

Innovative

Stories of people improving the way their organization runs.

Management



LEADERSHIP AND MANAGING THOUGHT

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Leadership and Managing Thought

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Author

Have you noticed that there are lots of books, schools, courses, and teaching about management and leadership? Have you also noticed there are many complaints in the world about leadership and management? Do you find that curious? Since there are so many people writing and teaching and speaking about leadership and management, why do we not have better leadership and management in the world? Does it seem that instead of getting better leadership and management we just get more books and speeches about leading and managing? Do you wonder why?

Do we know what the real need is?

One of the most familiar and popular processes used in management today is the PDCA Cycle. It was developed by Dr. Walter Shewhart, at Bell Labs in the early twentieth century, to more clearly understand and manage variation in production. The cycle was widely popularized by Dr. W. Edwards Deming in the mid-to-late twentieth century. PDCA is about Planning what you're going to do, Doing it, Checking-in on how things are going (with appropriate measurements), and then studying and Acting on the results to standardize those things that went well (and that you want to continue doing well), while at the same time deciding what changes and improvements you want to make, which then moves you along into planning, in a continuous cycle of Plan, Do, Check, Act. Of course, the assumption and hope is that the cycle is moving us in the right direction.

Is the PDCA Cycle the right answer?

This all seems to be pretty much common sense, right? But does the practical application of this PDCA process typically begin at what is really the beginning? Is something being left out? Does something occur prior to "P" (i.e., before the start of planning)?

Does anything happen prior to PDCA?

What may be implicit and assumed—but rarely, if ever, specifically mentioned—in the PDCA Cycle is something we really need to make explicit at an early stage of learning how to lead and manage. It is *thinking*. And not only thinking, but carefully paying attention to what we're thinking, and how we're thinking. It really isn't good enough to just tell ourselves, and others, what we think, and then exert power and influence to rush quickly into getting on with telling and planning and doing.

For example, are there any underlying and unexamined thoughts, assumptions, and beliefs that might tend to move the planning process in certain directions and prevent it from moving in other directions? Can they be surfaced and communicated and tested for rightness?

Example

If underlying assumptions and thinking are brought up, can they be challenged or would that be thought of as an inappropriate or aggressive response to a person because of our widespread belief that a person (including our self) is his or her thoughts? In other words, is it possible for us to consider our own thoughts as being something separate from our self (i.e., that they are just thoughts that I am holding at the moment and my thoughts are not me because I can let them go and get other

Example, continued

thoughts that serve me better)? What if the answers to those questions are yes? What would our feelings and thoughts and behaviors be after that? How would we manage our lives and work in these circumstances?

Knowing
the background

If we really care about the outcome of our planning and doing, and the quality of our relationships, we have to be aware of how we are thinking, and why we are thinking the way we are, because that is what influences what we will see and feel and think and do. There is actually a lot going on in the “background” of our minds as we are living and making decisions and experiencing life. Learning to pay more attention to that background is of major importance in improving our ability to lead and manage and achieve the desired results.

There is a quality
of thinking

The fact is that our ability to lead and manage anything in life depends on how well we are thinking. To cite an example, if we want to see the results of our thinking we just have to look at the way we see the world. It really is that simple, though we may not want to believe that. Doing something about it, such as honestly examining one’s thinking, seeing what one’s thinking is producing, and then making changes in thinking to create what we really want and need, is harder.

Leading and managing is a process, not an event

A fuzzy front end

Let’s begin with what is most important and often not apparent. First, leading and managing is a process. Second, the process does not start with developing goals, plans, and strategies, or with making decisions, setting priorities, developing budgets, and determining tactics. All of that comes later.

What comes first is what we may call our “fuzzy-front-end.” We can call it that because we generally don’t focus on it and it appears to be fuzzy when we do try to look in that direction. We don’t focus on it because it is something that we generally just take for granted and haven’t learned to explore and take seriously.

That something is the source and pipeline for how we approach all of the Plan Do Check Act decisions that we make. Like an underground reservoir, there is something that flows from somewhere deep within us. This fuzzy-front-end involves our thinking processes and how we live our lives through the energy of thought, mind, and consciousness. We may not pay much attention to this fuzzy-front-end because we have not learned to see it as a process that we can control. Instead, for example, we may go through life thinking that our thoughts, feelings, attitudes, behavior, and thinking are ourselves. And we gotta be ourselves, so anyone or anything that disagrees with the thoughts that we are holding is challenging our own sense of self!

What if our
thoughts
are not our self?

But what if our current thoughts are simply like the clothes we’ve chosen to put on, and they’re as easy to change as our wardrobe? What if we looked at ourselves in the mirror to see how we like the way we look when we’re wearing those thoughts?

Emerson captured it well when he wrote: “The ancestor of every action is a thought.”

Most people would probably accept that as true, understanding that human beings are thinking beings that use their mental, emotional, and physical abilities to make their way in life. Because of that, it is useful for us to pay careful attention to, and understand, our thoughts and our thinking processes.

Thought precedes action

Three pioneering twentieth-century businessmen and friends—Thomas Edison, Henry Ford, and Harvey Firestone—clearly recognized the importance of paying attention to one's thoughts. Harvey Firestone said, "Thought, not money, is the real business capital." Henry Ford said, "Thinking is the hardest work there is, which is probably the reason why so few engage in it." Thomas Edison said, "There is no expedient to which a man will not go to avoid the labor of thinking." Considering the personal power available to us through our thinking, isn't it surprising that people don't study their thinking and develop it better?

Power from paying attention to thought

The power of our thinking is not only what it enables us to do outwardly, but inwardly, too. William James, the person considered to be the father of Western psychology, came to the realization that: "Man can alter his life by altering his thinking." Clearly, the individual that we call our self is a person that with varying awareness of thought, mind, and consciousness, can choose to create the particular human being that he or she wants to be, and to change what he or she wants to change.

Quality of leadership begins with quality of thought

The notion of improving quality is frequently encouraged in business and industry, and this generally involves a focus on production and service processes. It is, however, just as important to pay attention to internal quality. The quality of leadership and management begins with the quality of thought; it ends with the quality of words said and deeds done. In other words, the way we can distinguish high-quality leadership and management from low-quality leadership and management is by looking at the results. If the results of one's leadership and management are not of the desired quality, one must look to see what thoughts and words are being put into the thought-stream to begin with.

