates that...

Leaders go first!

Leaders go first!

Leaders go first!

Leading in our current times has become much more about implementing than it has been about breaking new ground. There is a tendency to wait for the script, the directions, the guidelines on how to move forward. That way, if anything goes wrong, fingers can be pointed, responsibility can be shifted, blame can be assuaged.

The problem is that there is a lack of leadership in that mindset...

Leadership mandates a willingness to take risk, to be all in. To be passionate about what you want to achieve without any assurance of the results. Only knowing that what you are trying to create is better than what currently exists, a better place, a better future, a better way of doing and being.

Leadership that waits is leadership that often lacks relevancy. Leaders have to be aware of what is happening around them, in their profession, their organization, and even on a larger, more global perspective. Going first is not about setting a trend, rather going first is about catching the hints of what is to come, of what lays beyond the horizon. Just out of sight. *Just around the corner.*

Leaders who go first, tend to employ an inquiry-based leadership...

Leading is an inquiry-based proposition. Constantly looking into what is coming, what you will be facing ahead, and preparing yourself, your people and your organization. Engaging in greater questions than easy answers. It is leading through the '*art of the hints*'. The *hint* of what is to come.

Scripted leadership fails on many different levels. It lacks both passion and authenticity, and it seeps through with vivid transparency. It is the great divide between the innovating and the implementing leader. Leaders who wait on the script, the directions, the guidelines are taking themselves down a path to irrelevancy. Leaders don't wait on others.

Leaders go first and that requires a pioneer mindset.

And as you engage in the pioneer mindset, just remember the difficulty in being a pioneer is not found only in the blazing of new paths, but the perseverance and courage required too push your ideas up against the status quo, a status quo that will fight and push back every step of the way.

And you will never fully comprehend the strength and power of the status quo until you try to push, change or try to move it.

Being a pioneer in the 21st century is no longer as much a physical journey as it is a mental one. No longer so much about where our bodies can take us as where our imaginations can transport us. It has become much more about facing our mental, than our physical limits.

What used to be about where our feet, a horse, a wagon, car, ship or plane could take us...

Is now about a completely different type of vehicle, a brand new way to travel. We now blaze our paths into the unknown on the wings of our mind and our ideas. A brand new reality, one which has opened new doors to previous limits and possibilities, and what it means to be a pioneer in our modern world.

And an endless frontier it is, one in which only our mind and visions of possible, or impossible, can restrain and constrain where we wander, where we can go, and of what we can conceive and achieve.

Sounds simple, doesn't it? Unfortunately, it's not.

It's incredibly difficult. Being an idea peddler, a 21st century pioneer will require high levels of perseverance and stamina. Much like the pioneers of the 1800's, only different, less physical, more mental.

It requires acknowledging that doors, and even minds, will constantly be closed off and too your ideas...

Not because they are wrong, but for the simple fact that they are disruptive. Disruptive in the fact that they push on the status quo, push us beyond our current level of comfort, often setting off internal alarms across the organization. Disruptive in that they upend our current understanding of the known, and that is disconcerting, unsettling, and uncomfortable. But necessary, if we are going to grow and change.

Remember, being a modern day pioneer is not just about being an idea peddler, it is about having the perseverance, stamina, and courage to not only stand strong against the currents of mainstream status quo, but being able to swim against that very same current.

In the end, if you think about it, our leadership stories that engage a pioneer mindset have a lot in common with the story of *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*.

Much like *Goldilocks*, being a leader requires us to venture out into the forest, not sure of what we will discover...

- And like *Goldilocks*, we have to be willing to take that walk in the woods.
- And like *Goldilocks*, once we stumble upon an unknown place and knock and no one answers, we still have to be willing to step through that door in the name of discovery.
- And like *Goldilocks*, leaders have to be willing to try a variety of porridges, chairs, and beds to discover what is best for ourselves, our organizations, and those we lead.

The story of *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* reminds us as leaders, that...

- Leaders have to be pioneers, ready and willing to explore new lands.
- Leaders have to be willing to go first, to open a lot of closed doors.
- Leaders have to be willing to be learners, and model that mindset for the organization and those they lead.

And while Goldilocks was in search of the most comfortable, she was still willing to be uncomfortable to find it.

As leaders, as pioneers, we have to be willing to step out of our comfort zone and try things that might not be the right fit, if we are to discover a better way of doing, being, even seeing. We have to be willing to spend time in the uncomfortable...

If we are going to get better.

Reflection

Today's pioneers face some of the same struggles and issues that the pioneers in the early days of discovery faced. Great leaders not only support the settlers of the organization, they support the pioneers as well...giving them the strength, stamina and resources to persevere.

