Operational Integrity:
The Gateway to Workplace Harmony and Velocity

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The word integrity appears in most companies' vision and mission statements. New employees are expected to measure up to the company's integrity standard. Testimonial dinners often extol the recipient's stellar integrity. And when a problem occurs, everybody claims the high moral ground of superior integrity. Yet, no one seems to know how to define or develop integrity.

Our professional and personal passion springs from a life-long study of the root meaning of integrity, which is wholeness. We have come to understand integrity not as a measure of good-and-bad or right-and-wrong, but an energetic thermostat that gives accurate, current feedback about the organization's creative juice and problem-solving capacity. We have interviewed the top executives of many of the companies who advocate integrity and asked them, "What does integrity mean in the day to day life of your organization? How will people know if they are operating in integrity or not? If they are not operating in integrity, what impact does that lapse have on your communication, working alliances, or bottom line?" There appears to be a chasm between the intention and the practice of integrity. For example, the CEO of one of the United States' largest companies couldn't verbalize a working definition of integrity, although the word is a cornerstone of their mission statement. Organizations seem to lack an operational understanding of the integrity skills that give teams, colleagues and executives the freedom and intellectual momentum to produce breakthrough innovations and resolve the unexpected roadblocks that always arise.

Spirituality flows from the source-spring of integrity and withers without that source. We define spirituality as the quest to find and feel the moving sensations in your body that your mind interprets as connecting you to the cosmos and to other people. So in business, no matter what people are selling to each other, they are also seeking to feel and exchange those sensations. Spirituality cannot flourish in the absence of integrity because the potential spiritual energy of individuals and synergy of groups drains away in power struggles, blame, mistrust, and withholding. In contrast, when organizations stand on a base of integrity, relationships, vision and creative innovation blossom. Dramas of inclusion and exclusion, replays of old family dramas, and nostalgia about past triumphs and defeats make a poor but common substitute for wholeness and connection. Speculations aside, few practices are actually circulated about how to cultivate the presence of spirit through integrity.
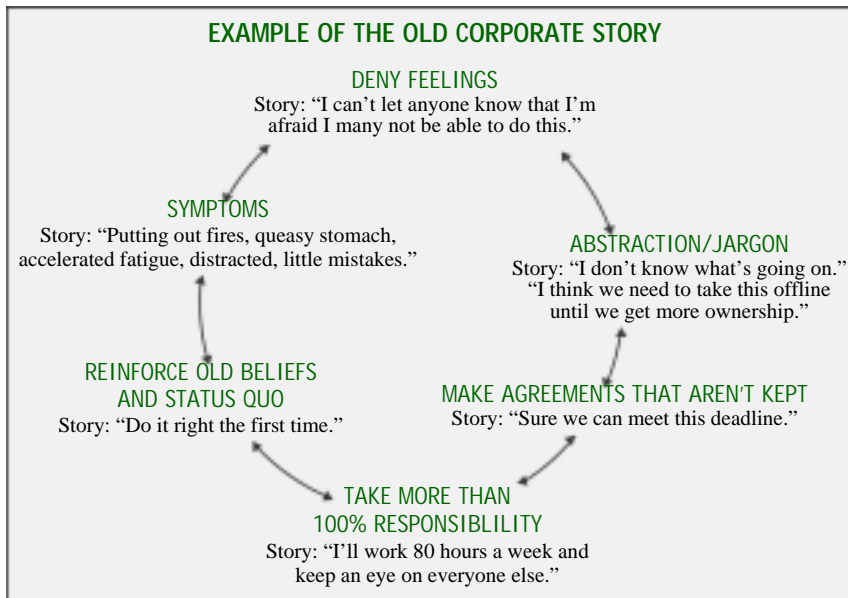
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Integrity opens the gate to spirit by acknowledging that we are all connected at a microscopic and macrocosmic level. Yasutani Roshi said, "the fundamental delusion of humanity is to suppose that I am here and you are out there." The fascinating brain research summarized by Drs. Lewis, Amini and Lannon (2000) confirms humans' life-long interconnection. "Adults remain social animals: they continue to require a source of stabilization outside themselves. That open-loop design [humans **require** input from others to keep internal systems functioning well] means that in some important ways, people cannot be stable on their own—not should or shouldn't be, but *can't* be." (p. 86) In other words, our very well-being, thinking style, creative output and harmonious interaction cannot function effectively without nurturing contact with others. Stabilization occurs through what the authors call "limbic resonance." This flow of information between emotional brains actually allows us to share another person's experience and to support each other's well being through the quality of our exchanges.

We may agree intellectually with the poet Donne's assessment, "No man is an island." However, most people can't truly see or feel their resonance with others because they are seeing through an eons-long mind-body split. People influence each other in thousands of subtle and compounded ways, most of which are so miniscule that only split-frame films can detect them. Emotions, moods and attitudes are contagious. For example, conversational tones ripple through the organization via the grape-vine code that lets everyone know in a matter of minutes the boss's mood or who's about to get fired. Most organizations do not yet realize what Native Americans have held for generations: "There is no where in the world to spit."

When we consult for organizations, the first area we examine is their integrity foundation (Hendricks and Ludeman, 1996). We have studied whole-body, whole-brain learning for thirty years and have heard thousands of experiences that confirm our theory. When people operate from integrity, personal and professional well being accelerates tremendously.