Internal quality precedes external results

Benjamin Zander is a popular keynote speaker on leadership and management at large conferences for professional and business leaders. Professionally, he is a conductor of adult and youth symphony orchestras, and a teacher of music interpretation, in Boston, Massachusetts. To attend a Zander-led concert is to enjoy a wonderful musical experience and yet, as he says, he is the only one in the orchestra who doesn't make a sound. To see and hear him speak, and to experience his leading and coaching people, and managing a musical performance, is to understand that performance excellence begins with thinking and attitude—the thinking and the attitude of the leader and the thinking and attitude of the performers, both individually and collectively. It all begins with how everyone is thinking about themselves, their instruments, the music, the leader, the customers (audience), and each other.

Example—Leading and managing involves complex relationships

I will try to convey the sense of all this more clearly by using an example of Zander's, which is in his book, *The Art of Possibility* (Harvard Business School Press, 2000). It's a great

**Example—
Leading and
managing involves
complex
relationships,
continued**

story in many ways, but for us here and now it is especially relevant because we can get from it a sense of both the stated and the underlying thinking that was going on.

Throughout the rehearsal process of Mahler's Ninth Symphony with the Philharmonia Orchestra of London, I had been aware that one of the violinists had been sitting in an overly relaxed, almost slouched position. By the time of the dress rehearsal, her posture, still unchanged, was in noticeable contrast to the other players, who were now fired up and physically demonstrative. Although her playing was completely professional, the gut-wrenching intensity of Mahler's final testament made her indifferent manner, dispiriting in any performance, seem particularly incongruous in this one.

At the end of the rehearsal, I went up to her and asked whether anything was amiss. Her response surprised me. "Are these your bowings?" she inquired. When I told her that these were the bowings we had used in our last performance in Boston, she commented, "The music goes too fast for all these bow changes. I just cannot get into the string." Since I know how difficult it is to apply a fast-moving bow to the string with enough pressure to make a big sound, I suggested that perhaps we should take a slower tempo. But she was taken aback. "Don't be ridiculous," she remonstrated, "you should perform it the way you feel it. But you did ask."

This was a revelation to me. A player's outward demeanor, her whole physical appearance, even her mood, were connected to her comfort with the bowings! One should remember that the conductor of the orchestra is not actually playing the music, however attuned he or she is to each instrument—and as a string player, I consider myself particularly sensitive to the physical motions of the bow. However, in my eternal quest to find the right tempo for the music, in my desire to reveal the aching, arching long lines and the turbulent frenzy of Mahler's expression, I had probably been led to move the tempo somewhat faster, thereby sacrificing the player's vital kinesthetic relationship of bow to string. The cost was the discomfort and finally the resignation of a valued member of the violin section of one of the world's greatest orchestras. That was too high a price.

My usual routine on the day of a concert is to go to my room after the morning's rehearsal and take a long sleep, then shower, eat two English muffins and a scrambled egg with some nice strong English tea, and return to the hall to give my customary preconcert talk. This time, however, it all changed. I went back to my hotel room and spent the afternoon with Mahler's score, imagining how it would feel to play each passage on the violin. It was obviously not all too fast. Maybe this passage? Maybe that one? At the concert that evening, I slightly broadened each of the passages that I had decided might have presented a problem for Tanya's bow.

During the performance, I frequently glanced in her direction, and there in her seat was an impassioned, unabashedly demonstrative player totally enraptured by the music. Although we would have played a more than respectable performance without the full participation of Tanya, the engagement of that extra 1% caused a disproportionate breakthrough because once she and I were in relationship, I, too, could be fully present. When I had been viewing her as an unimportant casualty, I had to pretend it did not matter that for some reason she was not engaged. Meanwhile, I wasted energy both watching and ignoring her.

After the concert Tanya was nowhere to be found, but a few weeks later I decided to track her down to thank her for the last-minute coaching that had helped us give such a stirring and satisfying performance. I obtained her phone number from the Philharmonia office and called one morning from Boston to the London suburb where she lived.

Tanya seemed audibly shaken when I identified myself. She confessed that she had never received a call from a conductor at home before. She responded with delight as I expressed my deep gratitude for her contribution to our performance of Mahler's Ninth. It emerged that Mahler was her favorite composer, that she was passionate about all his work, and that the performance we had done together was one of the high points of her musical life.

The lesson I learned is that the player who looks least engaged may be the most committed member of the group. A cynic, after all, is a passionate person who does not want to be disappointed again. Tanya, the Mahlerian par excellence, had decided to "sit out" that performance because it was going to disappoint her again. I learned that the secret is not to speak to a person's cynicism, but to speak to her passion.

When I initially approached Tanya—not to reprimand a recalcitrant member of the team for not pulling her weight, but rather with the attitude, the certain knowledge, that she loved the music, that she wanted the concert to be a success, that she wanted to "get into the string" with her bow—I gave her an A. My question to her, "Is there anything amiss?" was a question to

someone I imagined to be completely committed to the project we were engaged in together, someone who, for whatever reason, was having a hard time.

When I returned to the Philharmonia the next season, Tanya greeted me enthusiastically. As a result of my experience with this violinist, it seemed that I had a warmer relationship with all the players there. During the break at one of the rehearsals of Mahler's Second, after we had been working on the subtly lilting, Viennese-waltz-like movement, I slipped into the chair beside my new friend. "A tiny bit slow, don't you think?" she murmured.

Perhaps you can see from this story that our lives aren't a result of just our own individual thinking, competence, vision, and sense of mission in creating performance excellence, although they are important parts of it, nor is it primarily a result of the thinking and demands of the leader, although that's important, too. Performance excellence emerges from the passionate performance of oneself, each team member, and the team as a whole, and their relationship with the audience—the customer, by whatever name one uses in one's work (i.e., client, patient, constituent, student, etc.). It is, ultimately, a quality of life issue. Quality of performance, quality of life, include everyone's competence, of course, but everything it is rooted in the thinking, feelings, beliefs, attitudes—and the relationships—of each person with themselves, with each member of the team, with the leader, with their tools and environment, with their customer, and with the work being performed.

