

*Why does the journey to the deeper level of the U always seem to be the road less traveled?*

*Perhaps... because it requires the difficult inner work of meeting and mastering the three enemies of inner growth?*

*We know that paradoxically community is central to this hard inner journey. Parker Palmer calls it “being alone together,” a space that welcomes our inwardness even as it connects us to the gifts and challenges of community, and to the larger world. This sense of community is grounded in relationships that according to Palmer, “combine unconditional love, or regard, with hopeful expectancy, creating a space that both safeguards and encourages the inner journey. In such a space, we are freed to hear our own truth, touch what brings us joy, become self-critical about our faults, and take risky steps toward change—knowing that we will be accepted no matter what the outcome.”*

1) What does inner work mean to you?

2) What have we done in Thrive that has helped you with your own inner work?

# Filling in the Gaps at Lunch

*Wisdom or the correspondence of words and action is rare. - W. Edwards Deming*

## The Gap Between Theory and Practice

Perhaps the major threat to openness is the gap that can develop between what we believe (our espoused theory) and the message we send by our actions (our theory in practice). For example, we may say we believe that "honesty is the best policy," and yet find ourselves telling others that what we think they want to hear instead of what we really think.

Without an open environment, we are unlikely ever to discover the difference between what we do and what we say. But uncovering our hidden agenda and bringing our beliefs (what we say) and our actions (what we do) into harmony contributes to our personal growth, a positive work environment, and the success of our companies. O'Brien offers insights into openness (*allowing for the free flow of information throughout the organization*) both from the individual and organizational norms and practices standpoints.

### Individual

- all of us built with unlimited potential for openness but environments of "shoulds" and distrust close us down-there's very little incentive to be open
- ideas presented as tests(tentative) not as self posture; seems often there's drive to get on agenda and maximize personal wins
- listen and inquire about beliefs of others; test assumptions and be open to others testing
- share own thinking(unless others know how we think, they can't correct our misperceptions)
- often choose security over risks; be forthright
- open to gap between espoused & practice
- uncovering our hidden assumptions & bring our beliefs(what say) & actions(what do) into harmony and contributes to our personal growth
- people are active participants

### Organizational Norms and Practices

- unfiltered flow of idea throughout organization
- incentive to be open
- advanced sharing of information so people prepared for meeting
- impossible to have openness without trust
- don't put spin on things; complete forthrightness
- without open environment, we are unlikely to ever discover difference between what we do and say
- openness create environment
- openness builds competitive advantage because it nurtures cooperation and stimulates thinking and creativity of people closest to problem who spend years in environment
- openness in spin free environment/ ecology has crucial impact on personality and maturity

## Leadership Questions Grappling with Gaps Gimping Growing Group Greatness

- 1) What does closing the theory/practice gap look like as specific inner work we need to do?
- 2) How might any of our work on Mental Models (Model 1 vs Model 2) be useful in the process?
- 3) How have you, or how do you see potential for cultivating ways to do inner work in your organization?
- 4) How do we help our organizations make this work at the individual and organizational level of creating new cultural norms visible, support the conditions needed to nurture it, and celebrate the indicators of its presence in daily activity?

### **After Lunch Mints:**

A Refreshing story on how Hanover worked on this gap. Go to Page 62

querade as consideration. But, in truth, it is grossly unfair, depriving them not only of feedback but also of the opportunity to explain further. When we decide, "She's not ready to hear this" or "He can't handle that," we are actually making a judgment. But what if our unilateral judgment is inaccurate? Unless others know what we are thinking, they cannot correct our misconceptions. And unless we get feedback, we fall into the trap of having our opinions become self-fulfilling prophecies.

### THE GAP BETWEEN THEORY AND PRACTICE

Perhaps the major threat to openness is the gap that can develop between what we believe (our espoused theory) and the message we send by our actions (our theory in practice). For example, we may say we believe that "honesty is the best policy," and yet find ourselves telling others what we think they want to hear instead of what we really think, as in the second example I have just given.

