

“THERE’S NO HIGHER CALLING THAN TO BE A CONSCIOUS LEADER.”
– RAJ SISODIA

BECOMING A CONSCIOUS LEADER

HOW TO LEAD SUCCESSFULLY
IN A WORLD THAT’S WAKING UP



GINA HAYDEN



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INTRODUCTION

When I was two years old, my mother packed me off to Sunday school. Each Sunday until I turned sixteen I went to church to be introduced to the ways of good living. Our home was that infamous hotbed of separatist thinking at the time: South Africa. Even the word 'apartheid' means separateness. I mention South Africa because it shows us that context is everything. We thought we were being upstanding citizens by going to church and learning good ways. In fact, seen in a broader context, from the perspective of the world, we were doing no such thing. We were acting in cruel and inhumane ways towards each other in a country that separated us by law. And although the world pointed out our faults to us, we did not have the consciousness at the time to see differently.

One evening, shortly after I turned sixteen, I sat on the comfortable church pew, listening to the minister, and a thought occurred to me: *How does he know this is the truth based on the book he is holding, when other religions have their own truth based on their own*

books and they believe they are equally right? Who is right? In that moment, it was as if the scales fell from my eyes. The questions and the search began for me that, many years later, would culminate in this book. I was no longer convinced by other people's versions of the 'truth'. I was no longer interested in competing about these. I saw the craziness of attaching ourselves to one way of seeing the world which we are convinced is right, while making other ways wrong. Instead, I began looking for the common threads underlying all worldviews that join us together as human beings. Without knowing it at the time, I was looking for a greater context, one that includes all of us acting as one human race rather than separately. Consciousness is that context.

If you're reading this book, you might be experiencing similar thoughts; perhaps the foundations of your own worldview are being shaken? Many people are experiencing this – you are not alone. All around you people are feeling disconcerted about their current reality, as if it doesn't quite meet their aspirations and longings. Perhaps what used to satisfy you doesn't seem to hack it any more? What you took for granted as that which defines you – your goals, the pursuit of success, your achievements – might have lost its shine. You still want to be successful, but you are looking for a new definition of success, one that includes a better version of yourself. One that answers a call deep within you. You want to lead in a way that allows you to bring more of yourself to the game and doesn't ask you to cut off important parts, like your values or your sense of purpose. You want to do this for others, too, to make it more about everyone rather than just about yourself. You might be feeling an inner pull to be 'whole', to be connected to others, to find your 'tribe'. Perhaps you're wondering how to lead business for the greater good and perhaps you're experiencing the tensions of trying to be this kind of leader in a mainstream business environment that doesn't yet fully support all these ways of being?

This book is designed to answer the call to awakening, to deal

with some of the very important questions that you and many other conscious leaders are grappling with. Tapping into examples from a wide range of conscious leaders, drawn from all over the world, we'll explore what it means to be a conscious leader operating both wisely and successfully in a conventional business world that is slowly waking up. My hope is that, through these stories, you'll get ideas, guidance and inspiration that will answer some of your questions and help meet your aspirations.

The world of business has been rather slow to catch up with the wave of humanity's 'waking up'. Business is the place where the battle lines that separate us are constantly drawn, and the traditional narrative of business is based on machinery and warfare (competitors, winners, losers, crushing the competition, stealing market share). Big business however has suffered severe consequences to its reputation through the infamous actions of some big-name corporates, their leaders and the most recent global financial crisis. Consequently, business, especially big business, is despised by many and seen as the enemy of all that is good, or at best, as a necessary evil.

But growing quietly alongside its flanks is an ever-strengthening quorum of large and small companies who are evolving to do business differently. These are accompanied by a clutch of movements that support this shift in our worldview about business. They go by many names: Conscious Capitalism, Inclusive Capitalism, Moral Capitalism, Blueprint for Better Business, and dozens of others across the world. In one study from 2014, conducted at Cranfield University in the UK, there were upwards of 130 initiatives identified worldwide, all dedicated to rethinking what we mean by 'doing good business'.

These movements share two important views: one, that business can have a higher purpose in the world than simply the act of making a profit; and two, that business needs to take responsibility for its impact on the world around it and factor this in to the way it

conducts its profit-making activities. Companies that follow this trend are fast becoming the new normal. They are heroes that conduct themselves responsibly and for the greater good in a world that is waking up and becoming more exacting of business and the role it plays in society and in our lives.