THE FOUR LEGS OF INTEGRITY stand on tangible skills that can be developed with practice: Authentic Speaking and Resonant Listening, Healthy Responsibility, Emotional Literacy, and Impeccable Agreements. We will discuss the problems that arise from lack of skill in each area and the results of reformed wholeness, or integrity.

EXAMPLE OF THE OLD CORPORATE STORY

DENY FEELINGS
Story: "I can't let anyone know that I'm afraid I many not be able to do this."

SYMPTOMS
Story: "Putting out fires, queasy stomach, accelerated fatigue, distracted, little mistakes."

ABSTRACTION/JARGON
Story: "I don't know what's going on." "I think we need to take this offline until we get more ownership."

REINFORCE OLD BELIEFS AND STATUS QUO
Story: "Do it right the first time."

MAKE AGREEMENTS THAT AREN'T KEPT
Story: "Sure we can meet this deadline."

TAKE MORE THAN 100% RESPONSIBLILITY
Story: "I'll work 80 hours a week and keep an eye on everyone else."

Organizations perpetuate The Old Corporate Story by skewing the balance of information flow between the cognitive mind and the emotional mind. By favoring the cognitive mind in business, organizations suffer from three types of "thought incoherence" that the physicist David Bohm (1995) has identified:

3 TYPES OF THOUGHT INCOHERENCE

THOUGHT DENIES THAT IT PARTICIPATES IN CREATING THOUGHTS. *In other words, thought is the Wizard of Oz saying, "Pay no attention to the man behind the curtain" while making up the illusions that people consider solid and real.*

THOUGHT EVENTUALLY STOPS TRACKING REALITY AND "JUST GOES. *For example, getting hold of an assumption about a colleague's motive snowballs into competitive maneuvering that remains under the surface like a burr.*

THOUGHT ESTABLISHES ITS OWN STANDARD OF REFERENCE FOR FIXING THE VERY PROBLEMS IT CONTRIBUTED TO CREATING. *Rather like the Army Corps of Engineers attempting to control the Mississippi River, thoughts' standards of reality can't control the rich emotional wisdom that weaves through all our decisions.*

These systemic thinking errors fuel beliefs that reinforce a sterile view of human potential. For example, a common corporate belief asserts that anyone is interchangeable, especially in the human resources arena. We have heard incredible stories, such as of the man who arrived on Monday morning to find his office locked and his belongings stacked in the hall with his termination notice on top.

More problematic in the Old Corporate Story are the problems that arise by not utilizing each person's full responsibility. In the current model of responsibility, energy is spent in competition rather than cooperation. Colleagues defend territory and dig their heels in rather than obstacles and roadblocks to success, such as pertinent information in a strategy meeting. Resources are considered scarce, so managers battle within a limited view of possibility. These operating beliefs lead to turf battles, secrets, gossiping and symptomatic solutions, such as putting out fires.

Operational integrity thrives on change. As organizations reform their wholeness, tangible benefits emerge from the personal to the company level. Personally, staff feels healthy and energetic throughout the day rather than stressed and pressured. Individuals know and utilize a reliable feedback system for assessing their skills. Professionally, people transform their relationship to time, becoming effective, flexible and adaptable. More interactions involve cooperation rather than stonewalling or defending territory. Collaboration replaces competition, and openness to change invigorates the whole system. Organizationally, each person builds group synergy by contributing unique qualities and skills. The organization designs change rather than chasing it with crisis management. Communication creates synergy rather than power struggle. Higher quality products and better bottom lines flow from harmony rather than fear.

We have had many executives challenge this model as "pie-in-the-sky," hopelessly idealistic, laughably out of touch with reality. We counter that the old corporate model is not only corrupt, but is bankrupting our health, our families and our future by ignoring the enormous contribution of the human spirit that speaks through integrity. We have committed to living and teaching in wholeness. We invite you to examine and experiment with these skills.

AUTHENTIC SPEAKING AND RESONANT LISTENING— THE MYTHS

One common caveat in business is to hold your cards close to the vest, to never let the "enemy" know what you are really thinking. This strategy is said to preserve a market edge by keeping the competition in the dark. Another commonly held myth is that only fools actually tell the truth to other business people. In a recent seminar, we asked the participants to write their favorite excuses for withholding from others on the flip chart. Here is a partial list:

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REASONS FOR WITHOLDING

1. I don't want to hurt your feelings.
2. This is not important.
3. You won't be able to handle it.
4. This is not the right time.
5. I'll tell you when I figure it out.
6. I feel dumb (foolish) (embarrassed) telling you.
7. I should be able to handle this myself.
8. You must be tired of hearing the same thing.
9. You don't share, so I won't either.
10. This is not worth arguing about.
11. I'll tell you later.
12. If I tell you, it will create a whole new problem.
13. I'm afraid you will get mad (sad) (afraid).
14. Right now you are in a bad mood. (tired) etc.
15. You're in a good mood, and I don't want to bring you down.
16. Now is not a convenient time.
17. I shouldn't dwell on the negative.
18. I'm afraid of what you might say.
19. I don't want to face the truth.
20. I'll tell you when we are alone.
21. I'm figuring out how to word it so I don't push your buttons.
22. You won't like me when you hear it.
23. Nothing can be done about it. It's just the way I am.
24. I'm hoping it will go away by itself.
25. I'll lose something if I tell you.
26. I'm defective, it's just another weird thing about me.
27. I've got too much to do.
28. I missed the right opportunity to tell you.
29. I feel exposed and vulnerable.
30. It has to be perfect!
31. I'll get yelled at.
32. If I hold out long enough, it won't matter.
33. I feel guilty about it.
34. Everything will unravel if I tell you about this.
35. I don't have the energy to deal with this.
36. You'll reject me if I tell you.

