

Institute For Enterprise Excellence



Bringing Purpose To Life

Foundations For Transformation In Education: Linking Purpose, People and Process

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Executive Summary:

Our first white paper “Foundations For Transformation”¹ described a model for cultural transformation primarily from the viewpoint of business and industry. The purpose of this paper is describe how this model applies to the education of children.

There are many stakeholders for any school or education system, all of whom would like to see better results. Simultaneously, students, teachers and administrators (at all levels of an organization) deserve and want meaningful purpose in how they contribute to on-going learning.

As with business, schools have attempted some type of improvement effort intended to “fix” education, and most teachers and students in schools have experienced attempts to introduce and “implement” different approaches. And as with business, the experience has been a series of programs (flavors of the month²) rather than the pursuit of a philosophy of improvement.

We have observed predictable patterns in companies (including schools) that pursue company-wide improvement from nearly all industries and share them in this paper.

Phase 1 – The Quick Win

Many people view education “results” as synonymous with “student achievement.” This is often narrowly defined as academic achievement as measured by standardized tests. Examples of these are ACT, state testing, the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), or SMARTER Balanced Assessment (SBA). These measures are important, and are often the only measures by which schools are judged publicly; however, they are not the only important results.

Education is also charged with ensuring many more intangible things. Graduates of the K-12 system are expected to be strategic problem solvers, to value learning as a lifelong key to success, and to be prepared for their next steps in life. There are no tests to measure these things, and individual organizations often find they must create their own measures and metrics to some of the most important work that education is charged with accomplishing.

As with other industries, dissatisfaction with current results leads to a search for solutions. This search might come in the form of articles, best-selling books, consultants, conferences, and visits to other schools. The search for better results leads to the discovery of tactical methods and techniques. We’ll call these “tools.” Many times, this leads to some apparent improvement – either from the methods themselves, or the mere focus on the problem and desire for results.³ This “quick win” phase is summarized in Figure 1.

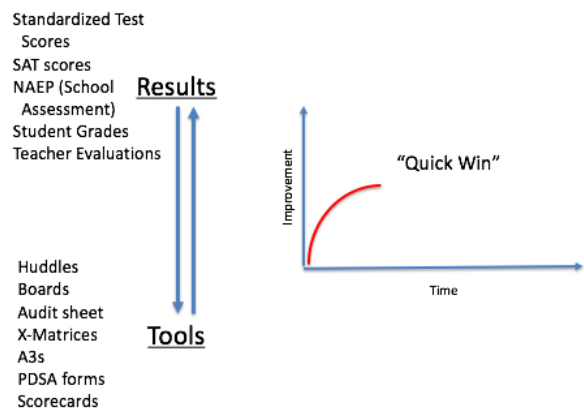
Use of tools and techniques is not wrong. Often this type of action is necessary to reverse the negative trend (stop the bleeding), but the introduction of tools (solutions) without a good understanding of the problems you are trying to solve will not lead to sustained improvement. This phase can also produce other unintended consequences.

¹ <http://bit.ly/IEXFoundations5>

² One cause for the “flavor of the month” phenomenon can be found in our 3rd White Paper: <http://bit.ly/IEXPracticalWisdom3>

³ Management’s focus on results can, by itself, lead to improvement in results. But the effect could be temporary if management’s removes the spotlight of focus. Brian Joiner, author of *Fourth Generation Management* pointed out that there are three ways to get better figures: 1. Improve the system, 2. Distort the system, or 3. Distort the figures.

Figure 1. The “Quick Win”



We've asked many organizations what behaviors commonly result from the "quick win" focus. Here's a sample of the responses:

- teaching "to the test,"
- focus on tasks to meet state or federal mandates,
- resistance,
- lack of ownership,
- distrust,
- the feeling that "this too shall pass,"
- decreased empowerment,
- ambivalence.

We've also asked, "what are we sustaining, maintaining and promoting?" Some of the common answers are:

- a "top/down" hierarchy,
- lack of respect for the learners and the teachers,
- disengagement,
- people waiting to be told what to do,
- attrition.

