

In loving memory of my Dad, the most gorgeous and kind man I have ever met. To my two beautiful children Christopher and Caroline, Mum, my siblings, friends, workmates and my past lovers and partners; I have been privileged by the presence of each and every one of you. My life is blessed as a result of you and the following musings are my way of thanking you.

My “Musings” are a collation of disparate ponderings over the years that are directly influenced by you. This is my “heart on my sleeve” moment!



MUSINGS
by aldo grech

Unedited

I write what, how and as I feel and with little editing. I certainly do not avail myself of 3rd party editors. Many of you who have read my articles will absolutely agree with a nod of the head and an "Aha"!

I refuse to put the make-up on my writing.

This may be because at the young age of 7, I won an award for an article I did not write. My uncle, the headmaster wrote it for me! This was somehow meant to help me in my path in life; I guess the more awards bestowed on me, the more intelligent I appeared, or something. What it actually accomplished for that younger version of me, was shame that I was obviously considered unable to write my own article, and at that young sensitive age, I seriously, was not, nor should have been. Rather than empowerment, I was left with a lesser-then feeling as obviously the implication was that at that young vulnerable age I should already have been running a publishing empire all with editors, printing presses and brilliant marketers!

On the other hand, it may be because, I want to show-up for who I am, without make-up. And if there are those that will judge me because sometimes my grammar is long-winded or my spelling sometimes erratic; then probably they are not my target audience.

In my writing, I am sharing myself, and I wish this to be felt even more than read. My beloved siblings have often remarked, "Aldo, your messages, passion and concepts are absolutely felt in your writing and here are some spelling corrections.....". I am grateful and obviously gladly go ahead and correct the spelling. However, what matters to me is their, and other friends' and readers' feedback that my messages and passion are palpable, and so I have achieved my objective.

I thank those that still persist in reading my musings and hope that you get something from them; if nothing else, the gift of Leadership through authenticity. I encourage you to respect your natural and innate passion and purpose and show-up for who you are. You only need around you those that respect you for who you are now, and can do without those that expect perfection from you, as this, at best is unreal and certainly not who I am now! Perfection is so seriously overrated anyway.

True abundance (even the financial kind) is mostly found in authenticity in whatever we do, while riches can be made from inauthenticity, but often that comes with many layers of despair and depression. Your choice!

Leadership Cannot Be Trained!

Managers, CEO's, and other similar titles, are manufactured human concepts that are based around a set of specifications (job descriptions) mainly designed at the start of the industrial revolution to slot people into roles, to deliver results for business owners or to create support infrastructures around these businesses.

Indeed a very successful number of decades have transpired that seem to have vindicated this structure. However, this is also the structure that created the greed that resulted in the GFC (Global Financial Crises).

Like those explorers before us, that gave us access to lands far away and that have reached out into the cosmos, Leaders seem to come out of nowhere and stretch our imagination further than we thought was possible. Leaders like Steve Jobs, Bill Gates, Richard Branson and Larry Ellison were orphans, nerds or school drop-outs, before they redefined the same world we live in.

There is no curriculum that these people followed to realize their visions to achieve such outstanding results. They merely believed in, and focused on their innate intuition, the Leader inside each and every one of us; our purpose.

Now there have been many studies, writings and biographies, designed to explain the phenomena that these and other similar luminaries are. However, none of this literature will make another person a Leader. One might break down the successes into studies and come-up with formulas for success and possibly emulate some of their successes, but rise to their measure or even create new disruptive directions, highly unlikely.

However, there is a way, (the way these luminaries achieved their amazing feats) simply by tapping into your innate Leader, by following that which your heart tells you. Doing this because of your belief, passion and conviction and not because you need a job, a stylish car, a house the envy of the neighbourhood, or other "normal" objectives. Because you, like each and every one of us, have been blessed with an innate design that created us and made us unique. Humanity needs your unique intellect, creativity and contributions and you know what they are, if you stop the noise of "normality" and tap into the silence of your gifts. Share them with the rest of us, as this is your god given right and duty. Be proud of your purpose and do not be derailed by the voices of fear from those that, "wish the best for you", and plagued and shackled by "normality", divert you from your natural course. They too will be inspired by your eventual achievements. Be a Leader and show us the way in your chosen field, craft, business or adventure.

Go, be a Leader whether you are a store person, a reception, sales manager, CEO, entrepreneur or even a parent, and create the new in whatever you do.

Call For Leaders!

According to the Congressional Research Service (CRS) Report for Congress, from the 9-11 attacks to date, the cost of the "War on Terror" has been US\$863 billion, and growing. Since 1993 Greg Mortenson, an American mountaineer from Minnesota, has among other things, single-handedly built 55 schools for impoverished children in the forbidden terrain that gave birth to the Taliban. Which approach do you feel is producing the best outcomes in making the world a safer place, the War on Terror or Greg? To us the answer is simple, the latter.

We recommend that you read Three Cups of Tea and find out more about this amazing American and the power of the humanitarian spirit. And imagine what Greg could have achieved with the squandered US\$863 billion! My musings are about Leadership, not necessarily about humanitarian stories, although we do draw courage from the human spirit of benevolence. However, this example patently demonstrates the difference between a CEO and a Leader. There are many approaches towards a desired outcome, and we believe that the only approach that achieves sustainable and great outcomes is Leadership (that emanate from our Essence). All the others come from ego and achieve a variety of short-to-medium-term good outcomes, and in some cases long-term, damaging, often irreparable outcomes. In our example above we see, on one side, the ego of a nation and its president and on the other, an American with a different approach, operating from his Essence, the stuff of true Leadership.

Ego is a difficult armour to wear.

Ego is conditional and conditioned. It operates within certain parameters of expectation. It deals with image, consistency, expectations, biases, learnt behaviours, conformity, protection, defences, pride, routine, and much more. Paradoxically, it also feels safe for the carrier as it is built around known behaviours, survival instincts, and defence mechanisms.

Essence, however, is pure. It is about passion, purpose and the authenticity of the objective/s. Essence takes courage. It often goes against norms, at times it demonstrates unpredictable behaviour, and it is often blocked, rejected, and derailed.

However, these are not times for easy options. In our opinion the current global financial meltdown was brought about by ego and greed. It takes true Leaders and true Leadership to take us to the next stage of human evolution. The CEOs who led us to this place will not cut it for the next stage. Much discussion in our internal workshops, and much media scrutiny, has revolved around what to do to punish the CEOs and board members who have brought the world to this place and how they should repay society for their failings and the treacherous conditions in which we find ourselves. Whilst this would soothe the human desire for revenge, it might not be the right solution for achieving the next stage of human growth, as the "War on Terror" has so clearly demonstrated.

Most of these executives did what they thought was best, and yes, some are possibly corrupt. However, these corrupt individuals are likely few in the scheme of things and need to be dealt with directly. We are going to have to trust that these governments that are handing out trillions of dollars hand-over-fist will take appropriate action to discipline them, but let's not toss the baby out with the bathwater. Surely they are not all crooked. Surely most were doing their best and have had a notably successful track record. Still, their best will not cut it anymore unless they too learn to give heed to their Essence and change from being just CEOs to being great Leaders. The lesson from Greg Mortenson is clear, take a compassionate approach to adversity. This

takes true courage and comes from our essence, which at its core is pure, exploratory, growth-attuned, astoundingly innovative, and frankly, exhilarating, for when things get to their worst and humankind seems to have lost everything, great Leaders seem to emerge and take humanity to its next stage of evolution.