Quite a lot has been written about this more conscious way of doing business and about these companies. John Mackey's *Conscious Capitalism: Liberating the Heroic Spirit of Business* and Frederic Laloux's *Reinventing Organizations: A Guide to Creating Organizations Inspired by the Next Stage of Human Consciousness* are two excellent resources to further explore what's changing in the world of business.

Which brings us to the motivation for this book. While we know a fair amount about the companies themselves, we know less about their leaders and how they run their businesses in more conscious ways. How have they evolved and made the leap to leading consciously in mainstream business? How do they think, speak, behave and lead differently from other leaders? If we are to encourage more conscious leaders onto the playing field of business, then taking an up-close-and-personal look at those currently doing so can provide us with clues that make it easier for more of us to join in.

I am fascinated by how these leaders think, what makes them tick, how they got to where they are, and how this shapes the way they lead and do business. What can we learn from their example and how can this inspire those of us who also want to be on this journey? If we can map the territory of their characteristics and qualities, this can be a useful navigational tool for those of us feeling called to this within ourselves.

All this is in service of a possible future where many more conscious leaders around the world run their organisations differently, which in turn influences and positively impacts the lives of the thousands of people working in those organisations, and which ultimately has an uplifting effect on the world. Since so many of us are involved in business, it is a platform teeming with potential to elevate humanity.

I believe the key at this point in time lies with leaders and their power. Leaders set the tone of cultures; they influence many through their decisions; they set direction and make choices that impact, positively or negatively on the lives of millions. Leaders therefore play a crucial role in the way business impacts the world. While there is evidence that we are moving towards a future where the traditional hierarchies of business will dissolve and companies become more self-organising, our current reality is that organisations are still operating in a pyramid-style structure. So, right now, the best way for business to play a role in uplifting the world is to impact the way we view leadership itself.

This is, nevertheless, not an evangelical crusade to convince business to be different: doing so merely creates resistance. To paraphrase Buckminster Fuller, to inspire change we need to create an alternative paradigm that is more appealing than the existing one. When this happens, those who are ready to make the leap, will leap. Those who aren't, won't. Ultimately, there's no one to transform and no transformation to be done to anyone. This book is simply a helpful guide to those who feel moved to play a different game of leadership and life.

All this talk of organisational leadership is not meant to replace the importance of self-leadership. This book is not only intended for leaders in the usual positions of authority; anyone can practise being more conscious as a leader, since this is as much about leading yourself from any point in an organisation as it is about leading others.

The number of conscious leaders in the world is increasing all the time. I've interviewed about 20 such leaders for this book, all of whom had fascinating stories to tell. I found them in all corners of the world: the United States, the United Kingdom, India and Africa, yet they shared similar worldviews, despite being spread geographically far and wide. Their perspectives on life and on business give us rich insights into how conscious leaders go about the job of leading.

One thing struck me, though. When I asked them at the end of our interviews, “Do you know anyone else like you that I can also speak to?” I was invariably met with a long, thoughtful silence before they responded, “I know of people like me, but I don’t know them directly.” This makes me think that being a conscious leader in the world at the moment can be quite a lonely place. Because you see the world so differently from your contemporaries, you might be inclined to think that you are alone in your views. It might seem like others don’t quite ‘get’ you. You might feel a longing to be connected and to find your tribe. This book is also here to say: that tribe exists.

Something has made you pick up this book and read this far. You might be feeling the innate pull towards becoming a better version of yourself. You may not even have the words to describe that yet. I hope that you will find inspiration in these pages and get ideas for your own leadership and personal growth from the many examples on offer. I hope also that you will come to realise that you are part of an ever-growing group of new leaders who are at the frontier of leadership and business, and that business forms part of the very edge of our evolution as humanity. Most of all, I hope that many more of you will join.

Gina Hayden
November 2016

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RADICALLY RELATIVE AND THE VALUE OF WE-Q



A few years ago, I arrived in Basel airport, Switzerland, and exited through the wrong door, on the French side rather than the Swiss side, where my client was based. The airport is operated via a state treaty, established in 1946, whereby both the Swiss and the French are granted access to the same airport. A very nice gentleman, probably a security guard or immigration official, politely told me that I needed to go back into the airport, walk 100 metres down through the building and exit on the other side of the chicken-wire fence. He pointed to the fence next to us, a flimsy thing about 5ft high, effectively separating us humans beings onto either side of an imaginary border.