We have asked people about the cost of the "quick fix" approach. Here are some common responses:

- engagement in learning,
- passion for teaching,
- time,
- people (who need to be replaced),
- the knowledge that these people take with them,
- value to the stakeholders and community,
- ability to learn,
- loyalty,
- reputation.

Phase 2 – The Comfort of the Comfort Zone

Because there appears to be some improvement in measurable results, there is often an effort to broaden the use of these techniques in other parts of the organization. The tools are "pushed" into existing systems, and the systems will "push back." This seems to happen for two reasons: 1) because people are a part of the existing systems, there may be some resistance from lack of "buy in" or ownership, and 2) the newly introduced tools and methods may be incompatible with the systems as they are built on different principles (the principles are also a part of the systems). A common result is a decrease in the results back to the original level.

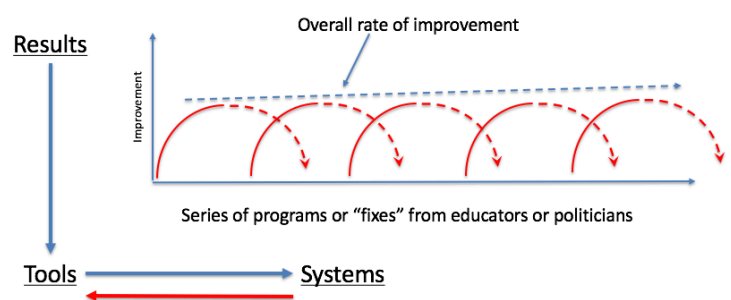
This prompts the search for the next promising tool, or sometimes renaming the effort. We call this repeated pursuit (or renaming) of tools the "comfort of the comfort zone" illustrated by Figure 2. There seem to be two categories of efforts:

1) Ideas that come primarily from educators with the intent of improving student outcomes. It seems that once something has the label of "best practice" or "research-based" educators are quick to try to copy it. Principle-based leadership would not invalidate these approaches, but would rather suggest that the evidence be used to select the solution most appropriate to the problem identified. Some examples of these "fads over time" are:

* Writing Across the Curriculum

* Timers

Figure 2. The "Comfort of the Comfort Zone"



- * Left-right Brain Strategies
- * Self-esteem
- * Cultural Literacy
- * Multi-culturalism⁴

2) Educators have been subjected to legislation on: Educator Effectiveness, No Child Left Behind, Voucher Schools, School Choice, Charter Schools, to name just a few. These mandates and programs seem to be geared toward “fixing” education, and most come from federal or state government. These “fixes” are rarely introduced by educators, but rather by politicians, whose motive may be different from the principles upon which a school stands. Whether the idea comes from educators or well-intended politicians, it is interesting to note that the overall rate of improvement stays relatively flat.

When we have asked schools what behaviors are commonly driven by the “comfort of the comfort zone,” we received some interesting responses:

- complacency,
- teaching (but little learning),
- endurance,
- “wait it out” attitude,
- resentment,
- status quo,
- lack of challenge (not raising the bar).

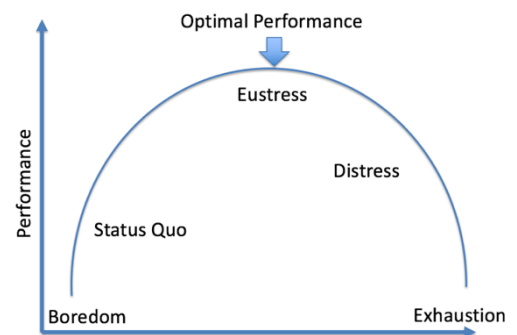
For many schools, this is their culture – vacillating between Phase 1 and Phase 2. For these organizations, management does not change the way they think, what they believe, and how they manage. This is the “program” path.

Phase 3 – No Why, Know Why (The Power of Purpose)

Some leaders feel that there has got to be a better way, and in these organizations a radically different path is pursued. To understand what causes some educators and administrators to pursue this different path requires some understanding of what Beckhard, Harris and Gleicher call the “change equation.”⁵ All three of these components must be present to overcome the resistance to change in an organization: 1) dissatisfaction with the present situation, 2) a vision of what is possible in the future and, 3) achievable first steps towards reaching this vision.