The Greatness of Your Organisation Can Be Measured by the Number of Its Leaders

It doesn't matter at what level in the organisation you are and what role you have. Leaders are not necessarily at the top of the hierarchy. We all can make a difference. Get in touch with your Essence and follow your purpose. Do this from your core. Do it because you know that what you are doing is right, rather than just because it is popular. Trust in that voice inside you that at times is at odds with your surroundings and achieve greatness for yourself, your organisation, and humanity. Otherwise, you can just focus on your next pay-rise, operate from your ego, and forever deprive yourself of the greatness within you and the real contributions you can make to yourself, your family, and society.

Every individual is a born Leader until this aspect of ourselves is beaten out of us in our early years to make us compliant human beings who fit the society we have created. This is not good enough anymore. While our Ego is a mechanism built like a wall around us for protection, it also holds us prisoner. While Ego is to be celebrated, as it has brought us to where we are as successful individuals, our next stage of growth is to break down this wall and to instead operate from our Essence, our true selves that are intuitive, innovative, humane, nurturing, intelligent, and amazingly resourceful, and trust that our Ego will always be there like an attentive, watchful guardian. This is about great courageous Leadership. Many feel safer taking the less-risky Ego approach that has worked for them, and that is fine. Some, however, choose the Leadership path by following their Essence instead, and produce seemingly unachievable outcomes that, deep down, they knew were possible.

If you are currently a CEO, there is no time like now to engage your Essence and lead your organisation to sustainable greatness. How?

As a Great Leader you know that whilst organisational structure is important and gives the organisation its Ego/Brand, however, it is what the individuals in those roles do that makes your organisation a GREAT organisation. Ensure that the role descriptions are just that and not somehow anchors and nooses around your employees necks, just in case they decide to operate slightly outside the square. Welcome their creativity. Engage them in discussions on subject matters that interest them to unleash the Leader in them, especially in these tough times. You might be surprised. They often have the answers!

When Sir Ernest Shackleton and his crew sat-out on their attempt to be the first to walk across the Antarctic continent and hit disaster, it was his affinity with his team, his trust in his team, their total empowerment of him as their Leader and their learnt and observed Leadership qualities that resulted in all 28 being returned safely home, even when for the purpose of survival, they had to break-down into smaller groups with no means of mutual communication. Sir Ernest Shackleton celebrated to lift spirits whenever one team member was down, he did not sleep in his own tent surrounded by attendees. Instead, he ensured he spent a night in each tent, getting to know and understand each and every individual and engaged them in intellectual discussions on subject-matters of interest to them.

"MEN WANTED: FOR HAZARDOUS JOURNEY. SMALL WAGES, BITTER COLD, LONG MONTHS OF COMPLETE DARKNESS, CONSTANT DANGER, SAFE RETURN DOUBTFUL. HONOUR AND RECOGNITION IN CASE OF SUCCESS. SIR ERNEST SHACKLETON"

Sir Ernest received applications from highly qualified individuals in the thousands from the above job ad! How many Leaders are you recruiting and developing in your organisation. And, to start-with, ensure your staff is managed by those with Leadership qualities rather than merely tactful politicians that will eventually kill that Essence the native human endeavour in your team members. Personally review all the organisational processes and procedures and ensure that they promote this basic quality in your staff and that the compensation reflects this and rewards those that make your organisation GREAT.

What is Leadership?

Hours can be, discussing what the definition of Leadership is.

Dictionary.com defines it as; [lee-der] -noun 1. a person or thing that leads. 2. a guiding or directing head, as of an army, movement, or political group.

Others define a Leader as;

1. a person who has control or direction of an institution, business, etc., or of a part, division, or phase of it.
2. a person who manages.
3. a person who controls and manipulates resources and expenditures, as of a household.

Dictionary.com defines the above 3 points as a manager rather than a Leader, and I agree.

So what is the key difference here? In our view, a manager ensures that everything operates within the defined norm(al), whereas a Leader, in our opinion, operates through his/her natural Element/Purpose and inspires colleagues to be the best of who they are, Leading them collectively to engage their natural passion and purpose to create "a game worth playing" (as my friend and writer Tim Voccola has craftily defined).

It is like the old TQM or Total Quality Management for those not aware of this acronym. As a Project Manager once defined it for me, "TQM is about ensuring that one always produces the same gadget". In fact he went on to confirm that "if the organization had produced faulty gadgets in the past, this process would ensure that each gadget had the same exact fault"! Makes sense.

So then, the concept of continual improvement took hold. This intertwined with TQM was meant to ensure that quality was maintained and improved at the same time.

Now, I am not for a moment saying that we do not need systems, processes, roles and hierarchies; this is also a natural part of being. If we look at nature, we see a myriad of systems, processes and roles. However, there is also growth and change in nature. Each of these elements conspires to create the new (such as the human being has evolved from the other animal species). As a Leader, are you ensuring that within these roles, your people are motivated, engaged and enticed to give the best of who they are, being their natural Leader (allowing the natural evolution of them and your organisation to be guaranteed) or are you and your managers fearful that allowing them this scope, your team will surpass you, impacting your or your managers' "earned" status of "success".

This is indeed a challenging question that you need to ask yourself. Do so in the knowledge that what you feel you have achieved to-date will be eclipsed by new found "natural" Leadership.

I would like to promote the concept to you that creating a sustainable organization that lasts in time beyond you and your managers, should be your Leadership's only mission; for you to operate from your natural instinct and creativity, your Element and by example ensuring that your managers and their teams are doing the same.

You will preside over an industry inspiring organisation and you would have done a lot for you, your family, your employees, your shareholders your community and the world.

Transparency = Improved Bottom Line

The CEO had a great office with a great view and two great secretaries.

The secretaries ensured his diary was efficiently run, he was appropriately briefed and suitably prepared for his next appointment, especially for Board and Shareholder meetings. It was a perfectly tuned machine, always on-time, always prepared for his next high-level meeting. His Board and Shareholder gatherings were meticulously prepared by a formidable team of researchers, writers and editors behind the scenes who produced sensational shiny reports. These reports always glistened in the eyes of the Board and the Shareholders, and the well-rehearsed presentations seemingly addressed the salient issues they wanted to hear. Theatre at its best! Applause assured!

What polished performances. Then, one day, he was gone.....

It would seem, eventually, reality caught up with the Board who managed to look beyond the camouflaging effect of all those stylish polished reports and well-rehearsed presentations. The disturbing financial results that accompanied later meetings rang sufficient bells. So, what went awry?

In one word, TRANSPARENCY.

Naturally, there are many views and answers to this question by whoever was in the organisation at that time. They each would have their own valid opinion as to what went wrong and what could have been done differently. The answers would mostly centre on technical, financial, product related or structural reasons. Indeed, they are all true and have their place.

However, we wish to explore another view of this situation from what we believe is a higher level. The CEO and, as a result, the Board were isolated and insulated from the reality of their business. The focus was pointed the wrong way. What became an endemic problem throughout the organisation was what became a focus on Protection rather than Empowerment. "Bad" news was unwelcome, just in case it accidentally made its way through to the CEO!

Feedback in real time or no time.

The case above is a true story. We have, however, exaggerated the characters, their behaviour and the outcomes to paint the necessary picture for our debate. When this situation typically occurs, it is somehow subliminal, under the radar and between the lines in the reports, emails and communications we are receiving from our teams! So you must be thinking we are suggesting mistrust in our teams? Absolutely not.... In fact, the opposite is true.

We are advocating openness and transparency which must start with us, the Leaders. Are we open to "bad" news (see related article)? Do we truly welcome staff feedback (even if it is not what we wish to hear) from any corner of our organisation? Do we protect them from victimisation by their managers, as a result of their sharing? Or are we too busy running the business to be bothered with such pettiness! Or do we operate the ostrich model, "if I do not see it, then it must not be happening"! We do this at our own peril.

