

# Mentoring for Change

Seasons Greetings  
and Best Wishes  
for 2003!

*Mike the Mentor*

executive mentoring and coaching, values the...

Welcome to the Mentoring for Change newsletter. In this issue:

- Coaching across Cultures
- Thinking Globally: The Leadership Journey

## Coaching across Cultures

In the previous issue of this newsletter, I presented some results from the Myers Briggs Type Inventory (MBTI). One of the benefits from knowing your own particular type preferences on an instrument of this kind is the insight it can give you into how you are in the world. Another equally important benefit is recognising that other people may have very different (and equally valid) ways of being in the world. Recognising these differences can help us value, work with, and even welcome people's diversity.

At a cultural level (ie, at the level that distinguishes one group of people from another, rather than one individual

from another), it is equally important and valuable to be aware of differing preferences. Coaches or managers wanting to work across cultures need to know what the key dimensions of difference are. A new book (*Coaching Across Cultures* by Philippe Rosinski) presents an integrative model, the Cultural Orientations Framework (COF) that maps 17 key dimensions of the cultural territory (see diagram).

For example some cultures have a preference for direct communication (as in the United States), saying what they mean and meaning what they say. Their cultural orientation then is "direct communication" - in contrast with Asians' typical indirectness where much may be left unsaid and only hinted at. Rosinski uses as an example of the indirect approach the scene in *The Godfather, Part II* where Michael Corleone, played by Al Pacino, is on trial and about to be accused by a witness of mafia activities. But Michael Corleone's men bring the witness's brother with them to observe the trial. Nothing is said but the witness immediately gets the message "If you testify, your brother will suffer". He doesn't testify!

A sensitivity to these cultural dimensions is increasingly important as we seek more frequently to manage and coach across cultures. The COF lays out the primary ways in which people's worldviews differ and hence provides a way of challenging cultural assumptions and enabling more effective work across cultures - both internationally and when working with people from various organisations and backgrounds.

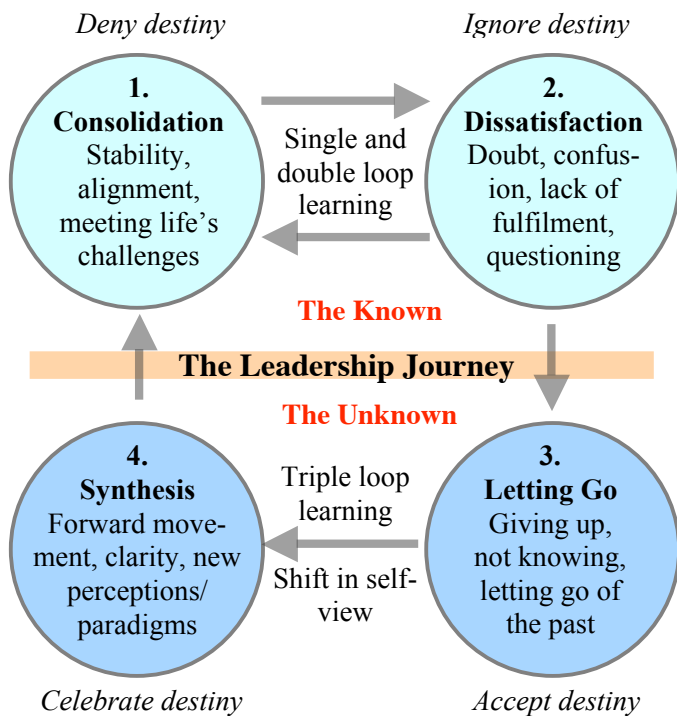
## Thinking Globally: The Leadership Journey

I'd like to draw on one powerful and popular metaphor for viewing our lives - which is as a series of journeys through various trials and joys towards our destiny. Each journey involves leaving a place of stability and familiarity, overcoming tests and challenges, gaining a precious gift, and coming back to the world somehow changed. In terms of the Levels of Leadership model presented in the previous newsletter, the precious gift is lost parts of who we are and the change is the ability to lead at the next higher level of leadership.