It is also helpful to understand the difference between eustress and distress. Figure 3 shows the type of stress compared versus individual performance level. Eustress is defined as “moderate or normal psychological stress interpreted as being beneficial for the experiencer.” Eustress occurs when the gap between what one has and what one wants is slightly pushed, but not overwhelmed. The goal is not too far out of reach but is still slightly more than one can handle. Eustress has a significantly positive correlation with life satisfaction and hope. However, experiencing chronic stress, either in the form of distress or eustress, is negative.⁶

Figure 3. Eustress and Distress Curve



⁴ A more complete list of these strategies can be found at this link: <http://bit.ly/educationfads>

⁵ http://www.valuebasedmanagement.net/methods_beckhard_change_model.html

⁶ Hargrove, M. B.; Nelson, D. L.; Cooper, C. L. (2013). "Generating eustress by challenging employees: Helping people savor their work." Organizational Dynamics 42: 61–69

In schools that successfully understand and manage the change equation, enough positive eustress is created to move in a totally different direction. One critical discovery on this pathway is the power of purpose illustrated in Figure 4. Purpose is more than “true north measures,” pursuing strategic initiatives and bolted-on mission, vision and value statements. An organization’s purpose statement is simple, succinct and easily understood by all. The statement answers this question: “What is the need in society that this organization meets?” The purpose is not better grades or test results – that is an outcome.

Both students and teachers want purpose in their lives. Why do people get out of bed and come to school? What gives their life meaning? When a school’s purpose aligns with the purpose of the individuals at all levels of the organization, then alignment and engagement are not difficult to achieve.

Here are some examples of some organizations that have discovered the power of purpose:

- AutoLiv - “We Save Lives”⁷
- US Synthetic - “We Improve Lives”⁸
- Southwest Airlines - “We connect people to what’s important in their lives”⁹
- Sandoval Regional Medical Center - “Putting You First”¹⁰
- Leander Independent School System – “Leading to a Bright Future”¹¹

Some useful concepts about the power of purpose can be found by studying the work of Simon Sinek¹² who identified what he called the “golden circle” that helps us find order and predictability in human nature – in other words, why people do what they do. Figure 5 illustrates the golden circle concept which starts with the middle circle - it starts with “why.” What is the company’s (or school’s) purpose, cause or belief? Why do people get out of bed to come to school? Why do people care? The next circle is “how” – how will we bring the purpose to life? The outside circle is the “what.” “Why” is the belief, “how” is the actions we will take to realize that belief, and “what” describes the results of those actions. Sinek transforms the circle into a cone, and demonstrates the similarity between this shape and the typical hierarchical shape in an organization. At the tip of the cone (the why) you should find the school’s administration, who articulate the purpose, the vision. The “how” level typically includes the teachers who are inspired by the why and work on the how – to bring the purpose to life. The “how” level represents the group that builds the infrastructure (systems) that will make the why tangible. The “what” level represents the those at the student-teacher, and student-student interface. This is where value-added activities occur. If the things happening at the what level do not clearly represent why the school exists, and are not guided by how the why is made tangible, then the ability to inspire and connect at the student and teacher level is severely limited.

Some important questions to ask are: “what is the purpose of education?” and “what is the purpose of a school?” Education was originally designed to meet the needs of the very small community in which the school existed. It was intended to develop children into the next generation of teachers, blacksmiths, farmers, merchants, etc. that the

Figure 4. “No Why, Know Why”

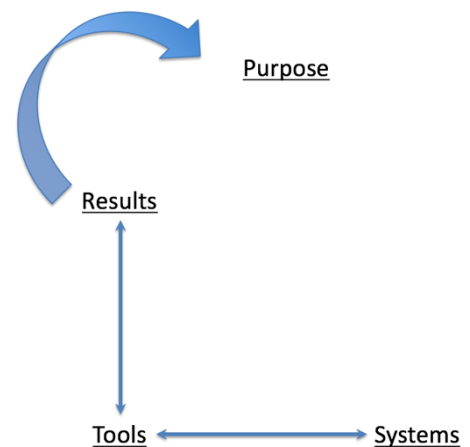
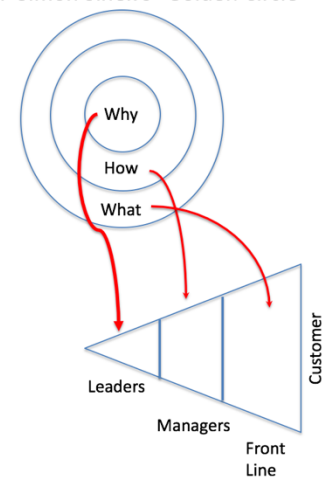