When people do not know how to speak authentically to each other, words wound. In business settings especially, associate, sling words with deadly precision. Here are some examples we have overheard:

> "That is the stupidest idea so far this year!"
>
> "You always ignore my suggestions."
>
> "No-brainer must have been invented for you."
>
> "Who's responsible for this mess!"
>
> "You planning on coming in when the rest of us do any time this year?"

Many organizations operate from the perception that if people acknowledge how things actually are, they make it all worse. The ostrich approach governs many businesses and prevents them from navigating change successfully. As Yogi Berra said, "If you don't know where you're going, you will wind up somewhere else."

When people cannot be authentic with each other, they retreat behind masks or roles, which we call personas.

> Spiritually starved business people also downplay the power of listening and relegate it to the dreaded "touchy-feely" garbage heap where many innovations eventually land.

Corporate interactions then devolve to popular persona interlocks, such as the Policy Police and the Whiner, or the Supercompetent and the Bumbler. Each company with whom we've consulted has quickly identified their key personas and the predictable, persona-driven bogs they produce.

Spiritually starved business people also downplay the power of listening and relegate it to the dreaded "touchy-feely" garbage heap where many innovations eventually land. In the Vice-Presidents' Institute that Motorola holds for new officers, the most common feedback that colleagues gave to the new Vice Presidents concerned their poor listening skills. New VP's were astounded to hear that others found them obstinate critics, heavy nonverbal signalers (watch checking, sighing, finger drumming), and compulsive interrupters. As another example, two executives in a team building who had worked together for twelve years were unaware that their children played on the same soccer team until they listened to each other describe their issues in balancing home and work life. Colleagues cannot deeply resonate with each other, build on each other's unique contributions, or create synergy to create streamlined innovation from within the myths of inauthenticity.

AUTHENTIC SPEAKING AND RESONANT LISTENING— THE SKILLS

- *To communicate what is going on in a way that is unarguable*

- *To communicate the details of what is going on in any given moment in a way that invites wonder and that does not blame anyone*

- *To listen for accuracy, with empathy, and to promote mutual creativity*

- *To take responsibility for communication until the other person comprehends*

- *To be the source and initiator of authenticity in any situation*

- *To know the body sensations and experience associated with authenticity and those associated with withholding*

- *To be able to communicate authentically under duress*

THERE IS A GREAT DEAL OF RESEARCH ON THE HEALTH BENEFITS OF OPEN COMMUNICATION. The pioneering work of James Pennebaker (1990), among others, has demonstrated a clear connection between authenticity and increased well-being. His research demonstrates that facing, feeling and expressing "what's so," especially negative feelings, has a tremendous strengthening impact on a person's immune system and overall health. This research contradicts one of the central myths in business: keep your opinions and especially your feelings close to your chest and don't disclose your authentic experience. One of Pennebaker's most intriguing experiments (1993) involved a group of long-term, middle-aged businessmen who had lost their jobs due to downsizing. One group of men wrote about their feelings for fifteen minutes on five consecutive days; the control group wrote about trivial items; and a third group engaged in a time-management activity

in which they meticulously recorded there job-seeking actions. In a follow-up survey eight months later, the group who had "opened up" about their job loss were more than twice as likely to have found new full-time employment as those in the other two groups. Additionally, these men got their jobs much faster than the other groups.

Most business people confuse authentic speaking with using words as weapons. Or business people confuse clarity with corporate jargon. We can remember how long it took to learn the business jargon that passes for communication in many organizations: no-brainer, value-added, sending the data to the VP of HR, bottom line, real time, etc.

In fact, *"to communicate what is going on in a way that is unarguable,"* which *is "to communicate the details of what is going on in any given moment in a way that invites wonder and that does not blame anyone,"* promotes connection more quickly than any single communication skill. Authentic speaking brings clarity and economy to conversations, negotiations and conflict resolution.

SO WHAT WOULD THIS KIND OF SPEAKING SOUND LIKE? Here are some examples from our consultations:

BODY SENSATIONS

"I have butterflies in my stomach."
"My head feels caught in a vise grip."
"When you mentioned the report, I held my breath."

CORE FEELINGS

"I'm scared…sad..angry..excited."

SPECIFIC THOUGHTS/IMAGININGS/INTERPRETATIONS

"I was just imagining you jumping in and taking over."
"I interpreted your lack of comment as a go-ahead signal."
"My listening was compromised by the thought, 'You don't like my idea.'"

FAMILIAR PATTERNS AND EXPERIENCES

"When I hurry, I notice I become short with people."
"Every time the VP of sales comes to our office, my mind goes blank."
"I realize I have difficulty listening when I feel afraid."

