
LEADERSHIP UPDATE

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CHANGE LEADERSHIP DIAGNOSTIC AND DIALOGUE FRAMEWORK

by Richard Searle

This Framework has six steps which can be adapted for different clients and different client needs. It is based on the Deep Listening, Dialogue, Future Sensing and Prototyping Methods incorporated in the Mt Eliza Senior Leadership Program and the Strategic Leadership Program. It is intended to bring about transformational change in organizations and social systems:

- An initial exploratory workshop and negotiation with key decision makers.
- One-on-one Dialogue Interviews with range of internal and potentially external stakeholders to understand issues and needs from multiple perspectives.
- Workshop Presentation to Stakeholders about the findings from the Interviews and Dialogue about problems and the way forward.
- Leadership and Team Development Workshops.
- Prototyping
- Follow-up Dialogue Workshop and possible Dialogue Interviews to determine progress and next steps

DIALOGUE INTERVIEWS

The intention of the one-on-one dialogue interviews is to gather multiple perspectives on needs and challenges and to enable consultants to develop a sense of core issues, key leverage points and a sense of the future and future possibilities within the organization or social system.

This is a sample of the questions which might be explored in such an interview:

- 1) Describe the Leadership Journey which brought you here.
- 2) Describe your best team experience. How do they differ from your present experience? How will you develop your team?
- 3) Who are your most important stakeholders.
- 4) What top three challenges do you and your organization currently face?

- 5) Describe your own role in keeping these challenges unresolved? What is your piece of the mess?
- 6) In order to be successful in your current leadership role what do you need to let go of and what do you need to learn? What capabilities do you need to develop?
- 7) What today is fundamentally impossible to do in your organization but if it could be done would fundamentally change it for the better?
- 8) Why is it impossible?
- 9) What would make it possible?
- 10) How can you make it possible?
- 11) Nine to twelve months from now what criteria will you use to assess whether you were successful?
- 12) Now reflect on our conversation and listen to yourself: what important question comes for you now that you take out of this conversation and into your forward journey

In preparing the summary from the Dialogue Interviews it is the job of the team of interviewees not simply to prepare a summary of what was said, but rather to feed back their own sense from the interviews of what the core issues are and what the emerging possibilities are to bring about change in the organization or social system.

An example of such a core issue might be this. Let us say that the organization is a health system, and the key stakeholders of patients, doctors, insurance companies and government are all complaining about the efficiency and effectiveness of the system. During the Dialogue Interviews the consultants may sense that the fundamental underlying issue and leverage point relates to the disappointment of patients and doctors about their relationship. Both aspire to something more, but blame the system for letting them down. This might be a key insight to feed back to the stakeholders to illustrate that they are the system and they are tolerating a type of relationship which they find sub-optimal. Then later in exploring what new possibilities there might be for the health system the focus might be on how do we change this relationship and what pilots or prototypes might we explore to help us change the relationship?

Another example of a key insight arising from Dialogue Interviews can be found in the work we have done with a major corporate client. We detected a fundamental tension in the culture, the structure and the operations of the Executive Group which was ripe for resolution. The founding Managing Director was a champion for maintaining the “entrepreneurial spirit and values” in the growing company, and wary of too much bureaucracy, and disappointed that his

managers did not show more initiative and flair. Other Senior Managers were worried that the company's efforts to achieve operational excellence were being undermined constantly by a loose structure and an old mates' network where people could always gain direct access to the MD to discuss new projects. Ironically it emerged that managers had stopped taking too much 'responsibility' and "initiative" because they were often overruled or sidelined by the MD, and a big bottleneck had developed where everybody looked to the MD on most issues. The key issue was entrepreneurialism versus operational excellence, but through the Dialogue process it emerged that the missing ingredient was actually "honest and skillful communication". Elaborate and inefficient structural artifices had been built to promote entrepreneurialism, but a much cheaper and more effective solution was readily available through genuine dialogue.

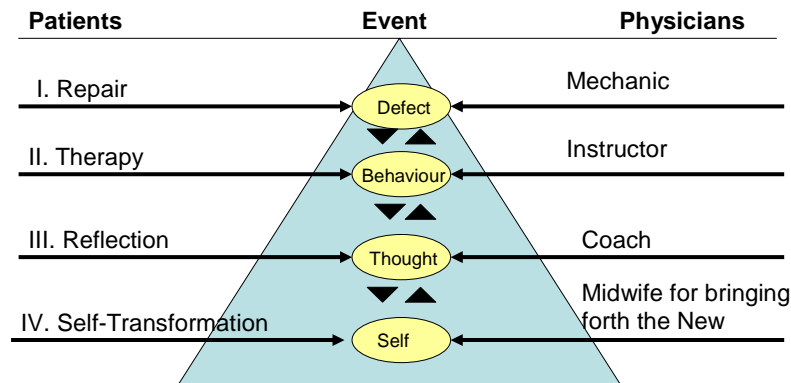
STAKEHOLDER DIALOGUE WORKSHOPS

The intention of these Dialogue Workshops is to feed back the key insights from the Interviews and to begin a dialogue from multiple perspectives about the key issues and challenges facing the organization and to begin to generate some new possibilities. If successful these Workshops will move the participants from debate, silos and positions to genuine reflective dialogue which can generate new and innovative possibilities.

