WORK AND LOVE

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"Love and work are the cornerstones of our humanness."
- Sigmund Freud

".., all work is empty save when there is love… Work is love made visible."
- Kahlil Gibran

It is certainly not saying anything new to observe that the business world struggles to create an environment in which performance and people are of equal concern. Countless books and articles argue for the necessity of honoring both and almost no one would disagree with that. Yet, almost no one is so naïve as to not know that when push comes to shove, it is performance that counts far more than people.

Is this simply just the way of the world with the push and shove revealing the inevitable either/or choice inherent in the situation? Or is there perhaps something we're overlooking in the matter – a blind spot, if you will – which, if we could see it, would make the apparent contradiction disappear?

This contradiction between people and performance derives from a misunderstanding of the fundamental relationship between work and love. F. Scott Fitzgerald gives us a clue to resolving the apparent dilemma in his famous self-analysis article in Esquire magazine (1936):

> *"The test of a first-rate intelligence," he said, "is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in mind at the same time and still retain the ability to function."*

Perhaps our struggle with bringing work and love into harmony is a failure of Fitzgerald's "intelligence" or as we prefer to put it, a missing distinction that would allow for a leap of consciousness. As if to emphasize the point, Fitzgerald gives us another, less quoted observation in his first novel, This Side of Paradise:

> *"The idea that to make a man work you've got to hold gold in front of his eyes is a growth, not an axiom. We've done that for so long that we've forgotten there's any other way."*

If not money and all the similar carrots and sticks stored in our corporate arsenals to get the job done, then what is it that would make it possible for us to care for one another while at work?

Most companies, whether they realize it or not, are based on the model of an army – specifically the army of Frederick the Great of Prussia (1740 to 1786). Prior to Frederick, European armies (with some notable exceptions like the famous Roman legions), were largely made up of unwilling conscripts – unruly mobs of criminals, paupers and occasional mercenaries. Frederick determined to make his army a reliable and efficient instrument of his political ambition and introduced many innovations including ranks, uniforms and standardized rules and regulations. To ensure that his army operated efficiently on command, he encouraged the idea that the common soldiers should be taught to fear their officers more than the enemy.

This basic idea of a mechanized structure in service of a political intention became the basis for organizing factories during the Industrial Revolution. The officers became the managers and the political intentions became commercial objectives. What endured was the reliability of an efficient machine. Division of labor, so much admired in Adam Smith's Wealth of Nations, accelerated the movement towards mechanization, further separating workers from their supervisors and removing any vestiges of control from the workers.

This culminated in the late 19th Century's principles of Scientific Management, particularly as expounded by a second Frederick – Frederick Taylor, who was famous (some would say infamous) for introducing time-and-motion studies into American factories. While quite successful in increasing productivity, he was perceived by many to be an "enemy of the working man". (In fact, the whole idea of Scientific Management was brilliantly parodied in Charlie Chaplin's classic film, Modern Times.) Here is how Taylor succinctly described his view:

> *"Hardly a competent workman can be found who does not devote a considerable amount of time to studying just how slowly he can work and still convince his employer that he is going at a good pace. Under our system a worker is told just what he is to do and how he is to do it. Any improvement he makes upon the orders given to him is fatal to his success."*

While it is easy to characterize Taylor as a villain, his methods were a logical development arising from the central vision of the Industrial Revolution. The machine may have started as a tool, but it soon came to be the iconic model for human organization. It was not until the second half of the 20th Century that this model was seriously and broadly questioned.

After World War II, Japan was in ruins and its industrial base almost entirely destroyed. "Made in Japan" became synonymous with primitive production of cheap consumer goods. W. Edwards Deming, an American expert in the field of statistical quality control

of manufacturing processes, was invited in 1950 by the Japanese Union of Scientists and Engineers to lecture on his methods and techniques. His lectures and workshops revolutionized Japanese business culture over the next decade, leading to a renaissance of Japanese industry and the development of their worldwide reputation for high quality products. Emperor Hirohito awarded Deming the "Order of the Sacred Treasure" in 1960, in appreciation of his contribution to the rebirth of Japanese industry. The "Deming Prize" established by the Japanese to honor him, continues to exert enormous influence in Japan and throughout the global business world.