When we first arrive at a particular level, we lack many

Categories	Dimensions
Sense of Power and Responsibility	• Control/Harmony/Humility
Time Management Approaches	• Scarce/Plentiful • Monochronic/Polychronic • Past/Present/Future
Definitions of Identity and Purpose	• Being/Doing • Individualistic/Collectivistic
Organisational Arrangements	• Hierarchy/Equality • Universalist/Particularist • Stability/Change • Competitive/Collaborative
Notions of Territory & Boundaries	• Protective/Sharing
Communication Patterns	• High context/Low context • Direct/Indirect • Affective/Neutral • Formal/Informal
Modes of Thinking	• Deductive/Inductive • Analytical/Systemic

### Cultural Orientations Framework



of the skills necessary to lead effectively at that level. We therefore face a period of **Consolidation (1)** during which we develop the skills and competencies necessary to meet the challenges of the particular leadership level. As our capabilities increase, so we will tend to feel increasingly fulfilled and satisfied, and have a growing sense of contentment and stability. We are able to meet the leadership challenges we face and our abilities are in a healthy dynamic equilibrium with our surrounding life conditions.

Whilst this dynamic equilibrium can in theory continue indefinitely, what often happens is that, as we become increasingly successful in our existing role, so our sense of satisfaction and fulfilment starts to decrease. What was once compelling and exciting becomes mundane and boring. We have a sense of outgrowing our existing job and find ourselves seeking a new challenge or looking for a more meaningful role. This is the **Dissatisfaction phase (2)**.

Here we lose the sense of our life working well. Goals and aspirations that motivated us a few years earlier have been realised and no longer hold the appeal they used to. We feel trapped by our situation and feel that we have exhausted the possibilities in our current way of living. Our immediate response to this may be to return to the Consolidation stage and take on new responsibilities or projects to try and rekindle the enthusiasm and sense of challenge we previously felt. This has the attraction of taking us back to a simpler less complex place where we know how to operate and know who we are. But sooner or later the dissatisfaction is likely to return. This time we may move jobs or have an affair but still find only temporary relief from our doubt and confusion.

We can also find ourselves moved out of the

Consolidation phase involuntarily – not because we have changed in some way but because our environment has. For example, a promotion, organisational change, or changing market conditions can all lead to our current ways of meeting leadership challenges no longer being adequate. And here too we may try to regain our former sense of competence and control by trying to build on our existing skills but find to our frustration that these are no longer sufficient.

And so we can find ourselves trapped in what appears to be an endless oscillation between Consolidation and Dissatisfaction. However, there is another way out of Dissatisfaction and that is **Letting Go (3)**.

When we finally accept that our old way of operating is no longer sustainable and that making incremental changes and trying to paper over the cracks is not sufficient, then we begin the process of letting go of the beliefs and attachments that no longer serve us. We realise that there is no turning back – but we also fear that there may be no way forward.

This is a time when we feel demoralised, frustrated, angry and despairing but also a time of opportunity and new possibilities. As old ways of being and doing begin to fall apart, so the possibility of new ways of thinking, acting and leading emerge. Often, only when we finally, *in despair*, give up on the old ways, can the new emerge. But this only happens when we let go of our expectations, preconceptions and ideologies, and our need to feel in control. In effect we have to let a part of our ego die so that we can become more of who we are.

It is at this time, when all seems darkest and most difficult and when we are ready to give up, that something shifts and we find ourselves emerging from the emptiness of having let go into a new place of possibilities, resolution and excitement – **Synthesis (4)**. We feel empowered; we have a new sense of who we are and what we can achieve. We see the world from a new, enlarged perspective.

We must now bring the gift of our expanded sense of our selves back into our everyday lives and work. In one sense, we are back where we started consolidating and developing our skills. But the difference is that we have stepped up to a new level of consciousness and leadership, and the skills we are developing are more sophisticated, complex and global than those we were using before. And there will come a time when these skills in their turn will eventually lack sufficient depth and meaning and once again we will hear the call to make the journey to our fuller selves and our greater leadership potential.

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