

If you think 2009 was a tough year, get set for 2010. We are on the leading edge of a shift in how humans organise themselves to accomplish purpose and it has only just begun. There is a growing awareness that what got you here won't get you through the paradigm shift that is occurring before our eyes. The key to traversing this divide is a radical transformation of mindset. We are not just talking about positive thinking or self awareness either, we are talking about stretching minds, coming out of our comfort zones and completely rethinking organisations and business

Downturn, Upturn? Or **YOUR Turn** to Cross the Great Chasm?

A view towards 2010 – 2012 By Lorna McDowell, Organisation & Leadership Analyst



Organisations who embrace continuous learning (strongly differentiated to “ticking the box” training!), who have a high level of awareness of the changing context, who have a well developed sense of identity and are thoroughly integrated, conversing and connected at all their boundaries and interfaces with the world around them and inside them, are more likely to come out the “other side” of this current crisis. Those organisations and people that cannot make the shift simply won't survive.

It is what is on the “other side” of the transition that this paper is concerned with, the difficulty in seeing it with conventional eyes and how to resource ourselves to make the giant leap across the great chasm. 2010 will take us deeper into the journey through further collapse. Humans don't usually enjoy change and only undertake massive shift when it's forced upon them, and this is the effect of the current crisis.

For many, current coping strategies are temporarily working so life goes on with a seeming semblance of “business as usual” as someone described it as thus recently. “Only”, he said, “I'm working three times harder for three times less the money”. Many others, on the other hand, are not experiencing “business as usual”. They are already staring massive change in the face.

CV Tsunami Ahead.

As conditions worsen and access to resources dries up even more, the usual answers to problems e.g. reductionist coping strategies will simply no longer work, because there's nothing left to cut, when what is required is an injection of new energy and new thinking. Leadership may regress before it progresses, such will be the frustration and scale of the challenge, leaving a sea of exhausted and disillusioned people trapped in their own fear and denial like rabbits frozen in headlights, facing the inevitable. Sounds, Feels Gloomy? It's already happening. I've met these people in the corridors and cubicles of corporate life, they just don't talk about it publicly – they're too scared of being in the redundancy line, but they're busily burrowing away at their exit tunnels, sending off their CVs to other companies, and most importantly assessing companies for their integrity in treating their staff better despite the climate. They will vote with their feet as soon as they can.

The Penny Drops – Acceptance of Major Transition and Reframing Anger in Positive Renewal

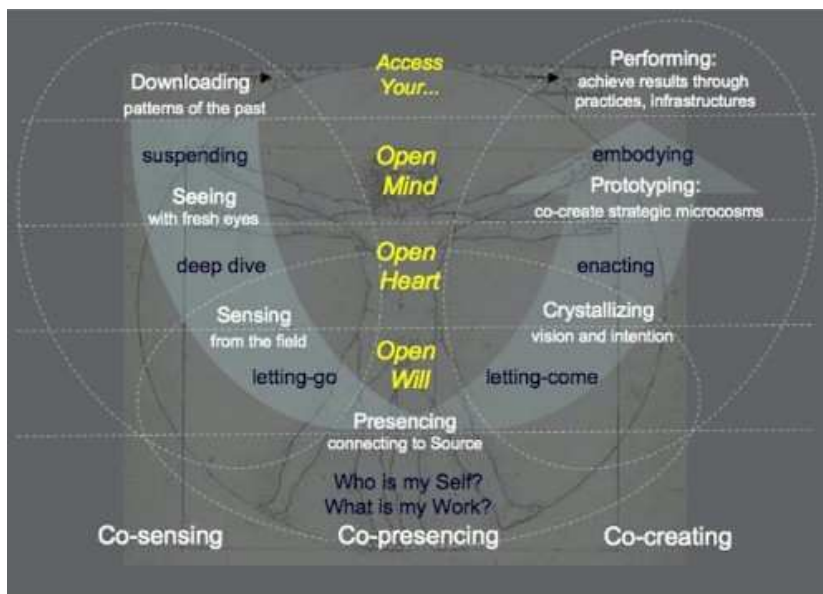
Frustration and anger will remain through 2010, but let's reframe it as a very necessary and essential part of our transition - the letting go, the death of the old to let come the new – the essential labour of new birth. Swiss author and psychiatrist, Elizabeth Kubler Ross, has written extensively on this subject – how denial, frustration, anger, acceptance, readjustment are each natural and essential stages of transition in confronting death. It hurts and it's horribly tiring and confusing, but there will be new doors opening *if* we look for them outside of our normal patterns, experiment with pushing a few open and accept a few maybe revolving doors until a pathway emerges.