How many people who are not your direct reports do you speak with during the day? Do you make it one of your business practices to walk down, or up, to the workshop, warehouse, canteen, coffee machine to engage with any staff member where

you do not dominate conversation? Do you listen instead, with interest to what staff have to say, be it chit-chat or business talk? Or do you look-down and somehow demonstrate disdain for these people that "waste company time" chit-chatting at the coffee machine? Do you judge your people's performance by the number of hours they stay glued to their desks (and if you can stop them using the internet, the better) or do you judge their performance by their output?

Chit-chat at the coffee machine.

Unless you believe that people actually turn-up to work to positively contribute, and are able to manage those few that do not, you end-up being a policeman with a very depressed and unproductive non-transparent organisation. Truth is that if your people are spending too much time on personal things like personal email and extensive coffee-breaks, then this tells us more about the organisation than about the people. Since we are at the helm of our organisation and leading it, then it is we who need to take full responsibility.

We challenge you to think this way. Enjoy your people by joining them in their environment and garner information when it is meaningful to them. Should you see a few time-wasters, manage them accordingly. However, if you are sensing an endemic situation, it is time to start working ON the business rather than IN it.

GREAT organisations listen to their staff.

It is our experience that GREAT organisations who regularly achieve their objectives have Visionary Leaders. Those Leaders select the Right People to form their teams. They then respect them, welcome their feedback and create an open environment where ideas at the grass-roots are cultivated and explored to ensure that the organisation remains relevant and continues to grow in lock-step with their customers. And, who are the best customer advocates, if not those in our organisation who work closely, day-in, day-out with our customers.

So, go down to the coffee-machine, welcome the insight of your team and celebrate their feedback, especially when it is difficult or "Bad" news! They are offering you the springboards to success.

Certainly, the Board and Shareholders should be presented with clear and professional documents and presentations. Yet, just as importantly, nobody should need to be protected from the truth. In our experience, Great Organisations are led by CEOs and Board of Directors who operate with total transparency by supporting the organisation when most needed, in tough times with difficult results.

If you are feeling "what a load of hog-wash" while reading this article, then you are potentially resisting your biggest transformation opportunity. One that could mean less midnight oil burning for you, while achieving more, with a willing contributing team, feeling positive and achieving what you know you are able to!

"Bad" News

"Necessity is the Mother of Invention", I remember from my school days. Well, in business, Bad news is the mother of re-invention; the spark that constantly and effectively recreates our organisations!

Bad news is Good news!

In our earlier article, we visited an organisation whose CEO was not able to get to the Bad News. His structures kept Bad News at a "safe" distance. I remember another Client stressing to me "why should I voluntarily establish a company/product Blog for all those whingers who want to complain about my product". The answer is simple really, they will whinge anyway, except that with your Blog, you know in real time and can do something about it (or nothing if you so choose). As are Bad News, Blogs are gold mines as long as they are well managed.

Another Client, a software development house, consciously kept segregated the customer complaints database from the product development tracking and roadmap database and ensured that the 2 shall never meet, as "the customers do not realise that we have been building the best software for decades and I know better than any customer what their needs are" claimed the CEO! And at no time were the Customer Support staff allowed to share their knowledge with the software development team in case the latter were influenced by "complaining customers".

So, let's analyse Bad News. To start with, bad is very subjective and what Bad news is for one is no news for another. This is a basic premise we need to embrace before we are able to allow for the world of opportunities to open for us. In the early days of the ICT industry, regular commentary by colleagues and IT journals, about the LOW quality of the Microsoft products was commonplace. This was indeed seen as Bad News by those uncomfortable with Bill Gates' business success. Not for Mr Gates, we imagine. What we saw was, Mr Gates creating a new industry of "resellers" that Microsoft trained and ensured they shared revenues with and that Microsoft was able to continue listening to, step by step improving the products, making them market relevant rather than technologically at the bleeding edge.

Now, this is a very controversial subject and there are many that still today disrespect Microsoft and they are allowed to have their opinions. What cannot be said is that Microsoft did not go on to become one of the most successful businesses of our time making Bill Gates the richest man on earth!

Still, many technocrats agree that Microsoft products are not technically as advanced as their counterparts such as Unix, and this may be true. However, customers and investors vote with their money and they have voted for Microsoft time and time again as instead of trying to build the best technical products, Microsoft continues to build Client relevant products based on their feedback. The question for Microsoft is, will the new management team post Bill Gates understand and propagate this subtle choice and are they able to match the Google onslaught and the SaaS software model? Time will tell and this is not the subject of this article.

It is our experience that GREAT companies treat Bad News like gold. They often have a specific role(s) in their organisations that analyse this feedback and work towards merging this with product and services roadmaps. We certainly agree with this approach. The best GAP analysis will find significant relevance in this Bad News. Often organisations ask their marketing teams to work

through GAP analysis and struggle to find relevant information, or worst still, abdicate the role to an external organisation that goes-on to commit the organisation to lengthy and costly research programs that often give the wrong results. All this while in a database, hidden away somewhere in a Customer Support department, this goldmine is sitting there gathering digital dust!

So, as the Leader of your organisation, how often have you gone and sat at the customer support desk and asked for real feedback on what our customers are telling us about our organisations. Has your website become a labyrinth full of "Look at me" type information, where most of your potential and existing customers get lost looking for information or are you giving them tools like Blogs that are easily accessible allowing them to get quick access to information and giving you their FREE advice?

Believers and Chameleons

Leaders are believers. The rest are chameleons. And there is nothing necessarily wrong with any of these options as long as this is a conscious choice. By believers we do not mean religious or cultural beliefs, but organic and granular beliefs we were born with (our purpose and passion) often derailed and apparently lost in the process of turning us natural beings into normalized (domesticated) beings.

We all have innate beliefs and most of us, mostly subconsciously, discount them to blindly follow others' (civilization trains us towards this); we become chameleons, adapting to environments with the main objective being safety! Never quite exposing our authentic selves.

The few of us that live by our beliefs and values, have tapped into that leader that exists in each and every one of us.

This simple concept of personal beliefs and values is often a great challenge for most of us preferring instead to live an inauthentic life that leads us to depression and despair. Most then medicate (often subconsciously) through things such as need for money, authority, shopaholic tendencies, alcoholism, workaholism, gambling, drugs and various other forms of obvious and often less obvious addictions.

These distractions are meant to fill that gaping hole left by our self-avoidance and self-negation, but they often do not and the only answer then are prescription drugs, which are no option at all. Well, maybe one step better than the suicide option!

Living from our authentic self is the only answer and the magic of leadership and self-fulfilment while contributing to society from our purpose and passion. The alternative is not a feasible option as most of us, in our authentic moments of clarity, are able to see but seem unable to follow-through.

So, be a leader in whatever you do; at home, at work, in your hobby, etc. And discover the leader in you that will lead you to greater peace, fulfilment and abundance.

Else, there are always prescription drugs and the despair of Ego.

What Is Your Language?

Within competitor boardrooms and generally in interest groups, there is a lot of discussion and debate about what is behind the run-away success of Apple's iPhone and iPad families of product.

I have heard comments like leading edge ergonomic design, iTunes, AppStore (and the hundreds and thousands of applications), the charm and genius of Steve Jobs, etc. And yes, I agree, all these have created a relatively high hurdle-to-entry for would-be competitors, and while we have already seen some competitors come-up with some of these elements, finding one that has the wherewithal to bring all these elements elegantly together and gain the support of various music, video and other content suppliers as well as the exhaustive number of available applications is a serious mission.

However, what surprises me is that nobody seems to have identified the language that Apple has created! Yes the language....

