

The Big Picture and the Moving Ground

A distinctive competence of extraordinary people is their capacity to approach and to understand the big picture of their reality. In essence, this is also the hallmark of the top-level executive. For every human being it is a big achievement to get outside of his/her traditional box and experience the world and reality from a wider perspective. Making the big picture real for oneself and for others it is a distinctive competence and a distinctive responsibility for extraordinary people, for leaders and for top management. In order to comply with such request, continuous learning is necessary and taking chances at teaching is an obligation.

One of the hardest challenges is that of communicating clearly the notion of what it is understood by the big picture. The traditional view seems to assume that people within organizations are informed about the mission or inspired with the vision in pretty much the same way that everyday communications occur. The traditional belief is that the mission or the vision or the grand strategy is automatically grounding for everything else.

Empirical cases and everyday reality shows that these expressions or statements are more metaphorical than workday instructions and guiding rules for behaviors. They are probably passionate expressions of a small group's values than being a set of technical requirements. The point is that it is a very complex and profound matter trying to communicate something that is more than necessary using traditional force. Just keep insisting in our way of seeing and interpreting things until the other party gives in and accedes to our version of truth is not enough. Sometimes this process is conducted at top volume with much sound and fury and people get paralyzed.

History and experience seem to show that nonstop forceful promulgation of a position to undergrid and give meaning to daily activity doesn't seem to work, at least in the long run. If we

want to be constructivists we should all aim at keeping coercion out of the social education process. If we stop for a moment to think hard, we wouldn't want any coercion done to us and this obligates us not to advocate doing it to others, no matter the circumstances.

Psychological research clearly demonstrates that human beings become strange when they are coerced. If by any chance this system of force seems to work the problem is that it becomes reinforcing. Next time more coercion is necessary to achieve the same amount of results. Thus, for transforming reality a new process for unlearning and relearning will be necessary for eliciting different kind of behaviors and actions.

The thing is that everyday problems and challenges require creativity, initiative, knowledge, goodwill and embellishment by those who are to implement solutions.

There is no point or benefit of creating blind, rigid and unthinking people to a current position and this is a short live poor strategy...

The task for helping organizations to move forward by showing their members the big picture requires to understand how people acquire frames of mind and frames of reference, how they communicate them, and how they change them in themselves and others.

It was Fred Emery in Systems Thinking that made the point that leaders, top management, teachers and knowledge workers in general have to be more reflective because reality is confronting a constant kind of moving ground syndrome that affects the process of communicating the big picture to anyone. All principles of good communication are relevant to the task of explaining the big picture of anything. It is the exploration of a pluralistic and diverse value system, not just an examination of unitary values. A society, an organization and a team are always plural.

But change agents have to realize how thoroughly is the traditional mentality, geared for crisp, technical communications, occurring in the context of structured agendas, with someone in charge of the discussion and process observers to keep it on track, with actions steps, followed by taking up of the next item in the agenda.

The big picture is about hard issues. Real issues are the ones that are hard to talk about pointing to what business are we really in, what is happening in the world around us, and whether current organizations have much chance of becoming the kind of place people want to be. These are the tough questions of strategic management and answering them with profoundness will provide the foundations for explaining to people the big picture within their current reality.

Changing the foundations of anybody's world is anxiety generating. It is possible to learn to perform this task in an artful manner, but it will always hurt. The challenge is to move from the operator's mindset of various previous generations ago to the strategic mindset requiring what Chester I. Barnard imply in *The Functions of the Executive* as a community of vision, knowledge and feelings. The task is to work with multiplicity points of view as fully, flexible and gently as we can in order to achieve sustainable results. Some leading concepts for achieving visible, dramatic and sustained results are feelings, emotions, judgment, sense, proportion, balance and appropriateness.

This challenge of explaining and convincing about the big picture is about cultivating the psychology of collaborator. Collaborators are inclusive players. They are responsible to and for themselves and to and for other people. To become truly collaborators it is necessary to expand the circles of reference, the playing field, the big picture, or the life of games. These are high standards for extraordinary people.

It is the core task of extraordinary people, leaders, top management and other professionals to develop and explain to all of their stakeholders the new big pictures, trying to piece together into a knowledge and value system and world views that are unfamiliar, evolving and in many cases untried.