Executives from Bell Labs who learned to communicate unarguably with each other noticed immediately that conversations took less time, produced more specific results and led to clear agreements that promoted stronger interdepartmental liaisons. Ultimately, they realized that authentic speaking and listening brought new products to market more quickly and directly influenced their bottom line.

> …"we do not see things as they are, we see them as we are. We do not hear things as they are, we hear them as we are" (The Talmud.) People can learn to listen, and those who have say is it the most powerful tool they know.

"To take responsibility for communication until the other person comprehends" stands in contrast with the body shop approach that many people take in their communication: "I said it perfectly clearly; you just didn't get it." Or, "what about 'deadline' didn't you understand?" If people learn to look and listen for the impact of their words, they build deep rapport and partnership **while** exchanging the facts and figures to get the job done.

Business partners can best take responsibility for communication by *"listening for accuracy, with empathy, and to promote mutual creativity."* Most executives we've worked with think they are good listeners. The feedback from their colleagues and associates suggests otherwise, that most business people are simply waiting for the other person to stop speaking so they can voice an opinion or conclude the item. As one of our friends and consulting colleagues, Ron Bynum, has said, " A conclusion is a place where you got tired of listening and abandoned wonder."

Most people can develop deeper listening skills simply by generating curiosity about what the other person is saying. This skill requires the ability to say, "I don't know," or, "Hmm, I wonder if you have a different perspective that could enrich this discussion." It requires a level of generosity that is squashed by the level of "normal" withholding. Generous listening involves shifting into the other person's world over and over. It acknowledges the need to let go of being right again and again, to know that "we do not see things as they are, we see them as we are. We do not hear things as they are, we hear them as we are" (The Talmud.) People can learn to listen, and those who have say is it the most powerful tool they know.

"To be the source and initiator of authenticity in any situation" is a senior communication skill that takes practice and commitment to master. Genuine flow and synergy of spirit in business depend on people stepping into authenticity voluntarily and completely. We call this "playing full out," and consider this play the height of co-creativity. The big fun comes from stepping into the unknown armed only with what is real, your experience and your ability to participate in the present interaction. The passivity often rewarded in business was illustrated brilliantly by the recent film *Being John Malkovich*, when the hero steps off the elevator for a job interview on the 7 1/2 floor. Here everyone stoops, compressing their full height and potential, and distorted postures end in rampant miscommunication.

"To know the body sensations and experience associated with authenticity and those associated with withholding" locates the speaker accurately. In other words, if you know your own body map of sensations and inner experiences that are associated with withholding, you are much less likely to engage in accusations and power struggles with others in your communications. You are much more likely to say, "Hmm, what am I missing here? What communication am I editing?" For example, working partners often withhold information that they suspect will trouble their colleagues, often using the excuse that they don't want to muddy the waters or create needless upset. The actual reason that truth is withheld is to avoid dealing with the consequences of the disclosure. For example, imagine the initial uproar that might greet:

> *"I didn't finish the report and took a shortcut by importing the data that marketing said was nearly foolproof."*
>
> *"I didn't agree with your conclusions but waited until after the meeting to gather a group of supporters from the seventeenth floor."*
>
> *"I started flirting and dancing quite close with your husband after you left the office party."*
>
> *"I made up the statistics."*

IN CONTRAST, if people can discern when they are withholding and speak something authentic instead, huge icebergs that have been bludgeoning the organization begin to melt, and the flow of interpersonal harmony and creative exchange replace frozen impasses. Communicating an experience that has been held back is often very simple. Listening through the keyhole of someone skilled at communicating withholds might sound like this:

> "I drifted off and missed what you just said."
>
> "I just noticed I was holding my breath. Behind that was a judgment about your proposal. Basically, I disagree with your assumptions and want to find a place where we might meet."
>
> "I noticed your forehead wrinkling and remembered your critical feedback last quarter. I was shrinking down in my chair hoping you wouldn't notice me."
>
> "I got confused in the middle of the last paragraph. Could you summarize the point again, please?"
>
> "Others seem to know what the agreement is, but I lost something from the contract to the discussion. What is our next step?"
>
> "I've been needing to stretch for a while. I'd like to get up and move around while we continue."

"To be able to communicate authentically under duress" saves time, energy, and health. This skill evolves from choosing authenticity rather than defensiveness. Even under the gun, the person grounded in integrity will say what is true rather than what is expedient. In our experience, the presence of this skill also reflects a deep, long-term commitment, since duck-and-cover has been rewarded in most organizations.

A person committed to authenticity in speaking and listening is gloriously free. In their presence others feel deeply seen and appreciated. Even if their exchange takes just a few minutes, the resonance level bonds each person more closely. The authentic communicator is not pushed and pulled inside by a multitude of conflicting sensory data. Instead, he or she gives full, undivided attention internally and to the other. They are not doing anything else but what they are doing, and that level of presence inspires and ignites everyone in their paths.

HEALTHY RESPONSIBILITY—THE MYTHS

> *"Okay, who's responsible for this mess?"*
>
> *"All right, since I'm responsible for the project, I'll stay tonight and clean up the data."*

Sound familiar? Most people confuse responsibility with blame and/or burden. Turf wars over a project are legendary in most companies and foster a sense of responsibility that is linked with alliances, power struggles and enormous expenditures of energy in blaming and counter-blaming. The atmosphere of distrust promoted by these misunderstandings is palpable in many companies. Add the ever-escalating litigation costs promoted by blame-and-victim-based structures of responsibility, and you can account for much of the misery and stagnation in organizations.

