



Head & Heart is a collection of ideas, resources and frameworks to support your personal and professional development in leading yourself, others and organizations with head and heart.

Summer 2010

From the Editor

Dear Readers,

Whether we know it or not, each of us has many opportunities to demonstrate our transcultural leadership skills. We enter into the transcultural space when we are confronted with people, ideas and ways of doing things that are different from ours. Often when we enter this space we begin to feel frustration, tension or have thoughts like, I'm right, why can't you just do it my way?

Being right isn't the same as doing right, I relearned last week in Malaysia. Push less, open out and be aware. Connect with the desires of others. Find something you can appreciate and acknowledge in others who are different from you.

It doesn't take a genius to see what make people different, but it does take wisdom and patience to see what different people have in common.

Enjoy our summer issue and best wishes as a transcultural leader!

Dan Norenberg

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Thought Leadership

Discovering Wealth in the Transcultural Space

"The important thing in communication is to hear what isn't being said."

Peter Drucker

Once upon a time a wise man was travelling alone in the desert. Coming to an oasis, he saw three men standing, all of them crying. The young men shared that their beloved father had died and they were mourning his passing as they loved him very much.

Surely he loved you, too and must have left you something to support your future, comforted the wise man. Yes, indeed said the three, he has left us his camels, as is with our tradition. The oldest of us is to receive 1/2, the second 1/3 and the youngest 1/9. But as he has left us 17 camels, we cannot divide them among us.

The wise man reflected for a moment and said, I will give you my camel and then you will have 18. The three protested but the wise man said, let this be as it is to be. So they divided 18 by two and the eldest took nine, the second got six and the youngest got two. The wise man's camel stood alone, remaining. As the wise man rode off on his camel, the boys were still sorrowful, yet full of gratitude and not entirely understanding what had happened.

Whether the three boys knew it or not, they'd just encountered a transcultural leader. Originally the term "transcultural leader" (TL) was used to describe those leaders who were able to work across national cultures in new and effective ways.

While national differences remain an important challenge today, it's the matrix structure and the new "cultural paradoxes" that challenge the new generation of TLs. No longer confined to national boundaries, newly emerging cultural dilemmas between head and field office, global and local business interests, and the differences between function and process cultures are producing a culture of winners and losers (depending on who got the power) instead of the global efficiencies and cost reductions that many strive to achieve with the matrix.

The TL addresses the dilemmas of the matrix not armed with more processes and role clarity of solid and dotted lines and escalation paths, but with an understanding of how energy is generated within the transcultural space of the matrix. This space belongs to everyone and is not defined by hierarchy. The TL brings people into this space with the unwavering conviction that organic customer growth is the single most important purpose of the matrix.

In this transcultural space, the TL introduces live dialog, inquiry, empathy, and reflection skills generating a wealth of inspiration, ideas, and insights amongst the key players as they learn to tap into the potential of the undiscovered, like the 18th camel from the wise man.

Dan Norenberg

Leading Self

Transcultural Engagement

"We listened, and through that listening a dynamic of its own developed. The end result (...) was a group spirit and group coherence stronger than I have ever known, yet it was a 'dance with many dancers,' a group of individuals who had found an emergent reality drawing our differences into a meaningful whole."

Danah Zohar and Ian Marshall, The Quantum Society

The theme of this article is how each of us needs to be responsible for being a leader of self in transcultural situations. What better place to begin than with the quotation above. It captures in a moment the true dynamic of a very diverse group of people dancing together into a newly discovered and deeply meaningful reality.

This description of their experience forms a benchmark vision for me and anchors me for when I am "parachuting" into different and challenging cultural environments. It creates a vivid picture of what really is achievable.

A number of years ago, I had an assignment in north Pakistan. I remember arriving at Islamabad airport and seeing hundreds of faces, noses spread against the airport windows, desperately jostling for position to see the new arrivals from each plane. The noise, the colors, the chaos, the language, and the intense energy of all the people overwhelmed me in the moment. I was terrified and emotionally paralyzed. I had no vision to stabilize me.