The point is that we need to realise this and resource ourselves and each other mentally and emotionally to handle this massive paradigm shift that is upon us. Any surviving cancer patient will heartily agree with this – you absolutely have to let go of old ways and the anger in order to get on board quickly to survival. And even when you’ve got the all clear, you know deep down that change could happen again at any time. Life is never that comfortable state of denial and ignorant bliss ever again. We can learn much by dealing with our own cancer as a society in 2010.

Letting Go to Let the Future Come – Working from the Future, not the Past

A modern version of Kubler Ross’ theory, adapted for organisation learning, is Scharmer’s Theory ‘U’* which describes a similar process by which one must “pass through the eye of the needle” at the most critical stage of this transition. At this stage he says, “involves turning inside out and outside in” – an intense emotional journey. When you pass through the eye of the needle – the threshold at which everything that isn’t essential must go – you shift the place from which you operate to those who are surrounding us, you begin to see from a different direction, to move towards yourself from the future not from the past. This is almost always a giant leap because you cannot see it if you are still attached to the past. A number of organisations are already using this theory to help reinvent themselves including motor manufacturers e.g. Harley Davidson and oil and energy companies e.g. Shell, who are experiencing the edge of their old paradigms and an urgent need to reinvent.

“The moment of insight usually comes after an intense period of frustration, it’s an intense silence, and place of deep listening, that we must learn to get in touch with’ says Kubler Ross. The problem in most organisations is that silence is awkward, it gets in the way of **doing**, or is taken as a sign or inactivity or laziness, so we tend not to think too much, just **do** as we’ve always done, do more of it count the numbers and then do three times more of what we’ve always done for six times less resources. That’s truly unsustainable.



Managing the Tensions of People at Different Stages of Transition.

In reality, people move through the change cycle in their own time, at different times, not always together, and thus the tensions between people at different stages of understanding and progress are huge. This is something I experience frequently as a consultant and a significant part of the role of consultants and coaches today is to help people manage these tensions between themselves as they progress through the change.

Beck and Cowan, developers of the Spiral Dynamics theory originally authored by Clare W Graves in the late 1970s, describe a social evolution of hidden social codes, called “memes” – a basic package of thoughts, motives and instructions that determine how we make decisions and prioritize our lives, that shape human nature, create global diversities and drive evolutionary change. Each meme, attributed an identifying colour (see diagram below), moves in cycles, like a spiral staircase entering a new level once it comes full circle. Beck and Cowan describe the current crisis as a giant leap of evolution from green, orange and blue memes which have been a process of gradual evolution over thousands of years to the radically different yellow meme. New times demand new thinking, only this time new thinking must be more than the next regular step on the staircase – it’s a huge leap of faith, consciousness and awareness involving the ability to grasp new concepts and intangibles and move quickly to embrace the changing context. The thing is, the problems that come at us in the transition can only be resolved by solutions that they, themselves create. Catch 22. Where do we begin?

Spiral Dynamics

the eight-stage spiral of development

Second Tier "Being" valueMEMES

TURQUOISE Holistic MEME – starting 30 years ago

Basic theme: Experience the wholeness of existence through mind and spirit

- The world is a single, dynamic organism with its own collective mind
- Self is both distinct and a blended part of a larger, compassionate whole
- Everything connects to everything else in ecological alignments
- Energy and information permeate the Earth's total environment
- Holistic, intuitive thinking and cooperative actions are to be expected

YELLOW Integrative MEME – starting 50 years ago

Basic theme: Live fully and responsibly as what you are and learn to become

- Life is a kaleidoscope of natural hierarchies, systems, and forms
- The magnificence of existence is valued over material possessions
- Flexibility, spontaneity, and functionality have the highest priority
- Differences can be integrated into interdependent, natural flows
- Understands that chaos and change are natural

"What I am proposing is that the psychology of the mature human being is an unfolding, emergent, oscillating, spiraling process, marked by progressive subordination of older, lower-order behavior systems to newer, higher-order systems

First Tier "Subsistence" valueMEMES

GREEN Communitarian/Egalitarian MEME – starting 150 years ago

Basic theme: Seek peace within the inner self and explore, with others, the caring dimensions of community