Here are some symptoms of responsibility imbalances in business that we have observed. See if you recognize any:

Taking less than healthy, 100% responsibility:

- coping quietly, not speaking up when affected
- reading mail in meetings you can't stand
- "forgetting" deadlines and agreements
- blaming others for problems that arise
- "Nobody told me what to do!"
- "People don't approach me."
- putting up with ineffective meetings and interactions rather than telling the truth about them and participating in improving them
- complaining

Taking more than healthy, 100% responsibility

- I'll **make** you take responsibility for this issue
- "He was out sick, but I know how to enter the data so I'll just stay late."
- "I'll call everyone on the team to remind them of the deadline."
- doing others' work for them because you can "do it better"
- Take over, get resentful with the work load, give up.
- Consistently working more and 4-5 hours a week

Ostrich Moves

- "I was hoping they'd take a piece."
- A manager doesn't take a strong stand when s/he has a strong opinion from the rationale that this stand would cut off others' input.
- "I hold meeting after meeting where I say 'This is open up time' and nobody talks, so I'm not holding any more meetings."
- "Let's have a task force."

WHY DON'T PEOPLE TAKE 100% RESPONSIBILITY? We have noticed that some central issues repeat in most organizations. First, many people create false equations about responsibility. One approach says, if I don't take responsibility but come up with a good excuse, that move equals taking responsibility. Another popular strategy is, "If my strategy isn't working, I'll do what I'm doing more forcefully," equals taking responsibility. In organizations, as in personal relationships, most people prefer to be right and make others wrong rather than to wonder. Most companies promote responsibility problems by not exacting a cost for taking less than 100% responsibility. For example, people who consistently come late to meetings (with a good excuse or story, of course) are brought up to date by others. Taking more than 100% responsibility is rewarded in many organizations by their compensation plans.

At a deeper level, many people confuse responsibility with "good" and "bad" rather than feedback toward taking healthy, 100% responsibility. Bottom line, most people confuse genuine responsibility with blame or burden rather than wonder.

HEALTHY RESPONSIBILITY-THE SKILLS

• *To know how to take 100% responsibility reliably*

• *To shift from defensiveness to openness to learning*

• *To actively promote and inspire 100% responsibility in others*

• *To shift readily and easily from blame to wonder*

"To know how to take 100% responsibility reliably" is the central skill that can shift a business from the bogs to the heights. In order to take 100% responsibility, most people need some education about what healthy responsibility looks and feels like. First, responsibility is an action you take, rather than a thing or a point on a graph. Taking responsibility happens over and over during each day as associates face new situations where reliable actions drive the success of the company. Responsibility is a dynamic feedback loop, not a static concept. Taking responsibility involves adjusting actions when you are operating out of more or less than 100% responsibility. Just as an airplane gets to where it is going by being off course and adjusting 90% of the time, you can take responsibility successfully by noticing the results of your actions and adjusting when you get feedback that your responsibility gyroscope is off kilter.

When you *"shift from defensiveness to openness to learning," y*ou consciously move from blame or burden to ownership. No matter what the situation, you wonder, "What might this have to do with me?" Taking responsibility involves noticing the connections between events. For example, a team member may say during a meeting, "I've noticed that in the last three staff meetings, half the team has been late. I wonder what that is about? I know I've been tempted to continue working on this project deadline rather than come on time." The focus shifts from whose fault to what happened, from finger pointing to what needs to be done.

To shift readily and easily from blame to wonder: This shift has great power. Most people need practice to create wonder rather than blame. If you surf past any current news channel, you'll see a banner saying something like, "Who's to Blame?" We have yet to see a banner that says, "What Needs to be Done?" Taking responsibility does not mean blaming you or others, which can contribute to stress and defensive maneuvers. If you take responsibility for an old pattern, blaming is an unnecessary addition. You can simply acknowledge what happened, accept the feelings you felt and your interpretations of the event. This acknowledgement frees additional energy to discover what you really want.

For example, a department head at Motorola was embroiled in a turf battle with another department head who just irritated him no matter what his colleague did. In the middle of one of our responsibility activities, he suddenly remembered an incident on the basketball court in college. His coach had been giving him feedback that he had ignored; consequently he got dropped abruptly from the team. The manager realized that his colleague reminded him of his coach. He had been hearing all his colleague's suggestions through the "coach" filter of failing and being rejected. When he breathed with his feelings about this discovery, he quickly shifted his relationship to his colleague and was able to form an alliance.

HERE ARE SOME TANGIBLE EXAMPLES OF TAKING HEALTHY RESPONSIBILITY. Imagine the impact on your business if people acted in the following ways:

• Communicating with other colleagues rather than bottling up;

• Sharing discoveries about the connections between actions and results;

• Assuming that everyone can take 100% responsibility and allowing them to do so;

• Rewarding keeping of agreements, for example, with appreciation;

• Forming compensation plans where people are rewarded for taking 100% responsibility rather than 3000%.

• Here are some questions that we recommend developing responsibility skills. They can be used in any situation where people are wondering what 100% responsibility might look like.