Leading and managing involves complex relationships, continued

The computer industry uses the phrase, "garbage in, garbage out." It means that you will never get good results out of a system if errors are put in. That kind of thing happens in leading and managing, too. The quality of the outcome is dependent on the quality of the input. Now the logic of that statement is probably clear, easily understood, even common sense to you. Yet how often do we sadly or angrily thrash around in a garbage-rich downstream location, and rarely make a trip back upstream to change the inputs, to stop putting garbage into the system to begin with. In fact, we don't even think about it. We may, instead, just look around for someone or something to blame for the unwanted results. We may just order someone to "Clean up this mess!" Why is that?

Garbage in, garbage out, happens in thought systems, too

How much do we know about our thought processes?

As we grew up, we may have simply been told: "Think about it!" "Do your best!" But we may not have been taught about thinking or about how to think about our thinking. We may have grown up with lots of other people telling us what to think and say and do—parents, teachers, peers, media, entertainers, government agents, religious leaders, lawyers, business officials, economists, politicians, marketers, doctors, bosses, etc. We were taught to believe that these people were experts and to believe what they told us. And then we were tested. If we said that we believed it, and demonstrated to them that we did believe, they would use their power and resources to reward us. If we disagreed, they had power to punish us. So we learned, over time, to conform to the thinking of these power wielders. That's what the violinist in Ben Zander's story was originally doing, but then Zander used his power of attention, and mindfulness, along with his position power, and made an effort to turn things around and make life better for himself and everyone else at the same time. That is synergy and serendipity, rolled-up together, improving quality of life.

Synergy from 360-degree caring

**Conformance
to habit and
paradigm**

Conforming to the expectations of others often becomes a habit and then we tend to stop consciously thinking about it. This conforming usually does not include learning how to see, understand, accept, and develop one's creative, independent, and critical thinking. We're taught to live in other peoples' social and scientific paradigms, complete with prefabricated walls and floors and ceilings, sometimes even without windows.

A big part of our development, consequently, tends to be about being taught to live within bounded physical and social systems. We are expected to stay within the boundaries set by others who tend to resist changing those boundaries that they have become comfortable with, get rewarded in, and probably have built very strong habits, thoughts, and beliefs about. From there, it takes some personal strength, will-power, courage, and self-confidence to recognize and break out of ineffective and obsolete paradigms, and create new ones.

What are we learning about psychology?

Let us now turn to and examine some leading-edge movements in mind and thought that may be influencing the direction and content of psychology.

What is thought?

Do you believe that you and your thoughts are the same thing? What if the thoughts that you are thinking about are not you? What if the thoughts you have are "just thoughts," possibilities floating on an ocean of life, and are not *you* until you make them a part of you? In other words, what if you are more than your thoughts? What if a thought is merely a resource that you can choose and use—a possibility that you've become conscious of through your mind, and not necessarily a part of you until you choose to pay attention to it, hold on to it, and then act on it because you think it's useful (or inevitable)? What if you can let go of some thoughts because you think or feel they're unhealthy and you don't want them? Do you ever think that you can even laugh at some thoughts as if they are pests, or a bunch of clowns running around at a circus?

**Paying attention to
psychology**

One place where the thinking of many leaders and managers has been influenced is in college where many, if not most, college students take at least one psychology course. I took a number of courses in psychology as I was learning to be a teacher and getting my Bachelor of Science degree in education. I can still remember the professor in my first psychology course saying that the purpose of psychology was the "prediction and control of human behavior." The obvious message was that we, as teachers, were supposed to be learning how to predict and control the behavior of our students.

I happened to find that notion distasteful. I was not interested in being predicted or controlled. I was not interested in spending my time predicting and controlling the behavior of others. My interest was along the lines of our university motto: "Let each become all s/he is capable of being." I took that motto to be a mission that would include me and my students.

I also came to learn that there are differences in thought between scholars in the

Eastern and Western hemispheres. The preponderance of thought and philosophy in the Western hemisphere seemed to be more about humans being in control of the world and their destiny, while in the Eastern hemisphere it was believed that human beings were subject to their destiny. Perhaps the real world involves some of both—in some ways we are subject to our environment and are not in control, and in other ways we do have some control over our destiny. And it is wisdom that lets us know the difference.

Paying attention to psychology, continued

In the United States, scholars taught that the study of psychology basically originated at Harvard in the late 1800s with the work of William James. In the East, the study of human behavior was known to have originated in India more than 2,500 years ago, and the Buddhist monasteries were universities for advanced studies.

I also learned that, similar to the field of management, there is no single agreed-upon theory of psychology in the US. There are many theories or schools of psychology, just as there are many theories of management.

There is no single psychology

In recent years a health-based and positive-outlook model has begun to emerge in psychology, and this is a direction that leaders and managers would do well to consider following. Let's begin with the new Positive Psychology Center at the University of Pennsylvania.

Positive psychology

Martin E.P. Seligman, Ph.D., is director of the Positive Psychology Center at the University of Pennsylvania. He is currently Fox Leadership Professor of Psychology at the University and former president of the American Psychological Association. His bibliography includes about 200 articles and twenty books, including the best seller *Learned Optimism*. His newest book, published in 2002, is *Authentic Happiness*, about which Daniel Goleman, author of *Emotional Intelligence*, writes: "At last, psychology gets serious about glee, fun, and happiness. Martin Seligman has given us a gift – a practical map for the perennial quest for a flourishing life." And so, since I believe that all of us, as individuals and as leaders and managers of organizations, want our own lives, and the lives of our organizations, to flourish, it ought to be a good thing if we focused on what can make that possible.

In the preface to *Authentic Happiness*, Professor Seligman writes:

For the last half century psychology has been consumed with a single topic only—mental illness—and has done fairly well with it. But this progress has come at a high cost. Relieving the states that make life miserable, it seems, has made building the states that make life worth living less of a priority. But people want more than just to correct their weaknesses. They want lives imbued with meaning, and not just to fidget until they die. The time has finally arrived for a science that seeks to understand positive emotion, build strength and virtue, and provide guideposts for finding what Aristotle called the "good life."

