

## Chapter 11

### Six Leadership Practices

#### *Spiritual Boot Camp for Leaders*

Leadership is a set of practices. The notion of practice is simple: To master anything, you need to practice; to become more effective in our leadership, we must continually practice and improve both our outer game and our inner game.

Here we describe six essential leadership practices that, if approached as ongoing disciplines, reliably mature the inner game and develop outer-game capabilities. These practices, taken together, are a *spiritual boot camp* for leaders. They are spiritual because they call forth the highest and best in us. They are a *boot camp* because they change and restructure us, making us more fit to lead. They reliably transform Reactive Mind into Creative Mind and beyond.

#### **PRACTICE 1: DISCERNING PURPOSE**

Life is purposeful. Leadership is purposeful. A primary task of a life creatively led is to discern the purpose of our life. Creative Mind orients itself on the purpose that seeks to come through us. Great leaders stand for what matters and create it. In his book, *On Becoming a Leader*, Warren Bennis writes: "Leaders are made, not born, and made more by themselves than by any external means. No leader sets out to be a leader per se, but rather to express him/herself freely and fully. Becoming a leader is synonymous with becoming yourself. It is precisely that

simple, and also that difficult. First and foremost, find out what it is you're about, and be that" (Bennis, 1989).

### I Am Not Becoming Who I Am

**Bob:** I started my career making hog food and dog food. I managed production in the most technologically advanced livestock feed and pet food processing plant in the United States at the time. We were in start-up (code for *nothing worked*). Late one night, we were trying to get the plant back on-line. I was frantically working in the receiving bay emptying a railroad car filled with feed ingredients needed to get the plant back in production. When the car was empty, I climbed inside to sweep it out. As I finished, I propped my feet up in the hopper bottom to catch my breath. Out of my mouth, in a loud authoritative voice, completely unrehearsed, came the words, "I am not becoming who I am." I knew immediately that I had spoken a truth about myself that I could not take back. That moment began my practice of *Discerning Purpose*.

A few weeks later, I received a book by Rainer Maria Rilke titled *Letters to a Young Poet* (Rilke, 1993). This book is a series of letters that Rilke, the great German poet, wrote to an aspiring young poet. The young poet had sent Rilke samples of his work for critique. Rather than critique the poems, Rilke responds with some advice about why one would write poetry in the first place, and in so doing, gave a powerful description of the practice of *Discerning Purpose*.

You ask whether your verses are good. You ask me, and others before me. You send them to magazines. You compare them with other poems, and you are disturbed when certain editors reject your efforts. Now, since you have allowed me to advise you, I beg you to give up all that. You are looking outward. Nobody can counsel and help you, nobody. There is only one single way. Go into yourself. Search for the reason that bids you write; find out whether it is spreading out its roots in the deepest places of your heart, acknowledge to yourself whether you would have to die if it were denied you to write. This above all—ask yourself in the stillest hour of your night: *Must* I write? Delve into yourself for a deep answer. And if this should be affirmative, if you may meet this earnest question with a strong and simple "*I must,*" then build your life according to this

necessity; your life even into its most indifferent and slightest hour must be a sign of this urge and a testimony to it.

When I read this, I knew that I had to discern my “Musts.” I started by creating a list of *Musts*—the deepest and highest aspirations for my life. Each night after work, I would write about these *Musts*. As I did, I knew that if I admitted what I really wanted my life to be about, I was crossing a threshold from which I could not go back. I realized that I had to be about this life, the one emerging on the pages of my journal. Otherwise, I would be living someone else’s life, not my own. When I finished writing, I set about creating the life that I felt born to live.

Fifteen years later, I found this journal in the attic. As I reread it, I began to weep because everything I had written was happening in my life in ways I never could have imagined at the time. I then realized the full power of the Creative Mind set on purpose.

This practice has the power to boot up with Creative Mind. When we get clear about who we are and what we must do, magic happens. Joseph Campbell (Campbell, 2008) says that when we step into the adventure of living on purpose “the universe will open doors where there were only walls.”

W.H. Murray could not be clearer on this subject (Murray, 1951):

Until one is committed, there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness. Concerning all acts of initiative (and creation) there is one elementary truth, the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then Providence moves too. All sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise have occurred. A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one’s favor all manner of unforeseen incidents and meetings and material assistance, which no man could have dreamed would have come his way. I have learned a deep respect for one of Goethe’s couplets: “Whatever you can do, or dream you can, begin it, / Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it.”

Creative Mind harnesses this genius, power, and magic in a way that Reactive Mind cannot. Creative Mind moves the levers that cause creation while Reactive Mind looks in the rear view mirror trying to

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navigate forward by fixing what it does not want in order to stay safe.

**Stalking Your Longing**

Creative Leadership springs from the pursuit of purpose, from discerning and defining a personal purpose worthy of our deepest commitment. Purpose is longing—love for what the soul wants to pursue most in this life. The Greeks called it *Eros*, the capacity to follow what is most intensely missing or unfinished in our lives. Purpose wells up from within. It is not something we invent. It finds us, if we pay attention. The primary task of life is to let it live us.

Discerning purpose is a practice of attention, much like tracking a deer through woods. The deer leaves signs if we know how to read, track, and stalk them. Discerning purpose requires attention to the trail, to the minute, subtle, and detailed clues our life is leaving as we live it (or as it lives us). Life has been speaking to us for a long time about what matters most. It has been leaving a trail. It remains for us to have the courage and the discipline to pay attention.