“The test of a first-rate intelligence is to hold two opposed ideas in mind at the same time and still retain the ability to function.”

F. Scott Fitzgerald

As I amicably walked back into the airport, along the corridor, and out the other side, I was struck by how ridiculous it was that this see-through fence demarcated one type of human being from another when we were all, in reality, exactly the same. There is even less to distinguish people from each other in that part of the world,

especially living as they do in such close proximity in this small, closely-knit country, and yet this fence was a symbol separating humanity into smaller boxes of difference. It was nothing more than a made-up border in people's minds, which had everyone sorting themselves into this worldview or that worldview in a very civilised way. I would've liked to simply step over the fence.

Of course, in other parts of the world, the same fences have become great big walls, sometimes curving around people's houses, for example in Palestine. They nevertheless all represent our attachment to our own made-up belief systems that are more or less consciously held, and that separate us out into different ways of being human.

*Conscious leaders dissolve
the walls that separate the world
into 'us' and 'them'*

To be a conscious leader requires us to look at these beliefs that underpin our worldviews and to become more curious about the worldviews of others. It requires us to move from being binary in our mindset to becoming much more nuanced. In effect, it asks us to dissolve the walls that seem to separate the world into 'us' and 'them', and to think instead in terms of the interconnectedness of 'we'. Global problems require solutions best generated by the thinking of a million minds, and conscious leaders are suited to help weave together these perspectives in the interests of creating new thinking.

MOVING FROM 'I' TO 'WE'

Enter the value of We-Q. We-Q tracks a new social megatrend away from the 'I society' towards the 'We society'. The central focus is on connection, the creation of synergies, working on joint solutions and the sharing of goods and products. It is a counter movement to egocentric thinking.¹ Open systems, open source, crowdfunding and co-working hubs epitomise these social shifts, and we are seeing more of them every day in the way people like to live and work. We can see them taking shape in goals as ambitious and urgent as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. The new world is very much about 'we'.

WHAT ROLES CAN CONSCIOUS LEADERS PLAY IN THE EMERGENCE OF 'WE-Q'?

The answer is: everything. We-Q requires us to think past our mind-generated boundaries. It requires us to think beyond what separates us and demands we recognise that when we extend our perception beyond our own minds, beyond our country borders, beyond our societies and continents, we are really left with one planet and one human race. Conscious leaders role model this way of thinking, for themselves and for everyone else.

This is as true for business as it is for life. The ability of conscious leaders to see multiple perspectives, think in systems and look to integrate a variety of viewpoints is of great advantage in business, not only, as we'll see, in pursuing new forms of competition – ones by which we all win – but to release the power of business to have an impact for the greater good. These same abilities apply equally to political leaders, leaders in education and – simply – to everyone, including ourselves.

The leaders I interviewed for this book were either born with this capacity to think in relative terms so that it showed up early in their

lives, or developed it through life experiences. It is highly unusual for us to have this capacity early on, since, as children, we tend first to have to develop a sense of ourselves as a separate entity before the long journey begins to join others as being part of a single humanity. But whether it's a leader like Bob Fishman, who describes how even as a child he was aware of at least two realities, or other leaders who have discovered this as they went along, moving away from an absolute viewpoint and towards a relative one is part of the journey.

*When we extend our perception
beyond our own minds, beyond our
country borders, our societies and
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planet, one human race*

Lorna Davis describes how, now living in her seventh country, she has learned about, "this whole question of relativity. You learn that there is no absolute good or bad, including yourself."

Paul Monekosso Cleal, who grew up with his mother, shares a British and a Cameroonian heritage. He recently added in his father's surname, Monekosso, to his own name. "I like the fact that I now use both of their names rather than having to choose one," he says. "There is a tendency for people to want someone like me from a dual heritage to choose one or the other. Well, you don't have to have one, you can have two. You can be both British and Cameroonian. You can support X and Y sports teams, and I don't see the conflict between the two. Most people can't understand that at all because their idea of identity is more one-dimensional, whereas mine is more multi-dimensional."