The pursuit of happiness is enshrined in the Declaration of Independence as a right of all Americans, as well as on the self-improvement shelves of every American bookstore. Yet the scientific evidence makes it seem unlikely that you can change your level of happiness in any sustainable way. It suggests that we each have a fixed range for happiness, just as we do for weight. And just as dieters almost always regain the weight they lose, sad people don't become lastingly happy, and happy people don't become lastingly sad.

New research into happiness, though, demonstrates that it can be lastingly increased. And a new movement, Positive Psychology, shows how you can come to live in the upper reaches of your set range of happiness.

Positive Psychology has three pillars: First is the study of positive emotion. Second is the study of

**Positive
psychology,
continued**

positive traits, foremost among them the strengths and virtues, but also the “abilities” such as intelligence and athleticism. Third is the study of positive institutions, such as democracy, strong families, and free inquiry, that support the virtues, which in turn support the positive emotions. The positive emotions of confidence, hope, and trust, for example, serve us best not when life is easy, but when life is difficult. In times of trouble, understanding and shoring up the positive institutions, institutions like democracy, strong family, and free press, are of immediate importance. In times of trouble, understanding and building the strengths and virtues—among them, valor, perspective, integrity, equity, loyalty—may become more urgent than in good times.

**The mission of the
Positive
Psychology
Center**

Seligman says the mission of the center is to understand and build the strengths and virtues that enable individuals and communities to thrive. It is believed that people want more than an end to suffering. People want to lead meaningful and fulfilling lives, to cultivate what is best within themselves, to enhance their experiences of love, work, and play. The center’s leadership sees an opportunity to create a science and a profession that not only heals psychological damage but also builds strengths to enable people to achieve the best things in life.

Understanding positive emotions entails the study of contentment with the past, happiness in the present, and hope for the future. Understanding positive individual traits consists of the study of the strengths and virtues: the capacity for love and work, courage, compassion, resilience, creativity, curiosity, integrity, self-knowledge, moderation, self-control, and wisdom. Understanding positive institutions entails the study of the strengths that foster better communities, such as justice, responsibility, civility, parenting, nurturance, work ethic, leadership, teamwork, purpose, and tolerance.

**The goals of
Positive
Psychology**

Some of the goals of Positive Psychology are to build a science that supports:

- Families and schools that allow children to flourish
- Workplaces that foster satisfaction and high productivity
- Communities that encourage civic engagement
- Therapists who identify and nurture their patients’ strengths
- The teaching of Positive Psychology
- Dissemination of Positive Psychology interventions in schools, corporations, government, hospitals, and communities

For more information, please see the websites:

- Positive Psychology Center, University of Pennsylvania (<http://www.ppc.sas.upenn.edu/>)
 - Authentic Happiness (<http://www.authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu/>)
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Meaning and Happiness

**Fulfillment
involves meaning**

There are a couple of issues mentioned in Seligman’s work that could use some clarification: 1. The notion that people want a life “imbued with meaning.” The notion of “the pursuit of happiness.”

The late Viktor E. Frankl, M.D., Ph.D., was professor of neurology and psychiatry at the University of Vienna, and author of the best-selling book, *Man’s Search for Meaning*. In another of his books, *The Will To Meaning* (Meridian 1988), Dr. Frankl speaks to the nature of human fulfillment and the need to feel that one’s life has a vital sense of positive meaning:

Man is reaching out for, and actually reaching, finally attaining, the world—a world, that is, which is replete with other beings to encounter, and meanings to fulfill.

Such a view is profoundly opposed to those motivational theories, which are based on the homeo-

stasis principle. These theories depict man as if he were a closed system. According to them, man is basically concerned with maintaining or restoring an inner equilibrium, and to this end with the reduction of tensions. In the final analysis, this is also assumed to be the goal of the gratification of drives and the satisfaction of needs (Page 31).

In the final analysis, the status drive or the will to power, on one hand, and the pleasure principle or, as one might term it as well, the will to pleasure, on the other hand, are mere derivatives of man's primary concern, that is, his will to meaning.... What I call the will to meaning could be defined as the basic striving of man to find and fulfill meaning and purpose.

But what is the justification of calling the will to power and the will to pleasure mere derivatives of the will to meaning? Simply that pleasure, rather than being an end of man's striving, is actually the effect of meaning fulfillment. And power, rather than being an end in itself, is actually the means to an end; if man is to live out his will to meaning, a certain amount of power—say, financial power—by and large will be an indispensable prerequisite. Only if one's original concern with meaning fulfillment is frustrated is one either content with power or intent on pleasure.

Both happiness and success are mere substitutes for fulfillment, and that is why the pleasure principle as well as the will to power are mere derivatives of the will to meaning (Page 35-6).

There is one additional point it is useful to mention before moving on. Dr. Frankl is aware of the popular hierarchy of needs developed by Abraham Maslow, and he writes about Maslow's concept of self-actualization that is at the top of his hierarchy:

Self-actualization is not man's ultimate destination. It is not even his primary intention. Self-actualization, if made an end in itself, contradicts the self-transcendent quality of human existence. Like happiness, self-actualization is an effect, the effect of meaning fulfillment. Only to the extent to which man fulfills a meaning out there in the world, does he fulfill himself. If he sets out to actualize himself rather than fulfill a meaning, self-actualization immediately loses its justification. I would say self-actualization is the unintentional effect of life's intentionality.

My contention that man loses any ground for self-actualization if he cares for it is perfectly in accordance with Maslow's own view, since he admits himself that the "business of self-actualization" can best be carried out "via a commitment to an important job." As the boomerang comes back to the hunter who has thrown it only if it has missed its target, man, too, returns to himself and is intent upon self-actualization only if he has missed his mission (Page 38).

Thought, Mind, and Consciousness

Earlier I raised the question about how we think about the thoughts we have. Do we think that our thoughts are us? Or is it possible that the thoughts we become conscious of are just part of a continuous stream of possibilities streaming by our mind's eye, which we can choose, focus on, take hold of, and then use, or let go of, in making our reality, our way in life? There are people in the mental health field who believe that we each create our psychological reality by using three principles: thought, mind, and consciousness.

The West Virginia Initiative for Innate Health is a program of the West Virginia University School of Medicine. Like the Positive Psychology Center at the University of Pennsylvania, the West Virginia Initiative for Innate Health seeks to build a health-based science that goes beyond the typical medical-school model of an illness-treatment science of human health.