In our early discussions on openness at Hanover, Harvard professor Chris Argyris, a long-time student of learning and management teams, helped us understand how unaware people often are of the discrepancies between their espoused theory and their theory in action. Drawing on extensive research, Argyris demonstrated two models of human behavior:

Model 1 individuals have a strong drive to accomplish their own agendas. They strive to exert control over tasks. They maximize winning and minimize losing. Model 1 behavior creates an environment in which people have little freedom of choice, take few risks, and often make only a token commitment to the goals of the organization.

Model 2 individuals, on the other hand, design situations in which all the participants can use personal initiative and take responsibility for their actions. They believe in joint control of tasks. They consider the sharing of valid information essential to the capacity of both individuals and the organization to grow and learn. Model 2 behavior contributes to an environment in which people

have significant freedom of choice, are committed to the goals of the organization, and are willing to take risks to further those goals.

Without an open environment, we are unlikely ever to discover the difference between what we do and what we say. But uncovering our hidden agendas and bringing our beliefs (what we say) and our actions (what we do) into harmony contributes to our personal growth, a positive working environment, and the success of our companies.

### THE EFFECTIVENESS OF OPENNESS

All too often, there is a dichotomy between the objectives of an organization and the needs of its people. But openness contributes to a fundamental harmony between the two. Openness—especially when practiced with merit and localness—contributes to superior organizational performance. Decisions that result from an open discussion of the merits of a situation by the people closest to that situation are usually far more effective than decisions motivated by political or bureaucratic considerations.

Openness helps create an environment in which people are active participants—in which they use personal initiative, share ideas and insights, take responsibility for their actions, work together to achieve goals, and gain the satisfaction that comes from leaving their handprint on the organization.

Openness builds competitive advantage because it nurtures cooperation and stimulates the thinking and creativity of the people closest to the problems and the solutions. Equally important, openness combined with a spin-free corporate ecology has a crucial impact on the character, personality, spirit, and maturity of the individuals who spend years in such a work setting. Each of us journeys into our adulthood through a blending of three forces: our genetic inheritance, the exercise of our own will, and the environment. A work culture that reinforces truth, competent conversation, and an understanding of the connection between human work and purpose cannot help but achieve success.

## FIXING A FLAWED SYSTEM

Here is a positive, practical, and proven solution to the ethical problems that plague American business. Bill O'Brien has accurately assessed a moral wasteland and chartered a course to invigorate business and businesspeople.

"There are a few people worth listening to with respect to building an organization. Bill O'Brien is one of them. Read this book and learn from a pioneer who 'walked the talk' of human capital driving financial capital."

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*Jeff Brown, President & CEO of Blue Cod Technologies*

"Bill's wisdom, humility, and love lit the way for all of us who are committed to building organizations that better serve their people and their world."