This practice is about learning to trust those moments of clarity when purpose is speaking. We exist as multidimensional beings. Since the deepest, truest parts of ourselves know what we are up to here, we need to be in conversation with them. Life speaks in times when we are most alive, when we are doing something that lights us up. Joseph Campbell's admonition is to "follow your bliss." He states: "If it brings you joy do more of it" (Campbell, 2008). The purpose of our life is leaving clues in periods of joy, excitement, enthusiasm, meaning, and fulfillment. These are the times when we feel most alive, moments when the soul is speaking about who we are and what we care most about, pointing us in the direction of our highest aspirations. It speaks of our *Musts*. Learning to stalk these moments is the practice of discerning purpose.

Life is also speaking in the moments when we are least alive, when life is not working, when it is as bad as it gets, when we are miserable, bored, restless, and flat. Life is letting us know, in these periods, what is most intensely missing. This too informs us about what we must be about. As David Whyte once said in a lecture, "The first step toward the fire is noticing how cold you are."

When we sift the times we are most and least alive, we can extract the themes, patterns, and clues that forge our purpose. Paying attention to these clues, letting them point the way to our deeper longings, and defining which of these longings are *musts* is the work of this discipline. When we do this, we stalk our longing—navigating the pull of the Ascending Current.

Purpose is not discovered in a vacuum. Our purpose is not merely about our personal fulfillment. It is about contribution and service. Albert Schweitzer said: “I don’t know what your destiny will be, but this I know: the only ones among you who will be really happy are those who have sought and found how to serve” (Schweitzer, 1935). Our purpose is about what brings us meaning and joy, but it is also about what the world most needs. We are born and live into a set of circumstances: families, societies, cultures, and organizations. The circumstances of our lives are no accident. Our purpose is connected to the needs of those around us, of the organizations, society, and world in which we live and work. In each of us, there is an intersection between our unique passion, curiosity, and talent and a world in need, a contribution only we can make, and when we find that intersection, we are on to the purpose of our lives.

Viktor Frankl discovered his purpose in a Nazi concentration camp. He learned that those who had a purpose for living had a much higher survival rate. He also discovered the meaning of his own life. Frankl survived, founded a school of psychotherapy he called Logotherapy, and wrote his classic book, *Man’s Search for Meaning*. In it, he says, “Everyone has his own specific vocation or mission in life; everyone must carry out a concrete assignment that demands fulfillment. Therein he cannot be replaced, nor can his life be repeated, thus, everyone’s task is unique as his specific opportunity to implement it” (Frankl, 1959). Each of us must find our inevitable work—the work we came into this life to do.

### Connecting the Dots

In his commencement speech at Stanford, Steve Jobs said: “You can’t connect the dots looking forward; you can only connect them looking backwards. This practice requires that we trust that the dots will somehow connect in your future. You have to trust in something—your gut, destiny, life, karma, whatever. This approach has never let me down, and it has made all the difference in my life.”

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In the feed plant, I started stalking my longing. When I left that job, I did not know how things would unfold or even what shape my life and career would take. I did not even know about the Leadership and Organizational Development profession. Now, 35 years later, as I look back over my life, and see all that has unfolded from what I wrote in my *Musts* journal, I can see how all the dots connect. I used to think that I was stalking my longing. I realize now that *the longing was stalking me the whole time*.

So, practice paying attention to what your life is trying to tell you about who you are and what you are here to do. Stalk the longing that is stalking you. Then, exercise the courage to submit to the purpose that wants to have its way with your life.

*Purpose is something bestowed*—and received. It arises in our lives and in us. We must notice it and inquire what it wants from us. It is not something we rationalize and choose, though we must choose to follow it. It is something we receive and to which we surrender. This practice is an inside-out dialogue with life as it spontaneously arises in our interaction in the world.

This practice is not something we do once; it is a life-long discipline to remain in dialogue with our purpose. The soul has a way of moving on as soon as we complete one phase of the journey having realized the vision that emerges from our purpose. About the time we feel we have lived into our purpose, it requires us to discern our purpose again. The soul is a jealous lover; it refuses to invest itself in a compromise. We either step toward “the spark behind fear recognized as life” or “the body fills with dense smoke.” Discerning purpose is a core practice for living and leading from our Creative Edge. There is no safe way to do that.

**Creative Leadership**

The ongoing discovery and exploration of our sense of purpose is the central discipline of the Creative, Self-Authoring Mind and the starting place for true leadership. The power to create what matters in the face of difficult circumstances comes from within, from passion and conviction. Passion is the energizing force of the Creative Mind and of the creative tension it takes to lead. Passion has its source in knowing our purpose: what we are here to learn, become, and do with our lives. If we are unfamiliar with this abiding sense of purpose, we have not integrated

a discipline of spiritual attention into our lives. As long as deep conviction and passion are uncommon, so will genuine, creative, and authentic leadership remain uncommon.

The soul knows where it wants to go, and it does not compromise. Leadership requires the spiritual discipline to be led by our higher purpose. This discipline provides the staying power required to transform ourselves and our organizations in spite of the vulnerability of change, the political risks, the self-doubt, the fear, and the possibility of failure. We will only see it through if it matters enough—if it is worth the risk. Our purpose is worth the risk.