Being a conscious leader requires us to notice when we fall into either-or thinking traps and to keep an eye on the assumptions and filters that we are seeing through. "Rather than having a filter and trying to match the world to your own definition," says Frederic Desbrosses, "I open my senses to learn. I understand the point of view of the other. The extreme views of others help me to find my balance."

LOOSENING OUR ATTACHMENT TO OUR WORLDVIEWS

In terms of their perspectives, conscious leaders have walked a good few miles down the road from seeing the world through their personal lens, towards seeing the world from the viewpoints of others. This most fundamental shift in thinking and the way we make meaning of the world, brings with it all kinds of benefits. Loosening our attachment to our own point of view lessens the urge to be right and make others wrong, or to stamp our perspective on the world as 'the truth'. It creates space for a lot more fluidity and variety of perspectives, multiple answers and for 'it depends' thinking to enter into the discussion. Those who are most prone to fundamentalist thinking are emotionally and intellectually attached to their beliefs about how things are supposed to be and this leaves little room for movement as new information becomes available. A more fluid perspective is of service to a leader looking to cope and flourish in a constantly changing and complex world, since agile thinking and the ability to flick quickly between perspectives will give you the advantage as you respond to challenges as they emerge.

Ken Wilber is fond of saying that our tendency towards fundamentalist thinking is partly what keeps us, as humans, at earlier stages of our own evolution. It precludes us from seeing more of

the whole picture which is where, ultimately, the best solutions lie. “I take my part and I make it my whole,” says Wilber, which leads us, collectively, to having broken or partial worldviews. “Ignorance is a partial view of reality, and if you take a broken, partial view of the problem, you get broken, partial solutions.”

Chapter 3 walked us through some ways in which we can develop our minds as adults, make them more malleable, and grow to be more conscious, complex and inclusive in our worldviews. We saw that we are capable of transitioning through a series of stages, from more egocentric (‘I’) to less egocentric (‘We’) thinking. We-centric thinking that is more complex and nuanced allows us to recapture more of the whole and means we are less inclined to cut off a part and make it our whole (whilst arguing with others about the parts they have cut off and made their wholes).

It is not a requirement of adulthood to be on this journey. There are plenty of us who will happily choose to remain at the end of the spectrum that champions our own perspective over others’. To become a more conscious leader, however, we need to invest in loosening our attachment to our viewpoints and see them for what they are – mere mental constructs – which opens the door towards a more conscious way of being and leading.

One of the greatest advantages of doing this in organisations is the ability to harvest the collective intelligence of everyone. As we saw in Chapter 1 that CEOs the world over are recognising that collaboration is the factor that leads to innovation and competitive advantage. Collaboration accesses collective intelligence. Rather than landing quickly on the side of one solution, conscious leaders are able, quite frankly, to get out of the way and to avoid making the conversation, the results and the organisation about themselves – because that is simply a play of ego. One facilitator I know who is skilled in hosting these kinds of emergent conversations says, “If they’re applauding you at the end as the facilitator, then you’ve done something wrong.” What she means is that we’ve made it about us,

rather than about holding the space open for different perspectives to be heard.

Sometimes the leadership of others from this perspective can be quite radical. Jean-François Zobrist (FAVI) started off his career in the traditional ‘boss-role’ of this company by telling everyone: “You work for the customer. I don’t pay you. They do.”² Eliminating hierarchy and flattening out the structure in a single stroke, Jean-François gives ultimate accountability to the employees who, in turn, are accountable to the customers, not the boss. As a result, they are free to experiment and innovate, highly successfully, supplying more than 50% of the European automotive market. All of his approach is rooted in his radical relativism.

“There is no model,” Jean-François told me. “Each person follows his own path, which is different to everybody else’s. What we all have in common at FAVI (and on which trust is built) is little ego, we are instinctive beings; we take a long-term perspective and we are good guys. No other approach or method is necessary.”

It goes without saying that Jean-François does not directly lead. When I asked him about how he goes about this, he simply said: “There is no method, no example to achieve free enterprise. One to three times a week I share my perspective that conscious leadership exists, that it is possible, and then people either do what they need to do or they don’t do it. I don’t feel I have to convince people. I am not a missionary.”

