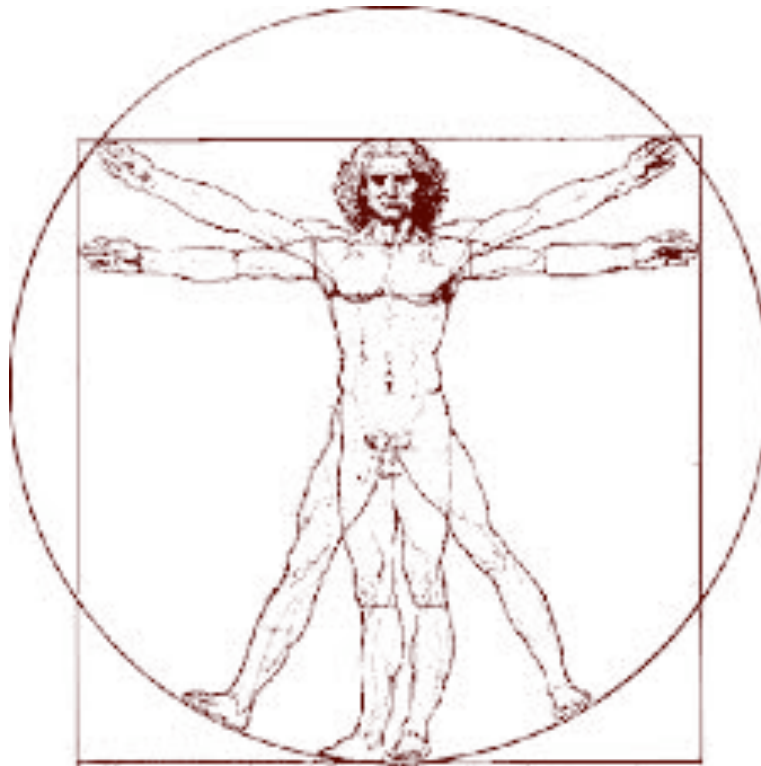


3 – You Don't Bring Just Your Head to Work



Ah, if only we did! A quick read of the **Five Dysfunctions of a Team**, and you would know how to fix your team's impasse. Eighteen minutes with **Simon Sinek's TED talk** and your team would be on board with the organization's purpose. Hand out the article on **Kotter's 8 Step Change Model**, and you'd be on your way to navigating that impending merger.

The first two articles in this series on Vertical Development illustrated the way that growth hinges on our sense making. Sense making itself, however, is intimately connected with how we feel, relate, carry and care for ourselves physically, how we connect with the

unknown, and how we are influenced by our cultural, historic, and systemic conditions.

Take self-awareness for example: Strongly linked with both leadership success and business results, **self-awareness plays a central role in executive development**. We coaches often talk with our clients about what they notice in themselves, what they are aware of in their conversations with others and how they think about what they do. This self-awareness happens in conversation, through language and discussion of thoughts about what they do, why they do it, and what might come next.

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There is so much more to consider, though, than just our thoughts.

Somatic awareness can pinpoint stress before we even know about it. (What do you notice at the hinge of your jaw, your forehead, or your shoulders, as you read this?)

Feedback from others can provide a reality check on what was really communicated as opposed to what we think we are communicating. Our own culture, history, and the systems in which we live and work may unconsciously bias us to pick up on some things over others. All of these factors and many others play out through and influence our sense making which, in turn, contribute to and limit our capacity to see, understand, and respond.

So this is where we get to the core of what transformation means. To transform, we need to be ready and willing to shift the form or structure (trans-form) of how we see and comport ourselves, relate with others, and to accept the new realities that come with those changes.

When we talk about this form or structure, we need to consider more than how we think..

- Our inner world, with its emotions and beliefs
- Our physicality, with its supportive and expressive capacities
- Our environment, with its cultures and systems
- And all it takes to integrate this kaleidoscope into new ways of being and doing

Vertical Development theorists often use the analogy of a cup of a given volume to illustrate this idea. As long as the structure remains the same, the capacity of the cup will be defined by that structure. That is where Horizontal Development fits in as development of skills, knowledge, and expertise can fill out one's abilities to full capacity to enable a high level of functioning within that given capacity.

To increase capacity however, the structure of the cup must change, in all the ways structure shows up.



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So, how does structure show up? New Ventures West developed an Integral Coaching model called the **Six Streams** to assess clients' emotional, physical, relational, cognitive, spiritual, and integrated aspects of their lives. These 'streams' are all important elements of structure.

Similarly, the **Wilbur Quadrant Model** of Integral Coaching considers clients':

- internal beliefs, values, emotions, and insights;
- external behaviors, communication practices, and actions;
- relationships, collective culture, and values;
- systems, technology, and environment

to identify how structure of interpretation plays out in all corners of life. These are just two of several frameworks for assessing and working with the structure that shapes how we and our clients interpret and engage with the world.

