

Why Else Get Out of Bed in the Morning?

**Organizations exist to serve. Period.
Leaders live to serve. Period.**

Passionate servant leaders, determined to create a legacy of earthshaking transformation in their domain (a 600SF retail space, a 4-person training department, an urban school, a rural school, a city, a nation), create/must *necessarily* create organizations which are no less than Cathedrals in which the full and awesome power of the Imagination and Spirit and native Entrepreneurial flair (We are *all* entrepreneurs—Muhammad Yunus) of diverse individuals (*100%* creative Talent—from checkout to lab, from Apple to Wegmans to Jane’s one-person accountancy in Invercargill NZ) is unleashed in passionate pursuit of jointly perceived soaring purpose (= win a Nobel peace prize like Yunus, or at least do something worthy of bragging about 25 years from now to your grandkids) and personal and client service Excellence.

Such Talent unbound pursue Quests—rapidly and relentlessly experimenting and failing and trying again—which surprise and surpass and redefine the expectations of the individual and the servant leader alike. The collective “products” of these Quests offer the best chance of achieving rapid organizational and individual adaptation to fast-transforming environments and provide the nutrition for continuing (and sometimes dramatic) re-imaginings, which re-draw the boundaries of industries and communities and human achievement and the very conception of what is possible.

In turn, such organizations, bent upon excellence and re-imaginings based on maximizing human creativity and achievement, will *automatically* create cadres of imaginative and inspiring and determined servant leaders who stick around to take the organization to another level, and then another—or, equally or *more* important, leave to spread the virus of Freedom-Creativity-Excellence-Transforming Purpose by pathfinding new streets, highways, and alleyways which vitalize and revitalize, through creative destruction, Entrepreneurial Capitalism, which is the best hope for maximizing collective human Freedom, Happiness, Prosperity, Well-being—and, one prays, some measure of Peace on earth.

“Radically thrilling”—BMW’s aspiration for a new model car

“Insanely great”—Steve Jobs’ aspiration for each Apple product

“Gaspworthy”—Tom Peters’ aspiration for every project

*The greatest danger
for most of us
is not that our aim is
too high
and we miss it,
but that it is
too low
and we reach it.*

Michelangelo

An Immutable Chain of Logic?

Purposefully constructed organizations are the vehicle for (virtually) all human endeavor. Yes? No?

The majority of humans, including children, spend the largest share of their waking hours in organizations. Yes? No?

It necessarily follows that organizations are the vehicle for and arena in which virtually all non-family fulfillment (or not) takes place. Yes? No?

It necessarily follows from the above that there is an enormous pressure placed on leaders to maximize the potential of their employees-members, to teach them concrete skills, a love(!) of change, the joy of commitment to Excellence, and social-political skills needed everywhere for success—either as longterm members of their own organization or as “marketable” members of the workforce at large. Yes? No?

The good news: It necessarily follows from the above that the enterprise that maximizes human potential dramatically increases the odds of engaging and surprising and satisfying customers and other community members. Yes? No?

(And those organizations, well-intended as they may be, that fail to engage customers in fact provide usurpers or others the opportunity to flourish and benefit from the services of an exceptionally talented labor pool.)

The good news: It necessarily follows from all the above that an “economy” per se maximizes its potential by maximizing the share of organizations that are acting as stated above. Yes? No?

All of the above is a delightful and important example of a virtuous circle. (Think Silicon Valley, 1970-2007; Bangalore 1995-2007; Singapore 1980-2007.)

Addendum: An Immutable Chain of Logic?

Research demonstrates that the best investment in “foreign aid” is investment in the education of women—primarily because women in turn are the most committed to the development of children and educated-humane-productive communities.

Women are often the recipients of 90% of micro-loans in microlending programs such as those of the Grameen Bank (Muhammad Yunus). This figure was not an aim, but the result of women’s demonstrated reliability and utilization of said loans to support community development.

Women are the font of human development—and tend to foster environments more amenable to human development in the organizations they lead.

To achieve the aims enumerated in the previous analysis, it follows that wholesale participation of women in managerial and executive capacity is a cornerstone for populations of effective organizations which maximize the development of human potential.

“Get Real”: Isn’t the Above Utopian Drivel?

On the one hand, of course it’s utopian.

The horrors reported on the front page of every day’s paper suggest that the world-as-a-collection-of-mutually-supportive-organizations-that-maximize-human-potential is pie-in-the-sky. And the idea that one—and all—would rise to join such organizations, if they *were* the norm, and commit to growth and excellence is another pie in that same sky.

Skies with pies are unlikely. All is not well in the world—nor is all likely to be well in the world.

On the other hand, no, not utopian.

First, the fact that horrors abound is no excuse for failing to aspire to make one’s own organization a cathedral to human growth and excellence. Moreover, I mean the Cub Scout troop, the 3-person project team in Novosibirsk, Siberia, the Community Center Board of Directors, the large corporation and the governmental bureau—that is, each and every organizational entity.

The same holds for the individual. While one may indeed be ensconced in a truly wretched organization, that does not preclude making one’s small corner a beacon of light (“pocket of Excellence” was the term Nancy Austin and I used in *A Passion for Excellence*). Moreover, given the volatility of employment for one and almost all these days, Emersonian self-reliance and Franklinian devotion to personal improvement is simply necessary.

Second, better is better than nothing. Poverty abounds in China and India. Political repression is still the official doctrine in China. And yet who would deny that both nations’ embrace of global entrepreneurial capitalism, and hence the emergence of the sorts of organizations more or less described above that are necessary to compete in such an arena, has improved the lot of hundreds of millions of people in a surprisingly short period of time? And not only the economic-financial standard of living for those participating individuals, but also opportunities to use more of one’s creative talents courtesy of increased investments in the likes of education (e.g., China’s new 100,000-student universities), training in general and research and development. (NB: The utterly wretched life on the first farms, tens of thousands of years ago, was Utopia—and source of the term “civilization” and the

basis for organized learning—compared to the far more wretched lives of the tiny hunter-gatherer bands that had been the only form of “organized” life before.)

Repeat: Second, better is better than nothing. From Nigeria to Newark to New York Nagano, it can be argued that the Greatest Social Good derives from the creation of reasonably stable jobs. Hence, organizations that create the most-best-decent jobs are the vehicles of creating the most social good. Hence organizations that do the best job of *approximating* the “utopian ideal” described above enhance Social Good as much as possible at any point in time.

Third, there is nothing “utopian” about the impact of women leaders on organizations—unless it is utopian to hope that men who dominate most systems of leadership will awaken to and accept this fact.

Fourth, while I imagine organizations that individually and collectively maximize human creative potential, that in no way implies support for a “soft” or “touchy feely” environment. To the contrary! There is arguably nothing “tougher” than an organization committed to excellence and maximizing human creative potential. This is true in a 7th grade classroom, in a Girl Scout troop, or on an Apple project team. In pursuit of growth and excellence, wholesale commitment of every member—from “bit player” to “star”—is requisite. Self-responsibility as well as responsibility for the development of one’s mates is requisite. Accountability for growth and execution is requisite. Truth-telling is requisite. Both competitiveness and cooperativeness must be maximized. While “joy” and “fun” are operative words, such joy is in accord with the Aristotelian idea of “happiness” as the full and fertile and unrestrained use of one’s talents. “Soft” it ain’t.

Utopian?

Yes.

And no.

***You miss
100% of the shots
you never take.***

Wayne Gretzky