There was another occasion negotiating in Saudi Arabia. I had prepared for the obvious social protocols such as when drinking coffee to never drink before your host, but I was not rehearsed for some other business critical rituals. I was sitting opposite three negotiators, all dressed in a tra-

ditional Arab dress. There was a palm tree growing up through the table. I had arrived with a generous (or so I thought!) take it or leave it offer. For the Arab negotiator, the dance of the concession pattern is an essential ritual of any negotiation. I was not able to



play the game. As a result, one of the group sprung onto the table, shouted loudly to Allah, jumped off and disappeared. I never got the deal!

The remembered pain of these incidents is deeply etched in my mind. The key point is, that I was not acting as a leader in those transcultural situations. I was drifting with the assumptions of my own experience. I was living in my own paradigm.

So as a leader of self, the lessons for me are: **have a benchmark vision** of transcultural engagement, not rooted in one's own self-centeredness but connected to the desires of others... and always **prepare for rituals!**

Ed Norman

Point of View

Sources of Expertise

How does somebody develop transcultural expertise?

For some it is developed through situational experience. Nelson Mandela is a prime example. While growing up with multiple cultures and later being imprisoned for decades for his transcultural beliefs, his vision and ability to see, feel and act on what is important to each culture kept South Africa intact.

A second source is intellectual experience. There seems to be a limitless supply of university courses in international management which include a "cultural" component. Indeed the last couple of decades have seen an explosion in how to study different cultures and social groups.

A further source is professional experience, for example an international assignment for young talents. The challenges at work and for the family of fitting into a new culture serve to open the young leader's eyes to other ways of getting things done.

Then there is felt experience. A colleague once told me how he grew up in a small country town, conservative in every sense of the word. Aged 21, he left home, moved to a big city and got to know a great group of friends who were homosexual. This was a shock. For the first time in his life, he was the minority. He felt what it was like to be labeled "different" and had to learn to adapt to this new culture.

How do you develop transcultural expertise... well, that depends on your point of view.

Steven Hunt

Word Watch

Transcultural

While “transcultural” is itself a relatively new word, the base words “trans” and “cultural” have existed much longer. They imply an ability to move across borders, beyond one’s own group boundaries. That can be a boundary defined by age, gender, race, profession, and so on.

Transcultural leaders see the strengths and limitations of their own culture and simultaneously see the benefits and drawbacks of how other cultures “do it differently.”

“I think one of the basics of transcultural leadership is empathy,” says Carlos Ghosn, the man who turned around major Japanese car maker Nissan. He should know. Born in Brazil and raised in different countries, he quickly developed a mindset of empathy and curiosity along with great listening skills and a willingness to learn – all essential ingredients in transcultural leadership.

Interestingly, it was what he went on to say that defines transcultural: “If you have to work and particularly do something significant in a country, it is much easier if somehow you connected with the country and you like the country and you respect the people and you are curious about the culture.” His point is simple: Finding something that you love in the other culture, while cherishing what you love about your own culture, is always a rewarding journey. People in the country you are working in will notice what you are doing. They see that you are connected and happy to be there. In turn, they are more willing to help and more accepting. And you are a long way down the road to being a transcultural leader.

Steven Hunt

Leading Others

Culture and Leadership

What if Angela Merkel and Barack Obama suddenly exchanged jobs and became the heads of each others’ countries. How might Germans and Americans react?

Leaders who lead across national boundaries have discovered very quickly that national culture plays a significant role in determining the leadership style that will be most successful at meeting the expectations of employees from that culture.

At N Vision Learning Solutions, we have been working with leaders in this situation for many years and we began to notice distinct leadership styles that seemed to be driven by two fundamental questions:

1. How do people in the culture deal with power and hierarchy issues? (**Power Distance**)
2. How comfortable are people in this culture with ambiguity and uncertainty? (**Uncertainty Avoidance**)

The leader behavioral patterns were so clear that it was pretty easy to assign them a name that articulated the essence of leadership behavior. We then used the research of Geert Hofstede to create a framework that would support cross-cultural leaders to adapt their leadership style to be more effective when leading a transcultural team.