To lead, we must optimize the tension between purpose and safety by orienting on purpose and letting the chips fall where they may. There is no safe or risk-free way to do this, no sure formula for success. However, great power lies at the source of Creative Leadership. As leaders, our first task is to cultivate purpose, translate that into vision, and sustain that creative tension in ourselves. Our second task is to cultivate and sustain this creative tension for the organization. This is the path of transformation. We transform ourselves into an embodiment of our purpose and vision, and then we stand for it in the midst of the current realities and shifting political currents. We act it out in every encounter, and, thus, transform not only ourselves into our highest self, but also the organization into its higher purpose. This is the Promise of Leadership.

## PRACTICE 2: DISTILLING VISION

The second practice that reliably develops Creative Leadership is the ongoing discipline of translating purpose into a vision of our desired future, both individually and collectively. Every credible authority on leadership (Bennis, Collins, Covey, Wilson, Senge, Fritz, Block, Peters, Drucker, Kouzes/Posner, and Cashman, to name a few) describes *vision* as the centerpiece of effective leadership. In the LCP, the dimension of *Purposeful Visionary* most correlates to Leadership Effectiveness. The Creative Mind is focused on creating vision; thus, the discipline that most evolves Creative Mind is the challenge of self-authoring a vision of greatness for ourselves and for the organization. Being a person of vision and leading the organization into its desired future is the first Promise of Leadership.

### Five Elements of Vision

Vision is personal, specific, lofty, strategic, and collective.

**Vision is personal.** Vision, in the Reactive Mind, is given or authored by others, and then it is adopted, however enthusiastically. Vision at the Creative level is self-authored. Creative Leadership is the act of articulating and acting in pursuit of a vision that flows from our personal commitment to higher purpose. Vision is the picture of how that purpose wants to actualize in meaningful and tangible ways. Vision describes the specific direction our soul longs to go.

**Vision is specific.** It is specific enough that we would recognize it when we realize it. Recently, as we consulted with a healthcare organization, we encouraged the leadership team to take a three-day off-site to get clear and aligned on their vision. As we introduced the meeting agenda, the CFO said, "I am concerned that this will be a huge waste of our time. What do you mean by *vision* and what might we say about it that could possibly take three days?"

We responded, "You will create a specific and detailed picture of the healthcare organization that will exist in this community five years from now." The CFO said, "If we could do that, it would be amazing. We have never had that conversation."

For vision to be useful it needs to be specific enough to set direction, focus strategy, drive action, and guide decision-making. We need to specify the result you have in mind, in enough detail that everyone knows when the vision is attained.

**Vision is strategic** (but it is not strategy). Strategy charts the course of how to get from wherever we are to the vision. Vision is the capstone of strategy, a description of the business, as we most want it to exist at some point in the future. Vision is a response to the current reality of the marketplace, but it is not limited by the constraints of that reality. It is strategic because it sets a direction that enables the organization to excel in its current environment and well into the future. Vision defines the organization's unique contribution to real needs, real markets, and real social and cultural imperatives. It sets the organization on course to thrive and contribute.

**Vision is lofty.** It captures our highest aspirations for our lives and work. It is unashamedly spiritual and fundamentally imaginative. A lofty vision grabs us at a deeper level than does the promise of profit or

market share. While a vision will often include these, by *lofty* we mean that it appeals to our deepest values, higher aspirations, and personal purposes. As such, a lofty vision also makes the pursuit of it meaningful and worthwhile. Lofty vision is worthy of our deep commitment. It is worthy of our life's blood. Lofty vision magnifies the creative capacity of the organization by drawing people into alignment.

Vision is collective. Vision catalyzes alignment. If purpose is the source from which great leadership springs, vision is the leader's primary contribution. By expressing his or her vision, the leader causes others to reflect on what they stand for. It is difficult to remain neutral in the presence of strong, visionary leadership. When we encounter it, we are challenged to examine and evaluate our own interests, values, stance, and direction. Alignment happens when members of the organization can see that they are able to fulfill their own personal purposes by achieving the organization's vision.

Leaders enroll others in their vision, but *enrollment* has little to do with getting others to buy in to our vision. This notion is a vestige of our Reactive, patriarchal roots. Enrollment, as a Creative process, happens in dialogue. When, as leaders, we articulate and embody our vision, we stimulate reflection in others. If we then engage in dialogue about our individual aspirations, we find common ground. We enable the true purpose and vision of the organization to rise to the surface. Alignment develops naturally as the dialogue continues. Thus, the practice of Distilling Vision requires that leaders initiate and sustain this dialogue—that they are willing to influence and be influenced. Such a dialogue ups the probability of a collective vision emerging that expresses the highest aspirations of the organization: one that excites, humbles, and fulfills its members, as well as one that contributes to the success of the business.

The *Purposeful Visionary* dimension on the LCP is the dimension most highly correlated with *Leadership Effectiveness* at .91. Since a lofty and strategic vision catalyzes alignment, it is highly correlated to *Teamwork* at .89. The combination of *Purposeful Visionary* and *Teamwork* is the combination of dimensions that is most highly correlated (.94) to *Leadership Effectiveness*. Distilling Vision is the primary Promise of Leadership.