• What do you notice about your contribution to this situation?

• What might the hidden agenda or payoff be in the way you are participating in this issue?

• What is familiar about my actions, feelings and responses in this situation?

• How might this dynamic be different if everyone took 100% responsibility?

• What can you do differently in this situation to create what you really want?

• How can you look at this situation differently where you participate as the architect or designer?

EMOTIONAL LITERACY—THE MYTHS

How much does it cost to hide your feelings at work? The health costs borne by people's unbalanced lives may be incalculable, but the body of scientific evidence is growing. Suzanne Oulette's research (1984), among others, has firmly established the link between stress and illness. Business people operate under incredible levels of stress and often cannot even take time to deal with the resulting illness. For example, one executive from Motorola had to run his department from his bed for two months when his back went out. The stunted emotional life of millions of business people continues to stymie consultants and support staff who attempt to point out the obvious connection between head and body.

"Every second, a massive information exchange is occurring in your body. Imagine each of these messenger systems possessing a specific tone, humming a signature tune, rising and falling, waxing and waning, binding and unbinding, and if we could hear this body music with our ears, then the sum of these sounds would be the music that we call the emotions...We can no longer think of the emotions as having less validity than physical, material substance, but instead must see them as cellular signals that are involved in the process of translating information into physical reality, literally transforming mind into matter." (Pert, 1999).

Emotions have been seen as the "soft stuff" for decades, if not generations. In many organizations, showing an emotion is the kiss of death. Why is the official line so anti-feeling? Emotions can't be controlled as easily and graphs and flow charts. The comparatively (to the cognitive mind) messy world of emotions can be frightening if you don't have a map to the territory and a way to navigate all the signals swirling in and around you. In the name of logic and efficiency, terrible wounds are inflicted on business associates daily. Shoes are banged on desks. People get yelled at vigorously enough that spit flies, yet carry on as if everything were normal. The unspoken agreement for most businesses is that feelings get left at the door. They don't belong in the data-driven world of corporations.

> How much does it cost to hide your feelings at work? The health costs borne by people's unbalanced lives may be incalculable, but the body of scientific evidence is growing.

The "special feeling" problem also impedes deep connection at work. Most people with whom we have consulted have been mystified and/or terrified by a specific emotion. Anger, sadness or fear (not to mention the non-pc world of sexual feelings) gets closeted if people haven't learned emotional fluency. For example, in many families only dad could be openly angry. Children had to go to their rooms until they could behave nicely. This "don't feel" message prevents growing individuals from learning the power of anger to create clear boundaries, to signal social trespasses or to combat genuine unfairness. Compartmentalization and illiteracy stultifies emotional flow and deep limbic resonance, the true language of the spirit. Without emotional flow at work, people get sick, discouraged, and flat. Most people don't know what they are feeling when they feel an emotion and where those sensations are located in their bodies.

EMOTIONAL LITERACY—THE SKILLS

- *To know what you are actually feeling when you feel it*

- *To discern the difference between feelings and sensations, i.e., between hunger and fear*

- *To locate feelings accurately in your body*

- *To know the accurate source of your feelings*

- *To be able to talk about feelings congruently in such a way that other people understand the communication*

- *To be ale to focus non-judgmental attention on feelings until they are no longer an issue*

"*To know what you are actually feeling when you feel* it" gives continuity to the dozens of interactions that working people experience every day. We have heard thousands of people describe the confusion caused by ignoring or overriding emotional signals from others and from themselves. When people are present with emotions as they occur they wield a mighty tool, our inheritance from thousands of generations of savvy ancestors. Those who listen to their emotional voices move more easily into contact and contribution and catch drifts before they form rifts.

Through the research of Gary Schwartz, George Solomon, David McClelland and others, we learn that ignoring bodily sensations and feelings damages the heart. In contrast, expressing authentic feelings, even so-called "negative" ones, strengthens the immune system. Our whole-body learning approach allows people to build an emotional vocabulary from simple identification and exploration of sensations and other inner experiences.

"*To discern the difference between feelings and sensations, i.e., between hunger and fear*" creates a freer field of choice. How many meetings have been derailed by the inability to discern between anger and tiredness? How many projects have careened off-track from the confusion between excitement and fear? How much momentum gets lost every week in this confusion? For example, we have personally sat through many off-site meetings where teams literally ate up their creativity.

Cancer research by Lydia Temoshok (1984), psychologist at UCSF, demonstrated that cancer patients who kept emotions such as anger suppressed (were unaware of their anger) recovered more slowly. She found that the immune systems in those emotionally aware patients were stronger and their tumors smaller.

To be able to talk about feelings congruently in such a way that other people understand the communication: "My research has shown me that when emotions are expressed-which is to say that the biochemicals that are the substrate of emotion are flowing freely-all systems are united and made whole. When emotions are repressed, denied, not allowed to be whatever they may be, our network pathways get blocked, stopping the flow of the vital feel-good, unifying chemicals that run both our biology and our behavior" (Pert, 1999, p. 273.)

