

The Renewal Imperative

We live in challenging times. Life moves at breathtaking speed and seems to be constantly accelerating. Our global connectivity has introduced a level of complexity into our experience that is mind-boggling. The mass media bombard us with messages about what to eat, wear, drive, and even how to medicate ourselves. (Have you noticed that the volume of commercials on television is louder than the program you are watching?) The advance of technology introduces a seemingly unending array of new products that often come to us without instructions. Worse yet, we need to learn to use these gadgets or risk isolating ourselves from family members, work colleagues and even customers and clients.

In the face of all this noise and stimulation we can easily become disconnected from what matters most to us in life and work. When we are out of alignment with our deepest values and intentions we suffer...we feel unfulfilled...we lack clarity and spontaneity...our creativity is diminished. We ultimately lose contact with our souls. By soul I mean that seat of inner wisdom that holds the answer to the basic questions: Who am I? What difference was I put here to make? When we can't engage with our souls we are susceptible to chronic illness, depression, and burnout. Our egos take over and life becomes all about winning, being right, and accumulating stuff.

We see this happening now in the domain of politics where ideologues on each side of the aisle in Congress are so intent on winning or keeping power that they have become distracted from their higher, intended purpose of serving the electorate. To the man or woman who is out of work, the importance of ideology pales in comparison to the unemployment benefits they need to survive on a daily basis. We see it also in the private sector where executive salaries, more so than business outcomes, have become synonymous with power and success. The lengths to which these leaders will go to amass more compensation than they can ever constructively spend know no ethical or moral constraint. Witness the tales of the leader behaviors that led to the demise of Enron and WorldCom, or the greed that stimulated the scoff-law tactics used by brokers in the financial industry to create and sell derivatives that they didn't even understand while being enabled by the regulatory bodies who gave these investment vehicles a triple A rating without any financial substantiation.

As a coach, I am extremely curious about the root cause behind this dramatic "losing of our way" that I see occurring in all of our major institutions. The root cause as I would express it is: "We are all over-stimulated and under inspired." Our egos have adopted a gratification posture that promotes a kind of self-talk that: "I can have it all...right now...and anything goes to get it." What is both simultaneously fascinating and sad is that even after accumulating all that money and all those possessions we are left with a feeling of emptiness. It reminds me of that hit song of 1969 in which Peggy Lee so lyrically laments: "Is that all there is?"

The Gallup Organization and others have done significant research on the subject of engagement...the degree to which workers own their work and derive deep satisfaction from the doing of it. Their findings reinforce the Motivation-Hygiene Theory of eminent industrial psychologist Fredrick Herzberg first postulated back in 1959. Simply stated he found that lack of money and possessions tend to disengage and de-motivate but, conversely, a profusion of money and possessions DO NOT engage and motivate. Beyond the amount of money necessary to provide basic needs and security (which I grant is different for everyone) more money does not produce deep satisfaction and fulfillment. The research provides numerous examples of people who rejected promotions and "fast track" career treatment in favor of the meaning their current roles were providing. Meaning trumps materiality!

So we are left with a fundamental question: "In the face of this deep psychic malaise, how do we find our way back to the path where authentic satisfaction, fulfillment and inner peace are to be found?" The answer is simple but not easy. We go within! We reconnect with the seat of our humanity...our soul(translate "inner wisdom" if soul is too value laden for you). But how do we accomplish this? The dynamics of soul engagement are very different than engagement in the external realm. It is not the Soul's way to turn up the volume in an attempt to be heard over the other voices. Wisdom traditions point that out when they speak of "the still small voice" or use phrases such as "be still and know".

To engage the soul we need an environment of peace and reflection, an under-stimulating environment if you will. We must quiet that voice in the head(our followers and fans know it as KMIND) that is the ego demanding to be heard. We propose, therefore, to conduct a series of quarterly retreats in 2012. The intent of these retreats is to give, harried, over-stimulated leaders at all levels an opportunity for reflection and renewal. The atmosphere and the activities will be different than the typical kind of organizational event with which you may be familiar. The outcome is NOT about solving a problem, OR planning, OR goal setting. The intent is to create an environment where the individual souls of the participants feel safe to come forth and express themselves. When that condition is achieved, the outcomes will be whatever is produced by the inspiration that each individual participant experiences.

The ground rules of the event will also be non-traditional. At the beginning of all of our workshops we exhort the participants to listen newly, to actively engage by asking questions, and sharing life experiences, and to have something at stake in the real world. For our renewal retreats the ground rules will be different. We want participants to refrain from advising or trying to fix themselves or each other. Very simply we want them to witness whatever comes up from the experiences we will create. We want them to do and say whatever they are moved to do and say even including nothing at all. Since we humans are communal creatures by nature, there is much to be gained by sharing our deepest soul musings with each other. We are all connected at the level of spirit and our souls are the conduits through which this connection is accessed, expressed and fulfilled.

If you are feeling burned out, OR frustrated, OR overwhelmed please consider joining us for one of these retreats. You owe it to yourself to get reconnected with your soul's wisdom for the sake of your physical and emotional health as well as the energy, optimism, and creativity that reconnection will enable you to bring to your work and your personal and business relationships. We are convinced that your organization will benefit and your employees will thank you.

To be put on a retreat invitation list please contact:

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