We forget that before the iPhone, using a screen on a digital device included the cumbersome process of utilizing a stylus that while, relatively accepted by quasi nerds and gadget freaks like me, mass adoption was always a serious challenge, and do not mention the pesky touchscreen. That was merely a solution looking for a problem, inapplicable for any serious application beyond (possibly) non-professional consumers.

That is, until Apple developed a brilliant gesture language that made the iPhone and it's touchscreen, an absolute pleasure to use. One could not help themselves really. Once one got their hands on that brilliant screen with the amazingly intuitive gestures, it was game-over; there was no way they were going back to their Blackberry, NOKIA or that dreaded stylus.

I have recently purchased "Numbers" an iPad spreadsheet application for a mere fraction of the price of products like Excel. At first use, it was overwhelming. The difference from traditional spreadsheets is stark and getting used to it appeared to be a significant hurdle. Until within minutes, I was surprised to be using it and in less than half an hour, I felt like a Pro!

The evolution of the Apple Gesture language and how it is evolving in these apps, is amazing and I can see that very soon, keyboards and mouses will start to become an avoidable nuisance. I believe that once this new language becomes more widely adopted; and with the accelerated growth of adoption of these Apple devices, it seems unavoidable, switching away from it will become a serious barrier-to-entry for competition.

So as an Organisational leader or marketing guru, what is your language? What user patterns, devices, routines and campaigns are you developing and rolling-out to gain wide-spread user adoption that creates the new paradigm that your competitors will find difficult to overcome?

With the iPhone and iPad Apple has created many firsts and especially, in my opinion, a unique and brilliant new language. I believe you only need one as long as it is a paradigm shift that adds value to your customers. Investing time in defining this and getting your whole Organisation behind it could be the watershed you are looking for.

The Future Is Uncertain

The cycle of change has sped-up to a degree where we now have catastrophic and micro economic cycles, making the present unpredictable, let alone the future. This does not work well for traditional managers and traditional Marketing 101 plans.

5 - 10 year business plans are, at best a wish list and certainly not how the future will turn-out; and even if it did turn-out according to your plan, so much change would have transpired that you would have only managed to suffocate your organization, should you have managed it to the 5-10 year plan, as your nimble competitors would have sped past you at the speed of the unstoppable change we are experiencing.

So how is this good news?

Well, those that sped past you while you were anchoring your organization to its plan (the past), certainly have some answers.

Managers Manage, Leaders Lead. These 2 are not mutually exclusive. In fact, management is a role, while Leadership is an attitude, an approach. If as a manager you are not a Leader, you are probably short-changing your organization, your team and yourself.

Leadership, on the other hand is not about limiting, white-knuckling, anchoring and holding-tight to that plan. This only produces stress, depression and a paralyzed organization. Yes, Leaders have a 5 and maybe 10 year Vision for their organisation. However, true Leaders tap into their passion and purpose, and that of the employees, to find the creativity within them to inspire their teams towards a future that, in augmenting the organizational Vision, fulfils the teams' collective purpose and passion.

This sounds easy, simple and even simplistic. And whilst this concept is easy, the practice certainly is not. It works against convention (the past). Everything within us tells us it is unsafe, unchartered, unorthodox and even fool-hardy. Why should I stick my neck out? Why not follow the beaten track? At least that way I can always blame the system and keep my job. This is unfortunately, now, old thinking. No organization is safe from absolute failure as we have seen in the recent (and ongoing) Global Financial Crises. Your organization could be gone and so would the safety of your job unless you inspire your team to endorse Leadership by operating from their purpose.

Safe is not the same as pragmatic. Risk awareness is not the same as risk aversion.

So take a risk-aware and pragmatic approach towards restructuring your organizational DNA to have inbuilt change endorsement; another phrase for Leadership. This is achievable through a commitment to Leading by example of authenticity, purposeful approach, encouragement, empowerment and absolute determination of eliminating lethargy and inertia.

Be a Leader and empower the Leadership in others so collectively you are able to develop a dynamic and sustainable organization. An organization that operates out of respect for the individual, the team, the community and the environment.

The time of lip-service to Environmental Friendliness and Employee Empowerment is gone. True Leaders know this and those organizations that seem to be unstoppable even in these times are likely to have already endorsed these basic concepts and deployed them.

Your organizational greatest asset is your people and if your management team still sees them as a liability and an easy cost-cutting method, I feel your organization is going to face a challenging future indeed.

Read authors like Seth Godin and books like The Accidental CEO by Tom Vocola and you will see you are not alone in understanding that the future of your organization is written with different rules to those that got it here. And seeing that few organizations have been able to endorse, let alone deploy these concepts, you will be one of the first organizations to join the few that seem to be speeding towards a prosperous and abundant future for themselves, their teams and their investors.

Vote With Your Money

Greed has led us here... Where? To the Global Financial Meltdown and the culprits are not only the CEOs and Leaders that have led their organisations to this place, but all of us, driven by greed.

And this is the good news as we can do something about it. We are not helpless, lost in the arms of these wealthy individuals.

In most cases, our money, invested in shares of organisations we do not respect have enabled them to continue to thrive and grow, funding their flawed strategies that we would not accept as customers. So why are we subsidising them by investing our hard-earned money to give life to dysfunctional managers and their organisations? Greed, right?

But look where it all got us. Many of us have lost our money directly by the drastic revaluation of these organisations' shares or by losing our jobs or those of our close family and friends.

Now that safe investments do not seem to exist anymore, I recommend you take your money and invest it in those organisations you respect because you agree with their strategies, products and services so you fund the great organisations of the future. You are not only doing what is spiritually correct but you are safely investing your money in organisations of the future (should we all take this approach) and you should see significant growth of your monies as these organisations flourish.

So, vote with your money and invest in those organisations you respect, admire and love

Tough Times - Shrink Your Workforce!

To say that we are currently experiencing a global financial melt-down would be an understatement. From city to city and country to country, previously unheard of news, of major financial institutions facing bankruptcy and the billions of dollars of government aid, trying to avoid this, has become the staple diet of news reporters, globally. So, what does a responsible CEO and their organisation do in times like these? It is time to cut costs and in some cases, an opportunity to justify bad news, blamed on the current situation, often hiding the real problems that are more endemic within the organisation, rather than a real reflection of the current financial crises.

And who would blame a CEO that takes advantage of such an opportunity to trim-down costs while at the same time gaining respect for acting responsibly in adverse market conditions!

We all know that a significant and quick cost-cut is always in the headcount! Over the years we have diligently outsourced non-core activities, lowered our operational costs, maybe moved into cheaper offices, replaced old costly technologies with new, efficient and cost effective ones and now, the one large cost line in our P&L is people! A few heads gone.... and we significantly improve our bottom-line, now able to report better news in worsening economic climates. There you go, we are now stars claiming better than industry average results and the board and shareholders are happy.

So, we ask you to consider; does this mean that we have redundant staff that we had been unnecessarily carrying, allowing the organisation to incur unnecessary costs? As if not, then, this is the time we need this headcount. GREAT companies invest more in these down-times. These are favourable times to negotiate better supplier rates and develop new products/services/pricing to take-on their competitors that are more internally focused, reading the numbers to make staff-cuts resulting in weak moral in their organisations perfect for you to reap the benefits of this market opportunity.

Again, in this situation, referring to the "Bad" News article, we have looked at the tough market conditions as an opportunity to grow our business, increase staff morale, negotiate new supplier pricing and gain momentum while our competitors are slashing costs and handicapping their organisations!

After all, you have invested significantly in these people. Unfortunately we treat people as liabilities and costs in our P&L's. However, the truth of the matter is that our people are our unique asset that increases in value with time. It takes time, effort and a few mistakes for the employee to go through the process of becoming a valued entity in the business that efficiently and instinctively understands the nuances of the business to be able to turn-around and make quick and mostly accurate decisions. All those years of knowledge are gone when that employee leaves the organisation and let's hope he/she does not join the competition that is ready to leverage that newly acquired intimate competitive knowledge. And no non-disclosure contract can protect us from that, as we all know!