William F. Pettit, M.D., is the Medical Director of the Initiative and a professor of Behavioral Medicine and Psychiatry at the West Virginia University School of Medicine. He has more than twenty years of experience in psychiatric practice grounded in the principles of Mind, Consciousness and Thought. Dr. Pettit's vision for the Initiative for Innate Health is to awaken mental health across the health disciplines and elevate global thinking about the possibilities for human well-being.

**Fulfillment
involves meaning,
continued**

**West Virginia
Initiative for
Innate Health**

**West Virginia
Initiative for
Innate Health,**
continued

The Initiative states that it is dedicated to awakening the natural resiliency and capacity for well-being in all people, and that Health Realization /Innate Health is the heart of its work. It is based on three principles (thought, mind, and consciousness) that explain how the human experience is created from the inside out. The institute's founders believe that an understanding of those principles allows people to regain a quiet mind and a positive state of being and reconnect with their natural wisdom, common sense, and peace of mind.

Innate Health is understood to be the unrealized psychological aspect of one's immune system. It is resiliency. It is as natural to people as the physical immune system that we count on to heal our cuts and bruises and fight off the flu.

The Institute's personnel believe that all people come into life with a natural ability to regain their psychological balance and sense of well-being. They believe our minds ordinarily work in a quiet, positive state as we express an innate intelligence that we experience and take for granted as wisdom, common sense, and peace of mind. When we get caught up in negative thinking or struggle to fight upsetting thinking, we temporarily override or block our natural thinking and positive feelings and find ourselves lost or stuck in stress and distress.

The Institute teaches that we can temporarily lose sight of our innate health, but we can never lose the ability to regain access to it and resume a constructive flow of present-moment thoughts to guide us through life. The institute teaches that Innate health is "like the sun in the sky; it is not always visible to us, and sometimes after prolonged bad weather we may begin to think we might never see it again—but it is always there and we can count on it."

No matter what we are doing, the institute proposes, we are the thinkers creating our own experience of life as it happens. Although it is now widely understood that people's thinking creates their perception of reality, it is not widely understood that recognizing the creative process that generates thinking holds the key to mental health and stability. There is a prevailing view that we live in an outside-in world in which people's thinking "happens" because of circumstances.

Innate Health, in the institute's view, suggests an entirely different explanation of the relationship between thinking and experience, an inside-out view. Understanding how we think and that we think changes our relationship to what we think (the contents of our thoughts). Our experience of circumstances varies according to how we are holding and using our thinking, not according to the circumstances. As that understanding grows, it opens increasingly sustained access to innate health.

**Three principles:
Mind,
Consciousness,
and Thought**

The Institute teaches that there are three universal principles that can be used to explain the process of human thinking and behavior: Mind, Consciousness and Thought.

Simply put, Mind is the energy of life, the fact that we are alive. Thought is our ability to create forms or ideas from that energy. Consciousness is our ability to experience what we think as real. In other words, we are born thinking. We think our way through life. We see life through our thoughts as we go, and the quality of our thinking determines the quality of our lives (how we see things moment-to-moment).

Awakening to those principles sets people free from attachment to the contents of any particular thinking with the knowledge that thoughts naturally come and go. It frees people to see their state of mind, their felt response to perceived reality, as an indicator of the moment-to-moment quality of their thinking. A stressed or negative feeling state or state of mind produces a low mood and increasing tension, a feeling of insecurity, or dis-ease. That feeling warns us to allow our thinking

to quiet. As people learn to trust their state of mind as a guide through life, they catch themselves earlier and earlier in the process of insecure thinking that can lead to chronic stressful states of mind and worse. Recognizing the signal to quiet down, people can leave negative thoughts alone and allow them to pass. As our minds quiet, our feeling changes and our perceived reality changes. We naturally regain our ability to address life circumstances and challenges from a wiser, more optimistic and hopeful perspective.

**Three principles:
Mind,
Consciousness,
and Thought,
continued**

Dr. Pettit believes that once people recognize that innate health is constant and always accessible, they are able to navigate the ups and downs of their thinking without frightening themselves with their most negative thinking or deceiving themselves with their most positive thinking. We are able to be grateful in moments of exhilaration and graceful in moments of distress, and to experience the rich landscape of all our thinking as the gift of life. To learn more about this, visit the website: <http://www.hsc.wvu.edu/wviih/index.asp>.

These innovative programs in human and social behavior are relatively new, reporting successes over the past twenty-five years or so from a small group of professionals. But while change in technology and technical systems can be swift, change in human thinking and social systems can be slow. An expert will see a new technological product and be able to accept and use it immediately. That rarely happens in the behavioral, medical, economic, political, or other social sciences. In these fields, an expert will see something new and immediately doubt and even oppose it. It can often take years and decades for a “new” idea to be “proven” and become acceptable to the rule makers in that field. So if these ideas of Positive Psychology and Health Realization appeal to you, you might want to take some time to investigate and learn more about them. You may recall that the world’s leading medical doctors laughed at Pasteur when he proposed the germ theory of infection and urged his colleagues to wash their hands before treating a patient. For a number of years after that patients continued to be infected by doctors, and some died, because doctors didn’t believe Pasteur. Even today, a leading cause of infection in hospitals is the lack of hand washing by caregivers. So the world may well accumulate lots of proof and acceptance of positive psychology and health realization during the next twenty or thirty years. The question is how long leaders want to wait before testing it for themselves.

Conclusion

Mind and Brain

In their 2002 book, *The Mind and the Brain* [HarperCollins], UCLA research psychiatrist Jeffrey M. Schwartz, M.D., and *Wall Street Journal* science writer Sharon Begley (with collaboration from physicist Henry Stapp about how the science of quantum mechanics better informs us about mind-brain possibilities than does the limited knowledge of classic physics), writes: “What we now know about quantum physics gives us reason to believe that conscious thoughts and volitions can, and do, play a powerful causal role in the world, including influencing the activity of the brain. Mind and matter, in other words, can interact.”

**The complexity
of choice**

Modern neuroscience is now demonstrating what [Harvard philosopher/psychologist William] James suspected more than a century ago: that attention is a mental state (with physically describable brain state correlates) that allows us, moment by moment, to “choose and sculpt how our ever-changing minds will work, [to] choose who we will be the next moment in a very real sense.... Those choices are left embossed in physical form on our material selves.”