Figure 5. Simon Sinek’s “Golden Circle”



⁷ <https://www.autoliv.com>

⁸ <http://www.ussynthetic.com>

⁹ <https://www.southwest.com>

¹⁰ <http://unmsrhc.org>

¹¹ <http://www.leanderisd.org>

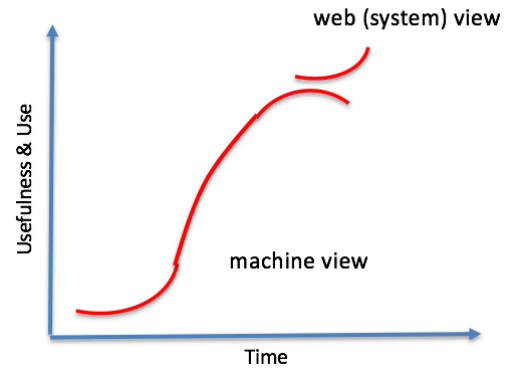
¹² *Start With Why*, Sinek, Simon

community needed to thrive once the current generation retired. In truth, the purpose has not changed: the purpose of schools is still to meet the needs of the community in which schools exist. What has changed is the community. Where once schools were preparing students for life within a few mile radius, now “community” is the entire world. The role of schools is to prepare students to enter the global community. This broad definition is why it is challenging for schools to state a purpose. Depending on who is asked, the purpose of a school may be defined very differently by the narrow lens through which that person or group views what is needed from the next workforce.

Phase 4 – Discovering Principles and Ideal Behaviors (Both/And not Either/Or)

Administrators and teachers who go beyond the “tool based” and “program” pathway will discover that an entirely different set of principles will need to be learned. One of the most difficult steps will be “unlearning” many of the beliefs and assumptions that people have learned in school and in the workplace. They will discover that the world view that drives most of our way of thinking about business, education, government and most everything is the “machine” view. The world view that is replacing the prevailing view has been called the “web” or “system” view (see Figure 6).¹³

Figure 6 – Change in World View



The change has been occurring for decades, and is most clearly evident by studying the phenomenon of sustained improvement over time shown by companies like Toyota, Honda and others in the use of what is being called “lean.”¹⁴ We can trace the origin of these efforts to the post World War II efforts where thought leaders like W. Edward Deming, Joseph Juran and Peter Drucker brought new knowledge to the country of Japan where leaders like Kiichiro and Eiji Toyoda, Shigeo Shingo and Taichi Ohno coupled this new knowledge with their own knowledge and created a fundamentally different management philosophy and principles of management.¹⁵ We explore the evolution of this new world view in our white paper “Evolving World View” (go to this link: <http://bit.ly/IEEvolvingworldview3>).

Here is a list of some of the important business principles of enterprise excellence, grouped into domains of 1) alignment, 2) enabling and 3) improvement.¹⁶

Align

- Constancy of purpose
- Provide value to the customer
- Think systemically

Enable

- Lead with humility
- Respect every individual
- Learn continuously

Improve

- Focus on process
- Provide quality at the source
- Flow and pull value
- Understand and manage variation
- Embrace scientific thinking
- Seek perfection

¹³ *After the Clockwork Universe*, Goerner, S.J., 2001

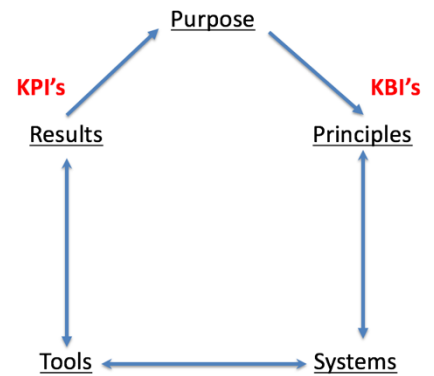
¹⁴ *The Machine That Changed The World*, Womack, J. and Jones, D., 1990