We ask you seriously consider, that Tough Times are in fact the time to hold on to your best asset, your people while your competition sheds their best asset.

And, we ask you, who is going to be the strongest, best set organisation to take advantage of the unavoidable good times that follow tough ones? The organisation with better trained staff, better tuned products, Great staff morale and highly respected by

the industry and all, for doing the right thing by their staff, or is it the organisation that "treats its staff as mere numbers in their P&L?

*Though your balance-sheet's a model of what a balance-sheet should be,
Typed and ruled with great precision in a type that all can see;
Though the grouping of the assets is commendable and clear,
And the details which are given more than usually appear;
Though investments have been valued at the sale price of the day,
And the auditor's certificate shows everything OK;
One asset is omitted – and its worth I want to know,
The asset is the value of the men who run the show.*

Archibald Bowman, 1938

Corporate Anorexic Lethargy

We see it in most interviews, most meetings, strategies and decisions. Cleverly it has been perfectly masqueraded in sophisticated concepts such as steering committees, team-work, and delegation, "I'll talk to my people"... you get the point. Not that some of these are not important business concepts. However, one needs to ask themselves, "am I getting involved in these processes to cover my arse (or CMA as one of my colleagues recently explained to me!), or am I clear about what I know needs to happen in this situation and I wish to get everybody's feedback to ensure the best possible outcome"?

This sounds like a subtle (but significant) diversion between the two. And the diversion is fear. Fear is at the core of corporate decision-making. After-all, I need my job and why should I stick my neck-out and get victimized by those that decide my tenure. Our experience is that this fear is experienced at both sides of this discussion. The "manager" is equally as fearful as you, in case they authorise the wrong proposal as they too report to somebody; and so on and so forth.

The end result is mediocrity.

Volumes have been written about agile businesses. Agility is key, especially in today's interconnected world. We have introduced amazing efficiency tools and yet, as always, the biggest expense in an organisation is human resource and organisations that allow this "fear" to manage decision-making are ensuring that this already significant cost is even larger.

So what are we doing about turning this significant expense into an investment? The problem is where do we start? It is a chicken and egg situation. Most are not prepared to stick their neck out, and even when they do, those around them feel it is their responsibility to protect them from themselves. So, the result is corporate anorexic lethargy (CAL) where expensive time is wasted wallowing and avoiding the unavoidable, making a decision. We have all heard that not making a decision is ALWAYS making the wrong decision. "Oh but at least I get to keep the job, after all, nobody was ever sacked for not making a decision"!

How do you gauge CAL? What internal research do you regularly carry-out to monitor the (hopefully) decreasing levels of CAL within your organisation?

For the problem here is about creating an open environment where fear is parked at the door. Fear is not the result of how you or your managers behave and manage. However, you and your managers could trigger the fear that exists within most human beings. This fear is the result of the "wounded child"¹ inside most of us and rears its ugly head when threatened, and the person in fear has no power over it once threatened!

So what do we do?

The short-term answer is to ensure empathy at every level of your organisation as a result of your understanding as a Leader that the best in everybody is found by allowing them to freely contribute their best creativity within their role. The long-term solution is to devise programs that free your people from the tyranny of the "wounded-child" that once freed and in your nurturing environment will transform your business into a GREAT organisation.

¹ The Accidental CEO – Tom Voccola Chapter 11 *“The wounded child in us is real - and more dominant than we know.”*

A true leader has already faced this fear and is already ensuring that the nurturing and empathetic environment has been created and they are your toughest competition should you be competing for the same business.

Our Inevitable Doom!

You are driving down the road searching for the park where you know you can sit and read surrounded by nature, away from the city noise for a few selfish moments with yourself and nobody else.

You take the right turn that you know will soon open up into this vision of the park that you had been dreaming of all week, looking forward to this moment on your weekend. But alas, rather than the beautiful park, you find a marsh-land with nowhere to sit and relax. What a disappointment. But you know it is somewhere around here. You remember from years ago when as a young man you stumbled across this oasis, that now you are so yearning for.

Easy you say, so you reverse back out of the path and track that took you there and right before you took the right turn. You stop for a moment, re-visit the beautiful park in your mind's eye and after a short while you once again, take the right turn to find what?... Obviously the marsh-land. But you are sure that those many years ago, this same path took you there. Surely that passage of time has not transformed that oasis into this stinking sludge.

And after repeating the same process a few times... you give up!

Well, those of you still reading...know that you would never go through this process as after your first attempt you would certainly do something different like, try a different route, call a friend, etc... but it seems futile and downright stupid to repeat the same action expecting a different outcome...

Well not so stupid it appears... we seem to keep investing our hard-earned cash in organizations that continue to make the same mistakes, vote in Governments that apply new rhetoric to same old practices and as Leaders... are we more or less driving down the same path expecting a different outcome? Somebody defined this as a sure sign of stupidity!

You see, as Leaders most of us do. Yes, we might put different spin on it, but the essence of what we do is the same. Why? Well, because this is what is expected by the investors that continue to invest, the Board Members that continue to hire CEOs of the same ilk and our staff that continues to support our misguided actions even though intrinsically they know they are off-the-mark.... and so do we Leaders by the way, know this.

Sounds like a vicious cycle; our inevitable doom! And if we do not break it, another GFC or the one after will.

The truth is that in every crises there is always a handful of Leaders that understand this and operate outside the norm (effectively listening to and trusting their essence, their purpose, the intuitive voice inside) and create something new, sustainable and initially apparently unorthodox.

The crises (so the opportunity) is here NOW! Which choice are you making TODAY?

Take the right turn, yet again! Listen to the voice within! The choice is yours. History shows that there are very few that take the second choice, (they are called Warren Buffett, Steve Jobs, Bill Gates, Richard Branson), so the choice is simple but certainly not easy!

Compromise - A Lose/Lose Strategy

A compromise is when 2 or more individuals almost agree, are almost happy and almost accept a less than ideal outcome for a situation. So at best, these individuals have accepted not to be totally happy, at peace, content, etc...

We have been trained to believe this is OK, and it has to be, for a society that is co-dependent. Co-dependency is not the same as respect and support. In fact it is the opposite. A compromise is about me not being true to my beliefs, visions, opinions and values, for the misguided purpose of making you happy; and this is also true for the other, who I reached a compromise with. It is synonymous to saying that my views are not totally valid unless you agree with them and vice-versa. Absolutely unacceptable!

This is both untrue and unhealthy and points to inappropriate engagement models.

My truth remains true to me independent of what you might think and at the very least, you should respect that I have every right to hold my views as it is for you. The true strength of a healthy relationship is where I honour your truths, views and ideals and you, mine. This is true relating independent of whether it is a parent/child relationship, husband/wife and any other healthy relationship.

We are all after truth and in care-taking, we abandon truth and choose what amounts to deceit.

An old adage goes, "I'd rather be hurt by the truth than a lie", and yet the latter seems more acceptable which is what compromise is all about. Our truths then become trapped behind the "but I do not want to upset him/her" behaviour, that then turns into resentment and eventually probably rage and who knows what else.

So let's never choose a compromise, rather respect for each other's opinions which is fertile ground for truth, intimacy and growth.

Beware of "Talking" Managers

Beware of your managers that talk a lot about their strategies, strengths, team building concepts and other grandiose notions.

The old adage "the proof is in the pudding" is very apt here. Usually managers that talk a lot about these "methods" are often found to be dropping slogans to big-note themselves (usually out of fear). They are a long way from understanding let alone adopting these methods. They require Leadership training.