This discipline requires that we create a purpose-connected vision of results, embody that vision, and encourage others to do the same. It also requires that we distill and refine a collective sense of purpose and vision through honest dialogue. The resulting vision taps the spiritual power of

purpose and brings a generative force to bear on the creation of meaningful personal and organizational results. Since vision is the focus of the Creative Mind, this discipline awakens the Creative, Self-Authoring Mind. As leaders embody this practice, they fulfill on the Leadership Agenda and imperative, developing a Creative Leadership System.

### PRACTICE 3: KNOWING YOUR DOUBTS AND FEARS

**Bob:** Early in my career, I did not know that I was a flaming perfectionist who was subject to his Reactive Mind. I was functioning at a mid-Reactive level as an *expert perfectionist*, meaning, “there’s a right way to do everything, and I know what it is.”

About this time, I became interested in assessments. I became fascinated by one assessment in particular, and my enthusiasm was an early clue to my life’s purpose and vision. In fact, I was so interested in this assessment that I called the company and told them that I wanted to learn from them. In order to expedite my learning, I invited them to come and work with one of the leadership teams in the organization. They sent the founder’s wife! She was quite talented, but she had a different model of how to lead the work than the one in my head. Of course, since I am an *expert perfectionist*, she was wrong and I was right. She could not find a way to work with me, and so, eventually, we parted company. Effectively, I ran her out of the organization.

Ten years later, I created a workshop to help senior leaders become aware of their Reactive patterns and see how they tend to recreate patriarchal systems even as they try to transform them. In this workshop, we used the aforementioned assessment. I wanted my colleagues, who would be leading this workshop, to be well-grounded in it. So, I asked the founder of the assessment company (let’s call him Doug) to teach us the elements of the assessment. Doug was a brilliant man, a walking encyclopedia on leadership, how to measure it, and how to see it in action. After one extraordinary day with him, we decided to schedule a second day.

A month later, we met again. I said something to start the meeting, and Doug quickly interrupted me, saying in his gruff voice, “Bob, can I give you some feedback?”

I said, “Yeah, sure.”

He said, "Well, after our last session, I went home and talked to my wife! We searched our database to see if there were any other Bob Andersons from Toledo, Ohio, that we worked with 10 years ago. We could not find any, and so we concluded that you are the same Bob Anderson. Is that accurate?"

I said, "Yes."

He said, "Do you still want the feedback?"

I said, "Yes."

He said, "You are not the same asshole you used to be."

A bit stunned by this statement, I looked around the room and everybody in the group was nodding in agreement as if to say, "Yeah, he is right about that."

Since Doug was an astute observer of human behavior, he precisely described the shift he saw in me over 10 years. Again the group nodded in agreement. After giving me this feedback, he said, "I do not know what you are doing, but keep doing it because it is working."

When he said this, I went "click, click, click" in my head—this practice, this practice, and this practice. I knew exactly what I was doing. I knew the practices that had caused this change in the way I was now leading. I had a regular practice of distilling vision, of focusing on what I most wanted to create and to become. I also had a practice of exploring my underlying Reactive beliefs and assumptions whenever I noticed that I was getting in my own way.

In the practice of *Knowing Our Doubts and Fears*, we face what Ralph Stayer, the CEO of Johnsonville Sausage, called "terrible truth number one"—"I am the problem" (Belasco, 1993).

We learn to notice (perhaps with the help of feedback from others) when we are not acting on our vision or acting in ways that do not support its realization. Then we take the path of descent in service of transcendence. We enter into the fear, anxiety, or inner conflict that is reactively running behavior that is inconsistent with our vision. In this practice, we move toward our doubts and fears. We become a student of them. We get beneath them and listen to the silent inner conversation we have with ourselves. We track that conversation to its source: the identity beliefs and assumptions that run our Reactive IOS. We face these beliefs and assumptions fiercely and compassionately until we see the illusion in them, and we see how this illusion is causing us to behave, act, and lead in ways that are inconsistent with the person we want to be, the results

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we are pursuing, and the vision we are creating. We are then liberated to act in ways that embody more of what we want.

This practice means learning to navigate the *Descending Current*. To be transformed, we must descend into the parts of ourselves that are not yet ready to embody our vision—that are too small, too scared, too reactive, too controlling, too cautious, etc. This is descent in service of transcendence.

We often hear people say, “The key to transformation is to get rid of the Reactive, or fix your Reactive, or get out of your Reactive.” No! This approach is, in itself, Reactive (fixing or getting away from what we do not want). The Path of Descent is Creative if it is in service of creating what matters. We are the agent of creation, and so, when we discover that we are the obstacle to our own vision, we must do the work of freeing ourselves up to, as Gandhi said, “be the change we want to see in the world.”

Our vision depends on this practice. We stalk our longing until it distills into vision. The vision then challenges us to transform ourselves into an effective and powerful vessel for realizing the vision. The new vision will challenge the status quo of who we are, how we live and lead, and how our organization is performing. Vision challenges and evolves the current state of things. If we cannot see our contribution to the current state of things and change our mind (rewrite the IOS code that runs us on autopilot), then we will likely continue to act in ways that undermine the very thing to which we are committed. The inner game runs the outer game.

We are never “done” with purpose or vision. If we are tracking it and stalking it, it keeps pulling us toward becoming the ever-larger person/leader that wants to emerge. It stretches us. When we are stretched by vision, when we choose to “step up,” we meet our doubts and fears at the door. The spark behind fear smolders inside—always this energy, always this tension.