Deming claimed that a sustainable improvement in quality required that *"the prevailing style of management must undergo transformation"*. He offered instead what he referred to as *"a system of profound knowledge"*. Where prior theorists viewed the organization as a machine (that is, a network of interrelated parts), Deming viewed it as a systemic whole. Moreover, the whole being greater than the sum of its parts, he saw it as management's responsibility to be aware of the system as a whole and to be engaged in a process of continuously improving its wholeness by including and integrating the contributing views of all its parts.

Where Taylor had focused on the continuous improvement of quantity, Deming shifted the focus to quality. It's not that advocates of Scientific Management hadn't appreciated the importance of quality and leadership. They saw them, however, as technical problems to be solved by addressing the numbers arising from an analysis of individual linear processes. Deming viewed leadership as a learning challenge to be met by developing an appreciation for context as the emergent property of a non-linear, complex system.

Konosuke Matsushita, head of Japan's Matsushita Electronics, said in 1982:

> *"We are going to win and the Industrial West is going to lose out; there's not much you can do about it because the reasons for your failure are within yourselves. Your firms are built on the Taylor model. Even worse, so are your heads. With your bosses doing the thinking while the workers wield the screwdrivers, you're convinced deep down that this is the right way to run a business. For you the essence of management is getting the ideas out of the heads of the bosses and into the hands of labor.*
> *We are beyond your mindset. Business, we know, is now so complex and difficult, the survival of firms so hazardous in an environment increasingly unpredictable, competitive and fraught with danger, that their continued existence depends on the day-to-day mobilization of every ounce of intelligence."*

Never mind that it hasn't turned out quite as Matsushita predicted. What's important is to recognize that Japanese industry, inspired by Deming, made a discovery and instituted a transformation so radical that it was enabled, at least for a period of several decades, to lead the world in technological and manufacturing excellence.

Japanese business leaders used to joke among themselves that delegations from the West would come to visit their factories, taking photographs of everything in sight, but missing the only thing of value because it was invisible. The key words in Matsushita's interview are "mindset" and "intelligence", neither of which can be captured by a camera. When Matsushita said, *"We are beyond your mindset",* he meant they had made a leap in consciousness, which enabled them to operate from a different context.

Successful managers in the early part of the 20th Century were those with keen analytic minds, able to draw rational and logical conclusions based on their observations of the individual elements of linear work processes. By the end of that century, analysis and logic, though still necessary, had become insufficient. Optimizing the present was no longer enough; creating the future had become essential.

Deming's profound knowledge, and his 14 points for management described in Out of the Crisis (1982), led to more than just an improvement in productivity. For example, his approach demonstrated that enhanced quality could be achieved with lower costs. This shift produced a breakthrough in contextual thinking, which redefined the nature of an organization and the essence of leadership. An organization is that emergent whole, which is greater than the sum of its parts; and leadership is the ability and the commitment to capture and mobilize "every ounce of intelligence" in the organization.

Emotional Intelligence, published by Daniel Goleman in 1995, became an overnight best seller in the United States and many other parts of the world. It obviously struck a receptive nerve. Mobilizing intelligence now meant not only marshaling facts nor even analyzing those facts to produce insight. Suddenly a new domain of intelligence had been brought into play.

Where Fitzgerald's characterization of superior intelligence spoke of a mind that could hold two opposing ideas at the same time, Goleman had made the matter even more complex. Now we must consider a mind that can hold two apparently opposing domains – the abstract mental and the sensory emotional.

Harmonizing opposing ideas and opposing domains are, of course, very different from each other. What they have in common, however, is the necessity for a kind of consciousness that transcends a dichotomy inherent in the usual way of perceiving the world.

To avoid any appearance of New Age mysticism in this discussion, let's consider a very down-to-earth understanding of what a leap of consciousness actually is.

It's almost impossible to speak about human consciousness without referring to Jean Piaget (1896-1980). For more than forty years (from about 1930 to 1970), he conducted experimental research with young children in Switzerland, charting the stages of their cognitive development from infancy to young adulthood. He published The Mental Development of the Child in 1940. Relying on empirical evidence from years of experimentation and close observation, he traced the emergence and

development of consciousness through a series of what we today call "tipping points". At regular, fairly predictable stages, he observed developmental leaps after which the child's perception and understanding of reality was dramatically altered.