¹⁵ *The Birth of Lean*, Shimokawa, K. and Fujimoto, T., 2009

¹⁶ These twelve principles can be attributed to a number of thought leaders and sources including the Shingo Institute, Lean Enterprise Institute, W. Edwards Deming, Stephen Covey, Taichi Ohno, and Shigeo Shingo. More information can be found at this link: <http://bit.ly/stoeckdeming2014>

The difference between the principles of the prevailing style of management and the approach based on these guiding principles is profound. Here is one example: Most management views the organization as a set of parts that should be managed separately. The prevailing belief is that if all of the parts of the organization operate efficiently and productively, then the organization as a whole will be efficient and productive. This additive view of management is incompatible with a systemic view. A detailed explanation of the differences between the prevailing principles of management and the principles of enterprise excellence is beyond the scope of this paper. The reader can go to this footnote to learn more.¹⁷

Figure 7. Learning New Principles



Here are some key points about these guiding principles:

1. Principles are not the same as “values.” Every individual develops their values early on in life. They are personal, subjective and govern the individual’s behavior.
2. Principles are universal truths that govern everyone and govern consequences.
3. Not understanding or ignoring these guiding principles will put a company out of business (some faster than others).
4. Understanding these principles will help to identify ideal behaviors or key behavior indicators (KBI’s). See Figure 7.
5. Understanding these principles help to adjust systems and select appropriate tools, which helps to deliver better results (key performance indicators – KPI’s). Refer to Figure 7.
6. Learning these principles (and unlearning existing beliefs and principles) is a challenging and life-long task. Understanding the way we think, including our mental maps, and the distinction between hard-wire and working memory will be critical.¹⁸

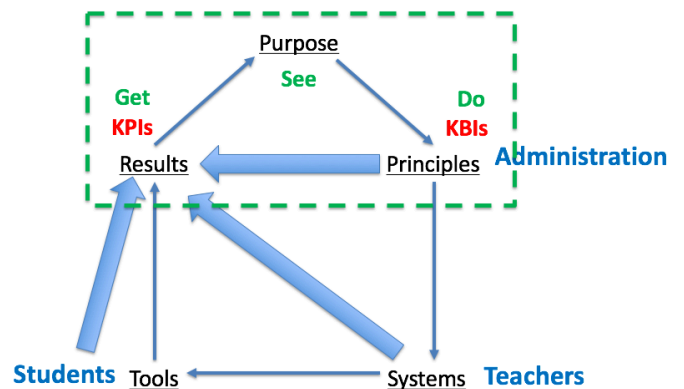
Our white papers, “Principles for Personal and Organizational Transformation – Part 1 (Enable), Part 2 (Align) and Part 3 (Improve)” discuss principles and ideal behaviors in all three dimensions in more detail.^{19,20,21}

Phase 5 – Putting the Pieces Together (A Way of Being)

Administrators and teachers who understand the interactions of all parts of the model will realize the following points as illustrated in Figure 8:

1. Working towards “true north” includes understanding what we want to see (Purpose), what we need to do (ideal behaviors – KBI’s) and what we want to get (key performance measures – KPIs). What makes it challenging in education is the many stakeholders that have an opinion regarding the three elements of true north. If you were to ask 100 different people about the purpose, KBIs and KPIs, you will likely get 100 different answers. In health care, the answer may be more straight-forward “zero preventable deaths.” In manufacturing the consensus might be, “more product at less cost.” What is the purpose of education? Local districts are left to determine purpose, KBIs and KPIs as they apply within their setting, and understanding/managing that variation becomes critically important is foundational for education as well.
2. Appropriate roles and responsibilities need to be understood and re-aligned. In most organizations, administration is adjusting the systems, and the managers (or in education, the teachers) own the tools and the students have no true ownership of their part in the model. Education is being done “to” them, not with them. This means that no-

Figure 8. Putting the Pieces Together



¹⁷ *Out of the Crisis*, W. Edwards Deming (Chapters 2 and 3). *The New Economics*, W. Edwards Deming, (Chapters 1 and 2).