To build capacity, we consider what—in each of these areas—will enable someone to step into the new way of being, and doing, to which they aspire. This may start with a narrative or goal statement that mentally defines the direction of development. For the development to be transformative vertically, however, it needs to engage more than the head alone.

OK, example time...

A leader I knew a long way back had a very clear idea of how good leadership should look. In his mind, leaders showed up confident, composed, non-wavering, and in charge. The structure of his thinking led him to focus his own development on a certain style of executive presence that was polished, communication that was direct and always on purpose, and way of carrying himself and sitting in meetings that non-verbally gave the message that he was the center of the room. Not good, not bad, this simply was his structure of interpretation, and it was so clear and important to him, that he used it to assess his staff's competence as well as the content of the leadership programs they delivered for clients.

This worked well for him...until it didn't. What he could not see from this structure of interpretation was how it limited his perception to the point where he missed opportunities to build relationships and explore points of view that would have enabled greater agility during a particularly challenging transition process. It was not even clear if he knew he missed those opportunities. (You don't know what you don't know, and you can't see what you can't see.)

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To expand the structure of how he made sense of leadership would have asked him to challenge the construct of leadership and executive presence that he had embodied through many years of hard, well intentioned effort and a good dose of innate charm and poise. I don't know for sure, but I imagine that deeply ingrained cultural, historic, and systemic influences informed his picture of leadership.

To change his sense-making about leadership might have required deep soul inquiry and pushing beyond beliefs and values that had long defined him, his world, even his family experience.

To expand that structure of sense-making would have asked him to notice the impact of his presence on others and to challenge his own assumptions about what others needed from him, further challenging his sense of identity. Tuning into how he was feeling would have given him access his own empathy, not simply his idea of what others were feeling, and enabled him to attune to what others needed from his leadership as things became more uncertain. Softening his physical mannerisms to appear more human and vulnerable, might have invited others to connect in a more real and open way, which might have led to easier sharing of new ideas.

Consider the following as you work with leaders (or yourself) to expand the structure of interpretation in all the ways it shows up.

- Do your feelings have you or do you have them? In what ways do your emotions shape how you think and act?
 - What do you do, how are you, in that space between emotion and action?
- Practice a 3 minute body scan a few times a day to identify what shows up physically for you. (You can download one for free [here](#).)
 - What does your body tell you about what you are feeling, needing, wanting?
- Become a student of how others carry themselves throughout the day.
 - What is nonverbally communicated through how others walk, sit, and carry themselves? What does that suggest to you about how you might shift the way you carry yourself?
- Build some type of contemplative or quieting practice into your day to day routine to allow opportunity to reflect and re-center around your intention. Kevin Cashman's **The Pause Principle** is a quick read and good about how to do this. Bill Joiner and Stephen Josephs, in their book **Leadership Agility** suggest a
 - What are the assumptions that are embedded in your definition of success and failure?
 - What continues to be true for you about those assumptions? What no longer fits? (See Keegan & Lahey's **Immunity to Change**.)

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relationship between leader success and the presence of a regular contemplative practice built into the day to day.

- Consider how relationships drain and energize you. This can be done with a simple energy audit of your day and week--checking in several times throughout the day to assess and assign a value as to level of energy you experience depending the quality of relationship. Consider what communication or conversation might be needed to shift the impact of the relationship on your energy level.
- Ask yourself why you do what you do. Identify the 1-3 core values that undergird your investment of time, energy, and good will and check to see how much of what you do every day is a healthy channel for those core values.
- Check out **The Coaching Companion** by Carylynn Larson and Daniel Sheres for concrete suggestions for putting coaching ideas into real life practice.
- Explore the edges of your sense making. **The Growth Edge Network** and work of Jennifer Garvey-Berger and her Cultivating Leadership colleagues (**Changing on the Job, Simple Habits for Complex Times**) offer workshops on how to use inquiry to explore and push up against the edges of

structure of interpretation.

- Consider taking the **Maturity Assessment Profile** or one of the other assessments linked with Vertical Development. Don't know about these? Stay tuned for article # 4 for more about these instruments!

None of this is easy. Research conducted by **Bill Torbert and Susanne Cook-Greuter** suggest a 3-5 year journey to shift one stage vertically. There is however some recent evidence that meditative practices, targeted vertical developmental efforts that include "heat" (life changing, and mind blowing) experiences and support for "safe to fail," trial and error experiments can, if not accelerate, support and enable shifts in who and how we are that lead to transformation and vertical growth.

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Jan Rybeck is a Partner with COPIA Coaching and Consulting. If you'd like more information about the Maturity Assessment Profile (LMF-MAP) or Vertical Development and how to integrate such coaching tools into a Leadership Development program with COPIA, contact her at jrybeck@verizon.net or (571) 286-9630.

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