If people know what they are feeling when they are feeling it, they are much better equipped to communicate in a way that promotes emotional resonance and connection. If a person can learn to say, "When you said _____, I felt _____," trust, clarity and respect result. For example, "When you said the deadline got moved up, I felt scared," will produce a totally different result than stonewalling. Businesses preserve an illusion that people don't know what is going on. In fact, people have to work really hard <u>not</u> to know. One of our favorite bumper stickers is, "What are you pretending not to know?"

To be ale to focus non-judgmental attention on feelings until they are no longer an issue: The business people with whom we have worked are very sharp and quick. They grasp concepts fast, even in the emotional realm, then say, "Okay, what do I DO about it?" The paradox of feelings lies in non-doing. Nothing needs to be done with feelings. Feelings are like rivers in the blood that simply need attention, and need simple attention. We teach our students and associates how to give non-judgmental attention to feelings. They find that feelings flow through, leaving clarity and increased vitality in their wake.

IMPECCABLE AGREEMENTS—THE MYTHS

The most common myth about agreements is that they are actually made and kept. Most people assume that they keep agreements pretty well, except…when they are pressed for time, or something important comes up, etc. If Woody Allen is true in saying that being a grownup is just like junior high, only with money, that dynamic shows up most with agreements. How people make and keep agreements will reflect the strength of the other pillars of integrity. Agreement assessment is the quickest way to diagnose the health of you business. If people are practicing conscious agreement skills, your business will hum. If not, you can bet that blaming, withholding, lack of listening and all kinds of miscommunication are also happening on every floor. In our informal surveys, we have determined that a certain percentage of people reliably keep agreements. In other words, they do what they say they are going to do, and they don't do what they say they are not doing to do. Guess what this percentage is?*

Why don't people keep their agreements, despite the obvious costs when agreements are broken? In our observation, most people have never gotten over being told what to do and not do with their bodily functions by big authority figures. They tend to confuse business associates with these archaic figures and rebel or give in rather than engaging consciously in making choices. For example, one of our consulting colleagues, Sandra Hill, said that she had never encountered a business team that could make effective decisions as a group, much less develop a reliable protocol for decision-making. Why? Because people get jammed up in power struggles based on their unresolved conflicts with past authority figures.

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To keep the agreements you make sounds simple but is fiendishly difficult for most people to master. *From our surveys, the percentage of people who reliably keep their agreements is 3%. Imagine the leap forward in productivity, clarity and free time that would result from even a slightly higher percentage.

To not make agreements that you don't want to make counters the "oh sure" problem. "Oh, sure, I can handle that." "Oh, sure, we can fit that into the schedule." "Oh, sure, no problem." When people carefully consider whether they are actually willing to follow up an agreement with action, the entire problem of "buy-in" evaporates. Discussions continue until all parties reach agreement. The time expended on gathering agreement up-front looks expensive until you calculate the costs of broken agreements, or even more commonly, fuzzy agreements: missed deadlines, over or under production, departments charging off in totally different directions, and so on.

To know how to change agreements if they are not working: When we bring up this skill in consultations, the usual response is blank faces or the comment, "I thought once I made an agreement I <u>have</u> to do what I said." As we all know, drift happens. Any number of unexpected events can alter agreements made in the morning. The ability to change agreements consciously prevents games of chase (e.g., who was going to do that? Where's the report that was supposed to be on my desk?) and other unconscious methods of changing agreements, such as forgetting, overriding or ignoring.

The methodology for changing an agreement follows a simple map. Go back through the other pillars of integrity. Open up to any feelings about the current agreement and what you want to change.. Tell the truth about your experience. Listen to the other parties' experience and authentic communication. **Then** change the agreement.

To come to the realm of making agreements with the perspective that keeping agreements increases vitality, rather than viewing the world as making you do something: Most people believe that agreements are literally binding. They feel confined and imprisoned by their agreements. The authority confusion mention earlier translates into incredibly costly messiness around agreements. If people practiced even a few days of consistently making and keeping conscious agreements, they would experience enhanced well being. Feeling more

energetic and happier is reinforcing. The practice of conscious agreements leads to knowing your life purpose, taking on meaningful challenges, forming and following a path to what you really want. All these practices increase your vitality and creativity. Suzanne Ouellette's research (1984) underscores a number of physiological and lifestyle markers that are enhanced by being able to make and keep agreements, seek out meaningful challenges, and take healthy responsibility. She calls this combination of traits "hardiness," and finds it composed of:

• an enhanced sense of healthy responsibility;

• greeting challenges as an opportunity for growth;

• flexibility and adaptability.

The central shift that brings all these skills together is openness to learning. When organizations and their people commit to using each interaction as an opportunity to learn, they can steer toward the organization's goals by choosing openness to learning over and over. The follow chart shows you one scale we use to educate clients.

BLAME TO ACCOUNTABILITY SCALE

Accountability is an **action** you take rather than a concept you debate with your colleagues. You consciously move from blame or burden to ownership. Willingness to learn from each moment–as opposed to defending yourself by stonewalling, explaining, justifying, withdrawing, blaming–is the key strategic move that leverages momentum. The great advantage of openness-to-learning is that you're in charge of it at all times; it's always within your control to shift out of blame into genuine curiosity. This scale was designed to help you make more powerful and rapid shifts into accountability.

High Accountability

+ 5 Implementing (planning actions, requesting support to follow-up)

e.g.: Request feedback about what you could do differently in this situation to create what you really want: "I would really appreciate your direct feedback about ways I can thrive with the changes we're undergoing, especially in..."