It seems that the key requirement to lead in this way is to give up the need to control things and bend the world to our point of view. Traditional organisations have as their core operating principle that some people at the top need to make the decisions on behalf of everyone else, and then follow the faintly ridiculous practice of filtering down that information through the ranks to the nerve endings of the organisation. By the time it has reached the points at which action needs to be taken, the world has usually moved on and the organisation is at risk of being out of date. This makes savvy

organisational evolution extraordinarily difficult and causes all kinds of problems with scaling from a successful startup to an established business.

An alternative is to practise radical trust and radical relativity, more about which is covered throughout this book.

I was curious to ask Bob Fishman what enables leaders to let go of control. In Bob's view, "If you're aware that ideas regarding what we could do next could come from anywhere in your organisation, then how we get people to feel safe enough to contribute ideas is paramount. This still leaves the leader in the position of having to make the difficult choices, not because they know the future better than anyone else, but because it's their role to decide in which direction to go. The leader's role can still be to pull together diverse ideas and explain, transparently, that from the various resources and viewpoints, this is their best judgement on where we should put our efforts in the future. That is a more humble leadership than one that acts as though the leader knows the future and pretends to listen to others, but has the 'right' answer."

This ability to seek out multiple perspectives is also present in Eileen Fisher, founder of Eileen Fisher, Inc, the highly successful fashion company. She has always been willing to say, 'I don't know.' "This leads to radical participation," says Fisher. "People feel safe to explore their own ideas instead of feeling like they just need to do what you tell them to do." She is, by all accounts, a conscious leader who is able to be humble, present and authentic.³

Knowing is the enemy of learning

Perhaps the most radically perspective-changing experience I underwent in talking to the conscious leaders I interviewed for this book was with Tom Chi. Tom is a force of nature: a genius mind who

is also deeply humble and conscious, and who has worked in roles as wide-ranging as astrophysical researcher to corporate executive. He has played leading roles in projects such as Microsoft Outlook, various Google X projects such as the self-driving car, and delves into human development issues with social entrepreneurs around the globe. His hallmark is a unique approach to rapid prototyping, visioning and leadership that can jumpstart innovation and he lives and breathes the ideas of opening up multiple viewpoints with humility and, in his case, rapid speed.

One of Tom's angles is the creation of 'mental debugs' – ways of getting around those sticking points in our consciousness that stop us from stepping outside our own viewpoints and leveraging our collective intelligence. One of Tom's mental debugs is: 'Knowing is the enemy of learning.'⁴ Knowing something makes learning impossible, he says, because knowing holds in place the current frame of our knowledge. Letting go of our need to know and being open to not knowing, to learning, expands the scope of our knowledge with new data and new possibilities. Being willing not to know grants our minds a permeable membrane through which ongoing learning – and innovation and growth – can happen.

"Don't bring all the experts on stage," cautions Tom. "Experts are paid to be in a state of knowing." Instead, bring the new thinking on board, the fresh thinking, through the left fielders, the new generation, the non-experts and the non-leaders.

Benjamin Zander, conductor of the Boston Philharmonic Youth Orchestra and a renowned leadership speaker, talks about this kind of humble leadership: "Something happened to me when I was 45," he recounts. "I realised that the conductor doesn't make a sound. He depends for his power on his ability to make other people powerful. And when I realised that it had an overwhelming effect on me, so much so that the members of my orchestra began to ask me, 'what happened?' And what had happened was that I realised that my job was to awaken possibility in other people. You get to see

whether you're doing this by looking at the eyes of the other people: if you are doing it, their eyes light up. If you're not doing it, you get to ask yourself a question: Who am I being that the eyes of my people are not shining?"⁵

Whenever I show this video clip of Benjamin Zander to leadership groups, there is a hush in the room as leaders recognise that it is their job to ask themselves whether they are being the kind of leader people want to follow, the kind of leader who gets out of the way and makes it all about the other person, about collective gain and collaborative intelligence, rather than about themselves. It is a great moment. "A monumental question for leaders in any organisation to consider," Ben continues in his co-authored book, *The Art of Possibility*, "is: how much greatness are we willing to grant people?"⁶

This kind of egoless leadership is possible as we become more conscious and as we notice when we are being driven by our ego-based needs to look special, to secure our survival, to be better than others or to win at all costs. All these things drive a one-perspective leadership style. Self-management is the key to being the kind of leader who is willing to let go of control and harness the collective intelligence across their organisation and the multiple viewpoints that enrich it.