So what does this mean for Angela and Barack in their job-rotation adven-

ture? Germans and Americans would appreciate the approachability and consultative leadership style that both leaders would display. However, both would realize that the expectations that Americans and Germans have regarding dealing with uncertainty could definitely cause some challenges (or problems, depending on whom you ask!).

Barack would realize that “**Yes, we can,**” might quickly be replaced by calls of “but where is the plan?” Having captured the people’s attention with the slogan, he followed it pretty quickly with a long-term, well structured plan created with his coalition partners. Meanwhile, Angela would realize that Americans become impatient if she spent months analyzing the political landscape to build a coalition agreement with Republicans. She would hold a series of “fireside chats” in which she passionately describes the dynamic and positive prospects the future could hold for everyone and invites the nation to “roll up their sleeves and get to work,” which they would immediately do.

Both would be happy to return home again having successfully learned valuable lessons about transcultural leadership. Stay tuned for our next episode in which David Cameron and Silvio Berlusconi exchange jobs for 6 months!

Michael Couch

LARGE POWER DISTANCE	THE NURTURING PARENT (focus on RELATIONSHIPS) S.E. Asian Cultures (HK, SIN), India	THE BENEVOLENT DIRECTOR (focus on HIERARCHY / POWER) South American Cultures, Arab Cultures Russia, Japan, Mediterranean Cultures
	THE INSPIRING SELLER (focus on COMMUNICATION) Anglo-Saxon Cultures, Scandinavian Cultures, The Netherlands LOW UNCERTAINTY AVOIDANCE	THE METHODOICAL MANAGER (focus on ORGANIZATION) Germanic Cultures, Scandinavian Cultures (FIN), Israel HIGH UNCERTAINTY AVOIDANCE

Leading Organizations

Transcultural Leadership

"When a conqueror acquires states in a province that is different from his own in language, customs, and institutions, great difficulties arise, and excellent fortune and great skill are needed to retain them."

Niccolò Machiavelli

Each of us has our own experience of how these "great difficulties" arise and knows how extraordinarily strong the dynamics of cultural non-mixing are. A case in point for me was when I joined a firm of insurance brokers in London, and after some initial organizational diagnostic work, I was amazed at the strength of disdain between two key divisions, who were working in the same markets and who needed to collaborate. When I asked how long the negativism had been going on, I was astounded to hear the casual response of "Oh! Actually, we merged with them about twenty five years ago!"

So what happened? Let's just remind ourselves of what culture is and how it becomes so deeply embedded into organizational behavior.

Edgar Schein defines culture as "what a corporation has learned as a total social unit over the course of its history." During this period, it is leadership that plays such a significant role in creating and embedding culture. The primary embedding mechanisms are: what leaders pay attention to, measure and control on a regular basis, how they react to critical incidents, how they allocate resources, rewards and status and how they role model, teach and coach. As key sec-

ondary embedding mechanisms, we have: organizational design and structure, systems and procedures.

When we step back and reflect on these powerful forces at work, it is no wonder that people are reluctant to change behavior. But in our world today, joint ventures, mergers & acquisitions are common place and we need to be able to understand the keys that will unlock these forces of resistance.



Kotter tells us succinctly that people change what they do less because they are given analysis that shifts their thinking than because they are shown a truth that influences their feelings. He says very clearly that behavior change is almost always as a result of "see - feel - change" and rarely as a result of "analysis - think - change."

Ed Norman

Food for Thought

"The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes."

Marcel Proust

Leadership Facts and Figures

Between 16 and 40 per cent of all expatriate managers who are given foreign assignments end these assignments early because of their poor performance or their inability to adjust to the foreign environment, and as high as 50 per cent of those who do not return early function at a low level of effectiveness.

Expatriate Management in Africa

by Kevan Hawley

For more interesting **Leadership Facts and Figures** go to our Leader's Toolkit at http://www.nvision-learning.com/leadersedge_toolkit.php

Challenging Situations?

What challenging situation would you like us to deal with in a future issue of Head & Heart? Get our perspective.

Send us an e-mail at: headandheart@nvision-learning.com

We will of course ensure that your challenging situation remains anonymous.