For example, Piaget noted that at around the age of seven, children enter a developmental phase where they become aware of the phenomenon of "point of view". To demonstrate this he conducted a famous experiment using a ball that was red on one side and green on the other. A child was seated opposite Piaget and the ball was placed in the space between them. Piaget asked the child to look at the ball and say what color he saw. The child had no trouble doing so. He then asked the child, "*And what color do I see?*" Children younger than seven would always say the same color as they were seeing. Older children would walk around to where Piaget was seated to look at the ball from the other side before answering the question. It never even occurred to younger children to change their position, because the very concept of point of view was simply too abstract to be considered. Only after having made a particular developmental leap was the child capable of this.

In an analogous way, when we speak of the leap of consciousness necessary to hold two opposing ideas or two contradictory domains in mind at the same time, we are also referring to a maturation process. Just as with the emergent capacity for recognizing different points of view, it is possible to alter where we look from so that a new perception of reality becomes available. This in turn leads to a new spectrum of experience and with it a new range of possible behavior.

Imagine standing in front of a tapestry, but so close to it that you can see only the individual threads. You see threads of many different colors, some of which may seem to you to harmonize with each other and some to clash. But not until you step far enough back does the scene pictured in the tapestry come into focus. If we now consider the apparent contradiction between a commitment to performance and a commitment to people (i.e., between what we care about and the essence of that we care at all), we start to get an inkling of the distinction that has been missing.

We can call it "missing the forest for the trees" or better yet, "looking *from* the whole rather than looking *for* the whole. In any event, rather than seeking a new answer to an old question let us ask a new question. Instead of asking, "*How does one bring work and love together?*" let us take a few steps back and ask, "*What is the whole of which work and love are parts?*"

Though we may not be able to immediately name it, intuitively we know it is there. In fact, after 40 years of research Piaget confirms this explicitly:

> *"There is a constant parallel between the affective and intellectual life throughout childhood and adolescence. This statement will seem surprising only if one attempts to dichotomize the life of the mind into emotions and thoughts. But nothing could be more false or superficial…. Thus affectivity and intelligence are in-dissociable and constitute the two*

complementary aspects of all human behavior."

It seems that we have indeed attempted to dichotomize thinking and feeling and now at the start of the 21st Century, more and more of us are beginning to notice the effects of this false separation. It's not so much that we need to integrate the mental and the emotional domains as that that we need to recognize, at the deepest possible level, that the two were never really separate in the first place – distinct, of course, but not separate.

One cannot "cause" a leap of consciousness. It is either a gift of grace or a product of evolution at work. What one can do is seek to be in partnership with evolution by making oneself as ready for it as possible. As Shakespeare's Hamlet demonstrates his remarkable transformation from brooding passivity to resolute action, his words to Horatio in the last act of the play are, *"The readiness is all."* It is in that spirit that we invite you to make yourself, your team and your organization ready.

A mindset is a Systemic Imperative for companies and for individuals

What shapes action in any system are the Systemic Imperatives. These are the fundamental rules, myths and beliefs that guide people's actions day by day. For example, US President Calvin Coolidge famously said in 1920 that, *"The business of America is business"*. What he didn't say is what should guide Americans as they went about that business. Work without love is eventually degrading to individuals and can only be kept going with a use of force that ultimately causes as much resistance as benefit. And eventually, love without work becomes lifeless.

In large organizations, far more often than not, the Systemic Imperative assures that work and love remain separate and the primary motive for being in business is to make money. From this fixed belief, corporate leaders wander around in the dark looking for the key to magical success far from the place it was lost. What releases great performance and leads to an engaged culture, however, is a paradoxical framework of love and work as two sides of the same coin.

There are numbers of historic examples of changes in Systemic Imperatives, including:

-       Rosa Parks' refusal to sit at the back of the bus challenged the prevailing Systemic Imperative of blacks as second class citizens, thus igniting the civil rights movement and culminating in the US Voting Rights Act.

-       The American Declaration of Independence challenged the Systemic Imperative of the Divine Right of Kings, which led to the birth a new country.

-       Nelson Mandela challenged the white-dominated apartheid system of South Africa, leading the country in a commitment to post-racial governance.