CONTINUOUS FEEDBACK LOOPS

Once we've developed a more radical mindset, what actions can we take to help harvest the value in We-Q? One thing is to get constant feedback about how a course of action is playing out. Bob Fishman describes this as a, "shifting back and forth". The approach he takes is to say to others: "Let's tentatively take this road, but get constant feedback about the conditions because we really don't know what the future is." Conscious leaders need a lot of people giving feedback on how something is or is not working, based very much on the

reality of the situation. It is the antithesis of the common practice of a small group of strategic leaders going down a road they've decided on and expecting everyone else to go down that road too despite the fact that other people might know that this is the wrong direction.

KEEPING COMMUNICATION CHANNELS OPEN

Paul Monekosso Cleal of PwC says: "I spend some time thinking through and making sense of things for myself, but increasingly by talking to other people we all learn more and we all get further together. Trying to create an environment where people can be comfortable raising their fears or ideas and discussing these openly, rather than keeping them to themselves, is important. A lot of it comes down to communication: getting people to communicate with each other and then giving them the confidence that they can actually say what they think and raise concerns so that you can start helping them to deal with issues."

It might seem unwieldy for a leader to manage such an apparently complex and chaotic process of communication amongst many voices. Enter the wonderfully practical, agile and light touch example of Buurtzorg's CEO Jos de Blok, who heads up a large network of home-care nurses in the Netherlands. This example is described much more fully in Laloux's *Reinventing Organizations*, but some of the highlights are worth mentioning here.⁷

De Blok has skilfully used technology to his advantage by directing his blog on Buurtzorg's intranet into a powerful leadership instrument for collecting multiple perspectives and turning everyone into organisational sensors. He writes posts from the heart and without PR spin, and reaches an audience of 7,000 nurses, and dozens or even hundreds of these nurses respond to his thoughts.

He addresses all sorts of organisational issues in his blogs: the direction the company could take, decisions he feels are needed, or simply examples and encounters that underpin what the company is about. Within a few hours, de Blok can sense the direction the company wants to take depending on the responses, comments and suggestions he gets.

This begs the question: Why would we, as leaders, employ people with perfectly good sensory intelligence, who have solid points of view and on-the-ground insights, and then ignore this in the name of our predetermined organisational structure? It makes no sense at all.

Laloux goes on to describe how, rather than harvesting collective intelligence in this way resulting in chaos (which most people coming across the idea of this kind of leadership and self-organisation instinctively fear the most), people in these kinds of sensing companies hold a very clear idea of the organisation's purpose and a broad commitment to where the organisation might want to go. "With the purpose as a guiding light," writes Laloux, "everyone, individually and collectively, is empowered to sense what might be called for ... The organization evolves, morphs, expands, or contracts, in response to a process of collective intelligence. Reality is the great referee, not the CEO, the board or a committee."⁸ Strategy then becomes a live and organic process.

This collective intelligence extends to decision-making in the organisation. As we'll see in Chapter 8, conscious leaders are willing to let go of control in favour of the intelligence of the system – that is to say, the collective intelligence of everyone within it – speaking and determining the direction through decision-making. The source of power and decision-making doesn't lie with the leader but with everybody. It is not, however, an invitation to free-for-all chaos. There are simple, light, though rigorous, processes that are put in place to guide everyone's actions. One such approach is called the Advice Process.

The Advice Process

When leaders themselves are no longer entirely in charge, how do decisions get made? Leveraging the collective intelligence of an organisation through people's multiple viewpoints is not the same as aiming for consensus or compromise. Trying to replace a centralised control model with consulting absolutely everybody is a recipe for disaster, slowing down decisions to a virtual standstill.

The alternative is something called the Advice Process, used in companies such as AES, FAVI, Buurtzorg and others, the Advice Process is simple: decisions can be taken by anyone. This removes the need for everyone to agree or for one person to force a decision on to everyone else. However, two things need to happen before making a decision. First, the decision maker must seek advice from those people who will be affected by the decision, and second, the decision maker must seek advice from people with the relevant expertise before making the decision. The more far reaching the decision, the wider the pool of people from whom advice is sought needs to be.