*Adam Kahane, Director of Generon and author of Solving Tough Problems*

# CHARACTER *at* WORK

BUILDING PROSPERITY THROUGH  
THE PRACTICE OF VIRTUE

WILLIAM J. O'BRIEN

*Foreword by*

PETER M. SENGE



Paulist Press  
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Character At Work-Wm. O'Brien	
Qualities for Self	Qualities for Organization
<p><b>LOCALNESS</b> –<i>distributing power so that decisions can be made as close to scene of action as possible</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-self direction, responsibility, self discipline and sense of efficacy</li> <li>-trust wisdom of intuition</li> <li>-understand freedom</li> <li>-high level of personal responsibility and confidence, yet detached so also verify with those having specialized knowledge</li> <li>-each person uses job to develop personally and serve organization's mission</li> <li>-work primary vehicle that people can achieve satisfaction and happiness(engage whole person)</li> <li>-trained to see way other than command and control by surfacing the fear based mental models that surround it</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-understand power and its positive and negative uses</li> <li>-empowering individual means encouraging them to develop best possible self while still having sense of order in org</li> <li>-internally generated motivation builds capacities such as: creativity, ingenuity, and relationship building skills</li> <li>-develop a healthy balance between focus on self/other/take on something larger</li> <li>-mature individuals find it easier to resolve conflicts, see from others' perspective.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Discipline not imposed, trust self discipline</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-guides relationships between people at various levels</li> <li>-ways to establish relationships in which each level contributes to the growth and fulfillment of others(optimal relationships between levels in org is painstaking task)</li> <li>-maintains balance between freedom and order (no command and control)</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-role of senior leaders help people grow through coaching, mentoring, evaluating, and inspiring</li> <li>-an ethos of expertise/not bunch of experts(humility)</li> <li>-Distributed power to capable people to increase org's adaptability and self reliance(what's best way to use and distribute power)</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-dispersed power and high personal</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-job design makes uncomfortable if don't grow</li> <li>-relate micromanagement with high expectations</li> <li>-Localness= spirit/way of life that grows from: personal conviction/ accept individual responsibility &amp; self direction, and common values and shared aspirations</li> </ul>
<p><b>MERIT</b> - <i>evaluating decisions based on their worth, not on how much they please the boss</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-liberate ideas</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-merit environment requires a strong sense of responsibility and willingness to speak out(advocacy)</li> <li>-individual needs to know and believe in purpose of organization</li> <li>-individual must operate from facts, if no evidence-no place in discussion</li> <li>-take responsibility for thinking about merits of own ideas rather than just raising questions or making suggestions because want to see change</li> <li>-can participate in open discussions and see winning for long run and not short term self interest</li> <li>-constantly strive to understand and challenge own mental models</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-merit environment supports individual initiative, open discussion, and search for common good</li> <li>-organization needs clarity of purpose</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-hold open discussions and ensure employees have core skills in conversation and systems thinking</li> <li>-a culture of continually challenging own mental models</li> <li>-out of continual testing and challenge of individual actions, new insights will emerge that will generate fresh strategies and shape goals</li> <li>-manager's role teach how vision and values apply to local need</li> </ul>

<p><b>OPENNESS</b>-<i>allowing for the free flow of information throughout the organization</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-all of us built with unlimited potential for openness but environments of shoulds and distrust close us down-</li> <li>there's very little incentive to be open</li> <li>-ideas presented as tests(tentative) not as self posture;</li> <li>seems often there's drive to get on agenda and maximize personal wins</li> <li>-listen and inquire about beliefs of others;test assumptions and be open to others testing</li> <li>-share own thinking(unless others know how we think, they can't correct our misperceptions</li> <li>-often choose security over risks; be forthright</li> <li>-open to gap between espoused &amp; practice</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-uncovering our hidden assumptions &amp; bring our beliefs(what say) &amp; actions(what do) into harmony and contributes to our personal growth</li> <li>-people are active participants</li> <li>-journey into adulthood set in 3 forces:genes, exercise of free will, environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-unfiltered flow of idea throughout organization</li> <li>-incentive to be open</li> <li>-advanced sharing of information so people prepared for meeting</li> <li>-impossible to have openness without trust</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-don't put spin on things; complete forthrightness</li> <li>-without open environment, we are unlikely to ever discover difference between what we do and say</li> <li>-openness create environment</li> <li>-openness builds competitive advantage because it nurtures cooperation and stimulates thinking and creativity of people closest to problem who spend years in environment</li> <li>-openness in spin free environment/ ecology has crucial impact on personality and maturity</li> </ul>
<p><b>LEANNESS</b>-<i>being stewards of the organization's resources</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-nourishment comes from being independent, self reliant and capable of identifying with and contributing to a larger cause</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-big mistake in times of prosperity to live high as it makes dependent on externals and spirits are starved</li> <li>-flush organization can be distraction and keep us from knowing self</li> </ul>