- The human spirit must be freed from greed, dogma, and divisiveness
- Feelings, sensitivity, and caring supersede cold rationality
- Spreads the Earth's resources and opportunities equally among all
- Reaches decisions through reconciliation and consensus processes
- Refreshes spirituality, brings harmony, and enriches human development

ORANGE Achievist/Strategic MEME – starting 300 years ago

Basic theme: Act in your own self-interest by playing the game to win

- Change and advancement are inherent within the scheme of things
- Progresses by learning nature's secrets and seeking out best solutions
- Manipulates Earth's resources to create and spread the abundant good life
- Optimistic, risk-taking, and self-reliant people deserve success
- Societies prosper through strategy, technology, and competitiveness

BLUE Purposeful/Authoritarian MEME – starting 5,000 years ago

Basic theme: Life has meaning, direction, and purpose with predetermined outcomes

- One sacrifices self to the transcendent Cause, Truth, or righteous Pathway
- The Order enforces a code of conduct based on eternal, absolute principles
- Righteous living produces stability now and guarantees future reward
- Impulsivity is controlled through guilt; everybody has their proper place
- Laws, regulations, and discipline build character and moral fiber

RED Impulsive/Egocentric MEME – starting 10,000 years ago

Basic theme: Be what you are and do what you want, regardless

- The world is a jungle full of threats and predators
- Breaks free from any domination or constraint to please self as self desires
- Stands tall, expects attention, demands respect, and calls the shots
- Enjoys self to the fullest right now without guilt or remorse
- Conquers, out-foxes, and dominates other aggressive characters

PURPLE Magical/Animistic MEME – starting 50,000 years ago

Basic theme: Keep the spirits happy and the tribe's nest warm and safe

- Obeys the desires of the spirit being and mystical signs
- Shows allegiance to chief, elders, ancestors, and the clan
- Individual subsumed in group
- Preserves sacred objects, places, events, and memories
- Observes rites of passage, seasonal cycles, and tribal customs

BEIGE Instinctive/Survivalistic MEME – starting 100,000 years ago

Basic theme: Do what you must just to stay alive

- Uses instincts and habits just to survive
- Distinct self is barely awakened or sustained
- Food, water, warmth, sex, and safety have priority
- Forms into survival bands to perpetuate life
- Lives "off the land" much as other animals

Enter the new ways of working:

- 1) **Emergence:** this is a skill of making sense of the future as it emerges, coming to the present from the future and building accordingly, not from the past to the future. It calls for flexible adaptation to change through connected, big picture views and working in integrative structures, handling concepts and intangibles before they have happened – people with these characteristics are self directed, highly principled, able to work at a conceptual level and are competent knowledge workers. They are rarely fearful because they are accepting of the naturalness of chaos and inevitability of change. As such they have shifting roles, expect competence and transparency, take people as they are, have a wide contact network, able to do more with less believe in dispersed power and actively engaged in lifelong learning. They are intrigued by humanity and the freedom we all have to make a difference

Questions for 2010: “How can we hone and develop this skill more successfully in organisations and in our leaders of tomorrow, when training budgets are slashed and considered an unnecessary luxury by conventional organisations?” We shouldn’t kid ourselves about how we are creating a knowledge economy without investing in upgrading mindsets.

- 2) **Leadership from within – rise of change leaders from unexpected places:** Some people are more adept than others at seeing the possibilities – in psychometric terms, those who process and make sense of information by attention to pattern and big picture, who work from the future, are the “**Intuitive (N)**” type in the Myers Briggs Type Indicator. My experience as a leadership coach has led me to know that these people are usually more able to make leaps and transition, often because they can think on many dimensions at once and bring diverse strands together and make connections. However, statistically they are in the minority and therefore often feel misunderstood by the major of “**Senser (S)**” thinkers who usually control essential budgets and functions in organisations, and conservatively make sense of information from the past, through logical sequential steps.

In my role as director of Coaching Alliance Ireland, I know that there are over 1000 trained life and business coaches, many with the “N” factor in Ireland, who have paid for their own training and learning because their organisation wouldn’t support this “non-essential, self indulgent” luxury. If it wasn’t Six Sigma or LEAN, the organisation didn’t want to know. Nonetheless, there are 1000 people who are skilled in self-authoring and transition mind skills and around 90% of them are embedded in organisation or community life. The challenge for them is to step up to being a change leader, not just a change agent and to learn to communicate what’s in their minds in language that people understand and influence and convince those who hold access to necessary resources, authorities to enable change.