As an example, I recently observed a manager that whenever involved in meetings (be-it one-on-one or in a group), talks at the rate of knots. She stresses that in her view it is all about listening to the team and operating on the basis of team feedback. However, at no stage did she really stop long enough to catch breath, let alone to create a real space where the team could contribute.

In a particular meeting, one of her team members, who was the only one still eager to rise above the barrage of her monologue and raise a point during question time was met with a "close" response! Something like, "I will collect everybody's feedback and take it to management". This was feedback, her opportunity to listen, had she teased it out!

This is not to say that these managers will not meet the lowest required threshold to performance, embellished by their constant "qualifying" to management that all the negative outcomes are a result of externalities and that they are doing their best in "the given circumstances". Just that these managers end up with a team that is not truly empowered, losing the Leaders amongst them and always struggling to get there, rather than allowing the team energy and capabilities to truly maximise opportunities and to grow into previously uncharted territories.

These type of managers are certainly not Leaders and will not create a Great Organisation complete with Leaders at every level.

It might be however that as the Leader of your organisation, you prefer this type of "driven" (as often, vocal is confused with driven) manager. Unfortunately, if this is you, then the prognosis is not good for your organisation. Your competition and their Leaders are operating in a different paradigm and will more likely than not, eclipse you.

Be a true Leader and ensure that your managers are Leaders too and that their Leadership shows-up in visible results, without the excessive "talking".

Listening is the domain of the wise, excessive words are the domain of the fearful.

A Sales Executive Without a CRM System Is Equivalent to a Writer Still Using Her Typewriter!

I have heard so many excuses as to why a sales executive does not utilize the Organisational CRM, and they range from the sublime to the ridiculous. Examples include; not as good as the one I used in my previous Organisation, I prefer my paper based system, I have my own and I'll load it on the company PC, I find it slows me down having to enter all that superfluous data into the system, and many more!

Any team members that utilize these and other excuses should never be part of a progressive sales effort. Having said this, there are many reasons why sales executives might be utilizing these cover-ups and they may include; previous bad experiences suffered at the hands of inadequate managers or even at the hands of your managers, lack of induction training, non-enforcement of Organisational tools, in rare cases - a desire to keep knowledge away from the Organisation that employs them. You get my point, none that you wish to accept in your Leading Organisation.

Sometimes however, it is the non-integrated concept that proves to be the Achilles heel; that is, organizations with badly implemented CRM systems that are not integrated into the standard sales process, as an example still utilizing spreadsheets for reporting, systems that do not feed straight into order-raising/invoicing/forecasting, etc..

So, if you are a Leader of a progressive Organisation, ensure that you have followed the "paper" process confirm that there is only one process, utilized by all and that is designed around eliminating paper.

If you are a Sales Executive, engage your Organisational-supplied CRM (none of them are perfect and sometimes there are good reasons for the differences), speak-up and request training, changes, and enhancements. But do not do so unless you can clearly show that you have utilized the system as otherwise it will be clear that yours are just excuses and will not be taken seriously. You can always leave and join a dinosaur Organisation that allows you to operate without their approved CRM system; and you know what happened to the dinosaurs.

If You Are in Sales, Stop Selling!

And before you commit me to the happy home, I am not saying that sales is not about results and ideally overachieving them. So bear with me while I share a few concepts with you.

Many years ago while I was a sales manager (in nappies) one of my team of great sales staff said to me, "Aldo, have you ever wondered why we humans have two ears and one mouth?" Well, you get the message; in one word "Listen"! That set me on another excellent path of discovery landing me in a place that is all about listening and feeling, or putting myself in the customers' shoes. I am so privileged to have worked and continue to engage with so many great people whose pearls of wisdom have triggered the ongoing awakening of my being.

We have so many times heard this cliché, "put yourself in your customers shoes". But do we actually believe it? Do we actually truly listen to what the customer has to say? Or are we driven by the latest product launch and cannot wait to vomit this new found knowledge all over our prospect, totally losing them along the way. And I am not saying product knowledge is not important, it is vital.

I'll share with you another thing that I have learnt along the way. Sales people who talk too much go through a process of unselling. In this mode, we impart so much information onto the poor unsuspecting prospect that they feel bewildered, inept and rather threatened by their lack of knowledge, preferring instead to politely exit the scene with a few brochures and "let me think about that", undoubtedly never to be seen again.

A simple example is the person that walks into a car showroom and says to the sales person, "every day, I have been admiring that car, while on the bus to work, as we passed this showroom. I am here to work-out a deal". Now, the sales person, sensing blood gets excited and starts "up selling" (another very dangerous sales process if done recklessly). He takes the brochure and starts optioning-up, talking about V6, direct rail injection, turbo charged, after sales package, tinted windows, etc..... The earlier excited customer is now totally overwhelmed at the complexity of buying a car and walks home needing a rest! Rather, all the sales person had to do is "work-out a deal" as the customer indicated.

Obviously, there was another option if one wanted to upsell, and that is to "step into the customer's shoes" asking the right questions so that the customer gets engaged, starts talking and (as customers always do) tell the sales person those things that are truly relevant to him, for the sales person to upsell towards. So I agree with upselling but this needs to be done from an empathetic space and not a "let's see how much I can get him to spend" space.

So stop selling and start listening.

Usually customers meet you or come to you because they are in the buying process and they are looking for the best value for their money. They might not always articulate it in this way and there are some that, try as you will, will never be your customers, as their value needs do not fit your business value-add. This heightens further the importance for good dialogue with your customer. If it is the case, be prepared to admit upfront that you are probably not able to meet their value requirement. Trying to deliver what your business is not structured for is a receipt for disaster, because even if you win the sale, you probably end-up with an unhappy customer.

On the other hand, once you have given the customer the opportunity to openly share his needs and let's say, you cannot meet their value equation, and you are prepared to say so, amazing things happen. The pressure of the sale is gone and then usually the customer is perplexed that you are walking away from a sale and will ask why. This is the best opening for you now to talk and truly explain the intrinsic value-add of your business/product.

In some circles they call it "solution sales" which I find exceedingly humorous. As, are we saying that in the car case above, we were not selling a solution? Whether it is a car, a home, an iPad, or a corporate purchase, the customer has a problem or at least a need. If we are prepared to truly listen, we are able to hear from the customer what his needs and priorities are and this is where the product knowledge comes in (as well as the organizational and industrial). This is where, once we have listened and listened and listened, we are able to then articulate the vision of a solution as sometimes the solution and the value-add is beyond the product itself. Maybe it is financing, maybe it is the finish, maybe it is the customer service, maybe it is something that is so easy for you to supply that you would never have thought of promoting and is so critical to the customer that you have an easy sale on your hands.

Maybe you do not have the answer and are comfortable enough to tell your customer that you would get back to them once you have thought through their needs and have a tailored offer for them. Maybe it simply is that car in the showroom.

I cannot give you the answer and neither are you able to come-up with it. But if you truly listen, the customer will certainly tell you, and you will easily over-achieve your target and end up with a trail of happy customers.

Happy Listening (selling).

Do Not Engage Recruitment Firms That Drop Their Prices to Get Your Work!

Instead, engage those that charge the higher fees.... and only once you have seen (not just been presented) their recruitment process. Now that sounds counter-intuitive especially in these times of belt-tightening.

We mentor many Great Executives who as a result of the Global Meltdown, have found themselves unemployed, fine-tune their CVs and hone their recruitment process skills (from a candidate's perspective). Many of them have not been on this side of the recruitment process for years, or ever!

We are committed to these individuals, as many of them are the architects of our future once an organisation recognises their worth, and because this is a basic humane thing to do.