The complexity
of choice,
continued

Schwartz and Begley quote the twentieth-century German monk, Nynaponika Thera, who coined the term Bare Attention to provide a modern description of the process of mindful awareness, the process of observing one's own inner experience: "Bare Attention is the clear and single-minded awareness of what actually happens to us and in us at the successive moments of perception."

Neuroplasticity

Dr. Schwartz speaks of the burgeoning field of neuroplasticity, which is about the ability of neurons to forge new connections in the brain, to blaze new paths through the cortex, even to assume new roles.

The willful focusing of attention is not only a psychological intervention. It is also a biological one. Through changes in the way we focus attention, we have the capacity to make choices about what mental direction we will take; more than that, we also change, in scientifically demonstrable ways, the systematic functioning of neural circuitry. How? By volitional effort, which is the effort of attention. The power of attention, and thus the power of mind, reshapes neural circuitry and cortical maps—and does so by means of what I call Directed Mental Force. We now have a scientific basis for asserting that the exercise of the will, the effort of attention, can systematically change the way the brain works.

We generally think of will as being expressed in the behaviors we exhibit: whether we choose this path or that one, whether we make this decision or that. Even when will is viewed introspectively, we often conceptualize it in terms of an externally pursued goal. But I think the truly important manifestation of will, the one from which our decisions and behaviors flow, is the choice we make about the quality and direction of attentional focus. Mindful or unmindful, wise or unwise—no choice we make is more basic, or important, than this one. (*The Mind and the Brain*, Page 368-9.)

It is the life we lead that creates the brain we have. (*The Mind and the Brain*, Page 373.)

Awakening to the possibilities

Mind, thought,
and systems

We can now begin to consider the practical applications of how we work with thought in our lives and work—individually, and collectively as part of ever-widening sub-systems in society and the world. I will begin by using part of a speech that anthropologist Gregory Batson (1904-1980) gave at the Second Conference on Mental Health in Asia and the Pacific, in 1969, which is also published in his book, *Steps To An Ecology of Mind* (University of Chicago Press, 2000, pages 490-495).

[We have] a broad conception of the world in which we live—a new way of thinking about what a mind is. Let me list what seem to me to be those essential minimal characteristics of a system, which I will accept as characteristics of mind:

1. The system shall operate with and upon differences.
2. The system shall consist of closed loops or networks of pathways along which differences, and transforms of differences, shall be transmitted. (What is transmitted on a neuron is not an impulse, it is news of a difference.)
3. Many events within the system shall be energized by the respondent part rather than by impact from the triggering part.
4. The system shall show self-correctiveness in the direction of homeostasis and/or in the direction of runaway. Self-correctiveness implies trial and error.

Now, these minimal characteristics of mind are generated whenever and wherever the appropriate circuit structure of causal loops exists. Mind is a necessary, an inevitable function of the appropriate complexity, wherever that complexity occurs.

But that complexity occurs in a great many other places besides the inside of my head and yours. We'll come later to the question of whether a man or a computer has a mind. For the moment, let me say that a redwood forest or a coral reef with its aggregate of organisms interlocking in their relationships has the necessary general structure. The energy for the responses of every organism is supplied from its metabolism, and the total system acts self-correctively in various ways. A human society is like this with closed loops of causation. Every human organization shows both the self-corrective characteristic and has the potentiality for runaway.

Now, let us consider for a moment the question of whether a computer thinks. I would state that it does not. What “thinks” and engages in “trial and error” is the man plus the computer plus the environment. And the lines between man, computer, and environment are purely artificial, fictitious lines. They are lines across the pathways along which information or difference is transmitted. They are not boundaries of the thinking system. What thinks is the total system which engages in trial and error, which is man plus environment.

But if you accept self-correctiveness as the criterion of thought or mental process, then obviously there is “thought” going on inside the man at the autonomic level to maintain various internal variables. And similarly, the computer, if it controls its internal temperature, is doing some simple thinking within itself.

Now we begin to see some of the epistemological fallacies of Occidental civilization. In accordance with the general climate of thinking in mid-nineteenth-century England, Darwin proposed a theory of natural selection and evolution in which the unit of survival was either the family line or the species or subspecies or something of the sort. But today it is quite obvious that this is not the unit of survival in the real biological world. The unit of survival is organism plus environment. We are learning by bitter experience that the organism which destroys its environment destroys itself.

If, now, we correct the Darwinian unit of survival to include the environment and the interaction between organism and environment, a very strange and surprising identity emerges: the unit of evolutionary survival turns out to be identical with the unit of mind.

Formerly we thought of a hierarchy of taxa—individual, family line, subspecies, species, etc.—as units of survival. We now see a different hierarchy of units—gene-in-organism, organism-in-environment, ecosystem, etc. Ecology, in the widest sense, turns out to be the study of the interaction and survival of ideas and programs (i.e., differences, complexes of differences, etc.) in circuits.

Let us now consider what happens when you make the epistemological error of choosing the wrong unit: you end up with the species versus the other species around it or versus the environment in which it operates. Man against nature. You end up, in fact, with Kaneohe Bay polluted, Lake Erie a slimy green mess, and “Let’s build bigger atom bombs to kill off the next-door neighbors.” There is an ecology of bad ideas, just as there is an ecology of weeds, and it is characteristic of the system that basic error propagates itself. It branches out like a rooted parasite through the tissues of life, and everything gets into a rather peculiar mess. When you narrow down your epistemology and act on the premise “What interests me is me, or my organization, or my species,” you chop off consideration of other loops of the loop structure. You decide that you want to get rid of the by-products of human life and that Lake Erie will be a good place to put them. You forget that the eco-mental system called Lake Erie is a part of your wider eco-mental system—and that if Lake Erie is driven insane, its insanity is incorporated in the larger system of your thought and experience.

You and I are so deeply acculturated to the idea of “self” and organization and species that it is hard to believe that man might view his relations with the environment in any other way than the way which I have rather unfairly blamed upon the nineteenth-century evolutionists. So I must say a few words about the history of all this.

Anthropologically, it would seem from what we know of the early material, that man in society took clues from the natural world around him and applied those clues in a sort of metaphoric way to the society in which he lived. That is, he identified with or empathized with the natural world around him and took that empathy as a guide for his own social organization and his own theories of his own psychology. This was what is called “totemism.”