At this point, you might consider the following questions;

- How can the story of Goldilocks serve to push your organization forward in the face of not-knowing and being willing to pioneer and explore?
- What stories already exist in your organization that serve to show how pioneering and risk-taking not only led to new ideas, but new ways of thinking and doing?
- How do you use the lessons and feedback from pioneering as ways for the organization to learn and move forward?

Chapter 5

Part I

Once we have stamped out fear, built a solid foundation of trust, engaged empathy and vulnerability into the environment that allows for a 'learner', as well as a 'pioneer' mindset to exist and flourish. We can begin to engage the 'innovator' mindset. We can begin to infuse creativity into our individuals, teams, organizations, as well as our leadership.

Ideas are the lifeblood of creativity and innovation. When ideas slow down, so does our creativity and innovation. And for our systems to remain both creative and innovative, we don't just need a few ideas, we need an ongoing flow.

Ideas ignite ideas, which in turn, ignite more and more ideas...

The problem is, we have a tendency to sit around and wait on that one great idea to hit, to provide us with that '*eureka*' moment. And unfortunately, those '*eureka*' moments are far and few between. Especially, if we are sitting around waiting for them to happen. The real '*eureka*' moments are born out of perseverance and hard work. And sifting through a lot of ideas...

Think of it like that entertainer, musician, or act that has been tagged by the industry as the new '*overnight*' success. And while they have finally gotten their big break or '*eureka*' moment that has sprung them into stardom, most likely, if you look past the surface, you will find that they were anything but an '*overnight*' success. For most of them, they have been toiling away for years, working at perfecting their craft.

Creativity and innovation work in much the same manner. They are the by-product of hard work and perseverance. Practicing your craft daily. It requires engaging daily in those processes and thinking that evoke creativity and innovation. But,

most people see it differently. They see creativity, which leads to innovation, as an innate ability. Either you have it or you don't. So, when the 'eureka' moments don't come, they label themselves as non-creative. Which is unfortunate.

For we are all creative, but we have to choose to do the work that allows our creative and innovative juices to bubble up to the surface.

Which not only means working hard and persevering, but creating access, access to ideas, a constant flow from which to draw from and ignite those creative and innovative juices. When we have access to an ongoing flow of ideas, it creates an avalanche effect. Ideas build upon ideas, which ignite and create momentum towards even more and different, and even better ideas.

Which is why access is crucial...

We have to search out the people and platforms that provide us with that ongoing, collaborative forum for not only gathering, but sharing and building upon those ideas. It is necessary, if we are to become more creative and innovative, as individuals, as leaders, as teams, and as organizations.

It is those people and platforms that create the opportunity for '*blended learning*'. Where ideas can be formed, mixed, stretched, blended, reformed, changed, and improved on an ongoing basis. Where we can toss ideas and thoughts into the mix, often churning up new ideas, which often lead to that so-called 'eureka' moment that we consider to be the pinnacle of creative thinking. Which is why a constant flow of ideas is so important, for we will have to go through a lot of them to get to the '*one*' that works.

To engage in '*blended learning*' you have to find the people and the platforms that ignite your creative and innovative juices, to find your flow.

As we consider next steps...

We understand and see the necessity and need for infusing and weaving creativity and innovation into all that we do, but we are at a place where we struggle to visualize what that truly looks like, or even means.

In regards to creativity and innovation, we've sounded the trumpets, we've rolled out the red carpet, we've even opened the gates of the kingdom wide to welcome both of them in.

The only problem...

Neither creativity nor innovation may be standing at the gate waiting to come in. And if they are, we may struggle to recognize who are what they are. Even if we have the awareness to notice and welcome them both into the kingdom, we would be hard-pressed on how to get them to take up residence and stick around.

However, the only thing we do know for sure, we can't wait any longer to usher them in because we know how much they will add and benefit the kingdom and all within it. Making it a much better place for all of us.

Which is why, in the end, we know that creativity and innovation will play a vital role in moving education forward, as well as creating and sustaining positive organizational momentum, as well as relevance. Creativity and innovation will be processes that we will not only need to infuse and engage to improve learning, but the overall lives and futures of our students and adults.

Which is why it will be so important for us to push forward in our efforts to infuse and engage creativity and innovation at all levels of our organizations.

So even though we know it, we say it, and we expound their benefits, creativity and innovation often come to a screeching halt at that point. Knowing about the importance and benefits of something is much different than taking action and determining ways to experiment with, incorporate, and weave it into the processes of what we do, on an ongoing and daily basis.