The unfortunate reality is that many would not get their CV's read by a human being, let alone responded-to or called-upon. Why? Well because until we ensure that the right keywords are included, dispersed throughout the text, their CV's would not make it through the electronic filters utilised by these so called recruitment specialists.

Some time ago, I saw that these great CV's were not getting any responses (beyond the automated emails) and so I approached colleagues within the recruitment industry to understand what was happening. I was shocked and disgusted that some of these firms have the audacity to charge 20% plus and supply the sort of service they do. Let me explain.

I was told that, in most cases, when CVs are received by the firms, they are first-up, automatically scanned and searched for keywords and only the top 10 or so that qualify get reviewed by a human being. The rest (based on candidate's approval) end-up stored for future reference, which seems a waste of time when it is the same software that re-scans them. So forward the clock to today and the higher unemployment; recruiters are inundated by great CVs and the number of "inappropriate" rejects is even higher.

This is not good enough, not for the candidates and especially not for the clients.

The appropriate recruitment process is an expensive one and requires the appropriate funding and it is your responsibility as a client to ensure that your money is spent wisely by these firms. Let's say that you are recruiting a \$150k role. At 20% this is a cost of \$30k, before expenses such as advertising in the papers, etc. I imagine that you would like the best candidate for your money and that you do not want the best candidates screened out of the process before they get viewed by a specialist recruiter.

Ensure that your next recruit is the best recruitment decision you ever made, ask for an unsupervised walk-through to understand the recruitment process at your chosen firm. Make it your business to find-out first hand from the candidate interviewers within the firm as to how they get the CVs they recruit from; and if they electronically screen most of the CVs out, sack them. I would expect that if I was paying \$30k, that the Job Ad would be professionally written to only attract the appropriate candidates and that in any case all the ones that meet the basic criteria, (namely CV and Intro letter), are studied by the recruitment specialist. If there were 200 of these, then this would cost an estimated reading and rating time of \$4,000.00. I would certainly expect that.

So, as a Leader, you have 3 choices as we see it; go to a cheaper recruiter as in any case you are bound to get a more tailored service; go to a greedy recruitment firm that charges too much for a piece of software that filters your best candidates out; or select the firm that gives you back the value for your money and follows-up on all candidates. In fact at best you have 2 choices, the first and the last. I would go with the latter as long as I have seen with my own eyes how the process works, rather than finding out about the process from some gung-ho power point presentation that rarely lives-up to the promises.

Now here is an idea! A recruitment firm that does not utilise screening technologies but employs staff instead, to give better service at the right cost to the Client. It's a win-win all the way; Clients get better candidates, candidates feel heard and receive the appropriate respect/advice and we employ more people at the recruitment firms that are now able to maintain their higher fees.

If you or one of the recruitment firms you have utilised, employ this or a similar non-electronic process, then please let us know so we publish them in our next newsletters.

Oh, and by the way, these are indeed tough times; so make sure you do get your discount, after all.

A New Definition

We need a new definition of humanity. One that is not based on historic structure that defines us by colour, sex, creed, geography, financial wealth, age and stature.

We are born naturally fluid with an ability to morph ourselves to an environment. Unfortunately the "normal" environment we have created is not natural at all and forces us onto a train track called age with milestones of what is expected as achievement at certain ages. So by age x we are meant to have started spelling and by age y we are meant to have started mathematical computations, at age z we get married, and so on... Those that do not comply, are somehow cast aside as lesser human beings as defined by academic "progress" or cultural limitations. Those that do are mostly on a treadmill of further expectations of "success" as defined by a third party and are white-knuckling it through in case they fall off this path into the abyss of "non-peak performance". And this supposedly is progress!

Just writing that previous paragraph has made me feel stressed. Let alone living it!

This linear path of progression in our lives, is designed around the needs for banks to make money from interest and for governments to continue re-inventing new taxes that they mostly squander as proven in the last Global Financial Crises.

So, now that obviously money has no value as governments in cahoots with the reserve banks continue to print money to hand-over to those who quickly redirect it to their bank accounts and where in America, 20 individuals are worth more than half the population there, has the time come for the majority to redefine what human life is all about and what defines humanity?

This is rhetorical question intended to inspire us to feel our way into the future. I suppose there are as many answers as there are human beings on this planet and possibly all are worth exploring as currently, what we call civilisation is seriously uncivilised. As otherwise how could one explain the dogged "make money at all costs status" we live in including at the cost of destroying our own planet. And yes, we can blame the Leaders of the petroleum organisations, or the leaders of the failed banks, even the heads of state of the "developed" world failed states. However, as I suggested in a previous article, we vote with our money, and while we, the "normal" people in this world continue to purchase gas-guzzling vehicles and investing in companies that without any conscience continue to produce products we are not happy with, or with side-effects that we are not happy with, just as long as our bank-account continues to get fatter, then we should accept that we live in a civilisation of our choosing.

Change starts a voter at a time, an investor at a time, a customer purchase at a time. Choose wisely; that is, choose for the outcomes you desire, or be happy with what we have!

Energy Is Energy

Energy is neither positive nor negative, it is just energy.

Energy is a gift of our nature that passes through us in response to a given situation. As it passes through us it gets coloured as positive, negative or neutral on the basis of our Ego, our upbringing, our state of mind. Based on this judgement, we then respond in a given way, either reacting negatively, positively or, not at all. These moments, unless seized as opportunities, are squandered gifts.

True Leaders, perceptively understand that every time this energy within them is triggered for a given situation, it is a GREAT opportunity to grab the moment and respond with an approach that engenders empowerment, growth, well-being and empathy.

Others that have not understood this basic, and often unconscious reality, automatically react through the filter of right or wrong. They do not understand that ultimately, there is no right or wrong except that, which has been tattooed in their brain. Our brain is a strong and capable resource that protects us on the basis of what it knows - OUR HISTORY.

Leaders understand that our history is not who we are. We are everything there is and our brain is only able to give us a small percentage of reality limited by our years on this planet; and should we be guided by this, then we are missing-out on the bigger picture which is available to each and every one of us.

So if Leadership is what you are aspiring to, then remember to question any auto-response your brain triggers when faced with what you then perceive as calamities, crises and issues. Better still, feel your way through a situation, trusting your God-given intuitive self rather than being limited by your history; your brain.

These are challenging choices to comprehend as, as you are reading this, your brain might be giving you all sorts of triggers, informing you to view this negatively and to discount it as "a great theory that will never work in the real world", or some similar notion. If this is you, then make the leap of Leadership and allow yourself to see beyond the tyranny of your history to embark, one "calamity" at a time towards your full potential that already exists within you and that your history is holding you back from.

In fact the brain, by its nature is selfish as it, to a large degree, exists to protect you.

Leadership is everything but selfish.

Are You Normal?

Normal fits within (and as a result limited by) human constructs. These are required in order to keep "harmony" but in themselves, they are limited and as a result inhibit our natural God-given talents and creativity.

The perennial question in business circles is, "are people born Leaders or can we be trained to be effective Leaders"? My view is that we are all born natural Leaders. However, before we get to understand, experience and explore and operate from our natural selves, Leadership is beaten-out of us by our parents, the education system and the community in order to put us on the "normal" train tracks of life that somebody defined as, "being trained to somehow believe that we exist to earn money so that we become upstanding citizens, paying taxes and mortgages and with some pocket-money to bring-up families and sometimes partake in a snippet of those things that really feed our souls, our natural passions and interests".

And this definition also only fits the lucky ones, as in many cases, such is the normalization that we have no way of discerning what is our natural passion and purpose and what is that, that we have been brainwashed to believe about ourselves.

Natural is sustainable, normal is not!