¹⁸ Some useful resources on the topic of neuroscience and mental models are: *The New Economics*, by W. Edwards Deming (in particular Chapter 4, “A System of Profound Knowledge”), *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, by Daniel Kahneman, *Quiet Leadership*, by David Rock, and *The Knowledge-Creating Company*, by Ikujiro Nonaka and Hirotaka Takeuchi.

¹⁹ <http://bit.ly/enableprinciples2>

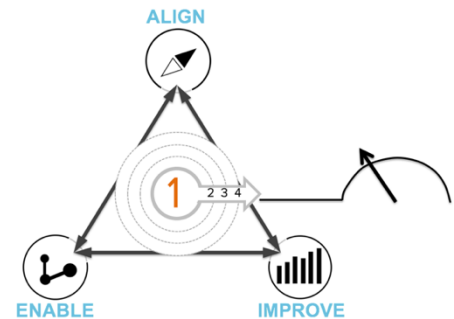
²⁰ <http://bit.ly/alignprinciples1>

²¹ <http://bit.ly/improveprinciples1>

one is responsible for understanding or owning principles. With better alignment, the administrator/principal would understand and use the guiding principles. Teachers would oversee systems, and the students would own and use the tools. A teacher's ultimate job would be to teach the students how to best use the tools so that they can "own" their learning. The goal is for students to have all the tools they need to solve problems and challenges they will encounter throughout life.

3. Systems drive behaviors. If you want different (ideal) behaviors, you need to have the right systems. Understanding systems and how to adjust them is critical knowledge that is beyond the scope of this paper.
4. Improvement comes from both individuals and from systems, and better results through ideal behaviors. It's "both/and" not "either/or."
5. There is a model for sustainability (summarized in Figure 8) and a model for velocity (see Figure 9). It is important to use and understand both.
6. Executives and managers can use their knowledge of the model to assess the current state of their systems by observing the frequency, intensity, duration, scope and role of ideal behaviors. They can use this information to determine how to adjust key systems to get better results through ideal behaviors.
7. There is a model for deployment²² that can help administrators who wish to apply this knowledge every day in their organization in order to bring their purpose to life.

Figure 9. Transformation Velocity

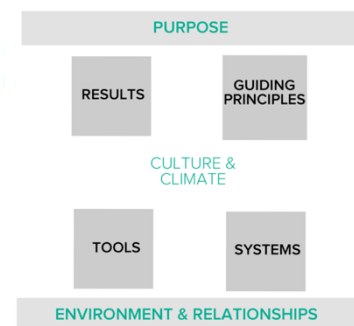


Environment and Relationships – A critical foundation

There are necessary conditions that must be in place in order for these models to be effective. We call this "environment and relationships" and see it as a foundation for the organization that wishes to transform from the "program" approach to a philosophy – a way of being. See Figure 10.

First, we provide some definitions for the terms in the middle of Figure 10 – culture and climate. We define the culture of an organization as "the sum of the collective behaviors at all levels in order to achieve the organization's purpose." If the ideal behaviors are not defined and modeled by administration, people in the organization will achieve the purpose (usually with a narrow focus on results) by any means necessary. This might be through "fire-fighting, work-arounds, heroic efforts and teaching to the test." In this case, the culture of the organization is "fire-fighting, work-arounds, heroic efforts and teaching to the test."

Figure 10. Environment and Relationships



We consider an organization's climate as a component of the culture, and see the climate as determined by senior management. Climate is the "mood" or "tone" that the administration sets. It is exhibited by what they tend to focus on, how they react to events, and how they interact with others.