And while we know both are necessary, needed, and important, we are still often not sure how to truly infuse and engage creativity and innovation, especially as sustainable and scalable processes across our schools and organizations.

Which is why we are not only going to have to determine and define for ourselves what creativity and innovation is, but where it comes from, and even what it looks like...

We have to look at those methods, strategies and processes that allow them to cascade and flow across all levels of the organization.

And that begins first with our mindset.

We have to begin by determining what are the first, as well as the next steps towards infusing creativity and innovation into education, as well as our organizations. To weave them seamlessly into the very fabric of what we do. Which will require us to figure out what that looks like, sounds like, feels like, is like, when engaged and activated.

It begins with the understanding that creativity and innovation is not just found in a new idea, a tool, or even technology, it is founded in our mindset. And for creativity and innovation to take hold in our organizations, we have to engage that mindset on a system-wide basis. Especially if we want to see creativity and innovation push out beyond just inconsistent pockets in our organizations.

And for that to happen, we have to pave the way for it to be actionable, useable, and even scalable.

Unfortunately, we too often see creativity and innovation as an add-on, an extra, when it should be woven deeply into the very fabric of all our organization is and does. For this to happen, we have to move beyond the thinking that creativity and innovation only resides in a chosen few.

We have to move beyond the idea of the creative '*few*' who have been blessed with the creative '*gene*' and begin to look at processes that allow creativity and innovation to be sustained on a more system-wide basis, than an individualistic and incremental basis.

- **Creative Flow and Idea Wells** – if we are going to disrupt our current level of what we consider possible, then we need access to an ongoing flow of ideas and thinking. We have to move past this idea of the '*eureka*' moment that we are in constant search of, that we will have this epiphany that will lead to this incredibly original idea that takes the organization and world by storm. We need to begin to realize that much of what we consider to be original is just a remix of the many ideas and thoughts that we encounter on a daily basis from our conversations, interactions, and learning. Instead of working towards that one original '*eureka*' moment, we need to be engaging daily at the ***idea well*** and gathering from a flow of ideas and thinking that add to our creative remix. We need to understand that we will find more creativity and innovation through ongoing perseverance and fortitude than we will find through any '*eureka*' moment.
- **From Within and Beyond** – in the same way we have our *idea well* that we go to for our flow, we have to acknowledge that this *well* exists both within and beyond our organization. It is not one or the other, rather it is both. We

have to engage and pull from the creativity that not only exists within our organization, as well as being willing to search beyond our walls for ideas and thinking that can and will disrupt our current view of what is, for what can be.

- **Connections and Networks** – we've had a tendency to create command and control organizational charts that inhibit the flow of ideas with organizations. We have worked too long in isolated silos. We need to take more systemic, whole approach to creativity and innovation in our organizations. We need to begin to think more in terms of connections and networks. The more collaborative opportunities that are provided, the more opportunities we have to engage, to share ideas, to create that remix, to dip into the *idea well*. It is up to leadership to create the environment and culture for this to happen.
- **Trust, Empathy, Value, and Self-Worth** – to create any type of collaborative, connected community where we can engage and sustain creativity and innovation, trust must exist. Those in the organization have to feel valued for what they have and bring to the table. Otherwise, they will no longer choose to engage and offer their thinking or ideas. And when that happens, the best ideas will never be shared, brought forth, or let alone make it to the organizational table where they can be shared. Which is why empathy is vital. We have to be able to engage those within our organization in ways that allow them to feel valued, to feel self-worth.
- **Action and Permission** – permission is often the golden ticket towards change, risk-taking, as well as creating and building individual and organizational capacity. When we create those trusting and supportive environments, and then give people permission to try, to engage risk, to move out of their comfort zone with fear of reprisal, we will create greater

capacity and learning across our organizations. Capacity and learning that lead to more creativity and innovation. Permission leads to action, and action ultimately leads to creativity and innovation. And this will only occur in those environments where it is supported.

Disruption. Imagination. Inventiveness. Ingenuity. Experimentation. Prototyping. Perseverance. Dot-Connecting. Cross-Pollinating. Risk-Taking. And even the possibility of Failure.

All associated with creativity and innovation. All a part of the process. Each one requiring us to stretch and push ourselves out and beyond our current comfort zones. Beyond the comfort of status quo...

Terms we instantly associate with those innovative organizations that constantly carry the creative torch...*Ideo, Google, Apple, Amazon, Starbucks, Intuit, Nike*, to name a few. And what do we find when we broadly scan these creative and innovative companies to determine what sets them apart? Creative and innovative leaders pushing processes within and across all levels of their organization that allow creativity and innovation to not just settle in the upper echelons of the organization, but to cascade across the organization in its entirety.