+ 4 Taking full responsibility for the issue, the results that were created

e.g., "I see that I've contributed to the confusion about the new configuration in the department by..."

+ 3 Listening generously (able to paraphrase the other person's point of view free of your point of view)

e.g., "I hear you saying that a decision has been made about this issue and that many people have conflicting feelings about it."

+ 2 Expressing appreciation for the message and the message, regardless of delivery

e.g., "Thanks for giving me the heads up on this new timeline so I can start some creative work to meet it."

+ 1 Genuinely wondering about the issue with an open body posture

e.g. How can I accelerate the velocity in concretely implementing our decisions?

THE KEY TRANSITION MOVE: COMMITTING TO LEARNING: CHOOSING WONDERING OVER DEFENDING

E.G.: Could we agree to wonder about this free of our preconceptions?

Could we agree to turn this into a learning opportunity rather than fault-finding?

Low Accountability

- 1 Showing polite interest outwardly while inwardly clinging to your point of view and/or rehearsing rebuttal

e.g., mentally planning how to retain all your staff while someone is outlining a cut in personnel

- 2 Explaining, interpreting, judging or going silent

e.g., withholding the thought, "get to the point already"
e.g., explaining all the reasons why the new idea couldn't possibly work

- 3 Finding fault with the way the message is being delivered

e.g., "You could have picked a better time, you know."

- 4 Blaming someone or something else:

e.g., demanding evidence in a hostile manner

e.g. "I can't get this goals met because you keep reallocating all my resources."

- 5 Creating uproar:

e.g., attacking the messenger, verbally or otherwise

e.g., enrolling other associates in resisting a change

Research by Gary Schwartz and Larry Jamner (1988) supports the vital importance of shifting from defensiveness to openness to learning. Their studies demonstrate the devastating impact of repression on a person's health, in contrast to the significant health boost created by facing and expressing one's experience accurately.

In his ground-breaking work (1990), Peter Senge discusses the devastating effects of defensiveness. Surprisingly, he asserts that defensiveness itself doesn't impede business success. The **concealment** of defensiveness does. For example, disagreeing with a colleague's business proposal is quite common and can be a source of creative innovation. Disguising that disagreement with polite nodding or explanations of the colleague's basic misunderstanding of the business issue sidetrack the company's forward momentum and halt the co-creative synergy of teamwork.

Openness to learning produces vitality in your bodymind, your spirit and your work. We call that increased vitality ease and flow. What does ease and flow look like, and what does it have to do with bringing spirit to work?

When people practice operational integrity, they raise their thermostat level for experiencing more appreciation, creativity and collaboration. This expanded state presents a unique problem in human evolution. Human beings are not wired up yet for ease and flow. Survival for millions of years has been based on an ability to suffer, to endure, and to spy the enemy before being spotted. At this point in evolution, humans can choose to actually change their nervous systems to accommodate more joy.

Most people can only sustain between a short period of ease and flow before something happens. "Something" in the workplace is often delivered as verbal or nonverbal feedback. For example, you turn in a report that you worked overtime to produce, and your colleague rolls his eyes and sighs. You offer an idea at a meeting; your boss says it's the most ridiculous thing she's ever heard. You're brainstorming with your team and someone across the table leans over to whisper to the person on his left; they both laugh and won't make eye contact with you. Most people have constructed a bunker of maneuvers to defend against these perceived attacks.

In fact, these daily interactions present ongoing opportunities to shift from defensiveness to openness. **The shift is not a one-time event**. We actually call it the shift-and-drift model. We assist clients to see that drifts are a natural part of the business day. Rather than blaming self or others when a drift occurs, we recommend shifting to curiosity and wonder. The shifts described with + numbers on the Blame to Accountability Scale create whole-body, whole-brain states of consciousness. Dan Goleman (1995) made the point that a key health marker is the ability to change states of consciousness by choice. In other words, shifting your perception can shift your whole world.

Here is one example of the impact of openness to learning in the career trajectories of two senior level executives at Dell Computers. One man was wobbling in the "about to be fired" category. He eagerly embraced the feedback and suggestions he received, brutal as many of them were. He planned and took new actions based on the feedback immediately, and asked for more. In contrast, one of his colleagues, a "golden boy" in one of the European branches, consistently chose to ignore learning opportunities offered by his colleagues and mentors. Within six months, golden boy had lost his job, and the wobbler was heading up a new department.

SUMMARY

People don't need other people; people require other people to find their passion and fulfill their purpose. The operational skills of integrity discussed above develop solid and flexible relationships that can propel organizations into this new century. We have never encountered an organizational failure due to lack of technological savvy. We have frequently encountered organizational failure due to lapses of integrity. Integrity can be reformed one skill at a time. Each added skill strengthens the individual and the organization.

Organization and business life can transform dramatically in a short time by building a reliable integrity base. When people operate from authenticity, healthy responsibility, emotional resonance and reliable agreements, their companies can flourish. Even in the unpredictable fluctuations of local and world events, business can foster wholeness and can return to wholeness when drifts occur. When breakdowns occur, look first to integrity issues. When these are corrected, vision and creativity naturally emerge. When spirit comes to work, work nourishes the spirit.

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