Ultimately, the advice process, or any similar process, is about trust — trusting yourself, trusting your employees and trusting the process.⁹

What is becoming clear is that part of a conscious leader's role is to tune into and to use the power of your people as on-the-ground sensors for how your organisation can evolve. Done well, this can turn your organisation into an agile sensing machine that responds quickly to the changing needs of the environment, which has distinct commercial advantages and positive knock-on effects for innovation and engagement.

ADVICE FOR DEVELOPING RELATIVE VIEWPOINTS

Other than learning from life's experiences, leaders interested in becoming more conscious can try to loosen up the grip of their worldviews through some of the following practices:

- » **Immersion experiences.** Immersing yourself in other cultures, taking secondments in other countries and travelling widely, especially in countries where your home language is not spoken, tend to open up the eyes and the mind as it forces us to try on for size the perspectives of others
- » **Staying curious.** In conversations, avoid deciding on 'the answer' too quickly based on your well-worn thinking patterns. Try living with the question for longer. Ask about and explore the thinking that lies behind others' points of view. What led them to their particular conclusions? How do they see the world differently from you?
- » **Resist converging too quickly.** Emergent conversations have three elements to them: the divergent, where everyone's viewpoints are being aired and differences are exaggerated; the 'groan zone' where conversations feel messy, difficult and even stuck; and the convergent, where new breakthroughs occur and an answer develops out of the chaos or confusion.¹⁰ The conscious leader's role in this is to see what emerges. It is useful to leave things open beyond the point of discomfort, beyond the point where you might normally be tempted to close things down to avoid everything feeling 'too uncomfortable'. Trusting the process, that something will emerge out of the chaos,

is the skill that's required and this involves knowing that you don't have to control the discussion, especially not too early.

- » **Peer learning.** Engaging in peer learning opportunities with others who see the world differently from you and who feel they have the right to challenge your assumptions can be extremely helpful. Depending on what kind of leader you are, this may not be your staff members. Examine your assumptions. Get others to challenge them. If what you think is not true, what could be instead?
- » **Seeking out what you don't know.** Consciously look for other perspectives that are different from yours.
- » **Noticing your rules.** Keep an eye out for all your 'shoulds' and 'oughts' that naturally play out in your automatic thinking, for therein lie our unexamined worldviews.
- » **Knowing is the enemy of learning.** Take a leaf out of Tom Chi's book: nouns, fixed points of view and labels are just a quick way for us to stop thinking about something. "A good time for employing 'knowing' is when you've already done the thing one hundred times and you just want to do it one more time," advises Tom. "A good time for 'not knowing' is when you're facing challenges that no one has solved yet. A good question to ask is: what else is there still to learn about it? Your mind becomes malleable again," says Tom. "All these things that have become stable and hard, become fluid again."¹¹

“To be honest with you, I don’t even have a lot of respect or consideration about my own opinion... because, you know, they’re like noses – everybody has one.”

Lawrence Koh, CEO International Diversified Products

Endnotes

- 1 <http://www.young-germany.de/topic/live/life-style/weq-more-than-iq>
- 2 May, E. Matthew. May 2012. ‘Mastering The Art of Bosslessness’. *Fast Company* magazine. <http://www.fastcompany.com/3001574/mastering-art-bosslessness>
- 3 Tenney, Matt. May 2015. ‘Be a ‘Don’t Knower’: One of Eileen Fisher’s Secrets to Success’. *HuffPost Business*. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/matt-tenney/be-a-dont-knower-one-of-e_b_7242468.html
- 4 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=25fUDjMtkul>
- 5 Zander, Benjamin. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zrGAJ7hVh1o&list=PL496B2B683BBEoD2F>
- 6 Zander, Rosamund and Zander, Benjamin. 2000. *The Art of Possibility: Transforming Professional and Personal Life*. Boston USA: Harvard Business School Press.
- 7 Laloux, Frederic. 2014. *Reinventing Organizations*. Belgium: Nelson Parker
- 8 Ibid., p207
- 9 Ibid., pp99–107
- 10 Model shared by The Art of Hosting. <http://www.artofhosting.org>
- 11 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=25fUDjMtkul>