And there are some surface level processes and ways of thinking that will help us as leaders on this journey to make our organizations more creative and innovative.

Let's explore just a few...

- Ideas, creativity, and innovation are not confined to a select few born with the creative 'gene'. All three can and should come from anywhere and anyone. When leaders are open to this, we have a better opportunity to cascade both at all levels of the organization. It requires openness,

awareness, listening, and the ability to embrace the ideas and thinking of others.

- Constraints don't constrain, as much as they push creativity and innovation within an organization. Leaders have to determine the constraints necessary to engage the creative juices of their people, and then be open to push-back. Constraints are like positive conflict...they engage and bring people into the process and give them something push on.
- Failure is often a by-product of the creative and innovative process. If we are going to engage our ideas, if we are going to experiment, if we are going to push past our comfort zone and the status quo, we can and will experience failure along the way. What is important is the ability of the organization to understand this if we are going to push past our current boundaries, as well as gain important feedback and learning from these misses and failures.
- Things like empathy, emotional intelligence, connection, relationship are incredibly important to creating a culture that embraces the processes that lead to increased and sustained creativity and innovation. If we are going to be able to experiment more, take risks and face failure head on, to create more positive learning, feedback loops, to push forward as more agile organizations. We have to have the leadership, the environment, and the culture to allow these processes to grow, flourish and cascade across the organization. Which will require greater and expanded levels of empathy and emotional intelligence, as well as stronger connections and relationships.

In the end, while an ongoing supply of ideas (*idea well*) is vital to creating and sustaining creativity and innovation within and across our organizations, it really and truly comes down to the 'human' factor. To determining...

How human are our organizations? How do we care, support, invest, and raise-up those in our organizations?

We understand that creativity and innovation is about engaging the thinking and ideas of those we lead, but it is about so much more. It is about creating the relationships and connections that bring forth the thinking and ideas that allow our institutions and organizations to become and remain creative and innovative.

It is the '*humanness*' of our organizations that will eventually allow us to create and sustain the creativity and innovation necessary to move forward confidently into the chaos and turbulence of an unknown and constantly changing world.

Reflection

Creativity and innovation is not just important, it is vital to the very existence of today's modern organizations. Those organizations that engage creativity and innovation at high levels, create the environment, the culture for this to happen. And that requires leadership that not only understands it's importance, but begin to put in place processes that allow it to grow and flourish at all levels of the organization.

At this point, you might consider the following questions;

- In what ways are you trying to engage creativity and innovation within and across your organization?
- What obstacles are you facing in your organization, cultural or structural, that impede creating more capacity for creativity and innovation?
- How are you engaging your own learning in regards to creativity and innovation, since it is vital to the very survival of today's organizations?

Chapter 5

Part I

In the end, while it is never completely cut and dried, and very often leaders fall into one of two camps...

Givers or Takers.

Servants or Self-Serving.

The interesting thing is that both styles of leadership can be incredibly effective for creating successful organizations. The difference lies in the journey, the path, the doing of the work that takes them to their success, and the ability to sustain that success.

One mindset is additive, creating a positive surplus.

The other mindset is subtractive, creating a deficit.

When a leader is self-serving and subtractive, they slowly deplete and drain away their principle resource, those they serve. Self-serving, positional leaders are constantly deficit spending towards that resource and it is only just a matter of time before their leadership ends up bankrupt. Unfortunately, usually after they have depleted the organization and those within.

When leaders continually refuse to...

- *Honor the ideas, thinking, talent and expertise of their people*
- *Give credit and celebrate the work and success of others*

- *Treat others with empathy and compassion, while employing a harsh and demeaning manner and attitude*
- *Treat others as valuable members of the team, rather than as a commodity or resource to be used*

Then they will fail as leaders to serve their organization and those within. They are leading on borrowed time. Borrowing resources from which they have built no reserves. In doing so, they are deficit spending. And eventually their deficit spending will leave their leadership bankrupt. Devoid of all value.

Servant leaders, in contrast, are constantly building up reserves. A reservoir of resources that they can borrow against if necessary. Their leadership is additive, rather than subtractive. They understand that their greatest asset is those they serve and they constantly look to build up and preserve that resource.

Eventually, you will have to account for your leadership and determine...

How has your leadership affected your organization? Your people? Are you building up a cache of resources and reserves through your leadership? Or are you depleting, diminishing, and draining away your assets?

In other words, is deficit spending leaving your leadership bankrupt?

For, in the end, we become rich in not what we have, not in what we gain, but in that which we give away.

