



## The Search for the Head/Heart Connection

### Abstract

This project explores the head/heart connection — its definition, the various models in which it appears, its value, what's made possible in the connection, and how to evoke the head/heart connection in the workplace and in a coaching relationship.

In coaching, as well as in the workplace, the head/heart connection provides a fundamental source of wisdom<sup>1</sup>. In the workplace, the head/heart connection is necessary for sustainable change; in coaching it offers a place for magic to happen when the client is guided in the dance between head and heart.

Yet interviews with eight seminal leaders, authors and working consultants in organizational culture, coaching and spirituality, plus a literature review of more than 20 references revealed no single source comprehensively covering the topic. In the Western world, the head/heart connection may be seen in varying forms scattered throughout a variety of models, including authentic leadership communication<sup>2</sup>, Level 5 leadership<sup>3</sup>, Emotional Intelligence<sup>4</sup>, servant leadership<sup>5</sup>, thought leader gatherings<sup>6</sup>, self-managing the synchronization of the body's rhythms to the heart<sup>7</sup>, and literally hundreds of other topics.

So why haven't these different models individually or collectively hit the tipping point and become more mainstream? Questions considered here include:

- What is the essence of the head/heart connection as seen within a variety of models?
- What's possible when the head/heart connection is integrated into the workplace?
- With an established business case for support of its effectiveness, why hasn't it caught on?
- Why should we care about making the connection?
- How do we evoke it in the workplace?
- How do we evoke it in coaching?
- What are the next steps in the (r)evolution?

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1 Egan, Gerard, *The Skilled Helper*, Brooks/Cole, 2002, pg. 80/

2 Pearce, Terry, *Leading Out Loud*, Jossey-Bass, 2003

3 Collins, Jim, *Good to Great*, Harper Business, 2001

4 Robert Cooper, Ph.D., and Ayman Sawaf, *Executive EQ: Emotional Intelligence in Leadership & Organizations*, Grosset/Putnam, 1997

5 Magellan Executive Resources, Inc., LeaderServe™ *Developing Servant Leaders* collateral materials, [www.magellaner.com](http://www.magellaner.com)

6 The Heartland Inc., [www.heartlandcircle.com](http://www.heartlandcircle.com)

7 Kaplan-Leiserson, Eva, TD, *Put Your HeartMath Into It*, TD, February 2002

As much as this inquiry fulfills a professional goal, it also fulfills a personal one. This topic came across my path during my mid-career reinvention, initiated after challenging experiences with two different organizations. Each organization had significant disconnects within their business that evolved into “ethical dilemmas” resulting in organization implosions — regrettable and avoidable outcomes, which have become increasingly commonplace in recent years.

*“There is in us something wiser than our head.”*

– Schopenhauer

### **What is a Head/Heart Connection?**

Millions of American workers go to work everyday wishing it were better. Wishing there were less politics in the office. Wishing they could relate to their co-workers. Wishing their boss wasn’t a bully. Wishing the company’s infrastructure supported them rather than being a slave to process and systems that have become irrelevant. Wishing their company had a real mission in alignment with the work they did. Wishing they didn’t feel like they were doing “pretend” work. Wishing (insert your wish here). Wishing, at some level, conscious or not, that they didn’t have to disconnect their heart from their mind, their soul from their body to get through the day.

The chasm between our hearts and minds has been a Western paradigm for centuries. In fact, we haven’t even been able to accept the head/heart connection as received from Eastern cultures, until it was passed through the filters of Western science.

Eastern philosophers, shamans, rishis and alternative health care practitioners have worked with the mind/body/spirit or head/heart connection for centuries.<sup>8</sup> Acknowledged as “citta” (mind or heart, the two terms being synonymous in Asian religious philosophy), it is the individual life field, normally defined by but not limited to the physical body; consisting of the purest and subtlest form of matter/energy.<sup>9</sup> By comparison, in the United States the head/heart connection was just beginning to be recognized in scientific circles by Candace Pert in her book *Molecules of Emotion*,<sup>10</sup> published in 1997. In business, it is achieved most often by reading the latest “how to” books and implementing “flavor-of-the-day” workplace motivation programs developed by Western productivity experts. Yet these efforts to connect actually disconnect us. They don’t engage all our senses, acknowledge the wisdom of the heart (feelings), support sustainable change, or help us relate better to our workplace.