- Mahatma Gandhi challenged the British colonial policy of "divide and conquer" by risking his life through fasting to stop Hindus and Muslims from killing each other, eventually leading India to independence.

- Labor unions challenged the right of corporate management to be the sole arbiter of wages and work rules, leading to a shift in the balance of power and the acceptance of negotiation.

- The Women's Liberation Movement challenged the subordinate role of women in society, broadening the opportunities available to them and altering the landscape of the workplace.

The resistance to love and work as harmonics of each other is just as deep as any speaking for it. In fact, leaders often survive and even thrive by keeping the two separate.

Changing a Systemic Imperative is daunting and most of us shy away from it. Zen masters are famously known for saying that, *"You have to want transformation as much as you want your next breath."* But what does this mean in practical terms when it comes to a transformation that has work and love go hand-in-hand? Throughout our combined 73 years of helping leaders reinvent themselves and their companies, success has nearly always depended on our ability to help them change the Systemic Imperative.

What we know from these examples is that Systemic Imperatives can change and that committed people can make the change. How this happens and when it happens isn't easily amenable to explanation -- the process isn't predictable and is full of twists and turns. Some of it seems the luck of the draw and often a matter of timing and courage. We don't know exactly how it happens. Systemic Imperatives are a complex phenomenon with many interrelated sources.

In John Mauldin's How Change Happens, he credits Friedrich Nietzsche with pointing to why changing a Systemic Imperative is so daunting:

> *"To trace something unknown back to something known is alleviating, soothing, gratifying and gives moreover a feeling of power. Danger, disquiet and anxiety attend the unknown -- the first instinct is to eliminate these distressing states and the first principle is that any explanation is better than none.., what drives this addiction and excitement is the feeling of fear…"*

Systemic Imperatives are locked in place by current explanations and interpretations which are based on past experience and which people use to justify their long-held points of view. These explanations and interpretations, giving the illusion of certainty, allow us to avoid the discomfort and anxiety inherent in raising fundamental questions. However, transformation requires a patience with uncertainty and never arises from

explanation. Rather, it arises from the deeper awareness born of stepping into the unknown when challenging unexamined assumptions.

Mauldin adds to our understanding of this phenomenon in <u>Notes from the Front Line</u>, when he tells us that behavioral psychologists say the process of explaining actually releases chemicals in the brain that make us feel good. We literally become addicted to the simple explanation. The fact that our explanations may be irrelevant or even wrong is not important for the chemical release. And thus, we eagerly look for reasons.

But daunting or not, challenging Systemic Imperatives is essential for transformation, the nature of which seems more like starting a brush fire than winding up a clock. Changing a Systemic Imperative is a creative act and as Frank Herbert points out in his great novel, <u>Children of Dune</u>, there is no such thing as rule-driven creativity. When magical innovation happens, rules for replicating it are nearly always wrong.

All of our examples, public and private and from all over the world, involve people getting others' attention with direct action. They were not merely writing books and articles or sending letters to those in power. While many of their actions seem risky in retrospect, they took responsibility and just did it. Each had pledged themselves to changing a Systemic Imperative, which they were convinced was wrong. None had much agreement from the "powers that be". Direct action is always *essential* for causing a new Systemic Imperative, at whatever level of the system for which you are willing to be responsible -- nothing changes unless you get peoples' attention first with uncharacteristic action.

Transformation starts in the leaders

The General Manager of the national division of a global consumer goods company was determined to set a bold sales goal as the basis for a company-wide transformation. She asked her senior team and the entire company to double sales over four years -- and she meant it.

What really made the difference were a number of life-altering events. Her relationship with her husband was tumultuous; full of shouting, making each other wrong and marked by a shared inability to manage their children in a coherent and graceful way. At the end of her rope, she agreed to practice simply listening to him every day with generosity and compassion. It was a rocky road. But she stuck with it and after a while there were moments of intimacy and connection they had not known in years.

At the same time, she realized that she had not been listening with that same level of generosity to a lot of people important to the success of the business. When she began listening to them in this new way, their willingness to imagine a new future for the company was evident. However, disaffected conversation, rumor mongering, false promises and low morale still persisted in the company. Many felt victimized by the new imagined future and there were widespread complaints.