In a way, it was all nonsense, but it made more sense than most of what we do today, because the natural world around us really has this general systemic structure and therefore is an appropriate source of metaphor to enable man to understand himself in his social organization.

The next step, seemingly, was to reverse the process and to take clues from himself and apply these to the natural world around him. This was “animism,” extending the notion of personality or mind to mountains, rivers, forests, and such things. This was still not a bad idea in many ways. But the next step was to separate the notion of mind from the natural world, and then you get the notion of gods.

But when you separate mind from the structure in which it is immanent, such as human relationship, the human society, or the ecosystem, you thereby embark, I believe, on fundamental error, which in the end will surely hurt you.

Struggle may be good for your soul up to the moment when to win the battle is easy. When you have an effective enough technology so that you can really act upon your epistemological errors and can create havoc in the world in which you live, then the error is lethal. Epistemological error is all right, it’s fine, up to the point at which you create around yourself a universe in which that error becomes

immanent in monstrous changes of the universe that you have created and now try to live in.

You see, we're not talking about the dear old Supreme Mind of Aristotle, St. Thomas Aquinas, and so on down through ages—the Supreme Mind which was incapable of error and incapable of insanity. We're talking about immanent mind, which is only too capable of insanity, as you all professionally know. This is precisely why you're here. These circuits and balances of nature can only too easily get out of kilter, and they inevitably get out of kilter when certain basic errors of our thought become reinforced by thousands of cultural details.

I don't know how many people today really believe that there is an overall mind separate from the body, separate from the society, and separate from nature. But for those of you who would say that that is all "superstition," I am prepared to wager that I can demonstrate with them in a few minutes that the habits and ways of thinking that went with those superstitions are still in their heads and still determine a large part of their thoughts. The idea that you can see me still governs your thought and action in spite of the fact that you may know intellectually that it is not so. In the same way we are most of us governed by epistemologies that we know to be wrong. Let us consider some of the implications of what I have been saying.

Let us look at how the basic notions are reinforced and: expressed in all sorts of detail of how we behave. The very act that I am monologuing to you—this is a norm of our academic subculture, but the idea that I can teach you, unilaterally, is derivative from the premise that the mind controls the body. And whenever a psychotherapist lapses into unilateral therapy, he is obeying the same premise. I, in fact, standing up in front of you, am performing a subversive act by reinforcing in your minds a piece of thinking which is really nonsense. We all do it all the time because it's built into the detail of our behavior. Notice how I stand while you sit.

The same thinking leads, of course, to theories of control and to theories of power. In that universe, if you do not get what you want, you will blame somebody and establish either a jail or a mental hospital, according to taste, and you will pop them in it if you can identify them. If you cannot identify them, you will say, "It's the system." This is roughly where our kids are nowadays, blaming the establishment, but you know the establishments aren't to blame. They are part of the same error, too.

Then, of course, there is the question of weapons. If you believe in that unilateral world and you think that the other people believe in that world (and you're probably right; they do), then, of course, the thing is to get weapons, hit them hard, and "control" them.

They say that power corrupts; but this, I suspect, is nonsense. What is true is that the idea of power corrupts. Power corrupts most rapidly those who believe in it, and it is they who will want it most. Obviously our democratic system tends to give power to those who hunger for it and gives every opportunity to those who don't want power to avoid getting it. Not a very satisfactory arrangement if power corrupts those who believe in it and want it.

Perhaps there is no such thing as unilateral power. After all, the man "in power" depends on receiving information all the time from outside. He responds to that information just as much as he "causes" things to happen. He must then trim what he says to this information; and then again find out how they are responding. It is an interaction, and not a lineal situation.

But the myth of power is, of course, a very powerful myth and probably most people in this world more or less believe in it. It is a myth which, if everybody believes in it, becomes to that extent self-validating. But it is still epistemological lunacy and leads inevitably to various sorts of disaster.

Last, there is the question of urgency. It is clear now to many people that there are many catastrophic dangers which have grown out of the Occidental errors of epistemology. These range from insecticides to pollution, to atomic fallout, to the possibility of melting the Antarctic ice cap. Above all, our fantastic compulsion to save individual lives has created the possibility of world famine in the immediate future.

Perhaps we have an even chance of getting through the next twenty years with no disaster more serious than the mere destruction of a nation or group of nations.

I believe that this massive aggregation of threats to man and his ecological systems arises out of errors in our habits of thought at deep and partly unconscious levels.

Clearly we have a duty...to achieve clarity in ourselves; and then to look for every sign of clarity in others and to implement them and reinforce them in whatever is sane in them.

And there are patches of sanity still surviving in the world. Much of Oriental philosophy is more sane than anything the West has produced, and some of the inarticulate efforts of our own young people are more sane than the conventions of the establishment.

When we think about leading and managing our lives, and our way in life and work, it can appear to be very complex and demanding, even overwhelming, if we look at it all at once. Yet we know intuitively that it is possible for us to live and learn and work and develop—and to do it well. For some, that means doing small things well. For others, it can be doing big things well.

Albert Einstein is frequently quoted as saying that one can't solve today's problems with the same level of thinking that created them. Perhaps you can understand how our thoughts and thinking and actions combine with those of others, and the whole ecology of the planet, to create our quality of life. And how our thinking and doing is layered upon the thinking and doing of our predecessors. As we dig and excavate, we expose and can see the levels of thinking involved and the results produced.

Robert Dilts has built on some of Bateson's work around levels of learning and change. In his book, *Visionary Leadership Skills* (Meta Publications, 1996), Dilts starts out by setting a perspective, a vision, about leadership. He quotes Gilles Pajou, who was CEO of Pharmacia: "Leadership is creating a world to which people want to belong."