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8 Pert, Candace, Ph.D., *Molecules of Emotion*, Scribner, New York, 1997

9 Houston, Vyaas, M.A., “Sanskrit & the Yoga Sutras: Sanskrit, The Language of Meditation, The American Sanskrit Institute, [www.americansanskrit.com/articles/a\\_sutras3.html](http://www.americansanskrit.com/articles/a_sutras3.html)

10 Pert, op. cit.

actually disconnect us. They don't engage all our senses, acknowledge the wisdom of the heart (feelings), support sustainable change, or help us relate better to our workplace.

Margaret Wheatley, Ed.D., co-founder and president emerita of The Berkana Institute, explains why. "Eastern cultures have never split the heart from the mind. The way I view the heart/mind or body/mind/spirit is that we are finally getting back to what has been well known for eons by other cultures. In our Western world we don't think as whole systems and we have disregarded emotions as important. What's going on is that science is trying to reweave the world and finally get back to what has been well known by other cultures. It is the end of our paradigm of dualism and mechanism, which is disabling at this point."

For example, In Japan, the art of Japanese flower arranging called ikebana is the most well-known and actively practiced of all the traditional arts. Through ikebana, an arrangement is created with consideration of the symbolism of each species of flower, the spatial relationship between each of the flowers, and the arrangement's relationship to its environment. The end result is dramatic. Ikebana engages the senses, stirs the spirit, and changes the viewer's perspective of the environment in which the arrangement is placed.

In the Western world, the act of enhancing one's environment with flowers proceeds with a total disconnect between the heart and the mind. We usually look for the best deal (for the purchaser), which may involve coupons, credit card points or frequent flier miles. We may go to Costco, call 1-800-FLOWERS or buy online at [www.flowers.com](http://www.flowers.com). We still get beautiful flowers, but other than a reaction to the type of flowers purchased and perhaps a positive feeling toward the person that sent them, the end result rarely stops us in our tracks and makes us look at our own environment differently. At best, our spirits are uplifted for as long as the bouquet stays fresh.

Likewise, the head/heart connection in the Western world isn't a universally acknowledged concept, nor has its introduction into the workplace been sustainable. This explains why in interviews with eight thought-leaders, authors, coaches and organizational consultants, and a literature review of more than 20 sources I found no singular definition of the head/heart connection. What I found were many different models to help people search, identify and evoke the head/heart connection, by moving them to a perspective of "getting beyond yourself"; listening to God and going within to find passion; bringing the whole self (including emotional intelligence) into the workplace and accessing the wisdom from feeling as well as thinking; bringing love into the workplace; and hosting Bible studies in the cafeteria.

And not only are there many models, each has its own language and methodology. No wonder why talking about the head/heart connection in the workplace can be so difficult.

Whatever its name or form; the head/heart connection has proven to be a fundamental source of wisdom<sup>11</sup>. In the physical body, the head/heart connection occurs when the “emotional brain” housed within the limbic system (specifically the amygdala) works closely and speedily with the “thinking brain” in the pre-frontal cortex.<sup>12</sup> In the soul, it is the heart/mind of God. In the workplace it’s the place where extreme passion, dedication and the ability to create sustainable change are possible. And in coaching, it provides a place for magic when the client is guided in the dance between head and heart — the source where “Ah-HA!” comes from.

For this discussion, references to the head/heart connection or spirituality in the workplace do not include any orientation toward religion in the workplace, i.e., specific denominations, religious dogma or specific religious beliefs.

### **What’s Possible: Business Case for Support**

In starting my research, I thought that proving the effectiveness of the head/heart connection was simply about creating a business case for support. However, this has already been proven.

Emotional Intelligence (EI) is probably the most well-known of all of head/heart models. A vast amount of research demonstrates that EI is more important than cognitive or technical skills for career success, exceptional leadership, job performance and achievement, improved sales, holding down costs, high employee retention and low employee turnover.

- EI is twice as important as cognitive or technical skills for high job performance, and at the top level almost all-important (findings from profiles of top executives in 15 global companies including IBM, PepsiCo and Volvo)<sup>13</sup>
- 70 percent of the reasons for losing clients or customers is EI-related<sup>14</sup>
- Financial advisors of American Express who undergo training in emotional intelligence improve sales by up to 20 percent<sup>15</sup>

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11 Egan, Gerard, *The Skilled Helper*, Brooks/Cole, 2002, pg. 80

12 Gill, Roger; Frost, John, *Emotional Intelligence: The ‘Heart’ of Leadership*, Paper presented at the Third Annual Conference: The Head & Heart of Leadership, The Leadership Trust Foundation, Ross-on-Wye, 6-7 September 2000.