Every time we go to a new edge, we are terrified. However, we have learned to not take that story so seriously. Reactive Mind is governed by fear. We react to those unconscious assumptions because they have us, and we believe their story is true. When this happens, we are into our favorite habitual Reactive strategy before we know it. We have chosen comfort over challenge, but it is not really comfortable. What appears to be a choice for comfort and safety is actually a managed level of



our well-conditioned Reactive Mind, making it impossible to stalk our purpose, let alone stand for it, when we are in the habit of reacting to stay safe.

Again, we cannot pursue both safety and purpose simultaneously. We must make a choice. The soul is not interested in safety. The soul knows what it longs for, it is up for the adventure, and it is unwilling to compromise. This is the key choice we make in life. It will determine the nature and quality of our leadership. Without a practice of descent, to know our doubts and fears, it is likely that we will live a compromise.

#### **PRACTICE 4: ENGAGE IN AUTHENTIC, COURAGEOUS DIALOGUE**

There is no safe way to be great. And there is no great way to be safe. Transformation requires courage. There is no way around it. Reactive Mind orients on safety in whatever form that takes (Complying, Protecting, or Controlling). The practice of Authentic Courage directly confronts all our play-not-to-lose strategies and, if practiced, reliably catalyzes the evolution of Creative Mind.

The courage required in organizations is not the courage required on the battlefield. We do not risk life and death, although it may feel that way at times. Mostly, the courage required is the courage to tell the truth. Honest conversation happens in organizations, but mostly in the bathroom, not in the meeting room. In the meeting room, we all agree that we are making great progress. In the bathroom, we often hear a different story. When caution prevails, the truth is obscured. Collective effectiveness and intelligence rapidly erode. Performance suffers. We fall short of the vision we espouse. Change efforts come off the rails.

Since authentic, courageous conversation is the lifeblood of high performance, this dimension is top-dead-center on the LCP. Authenticity in the LCP combines *Courage*, the willingness to bring up difficult issues and engage them in a great way, and *Integrity*, embodying our values by walking the talk. *Authenticity* is highly correlated to *Leadership Effectiveness* (.80), to *Purposeful Visionary* (.82) to *Teamwork* (.68) and to *Business Performance* (.50). It is one of the central defining capabilities of Creative Mind.

This Practice requires the previous three practices. Courage requires that we are committed to something bigger than our fears, something worth the risk (Discerned Purpose and Distilled Vision). It also requires

that we know our fears and that we can separate real risk from the fear we make up when subject to our Reactive illusions.

**Bob:** Five years after I discovered that I needed everyone to like me as a leader, I was consulting to a large manufacturing organization. One day we met with the top 80 managers. I was not leading the discussion because they wanted to explore a topic that was outside my area of expertise, so I called in another consultant to work with me. I made a few comments before the morning break. At the break, my client, the CEO, a rather rough and tumble type, took me aside and said, "Bob, I was just talking to my Vice Presidents at break, and frankly, they did not appreciate your comments. I think it best if you just keep your mouth shut the rest of the day."

I was shocked. I wondered, "What could I have said that was so controversial?" I went back to my seat licking my wounds and said nothing for the next few hours.

Mid-afternoon an amazing "coincidence" happened. A woman stood up and said, "I feel like it is not safe to say what you really think in this room. After meetings like this, the senior managers caucus and discuss who said what. They make conclusions about us that impact our credibility and our future here." No one knew quite what to say. Then the conversation continued, and within 30 seconds the group swept the issue under the rug by concluding that it was safe to say what you really think, that there was no issue with speaking up in this group.

In the meantime, my heart is beating loudly. What this woman had just described happened to me today. I found myself in a moment of choice: courage or safety. Mind you, I am sitting right across the table from the CEO. How am I going to play it?

While the group was disposing of this issue, I was riding the Ascending and Descending Currents of the first three practices. "How do I want to show up in this moment? What is my vision of great consulting in a moment like this? How do I best serve my client? What do I care about that is worth the risk?" These questions reminded me of well-practiced clarity that had come from the practices of Discerning Purpose and Distilling Vision. I was also riding the Descending Current. So this is the point where I always make up that if I stand up I will get shot. I know this familiar voice of caution all too well. I know that I constantly tell myself that my future depends on always being liked, admired, and valued. I do not have to listen to that voice in this moment. I chose to speak

up. I stood and said, "What you said (pointing to the woman who had raised the issue) happened to me today. A meeting happened at the break and someone in senior leadership, and I will not mention names, took me aside and said that it was probably best if I kept my mouth shut the rest of the day." The group gasped. "No way! It could not happen here." I said, "Yes. It did happen here. It happened to me today."

The group then had a two-hour discussion about the level of honesty, caution, truth telling, authenticity, and inauthenticity that was in the room. It was a breakthrough conversation for them. As they left the meeting, they agreed that the last two hours had been the best conversation they had ever had as an Extended Leadership team.

As the group was leaving, quite exuberant over their breakthrough conversation, I was trying to pack up and make it out of the room without making eye contact with the CEO. I caught myself in the act. This is the practice. I noticed that I was afraid to face him. Ascending Current: What is my vision of service to my client in this moment? Descending Current: What am I telling myself is at risk? Oh, that same familiar voice of caution again.

Choice: I looked the CEO in the eye and said, "What did you think about what I said?"

He responded, "What do you mean?"

I said, "Well you told me it would be best if I kept my mouth shut."