Questions for 2010: “Who are the gatekeepers that need to get on board to the requirements of this paradigm shift? ; and “How can we further support and energise those who do today have the skills and awareness and help them to connect more effectively with conventional thinkers”? .

“What attention is being given to resourcing minds in organisations for personal transition in the paradigm shift – it will take massive persona energy?”

- 3) **More people talking about meaningful things:** conversation is the currency that will hold business and people together from now on. Conversations help to surface new ideas and ground concepts in reality in a fast changing world. Whether it’s thinking and reflecting together, balancing tensions or simply showing compassion or encouragement, there will be a greater demand and need for conversations that help us to make sense of what is happening and making connections. But, we need to upgrade our art of conversation and courage to tackle what we feel, but do not voice.

This will lead to people discovering more of the wisdom within themselves as they take the courage to share their feelings and thoughts, and collectively and personally take action to make a difference. There is much power to be gained through sharing of stories and discovering capacities to bring ideas to life.

Questions for 2010: “How can we insist on making more time for meaningful conversations?” “How can we become more accountable for talking about the stuff “under the surface” – the stuff we avoid, deny or pretend isn’t happening?”

4) **On and off-line public spaces for conversing and collaboration:**

Linked In, Facebook, Twitter are driving a social networking revolution that creates the “space” for a whole new host of conversations to occur and interconnected networks to be viewed on a screen. We expect much more usage and uptake of online networking and collaboration platforms as people find it harder to travel but need to connect more frequently and easily with like minded people, for support, outside of their immediate geographical community – they simply don’t have the time, money or the energy to travel anymore and often those who energise them are not in their immediate workplace or community.

For example, Xenergie Consulting Change Leader Network is a global network of thought leaders inside organisations who are involved in influencing transition and developing “yellow-meme” principles of leadership – managed from Ireland, the network members are globally dispersed and connect via on-line webinars and chat rooms (<http://bit.ly/4qU8Gk>)

Questions for 2010: “How can we turn leaders into thought networkers and communicators?” First, the leader has to reflect on what he’s experiencing. Those that are making the transition tend to be those who engage in regular reflection through coaching and role consultation with an objective group or third party, probably by virtual means due to their busy schedule. These help to ground and make sense of the current experiences and take appropriate action to lead others through to purpose. Leadership role coaching has taken off significantly in the last two years and we predict that by 2011 every leader who is on track to survive paradigm shift will have a personal coach and mentor, and be highly connected to cross industry peer support forums on-line.

- 5) **The Spirit of Macro Inquiry - Taking Responsibility for the World we Inhabit.** The spirit of inquiry began with investigations into banks and politicians will gradually evolve beyond outing corruption, into an inquiry into creating the new: “What kind of world do we actually want?”, “what kind of organisations do we actually want to work for?” And as we get more comfortable discussing the uncomfortable, we feel able to broach issues that we have avoided and denied for a long time. Also, entering the unknown with appreciative inquiry liberates and connects people to feel empowered and encourage doing something. We expect to see more movements supporting world change and bringing people together on the macro level and increasing corporate involvement in this. Google’s involvement in research for sustainable energy is an example – connected to their personal involvement in using high amounts of energy to power their search engine servers.

Questions for 2010: What are the interconnected world issues that your business touches? “What is the inquiry that you have been avoiding in your own business until now?”

- 6) **Increased inter-dependency** – we have begun to see how the world is a weave of interconnecting webs and as the above conversations develop, we will begin to talk and collaborate more with each other through cross industry, cross- function... this will lead to an exchange of ideas, resources and potentially new currencies which could create new purposes, therefore new organisations and bring people to work together in a new kinds of organisations that are more fluid, temporary and open, designed to focus on a particular

purpose rather than the survival of the organisation. For many, this will be too intangible to even grasp and the fear and mistrust of working with competitors/strangers too overwhelming for them to embrace.... These people will be the losers, because these new organisations present fabulous opportunity for transformation of people and our understanding of how organisations should be.

Questions for 2010: “What is the greater purpose that you are serving and who else is involved that you should be connecting with?”

- 7) **Reorganisation of work/personal life – in search for inspiration, integrity, social responsibility and meaning** – as the CV tsunami sweeps across the country, many are looking to reorganise their lives and work to invest their time in something that feels meaningful. Whilst this has been spoken of for some time, it has been a minority that took the leap of faith to leave secure salaries. The current wave of redundancies, reduction of hours and failing businesses will force people to approach their career in this way.