13 Helen Pickles, “I Feel, Therefore I Am,” *Business Life*, July/August 2000, pp. 37-41

14 Helen Pickles, op. cit.

15 Helen Pickles, op. cit.

Other models that focus on the implementation of the head/heart connection can point to demonstrated research success as well. HeartMath summarized it best:

*“More than a decade of research, published in a variety of peer-reviewed journals, confirms a single, fundamental premise: Unleashing the full power of an organization starts with empowering the individual. When we’re internally self-managed – feeling balanced, in control, and powerful – we make our greatest contribution. We act, not react. We think creatively. We communicate clearly. We manage well under pressure. We make good decisions. Our most inspiring leadership qualities emerge. When dozens, hundreds, thousands of employees work to that zone of peak performance, so does the organization.*”

**Case in point:**

- According to case studies posted on HeartMath’s web site, results achieved by companies utilizing HeartMath’s technologies include:
  - A Fortune 50 High Tech Leadership Team
    - Improved team building and more effective working relationships
    - Enhanced business performance and workplace communication while reducing stress
  - An IT Services Firm
    - Improved leadership skill and sensitivity
    - Improved internal communication
    - Reduced stress
    - Increased moral
    - Increased sales

However, the experts interviewed for this discussion say that workplaces with evidence of sustainable change — and a culture shift — rather than just specific “improvement” projects are more difficult to come by. Real-life examples are rarely as neat and tidy as research makes it sound. Several interviewees agreed that many efforts are successful, but those are best considered as pockets of success. Wheatley noted, “There are many courageous champions – in schools, nursing units, and in divisions of large corporations, but I am not hopeful [that we’re close to a tipping point] as the pressure from the greater system to conform, to use measures and get things done at a ridiculous pace is greater.”

John Schuster, management consultant, coach and author of *Answering Your Call*, offered an interesting observation about organizations he has studied that have been cited as successful at achieving results through the head/heart connection: “An article came out in *Fortune* four years

ago called ‘God and Business,’ with the usual list of organizations doing this kind of work. I spent a lot of time studying those companies before the article came out as well as after the article was published and found that they all had a dark side — just like all human beings. And I found that the more public they were about some facet of their head/heart work, the greater the likelihood they had of having a bigger shadow.”

### **The Struggle to Achieve the Head/Heart Connection to Workplace**

So what’s the problem? Given the increasing pressures to work more, produce more, achieve more...faster than ever, and the proven success of bringing the head/heart connection into the workplace, why aren’t more organizations embracing this idea?

“Seeing isn’t believing,” said Patricia Neal, cofounder of Heartland, Inc. “You can prove that art education in school matters. We’ve proven it in Japan, Germany and other high performing cultures that arts and music in the school creates better students with better results. We can prove that over several generations. And do people believe it here? No. What’s the first thing to get cut: arts and music. And the same case can be made with the head/heart connection. It is proven to improve and retain a talent base, it provides renewal to the company, engenders more loyalty — and people want to believe, but they don’t. The fallback comes from fear.”

And it’s also fear about the accuracy of the data to demonstrate the effectiveness of a head/heart connection that prevents executives from moving forward. “We find that with lots of executives, data from somewhere else is quickly discounted,” said Bruce Cryer, CEO of HeartMath. There is a very strong need to prove that it will work — especially coming out of these risk averse times — in their company.”

So what drives this fear? A long history.

### **Barriers to Progress: The American Work Ethic**

The separation of the head and heart has been occurring over several centuries, accelerated by significant historic events. In the seventeenth century, René Descartes, philosopher and founding father of modern medicine, made a deal with the Pope in order to get the human bodies he needed for dissection. Descartes agreed not to have anything to do with the soul, the mind, or the emotions — aspects of human experience under the virtually exclusive jurisdiction of the church at the time — if he could claim the physical realm as his own.<sup>16</sup> For the educated classes, this division dramatically separated things physical from things spiritual — a division that has since been perpetuated at all levels in Western society.

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<sup>16</sup> Pert, op cit.

Deborah Savage, adjunct professor of Spirituality, University of St. Thomas and pursuing her doctorate from Marquette University, notes that the head/heart connection to our work dates back to Adam and Eve. “We were called to work from the beginning of human existence. It goes to the book of Genesis...before they took the apple they were put there to till the garden. In our original nature, before we sinned, we worked.”