The purpose of both the Dialogue Interviews and then the Stakeholder Dialogue Workshops is to help "the system" see itself and enable people from many points of view to "sense" collectively how they together have created "a system" that fails to meet their aspirations.

The findings from the interviews are presented back to the Workshop but not as a shopping list summary of comments. The key insights of the consultants are presented and the perspectives of the interviewees are loosely structured in a hierarchy ranging from the Defective point of view, the Behavioural point of view, the Thinking point of view, and the Self point of view.

Levels of Patient – Physician Relationship



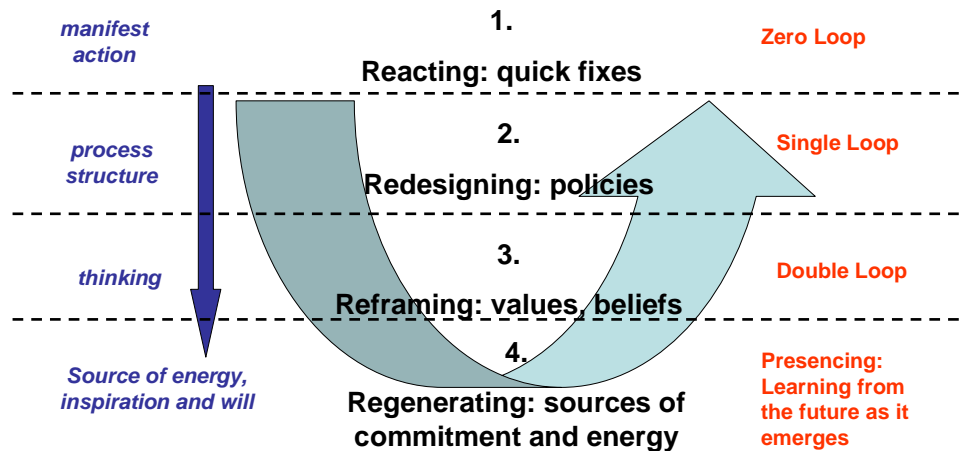
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Participants work in small groups and discuss the different levels of perspective on the issues and they indicate their overall view of the current reality and desired future.

An important development in the Workshop is that the participants cease to think of the system as lying outside of them, and that they come to appreciate that they are the system, and that they are enacting a system or properties of a system that people do not want.

When successful, this process will lead to a breakthrough in sharing and relating among the stakeholders, and a whole new level of honesty and creativity in addressing future possibilities.

Four Levels of Responding to Change



It will be important to begin early prototyping of the ideas which emerge from these dialogues and then doing qualitative follow-up interviews to assess progress. But in between, it may be necessary to provide key players with some Leadership and Team Development Programs to provide them with the in depth support to participate fully in the process.

LEADERSHIP AND TEAM DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOPS

For an idea of the nature of these programs see articles previously circulated describing our work. These are titled, "Attfluence and the Mt Eliza Senior Leadership Program", "Otto Scharmer's Contribution to our Change Leadership Work", "Influence for Leaders and Negotiators" and "Teaching Mindfulness and Leadership – Our Experience So Far".

Also, the work conducted on the Strategic Leadership Program and the Futures Thinking and Strategy Development Program are relevant for these Workshops.

PROTOTYPING

It is important to get into action early to test some of the new possibilities which emerge from the diagnosis and dialogue work.

One key idea is to form a core team(s), often shaped through the Leadership and Team Development Workshops, who are highly committed to a practical

realization of the new possibilities and who are capable of being connected to a range of other capabilities within and outside the organization.

Sometimes, when the new possibilities actually involve a shift in thinking or culture within an organization, then the core teams actually operate on a viral principle, where the way they relate and behave with each other is the prototype and their intention is to infect or enroll the wider organization.

In many circumstances, the prototypes are very tangible pilots which encompass all the new possibilities and which can be tested and are replicable if successful.

Here are some basic criteria for developing Prototypes as described by Otto Scharmer and the Idea Company:

1. Relevance – does it matter to all the key stakeholders involved: individually, institutionally and socially. Very often the relevance for each stakeholder is framed in a quite different language and way.
2. Right Fit – can you see the whole in the microcosm that you focus on? Get the dimensions of the problem or project definition right. In a prototype you put the spotlight on a few selected details. Select the right ones that address some of the root causes rather than symptoms.
3. Revolutionary – is it new? Could it change the game? Does it change some of the root issues in the system?
4. Rapid – can you do it quickly? You must be able to develop experiments right away, in order to have enough time to get feedback and adapt and thus avoid analysis paralysis.
5. Rough – can you do it on a small scale? Can you do it locally? Let the local context teach you how to get it right. Trust that the right helpers and collaborators will show when you issue the right kinds of invitations to the organization and beyond.
6. Relational – does it leverage the strengths, competencies and possibilities of the existing networks and communities at hand.
7. Replicable – can you scale it? Any innovation in business or society hinges upon its replicability, whether or not it can grow to scale. In the context of prototyping, this criterion favors approaches that activate local participation and ownership and excludes those that depend on massive infusions of external knowledge, capital and ownership.