In a moment of personal insight during a coaching conversation, she saw that she and her team weren't really saying what they meant, but rather were making general comments and complaints, addressed to no one in particular. That was the culture and she was its author. Having seen this, she began to speak to the members of her team directly and as individuals while in the group and requested that they do the same. She specifically asked them to speak only for themselves, to say what they really meant and to say it directly to the person they felt needed to hear it. It all soon began to clear up. Following her lead, the senior team stopped hiding and started speaking honestly in the group. They started taking responsibility for intractable issues that were keeping them from getting to the root of their company's problems.

Their next conversations revealed how deep the disaffection went and just how uncommitted the team leaders had been. From that place, the team ignited. They co-invented a future everyone wanted and created heartfelt, mindset-busting sales and business goals. They became much more emotionally connected and eager to enlist others across the company in achieving their goals and in profound truth-telling and listening. Already high engagement scores increased even further, job applications increased dramatically and from that moment they all felt a firmer grip on the steering wheel of the future.

At home she had wanted the transformation as much as she wanted her next breath and from that experience brought the mindset change to work. She came to know herself in a new way and the world around her changed. Although there was never any overt conversation about love and work going hand in hand, that is what happened. Starting with the leadership team, this transformation became a living possibility throughout the entire culture of the company.

Speaking and listening profoundly across boundaries of power and position

A famous IT company was losing money in its Enterprise Technology division. No one really knew which products or services were selling or which were dead in the water; records were unreliable and no one knew what was so. This was covered up in public with peanut butter "corporate speak" based in people's fear of looking foolish. As transformation often follows desperation, these people were the perfect clients. The phenomenon of cooperation, of love and work being together, was never in anyone's mind. Leaders just wanted the pain to go away and to bring common sense to work.

In the face of a corporate culture that was divisive and segmented, each of the leadership teams in five countries feared they would lose jobs and some might even lose their manufacturing capacity entirely. The team leaders were brought together for four days to try to work it out.

The consultants used every trick they knew to help them to negotiate, to discover underlying interests and to find common ground. Nothing really worked. The Italians were happy and having fun. The English were sober and abstract. The Germans were

purposeful and earnest. The Americans were bold in their speaking and timid in their action. The Swedes were stolid and hard to understand. The session was increasingly painful – it was like playing cards without a full deck. Everyone had security, jobs and reputations to lose.

Then, seemingly in a moment, it all turned around. Suddenly they were cooperating, solving problems and talking *to* each other instead of *at* each other. The consultants were being complimented for having done such a good job, yet we didn't really know what had made the difference. Over the next thirteen months 1500 disparate products produced in five countries were reduced to one coherent product line accessible on one computer screen. The project moved forward with great success and harmony for the individuals involved, the countries and for the company as a whole.

In retrospect, the miracle seemed to come from moments of love and work occurring at the same time. All of a sudden there was mutual compassion and real listening across geographical and positional boundaries; moments when different points of view were no longer a barrier to communication. What had seemed impossible became merely problems to be solved. The shared reality and the success was a surprise, flowing from equal measures of courage, intent and remaining open to possibility.

What's certain was that leaders and consultants kept faith in the process. No one knew what was going to happen and everyone saw it not working, yet we all stayed with it.., and suddenly, there was a magical turning.

Creativity Unleashed

An extraordinary emerging young glass artist, Michael Smith, invented the term "Creativity Unleashed" as the name for his company and as a declaration of values for his work and aspirations. Watching Michael work gives insight into a pathway to love and work occurring together as a basis for transformation.

We recently watched him create a large, orange meteor out of glass. For weeks he had imagined what it would look like and assembled the materials, tools, facilities and colleagues to assist in the process. His approach called for a lot of preparation and thinking through the dangers of working in a thousand degree kiln. He had accepted that the glass might break or that someone might carelessly open the cooling chamber too soon, and that he would have to do it all over again. His approach was neither anarchic nor careless, and he gave great attention to the mechanics of glass, heat, safety and coordinated action.

We watched him melt and shape a round ball of glass about the size of a baseball for nearly an hour. He kept adding colors to it -- first blue, then orange, then green and then blue again. He kept heating it in the furiously hot fire, protecting himself with safety glasses and gloves while maneuvering the little ball at the end of a long metal pole. He continued adding glass until eventually the little baseball grew to the size of a small

football. Then the magic happened.