He said, "You were talking about me?!"

When he asked this, I envisioned myself laughing and saying, "No. Never mind." Instead, I said, still looking him in the eye, "Yes, I was talking about you."

He responded, "Well I was just looking out for your welfare. I need what you are bringing to this organization, and I want you to live to fight another day!"

I pondered this comment and then said, "I get that you were looking out for my welfare. I appreciate your intent. Here is what I would like you to get: In that moment, you were a conduit to me for all the caution and fear that was just expressed in your leadership team."

He glared at me for what seemed like a long time and for a moment I honestly thought this might well be my last day consulting with this organization. He then said, "Huh! I did do that, didn't I? Wow. That was helpful! I need more of that from you. When is our next meeting?"

Courage is the willingness to be authentic, to speak and act in ways that express and embody our vision of greatness. The whole culture is going on in every meeting: the level of honesty or withholding, caution or courage, vision or compromise, integrity or manipulation, clarity or lack of clarity. It is all happening in every meeting. To change the culture is to change the moment. The vision lives or dies in moments of courage. We either opt for purpose and take the risk of saying what we really think and feel, or we opt for safety. In this choice we either advance the vision or hold it back. The power to create the culture we want lies in authenticity.

The *Promise of Leadership* cannot be fulfilled if leaders cannot tell the truth to one another. Most of our work with senior teams is long term. After a year of working with them, we often hear this feedback: “The difference that has made all the difference is that we can now tell the truth to one another. A year ago, too many issues were un-discussable and caught in the politics of caution and ambition. Now we can readily cut through complex issues, and it is fun.”

Authentic, courageous conversation is necessary for high performance. Collective effectiveness lives or dies with the ability to speak honestly and with high integrity to each other. Collective intelligence depends on it. This practice is a hallmark of Creative Mind and leadership and practicing it as a discipline evolves Creative Mind and leads to Integral Mind.

#### **PRACTICE 5: DEVELOP INTUITION, OPEN TO INSPIRATION**

Finding leverage points within systems that are so complex they defy rationality—or as Peter Senge says are *un-figure-out-able*—requires that leaders trust a way of knowing that is beyond rationality and deductive logic. Leaders must learn to use data and rational analysis as far as it can go and then listen to their gut, their intuitive knowing about the best or right thing to do. This requires a level of maturity in the IOS that can balance reason with intuition for guiding the development of the organization’s vision, strategy, decision-making, and creative innovation.

We do not Discern Purpose or Distill Vision solely with the rational mind. We do not balance our checkbook with intuition. Mastery in most disciplines, including leadership, requires strong rational capability

balanced by strong access to intuitive knowing. Purpose, vision, insight, innovation, creativity, authenticity, and wisdom characterize great leaders. None of these capabilities are merely rational. They depend on intuition as the source of inspiration.

Daniel Webster defines *Intuition* as, "The power or faculty of attaining direct knowledge or cognition without reference to data, evident rational deduction, or inference." In other words, we just know, and we do not know why or how we know. Most of us have experience with this kind of knowing and we also have experience with what happened when we did and did not follow it. Intuition is a capability we all have and it can be developed. Like any talent, intuition is normally distributed; some are more gifted than others, but all of us have the capability.

Intuitive capability atrophies in most of us. Usually our cultural bias tells us to ignore our intuition (unless we are from a rare culture that is deeply intuitively informed). Intuition is largely discounted in the workplace. As such, we limit our leadership effectiveness, individual and collective. Most cultures are primarily Reactive, and Reactive Mind is conditioned to dismiss intuitive insight as irrelevant and untrustworthy. Reactive Mind, in pursuit of safety and predictability, wants proof. It is designed to think "within the box," not to make innovative leaps "out of the box." Intuition, in most of us, lies fallow until consciousness develops beyond Reactive Mind.

Since it is an innate capability, intuition can develop at any stage, but it typically begins to emerge as a powerful leadership capability as Creative Mind evolves. In his book, *Value Shifts*, Brian Hall suggests that intuition does not develop until the Self-Initiating phases of development (another label for what we call Creative Mind) (Hall, 2006). Creative Mind develops intuition as a powerful tool. This intuitive capability tends to reach its full potential at the Integral level.

**Bob:** Intuition can be a powerful tool in many situations. It can be helpful, for example, in a courageous conversation when we do not know what to say next to move the conversation forward. I was once coaching a senior executive in a program at the University of Notre Dame. We administered the LCP and then conducted a one-on-one debrief session with each manager. It was my last coaching session of the day. I had started at 6:30 a.m., and it was now 6:00 p.m. When I walked into the coaching room, the man was looking down at the table. He did not look up at me. As I sat across from him, he pushed the LCP binder across the

table at me and said, "I do not understand this arrogance crap—explain to me what these results mean."

I tried to talk to him about what *Arrogance* meant and how it may show up in leadership. Nothing I said landed. I was getting nowhere. He was arguing with me at every turn. I was at a loss for what to say to him that would be helpful, and then, an idea popped in. When it did, I immediately had the gut sense that this idea held the key to our conversation. I then knew what I needed to say/do, but the idea scared me because it required that I trust my gut and take a risk with him. After double-checking my intuitive insight, I said, "Let me show you what arrogance looks like. When I walked into the room, here is how you looked (I put my head down and stared at the table). Most people would make eye contact, perhaps smile, or shake my hand. Knowing that I have been in these coaching sessions for 11 hours, they might even say, 'Man, it has been a long day for you, how are you doing?' Instead, you pushed this binder at me with your head down and said, 'Tell me about this arrogance crap.' That is what arrogance looks like."