The more you study the art and science of leadership, the more confounding, complex, and confusing it can become. Much of what truly great and authentic leaders do runs in direct conflict with our human nature. Which, therein lies the

struggle, and why leadership will always remain an ongoing journey of transformation.

The contrarian nature of servant leadership will most likely always remain a concept of continual struggle.

Whether those concepts are rooted around ideas of the release of power and autonomy, the giving and investment of your gifts and knowledge, or even the integration of empathy, compassion, and emotional intelligence.

It remains a struggle...

- *For we preach collaboration while making single-handed unilateral decisions.*
- *For we preach community and connection while fragmenting the process through dysfunctional communication and inability to create trust.*
- *For we preach teamwork while undercutting the process through our focus on titles and positional power.*

It is no secret...

Leaders have a track record of preaching one type of leadership, while implementing a style that is in direct conflict with those very same ideals and concepts they are preaching.

The reason...

Selfless, servant leadership is incredibly difficult. It requires leaders to turn themselves inside-out and wrong-side up. It is a perplexing proposition. In stepping down from the center stage, from no longer placing yourself and your

leadership at the center of every solution, every event, every victory, every part of the organization, you reframe your core.

You become others focused.

As a leader, you learn the importance of raising others up, allowing them to take their place on center stage, to spotlight them, their work, their successes. You learn how to add value to others, rather than focusing it back on yourself.

The inside-out is about engaging your heart and head, allowing your leadership to exude vulnerability, compassion, empathy, understanding, caring and even love for those you serve and support.

The wrong-side up requires you to disrupt your long held notions about leadership. You realize that is not really about titles, power, and position, that it is not about you. Rather, it is about those you serve and the connection and relationship you create with them.

It requires you to place a dimmer switch on your leadership. To allow the lights of those you serve the opportunity to shine bright. It is about creating other leaders.

The interesting thing...

When you employ this type of selfless, servant leadership, your influence not only increases, it expands in exponential ways. And it keeps on expanding.

It takes a big heart to place others and their well-being over your own. Not a trade-off that many leaders are often willing to make, or even consider, for that matter. But for those that do, they are often the ones that ignite a spark. A spark that ignites your leadership, changes people, changes organizations, and sometimes...even changes the world.

We each have gifts that were provided and given to us to not just have, but to share with others. To not only enhance our own life, but to enhance and enrich the lives of others. Our impact and influence is not in the knowledge and gifts that we gain and control, but in how we share and give them away freely to others.

Leadership is not just about pushing through closed doors, it is about holding those same doors open for those coming through behind you. Leadership is not about doing what we have always done, it is about doing different. And sometimes it is about being inside-out and wrong-side up.

In the end, always remember, there will be a humble beauty that emanates from us when we choose to serve others selflessly.

Reflection

Your greatest impact upon this world is when you choose to serve others. You create an imprint and influence and impact of exponential proportions...that will push out in wave after wave.

At this point, you might consider the following questions;

- As a leader, modeling is as much, or more important than your words...how are you modeling your words and talk to lead your organization forward?
- How are you finding ways to make sure that you are serving the needs of those you lead?
- How is your leadership adding to the environment and culture of the organization, more than it is taking and subtracting from?

Chapter Six

Conclusion

What we will come to understand is that not technology, not social media, not all of this access is what will be the foundation that drive this disruption, it will be the humanness of our organizations. The humanness of our leadership. The humanness that allows us to create the conditions, the environment, the culture that will allow for the risk taking and the safety necessary for disruption to occur.

In the end, there is a door that stands at the front of every organization and institution that leads to two very different worlds.

One leads to a world that is alive with energy and ideas and an inherent absence of fear. It is buzzing with chatter and an incessant collaborative spirit of creating and sharing that cascades across the environment. There is a sense of joy, of happiness. A spirit of giving and support that fills this world.

And unfortunately, that very same door can lead to a second and much darker world...

A world that is much quieter...and careful. A world where people are mindful to not make mistakes. To keep a low profile, to fly under the radar. To not make waves. Where you can feel the tension in the air, and it is thick. The feeling of fear permeates the entire environment. A world mired in silos, jealousy, personal agendas, hidden agendas, and self interest.

The interesting thing to consider in regards to these very different worlds is that they can both be accessed through the very same door.

We have a choice. We can decide not only which world we want to walk into, but as leaders, which world we want our people and ourselves to work and live in. We determine that doorway. Our leadership. The pathway is held within our grasp.

Our leaders determine the tenor of our organizations, plain and simple.

Ultimately, leaders create the environment. They determine the world their people will walk into.

In the end, there is never full assurance you are right. Sometimes there is just courage, courage to keep moving forward in the knowing that you are doing the right thing.