This work/life style also follows the pattern of the yellow meme – where people discover a calling and create their own freedom to make a difference in their work. For this reason, too, the expectations of organisations to be socially responsible, inspiring and meaningful will rise dramatically during 2010, and there will be higher demand for contract work that fulfils part of a lifestyle portfolio. The future is emotional, meaningful and sensual.

Questions for 2010: How can we create more fluidity of employment through contract and part time opportunities in our organisation? For individuals, “what is my calling and what do I really enjoy doing?” For those who don’t know what their calling or strengths are, I strongly recommend a course of career or life coaching to get underneath the bonnet of your potential.

- 8) **Seeing the Invisible, Seeing around Corners** – organisations such as GE are briefing their managers to see the unseen, to focus on managing chaos and unpredictability. This is calling for a new range of skills in recognising what is happening in company culture and inter-company culture, what is being unconsciously created in all that we do. One way of approaching this is a regular “culture extra-vision” forum which brings together key change agents in your organisation with an experienced culture analyst to explore what is happening inside and outside the organisation (not to be confused with employee engagement culture surveys – this is connected to strategic business purpose and gearing and alignment of thoughts and behaviour in the organisation)

Question for 2010: “What is it that you can’t see about your organisation that you should be aware of?”

- 9) **Accessing the World Virtually** – in this time-poor and busy time, people are looking to minimise unnecessary energy spent travelling and reduce time and overhead costs. We will increasingly access the world through the internet be it for virtual training, virtual meetings, downloading software applications or reading the news. After much persuasion, I attended my first completely on-line “outdoor pursuits” experiential team building event recently –it blew my mind at how I could literally step inside a computer screen, enter another virtual world and have a really similar human experience (without the wind and rain of Connemara!) as I participated in the training. All of a sudden a teambuilding session for 10 global managers across the world can be conducted cheaply and without losing masses of time in travel. There is massive potential here if we overcome our resistance to living in a virtual world – the technology is there to make it really human.

Question for 2010: How can we practise and better optimise our hearts and minds towards finding online and distance collaboration comfortable and not impersonal? How can we get more people onto the networks and flowing with learning and online conversational experience?

10) Masses of creativity through cross-pollination. All of the above will give birth to an amazing creative potential that will come out of the stimulation of the flowing connections, knowledge conversations and networks and the amazing encouragement that comes when we take the time to be humans through real meaningful connection. Also the sheer brilliance that will be demonstrated as people strive to overcome barriers and develop new insights and coping strategies.

We will see a huge sprouting of new businesses and entrepreneurial ventures as those who have lost work and find that getting permanent pensionable work is a thing of the past, begin to set themselves up with a business project or idea. The challenge will be to encourage and support this creativity, rather than allow the conventional system to spit out and burnout those with great ideas who need support to get their ideas off the ground.

Questions for 2010: How can we create a bartering or resource sharing system that supports these new ideas, when they can't get finance to get off the ground? How might corporate organisations sponsor some of these ideas?

Of course, 2010 is almost upon us and not everyone will transition through the stages at the same time – the experts say it will take at least until 2018. So the reality is that frustration is here to stay for a long while as the new paradigm fights to be taken seriously – not just by “those in charge” but by all those conventional thinkers who will remain entrenched in the old ways.

The reality of 2010 will be that the new thinkers will often be blocked in implementation, because of resources, access to funds or sheer ignorance and negativity of those who hold access to resources who are entrenched in conventional thinking. This will lead to a lots of feelings of futility and regression amongst the change agents and change leaders. The big question is how on earth do we maintain our energy to support ourselves through this? That, I believe, is a question of faith, collective encouragement and enduring persistence to stay tuned to the big picture. Here the media has a huge role to play.

More information

Xenergie Change Leader Network: www.xenergie.com

Spiral Dynamics: <http://www.spiraldynamics.net/>

Theory U: Source: Otto Scharmer. <http://www.presencing.com/>

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As director of **Coaching Alliance**, she stewards a collaboration of national and international coaching associations in Ireland who have put aside their competitive differences, to come together in common purpose to promote awareness of how coaching can assist transitions and mindset change in the major paradigm shift that our society faces. For more information about coaching and finding coaches for organisation transitions, please contact www.coachingalliance.ie or call Lorna McDowell on +353 (87) 919 0622.

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