Here are some key points regarding "environment and relationships:"

1. The quality of the relationship between each person and their immediate supervisor is pivotal. Marcus Buckingham, states it as follows, "The talented employee may join a company because of its charismatic leaders, its generous benefits, and its world-class training programs, but how long that employee stays and how productive he is while he is there is determined by his relationship with his immediate supervisor."²³
2. Research from 2015 provided by Gallup, Inc. indicated managers account for 70% of the variance in employee engagement.²⁴

²² <http://bit.ly/IEXdeploy1>

²³ Buckingham, Marcus, *First Break All The Rules*

²⁴ <http://bit.ly/gallup70percent>

3. A recent study by Google researches discovered that what makes a great team is not who is on the team, but rather how the team members interact, how they structure their work and how they view their contributions.²⁵ This conclusion should not come as a surprise, as this was pointed out by both W. Edwards Deming²⁶ and Russell Ackoff²⁷ decades ago. The best parts do not make the best system, what matters is their alignment toward purpose and quality of the interactions. This knowledge applies to social systems as well as mechanical systems.
4. The Google research also discovered five keys that make an effective team, the primary factor being “psychological safety” defined as “team members feel safe to take risks and be vulnerable in front of each other.”¹⁸ Again, this should not come as a surprise. Deming²⁸ pointed out the need to drive fear out of the workplace, and Patrick Lencioni²⁹ described the importance of creating trust and team member vulnerability.
5. Engaging employees is only the beginning. In a 2015 Harvard Business Review article, authors Eric Garton and Michael Mankins stated as follows, “The problem is that the typical manager today is generally great at hitting his or her numbers, while only a small minority have mastered the art of inspirational leadership. As a result they are unable to manage individuals to their full potential, build and lead truly great teams, and connect a team or individual’s mission to the company’s overall purpose.”³⁰
6. Learning more about emotional intelligence³¹ and social intelligence³² can provide guidance to managers who wish improve the environment and relationships in their sphere of influence.
7. What are the implications for schools and education? It seems that the quality of relationships between student and student, student and teacher, and teacher and administrator determines the basic foundation that makes continuous improvement in learning and education possible.

Summary:

1. Most organizations (including schools) that pursue better business results do so through a series of phases (the “quick fix” and “comfort of the comfort zone”) that results in a program approach and maintains the status quo.
2. Some organizations pursue a radically different (but accessible) pathway through understanding a more complete model for personal and organizational transformation. This alternative pathway produces sustainable desired results through ideal behaviors, and can become the organization’s philosophy – a way of being.
3. Some key discoveries along this pathway include: the power of purpose, new principles for management that are required, the power of systems to drive ideal behaviors, proper alignment of roles and responsibilities, “true north” is more than key business results, and improvement comes from both better results through ideal behaviors and contributions from the individual and the systems (it’s “both/and” not “either/or”). The health of the environment and relationships in an organization determine the necessary conditions for success.
4. Development of the knowledge needed for transformation must be led by top management in a manner that is organic (experimentation and learning) not mechanical (top – down).
5. Leading with humility may be one of the most difficult guiding principles to grasp and master. Most of what we have learned in school and on the job comes from an outdated view of the world as a machine. The new world view sees the world as a system.

We are indebted to the recommendations and subject-matter contributions from Holly Prast, Assistant Superintendent, Learning Services, Kimberly Area School District, Kimberly, Wisconsin.

²⁵ <http://bit.ly/googlegreatteam>

²⁶ Deming, W. Edwards, *The New Economics*, pp. 125-128, and *Out of the Crisis*, pp. 117-118.

²⁷ Ackoff, Russell, *Systems Thinking For Curious Managers*

²⁸ Deming, W. Edwards, *Out of the Crisis*, pp. 59-62.

²⁹ Lencioni, Patrick, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, 2002.

³⁰ <http://bit.ly/hbrbeyondengage>

³¹ One definition of emotional intelligence: “the capacity of individuals to recognize their own, and other people’s emotions, to discriminate between different feelings and label them appropriately, and to use emotional information to guide thinking and behavior.” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emotional_intelligence

³² One definition of social intelligence: “the capacity to effectively navigate and negotiate complex social relationships and environments.” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_intelligence

The Institute For Enterprise Excellence

The Institute for Enterprise Excellence (IEX) was established in 2013 as a research, education and coaching institution that focuses on helping organizations build principle-based architecture to achieve world-class results.

We bring purpose to life by advancing the use of practical application of principles, systems and tools in pursuit of enterprise excellence.

What differentiates us is our Principle-based Deployment Model, the culmination of many years of application experience and continuous research in the field of behavior and performance.

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