Dilts examines some of the essential skills and tools that are required to bring about change and create a world to which people want to belong, which he calls the skills and tools of visionary leadership. "These skills," he says, "involve self-exploration and discovery as much as they involve interacting with others. They relate to forming and clarifying one's own dreams and ideas, sharing these ideas with others, transforming dreams into actions and engaging the help of others to bring dreams and ideas into reality." Dilts then identifies nine attributes of visionary leadership, adding the caveat that the most important aspect of developing leadership skills involves engagement and commitment. The nine attributes that Dilts identifies are:

- Releasing natural leadership abilities through the identification of your vision and mission.
- Developing and maintaining states of personal excellence.
- Forming effective plans.
- Recognizing and addressing different thinking styles.
- Understanding and managing beliefs and belief systems.
- Enhancing personal effectiveness in communicating and in managing others.
- Exploring and enriching personal leadership styles.
- Giving useful feedback.
- Dealing with cultural presuppositions, organizational ecology, and other systemic issues.

Dilts identifies six different levels of change and influence, dealing with the issues of physical space (where and when), context (the what), one's inner world (the why and how), and also the who—who needs to be involved. The levels are summarized as follows:

- **Environment.** Environment determines the external opportunities or constraints to which a person has to react. It involves the *where* and *when* of leadership—influencing the external context. The environmental level of leadership primarily relates to people's reactions. It consists of things such as the type of room, food, noise level, etc. that surrounds a situation. Certainly these external stimuli will affect the responses and the state of a leader and his or her collaborators. One key aspect of leadership skill has to do with at-

Levels of change
and leadership,
continued

tention to the physical environment.

- **Behavior.** Behaviors are the specific actions or reactions made by a person within the environment. They involve the *what* of leadership—influencing people’s *actions*. The behavioral level of leadership has to do with the specific behavioral activities that the leader and his or her collaborators must engage in. The specific behaviors that people actively participate in, such as tasks and interpersonal interactions, often serve as the primary evidence for organizational goals. Much of the focus of leadership has traditionally been on the level of behavior.
- **Capability.** Capabilities guide and give direction to behavioral actions through a mental map, plan, or strategy. The level of capabilities relates to the *how* of leadership influencing people’s minds. Capabilities have to do with the mental strategies and maps collaborators develop to guide their specific behaviors. Simply prescribing behaviors does not insure that tasks will be accomplished and goals reached. The function of the level of capabilities is to provide the *perception* and *direction* necessary to achieve particular objectives.
- **Beliefs and Values.** Beliefs and values provide the reinforcement that supports or inhibits capabilities and behaviors. The level of beliefs and values involves the *why* of leadership—influencing people’s hearts. In addition to developing behavioral skills and capabilities, an effective leader must also address the presuppositions, beliefs and values of his or her collaborators. The degree to which some task fits (or does not fit) into the personal or cultural value systems of one’s collaborators will determine the degree to which they accept or resist that task. Beliefs and values influence the amount of *motivation* and *permission* collaborators experience with respect to their roles and tasks.
- **Identity.** Identity involves a person’s role, mission, and/or sense of self. It relates to the *who* of leadership. The identity level has to do with the sense of self experienced by a group or group members. Identity is somewhat difficult to define precisely. It is more abstract than beliefs and has to do with the deepest levels of incorporation of information, responsibility for what one has learned, and the commitment to put it into action. Identity has primarily to do with *mission*.
- **Spiritual.** Spiritual change relates to the larger system of which one is a part and the influence of that system on the group or organization. It involves the *who else and what else* of leadership—influencing the larger system. Spiritual factors come from our perception of being a part of larger and larger systems surrounding us. It determines the overall *vision* or purpose behind the actions of an individual or organization.

Each of the levels of change, from behavior up through spiritual, involve more systems and complexity as the space for interaction and interdependence grows larger. Effective leadership, Dilts points out, involves addressing issues at all of these levels, whether it is about oneself, others, systems, or goals. This involves what he calls micro leadership at the environment, behavior, and capability levels; macro leadership at the levels of beliefs, values, and role identity; and meta leadership at the identity and spiritual levels. For more information: <http://www.nlpu.com>.

Personal
development

I have read that Thomas Edison said: “Five percent of the people think; ten percent of the people think they think; and the other eighty-five percent would rather die than think.” Perhaps Edison knew that thinking was hard and endless work. It is work that one has to do both alone, within oneself, and in dialogue with others, and in community.

We're all familiar with the traditional forms of learning and developing—school, research, individual study and practice, mentoring, work groups, teams, conferences, workshops, writing, speaking, and publishing.

There is another form of learning and developing that has been growing and is becoming more and more popular—coaching: life coaching, executive coaching, professional coaching.

Coaching is widely accepted in athletics and the arts as being absolutely essential to performance excellence. But life coaching and coaching in management and leadership is not yet mainstream thinking in business and industry. It may be that organizational thought-patterns and culture lead us to think that if someone wants or needs a coach to do their job better they must be weak or troubled, perhaps one step from being terminated. No one, of course, would think that of an athlete or actor or any other performer. So why shouldn't the need to achieve performance excellence in organizations be seen as an appropriate venue for coaching—from star player all the way down to beginner?

There is, of course, the issue of finding a qualified coach and that is getting to be less of a problem. There is an association, the International Coach Federation (ICF), that has various levels of certification. ICF certification requirements and criteria have evolved over the years and considerable training and experience are required for a coach to go from associate to professional to master coach. ICF also accredits coach training programs, and has a referral service on its website.

For more information, see: <http://www.coachfederation.org/ICF/>.

Laurence R. Smith has led and managed organizations, and has worked with a wide range of people on the process of organization improvement. His work includes being CEO of successful nonprofit organizations.

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While CEO of the Merrimack Valley Chamber of Commerce in northeastern Massachusetts, he led it to be one of only 10% of chambers of commerce in the nation to be accredited. He also won the top award in The President's Citation Program for Private Sector Initiatives, in a competition with over 1,000 corporations and associations in the nation. The award was presented by the President at a White House ceremony.

Smith is one of only fifty-six chamber of commerce or association executives to have been admitted to the Academy of Organization Management by the University of Notre Dame and the United States Chamber of Commerce.

He was chairman of the Merrimack Valley Private Industry Council (a quasi-public agency that funded training programs for the economically disadvantaged), president of the Massachusetts and the New England Association of Chambers of Commerce, a member of the Governor's Working Group on Youth Violence, a member of the Massachusetts School-Business Partnership Committee, and Treasurer of the Lawrence (MA) YMCA. He is listed in *Who's Who in America* and *Who's Who in Finance & Industry*.

**Personal
development,
continued**

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