Over the millennia we have created the idea and definition of success and have linked our happiness to this concept of success. But is this real success? Is success casting aside our natural God-given abilities to fit within the "normal" definition of success and be happy that we have successfully risen to the top of the hierarchy, earning enough money to own a nice home and/or with enough money in the bank to retire and with a few interests on the sides to distract us from the groan of normality and to ease the pain of conformity, often looking-down at those that have not achieved such heights of "success" and seem to live "lower" forms of life (possibly not realizing that in fact they are happier than us)? And if this is so, then why is it that research after research confirms that the more affluent we are, the more unhappy we have become?

Or are we able to break away from the tyranny of the propaganda on every medium that continues to affirm in our minds the "normal" concept of "success", and instead get in touch with the natural Leader within each and every one of us and achieve success by allowing the natural energy that created us to take us to the heights of success that results from and feeds our natural instinct.

Are You Still a Sperm?

We start life by winning a major contest, a do or die contest and seeing I am here writing this, I have won that contest and so have you.

But seeing we are now here, surely the game has changed!

After all, the world has 6 billion of us and so at least there are 6 billion that have won this contest and in most cases are happily cohabitating this beautiful planet.

I want to promote the idea that at a subconscious level, most of us have not yet come to terms with the fact that we have won that contest and need win no more. It seems to me that life is about living, not about winning or being the one with most money. Research after research has shown that we are not happier just because we win more of what modern society has to offer (money or related).

And yet, winning is everything. There are so many anecdotes that prove that this is how most of us live our life. The mother that is happy because her son is happily participating in a soccer team is looked-down upon by the other parent who insists that unless her son is the best in the team (ultimate winner), then just being happy participating is a true sign of a loser. The mother that is constantly unhappy pushing her daughter to get the best marks in class before she is truly happy with her. The creative child that receives all those messages that their siblings somehow are more appreciated because they are focused on an educational path that takes them to money.

All these and many other behaviours are manifestations of our basic and subconscious NEED to win at all costs and winning by its definition is being better than others.

Imagine if this concept of winning was redefined to be about the fun and contribution in participating. Imagine if there was no failure related stigma and people could choose how and where to participate independent of the connotations that their chosen field/role might have.

Imagine if the prostitute was appreciated for providing a service that obviously many frequent. Imagine if a receptionist could be proud of doing that all his life without feeling that somehow it means that he was a failure or that this role would never make them rich?

You might be thinking that I am just another leftist, loser hippie. And maybe I am, or not, but this definition or any other that you quickly bestow on me or the prostitute has origins in your psyche and maybe that is because of your upbringing, shame or fear, or that of your ancestor or theirs. Or that maybe you are still in Sperm mode.

It is about time we stopped living from our past and from the fact that we had to win to be alive and focus on where we are now, in life with another 6 billion beautiful people or more importantly in a beautiful family, relationship, company or movement. And can we possibly be happy to merely be an effective contributor to any of these or other groups? Could this be the answer to the reluctance, many of us have, to wake-up and go to work, or to positively participate in that meeting, or the burning desire to shaft that other employee just because in a particular moment they had an idea that seemed better articulated than mine.

And as a Leader, what are you doing to build your sustainable organization? Are you ensuring that your team has moved-on from merely being sperms and have evolved to being collaborative teams that, rather than undermining each other (and by default your organisation), they are instead focused on contributing the best of who they are in a role and environment that brings out the best of who they are.

Yes, it is your responsibility, you are the Leader!

There Is No "I" In Nature

We live in an ecosystem that's made-up of subset and superset ecosystems. They are inter-reliant and by their nature are very fragile. This fragility ensures the ongoing evolution of the same ecosystem that relies on this mechanism as its method of survival and development.

Humankind is an ecosystem within this ecosystem. Unbalance in an ecosystem creates shifts that alter our ecosystem for the better; survival. Sometimes this happens at the cost of some specious as we have seen with the dinosaurs. If humankind really desires longevity in this ecosystem, we need to respect this balance or suffer the worst possible outcome for our kind.

All ecosystems are constantly in a state of change and rebalancing as they become more and more resilient. Humans are one phase of this ongoing ecosystem change. So by design, we are transient and as we transition to our next stage (should there be one), we need to work collectively towards this aim. There are many nascent initiatives, towards this goal, some spiritual, some industrial and others conceptual. I believe that the real answer lies in the "WE". The energy that lives these ecosystems is one energy and it is the same energy that is us. It is one and the same energy that lives and breathes us as does trees, and every other living organism. As one, we are able to continue the evolution of our species. As "I", we are one-by-one, driven by the greed and ego of "I" destroying the "We", our same humanity as we destroy our planet.

The "I" results from our upbringing, in a society that has been galvanized by the success of the individual. But this is a misguided notion, as real success stories are underpinned by the work of a collective rather than one individual. The greed of our Ego is driving us to compete at any cost, in the process losing ourselves, our families, our sense of compassion and more importantly humankind, as we race blinded by the objective of being the ultimate winner who, in our culture is defined as the one with most money.

There is no "I" in nature but the collective "We" that includes the cosmos, our solar system, our beautiful planet, the trees, the oceans, you and I. Our fear and shame drives our Ego to achieve at all cost, in the process losing everything. And yet, the alternative brings so much more abundance, peace and happiness, bundles of compassion and a humanity that lives as one with nature and itself.

Call me a dreamer. However, at 55 and many of these years driven by greed, I see the only real alternative we have, which is to focus on our creativity rather than the greed of Ego. The only real and sustainable wealth!

Depression - A Gift of Ego That Guides Us to Our Purpose

For those suffering depression there is little sense of hope. The world becomes a slow process of withdrawal into doubt, inertia and often thoughts of suicide. Many resort to the only one or 2 things that gives them a sense of joy, relief and often moments of bliss; such as music, nature, creativity, reading, etc...²

Depression was a lesser known condition before the industrial revolution. The industrial revolution took a colorful race of human beings engaged in those things that they were naturally passionate about and normalized us and turned us into a race driven by greed, shedding our passions, for work we often do not enjoy; driving us away from our purpose.

From the day we are born, our parents, the education system, the media and everything around us normalizes us to a world where money is king and where academia is valued above all other types of vocations. The result for most of us is a suppression of the natural talent and creative self that we were born as, to become aligned with the normalized world.

Then..... depression hits, and all the world can do is; feel sorry for us, medicate us and re-route us into normality.... the ability to once again fit-in (usually totally dependent on drugs)!

There are few that answer the call of depression. They are the lucky ones, the ones that often, by pure coincidence, end-up working on themselves in a non-traditional way, by allowing themselves a healing process through "a journey in" (to borrow a line from a yet unpublished author, friend of mine), into the discovery of who they really are... dare I say a spiritual journey. And I am not necessarily talking about religion here; although some find solace in this, I am talking about balancing our normalized bias to everything logical and worked through mental processes, with our natural self that comes from feeling, rather than just thinking, our way to the beautiful creative person we are.... finding our true purpose!

In my opinion, mid-life crises (which I have redefined as mid-life creativity; see my article on this subject), is another form of depression. And like depression, it is our purpose (our natural creative self), calling us away from our ego (our normalized self). Some heed this calling and evolve back (!) to their natural self, allowing their purpose in life to be fulfilled, others plough-through (once again often with the ongoing support of medication) and live a less satisfactory life.

There are many inspirational writers and supporters of this process of a journey in, "a journey from Ego to Purpose" (to borrow a line from Tom Voccola's brilliant book, (The Accidental CEO). They include; Shirley Smith, Pia Mellody, Tom Voccola, to mention a few.

If you have had enough of the ineffective medical solution to your depression, look-up these and other authors and set yourself on the most amazing journey of discovery, discovering the beauty and abundant creativity of YOU!

² This is the gift of depression and those few moments of bliss that cut through your depression are pointing you towards your purpose and cure.

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