He rocked back in his chair, glared at me for a minute, and said, "You know if people see me outside of work, they do not recognize me."

I asked, "What do you mean?"

He said, "When I am not at work, I have my ball cap on, a beer in one hand, and a smile on my face. I am actually a fun guy, but when I walk into work, I put my game face on. At work no one really knows me. I make sure of that."

We then went on to have an extraordinary conversation. In fact, the conversation was so transformative that when he stood up, and started to walk out of the room, he stumbled slightly and said, "Oh, I need to be careful. I feel a little woozy."

I said, "Yeah, that was a big shift."

In order to lead effectively, we need access to every kind of information available to us. We need access to forms of perception beyond the bounds of our usual organizational rationality. We need to see relationships and interconnections that are invisible to linear, logical methods. This discipline of leadership asks us to take intuition seriously, to recognize that intuition is real, that we all have it, that it can be developed through practice, and that, in the words of the philosopher Schopenhauer, "there is in us something wiser than our head" (Schopenhauer, 1974).

In the book, *The Intuitive Manager*, Roy Rowan indicates that most successful leaders rely heavily on intuition (Rowan, 1986). They learn to trust their gut with key decisions, decisions that define their careers and set the course for their success. They have done so even when the data does not seem to support the intuitive direction. However, they seldom talk about it, because it feels illegitimate in our data-driven world. That said, many leaders have spoken about how they have learned to trust their intuition. For example:

- I began to realize that an intuitive understanding and consciousness was more significant than abstract thinking and intellectual logical analysis ... Intuition is a very powerful thing, more powerful than intellect, in my opinion. That's had a big impact on my work. —Steve Jobs
- Steve Jobs, "... was, indeed, an example of what the mathematician Mark Kac called a magician genius, someone whose insights come out of the blue and require intuition more than mere mental processing power."—Walter Isaacson, author of the book *Steve Jobs* (Isaacson, 2007)
- The intuitive mind is a sacred gift and the rational mind is a faithful servant. We have created a society that honors the servant and has forgotten the gift.—Einstein
- The intellect has little to do on the road to discovery. There comes a leap in consciousness, call it intuition or what you will, the solution comes to you and you do not know how or why.—Einstein
- Dull minds are never either intuitive or mathematical.—Pascal
- The insight never comes hit or miss, but is born from unconscious levels exactly in the areas in which we are most intently consciously committed . . . where information is not consciously available. Although the realization may arrive at a seemingly magical moment, it comes usually after a long hard pondering of a problem ... It is through science that we prove, but through intuition that we discover.— Jules Henri Poincaré. (Singh, 2006)
- Have the courage to follow your heart and intuition. They somehow already know what you truly want to become. Everything else is secondary. —Steve Jobs
- We lie in the lap of immense intelligence, which makes us receivers of its truth and organs of its activity.—Ralph Waldo Emerson (Emerson, 1936)

Intuition is the practice of opening to a deeper knowing, a higher sensory perception, a calling, an inner voice that says, "Stay with this," or, "Do this now," or, "This is who you are, what you stand for, what you need to move toward in your leadership." Intuition is the gateway to the higher more spiritual dimensions of our selves. We are multidimensional beings. We are more than a physical body and brain. We are beings that exist simultaneously on unseen dimensions (traditionally called psyche, soul, and spirit). Intuition is the gateway to these higher dimensions. It gives us access to knowing at these levels of ourselves. When we tap into these dimensions we know things we did not know we knew. Insights come in wholes. The solutions to problems are immediately and completely comprehended. Intuition is the source of breakthrough insight, wisdom, and transformative vision. It is the source of most great innovative advances.

Intuition, balanced with rational analysis, is a key capacity of the Creative Mind. Developing it opens us to uncommon insight, wisdom, and creative capacity for innovation. Creative Leadership is courageous, authentic, purpose-driven, visionary, strategic, emotionally intelligent, and inspirational. All of this is informed by intuition.

#### **PRACTICE 6: THINK SYSTEMICALLY**

In the presence of a new and compelling vision, structures and systems must evolve. When structural change is ignored, visions fail. Great leaders have the capacity to think systemically and to design systems for high performance. Developing Systems Thinking stimulates the evolution of Creative and Integral Mind.

Culture eats strategy for lunch every day. Structural forces are more powerful than individual commitment. Only when leaders courageously meet the challenge of structural change head-on can they make their vision a reality. Systems have a powerful immune system that seeks homeostasis or equilibrium, and they push back hard when change is introduced. This tendency to resist change helps to ensure the survival of the system; it also makes systems difficult to change. As Warren Bennis writes: "The reason why so many experiments in change fail is that the leaders have failed to take into account the strong undertow of cultural (structural) forces. Leaders who fail to take their social architecture into account and yet try to change their organizations resemble nothing so much as Canute, the legendary Danish monarch who stood on the beach

and commanded the waves to stand still as proof of his power” (Bennis, 2009).