He began to swing the end of the pole in wide arcs as if it were a long baseball bat. As it flew over and over through the air, the glass began to lengthen from a ball to a whale to something with no definable shape. Michael kept adding color and small pieces of fresh glass to the mix and reheating it all in the kiln. This whole process felt on the edge and dangerous to me, yet his vigilance and apparent skill kept us entranced. Soon the glass was almost three feet long and I could see a meteor with a great fiery tail on its way through space. It was no longer blue, but an orange, silver and red streak of fire on its journey through the atmosphere.

We had gone from the physical, measurable and linear reality of preparation and skill to the transformed reality of Creativity Unleashed. We watched Michael move from the predictive world of planning to a world of risk, invented possibility and faith in limitless imagination and innovation. The first part was rational and thoughtful, but along the way, creativity was unleashed. The result was unpredictable, beyond words and a living demonstration of the pure presence of inventing something that had never existed before.

The moment of creativity unleashed was not a specific increment of time, a single second, minute, or hour. It took as long as it took for the waves to break. The experience was paradoxical, both conscious and unconscious at the same time. It was doing without thinking, like the way one walks on a high wire. Michael had embodied love and work in the same moment.

Conclusion

After reading this article, a CEO, department manager or team leader might see a glimmer of possibility for his or her business unit and be inspired to take responsibility for changing its prevailing Systemic Imperative. But then immediately the question arises: *"Where do I start and what do I do?"*

Of course it's understandable to want a clear cut set of instructions on how to proceed – a list of "how to's" in proper sequential order. But just like creativity, transformation doesn't work that way. Instead, we offer you a distinction as a starting place and a series of questions to guide you as you begin. Consider the distinction a place to stand, from which to perceive your organization in a new way, and the questions as possible doorways into the space of inquiry. Transformation is not a new answer to an old question, but rather a new question that's not so much seeking an answer as it is exploring a landscape.

First the distinction: *The whole is greater than the sum of the parts and you can't get to the whole by summing up the parts*. As we've said throughout this article, the conventional way of dealing with work and love is to consider them separate from each other. Since both are desirable, usually the manager in charge will ask him or herself something like, "*What is the proper balance between the two in the current*

circumstances?" In other words, what's the correct compromise to be made here? But seeking a compromise, no matter how well meaning, is exactly the wrong approach for achieving transformation.

A compromise is based on the premise that a Systemic Imperative is one of the ingredients in the organizational soup, that is, one of the many parts that make up the organizational whole. But this is not so. A Systemic Imperative is not one of the parts -- it is the whole or the context, which gives sense and meaning to all the parts. If a company is really more committed to performance than to people (regardless of what might be in the corporate vision statement), then adding a bit of concern for people won't make any difference.

To change a Systemic Imperative you first have to identify the core underlying commitment of the business unit (which is usually unconsciously held in the organizational culture), have the courage to acknowledge it out loud and then choose a new commitment, which you and your colleagues agree is more fitting to who you are or intend to be. In short, tell the truth of who you have been and who you are committed to being. These kinds of truths don't come cheaply. They cost an honest recognition that what's gotten you to your current failure is a product of what you've been committed to or, that what's gotten you to your current success won't necessarily get you any further.

As for the guiding questions, here are some that we have found provocative enough to get people's attention, after which real conversations for creating an attractive future are more likely:

• What are we not talking about that everyone knows we're not talking about, but is what everyone knows we should be talking about?

• What seems impossible for us to accomplish, but if were possible would make a huge, positive difference for us and/or our customers?

• What are we certain of regarding our business that we are nevertheless willing to call into question and examine for what's missing?

• *"Will I embrace and practice 'getting in touch with the paradox, contradiction, and confusion that surrounds us in every day of our existence'?"* (Deepak Chopra)

• What are the structural tensions inherent in our business that are not going to disappear and what's needed for us to become big enough to hold them gracefully? (Take marketing vs manufacturing for example – *"Why don't you build what we can sell?"* vs *"Why don't you sell what we can build?")*

• How do we make major organizational decisions? Are they based on power and authority or on genuine inquiry and the distributed intelligence located throughout the organization?