Again, *structure determines performance*. Individually and organizationally, you are designed perfectly for the performance you are getting. Significant changes in individual and collective performance must first take place at the level of structural design. Since organizational and societal systems are created at the level of collective consciousness that created them, personal transformation in the level of Mind of individuals must precede transformation in organizational and societal structures. When organizational structures are designed at a higher order of complexity and performance than an individual’s consciousness, they encourage individual consciousness to develop to that same order of complexity. Thus, systemic and personal transformations are interdependent.

In the Reactive Mind, we react to fix problems. This strategy is wholly inadequate for redesigning systems. Structures are not changed by attempting to “fix” the problems that are arising from inadequate design. To use another metaphor, the disease is not cured by attempting to resolve its symptoms. Only changes to underlying structure can, in the long run, lead to significantly different outcomes.

What changes systems is *leveraged action*: strategically focused action aimed at particular points of leverage that may be far removed in time and space from the symptoms that infuriate us at the moment. These points of leverage are where we get a multiplied return in improved performance on our efforts at change. Finding *leverage points* requires us to see and explore the dynamic “system-ness” of our current reality. When we create new vision, we establish a creative tension between our current level of performance and our envisioned results. In holding this tension over time, we are more likely to see the systemic structure of current reality, not just symptoms and problems. We need to resist reacting to the hot or loud symptoms closest at hand, to focus attention on redesigning the system that can more naturally manifest the vision, and to live with the anxiety of not responding to all the problems as we search for leverage. This capacity arises naturally on Creative Mind and is beyond the design capacity of Reactive Mind.

The ability to not react to problems and symptoms, hold creative tension over time, use intuition to find leverage in the midst of unfathomable complexity, and have the courage it takes to authentically advocate for fundamental change in structures is why Reactive Mind is incapable of

Systemic Thinking and Design. Creative Mind is required. Integral Mind is preferred. Brian Hall suggests that the Visionary Strategic capability matures as Creative Mind evolves and opens into Systems Awareness (Hall, 2006). Systems Awareness, thinking, and design begin to emerge in the late Creative Stage of Development and reach maturity at the Integral Stage. Learning about and practicing Systems Thinking evolves Creative Mind into Integral Mind.

The *Systems Awareness* dimension is highly correlated (.65) to the Stage of Development out of which the leader is operating. The more mature the leader's Structure of Mind, the more likely it is that they are systemically aware. *Systems Awareness* is the dimension on the LCP most highly correlated to *Leadership Effectiveness* as seen by bosses (.81). When CEOs evaluate the leaders who work for them, they most want to see a leader who is thinking systemically, has the big picture, understands the relationship between the business environment and business, and redesigns systems to solve multiple problems at once to achieve higher performance. It is little wonder that Systems Awareness is also strongly correlated to Business Performance (.57) and to Achieving (.88). Systems Awareness is a Creative Leadership capability required to lead change.

One of leadership's primary roles in executing the vision is as an architect of structure. Architects do not do the construction; they guide the process. Senior leaders ensure that processes are in place so that the organization learns to think systemically and to redesign itself over time. It does not mean that senior leaders do the redesign and then require others to adapt to new roles and processes. The real challenge is to develop a change strategy that gets broad-based involvement in the ongoing renewal of the system. In addition, the deeper work of leadership development needs to go on side-by-side with system redesign. When the Leadership Development Agenda is integrated into a well-conceived strategy for redesigning whole systems, visions become reality. People grow and translate that growth directly into organizational improvement.

This systems architect role of leadership requires courage. People may ignore or disagree with your vision, but when you address the system, you must be prepared for conflict. The underpinning of any tangible structure is an invisible structure of thought, belief, philosophy, or theology. Tangible structures simply mirror the thinking, assumptions, and beliefs that gave birth to them. Changing tangible structures, therefore, almost

always confronts the thought and identity structures to which people currently adhere. This is why structural change is often so tenaciously resisted. It upsets the apple cart.

Rollo May states: "Whenever there is a breakthrough of a significant idea . . . [it] will destroy what a lot of people believe is essential to the survival of their intellectual and spiritual world... As Picasso remarked, 'Every act of creation is first of all an act of destruction.' The breakthrough carries with it also an element of anxiety. For it not only broke down my previous hypothesis, it shook my self-world relationship. At such a time I find myself having to seek a new foundation, the existence of which I as yet do not know" (May, 1975).

Structure change is both conflictual and ambiguous. No one has answers because systems are so complex. Moving forward in ambiguity, while challenging the cherished thinking that built the old order creates conflict. Such conflict, compassionately engaged in, is a sign of life. It is the process by which visions get tested and improved (or changed) and through which the old structures evolve and become new. The leader is at the forefront of the controversy and must be willing to be a controversial figure.

The ambiguous and controversial nature of the change agent role brings the leader up against all the previous practices. Systems evolution happens in the presence of purposeful vision. Design innovations and leverage are discovered as much by intuition as by rational analysis. It takes the courage to engage in the authentic dialogue needed to forward the vision, find leverage, and implement fundamental structural change. There is no safe, risk-free way to do this and so, as Creative leaders, we must be able to see through our fears in order to refrain from reacting to symptoms, returning to old Reactive behavior patterns that are likely to stymie progress, and stay the course in the midst of pressures to compromise.

#### **PATH OF MASTERING LEADERSHIP**

There is no safe way to be great and no short cut to greatness. Boot camp is often required. These six practices, if practiced as ongoing disciplines, reliably evolve the mind from Reactive to Creative and beyond: These practices are interdependent. They each build on the others and