Martin Luther believed that people could serve God through their work and that a person’s vocation was equated as his calling.<sup>17</sup> That belief held true for centuries, and had an integral role in the founding of this country. However, according to Savage, that calling changed in this country after the Revolutionary War. “With an entire continent to conquer, the Protestant work ethic was superseded by more of a sense of civic duty than a deeply felt religious principle.”

The head/heart division increased with the Industrial Revolution, in which the individual and the product were separated by a machine; skill and craftsmanship were replaced by discipline and anonymity; and success was measured purely by the volume and efficiency of production. This eroded a sense of control over one’s destiny in the new workplace, and the emptiness and lack of intellectual stimulation in work threatened the work ethic.<sup>18</sup> The work ethic had become secularized in a number of ways. The idea of work as a *calling* had been replaced by the concept of public usefulness. Economists warned of the poverty and decay that would befall the country if people failed to work hard, and moralists stressed the social duty of each person to be productive.<sup>19</sup>

In time, this evolved to the idea of Henry Ford-style scientific management in the 1900s, which increased specialization and division of jobs into simple tasks in order to increase worker production and increase worker pay. At the end of World War II, human relations and job enrichment were introduced to make people feel more useful at work...again.

The urge to seek even greater fulfillment in work began with the Information Age. As “high-discretion” jobs (those requiring considerable thinking and decision making by workers), began replacing the Industrial Age positions, a significant shift in the work ethic occurred when opportunities for greater self-expression by workers began to create more self-fulfillment in their work.

This history is important to understand, as it sets our expectations for what level of self-expression and fulfillment we can receive from our work today. David Dibble, management consultant and author of *The New Agreements in the Workplace—Releasing the Human Spirit*, says that tolerance for the current business norms occurred because of the “domestication” of the human mind. Just as parents domesticate their children by passing on their own beliefs (using force when necessary), leaders domesticate each other and their workers in the same way.

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17 Hill, Roger, B., “Historical Context of Work Ethic,” Department of Occupational Studies, The University of Georgia, Athens, GA, © 1992, 1996

18 Hill, Roger, op. cit.

19 Rodgers, D.T., *The Work Ethic in Industrial America, 1850-1920*, The University of Chicago Press.

“The human mind which creates our individual collective realities, is mostly afraid of change, and believes that some part of it will die in the change process,” said Dibble. “So it becomes attached to what already exists in the mind. For the mind, change means going into the unknown, and since the mind requires concepts to create meaning, the mind makes up potential scenarios that usually make change far worse than it will be, which leads to a natural resistance to change. Creating a connection of head and heart in the workplace requires a transformation of the mind at the level of leadership. Leaders must transform old fear-based domestication in themselves to new beliefs based in the intelligence and connection to the heart.”

Said succinctly, the generations that have come before us have taken the heart out of work, demonstrated the efficiency of taking the heart out of work, and we’ve been doing it so long that we believe this is the way it’s supposed to be.

### **Progress To Date**

According to the people I interviewed, a list of notable pioneers and leading contributors to the development and implementation of current head/heart models would include Peter Senge, R. Buckminster Fuller, Pema Chodren, Deepak Chopra, Wayne Dyer, Lance Secretan, Miguel Ruiz, Dr. W. Edwards Deming, Daniel Goleman, Nash Scott, Scotty McClellan, Ian Mitroff, C. Michael Thompson, Emily Griffin, Robert S. Vogel and Robert Wuthnow. (See the Appendix for a complete listing.)

Although each of these individuals have made significant contributions, David Dibble suggests that without focusing on “systems thinking” and simply using the “typical” cultural change methods, wryly referred to as the – program *du jour* – we cannot create sustainable change. “A critical and necessary component to creating sustainable, measurable change in the workplace is systems thinking by leadership. Ninety percent of the results we experience in the workplace are a function of the systems in which people work, *not* individual efforts. Most leaders are not aware of this important fact. Leaders have been domesticated to believe that good or bad, people are the source of the results being experienced. This belief is simply wrong,” said Dibble. “Sustainability of change, including cultural change, requires both the transformation of leadership at the level of the mind *and* systems thinking/literacy as a necessary skill-set of leadership and management. As failed program after failed program have clearly shown, if either part is missing, change cannot be sustained.”

Neal explains that the shift from company-led movements toward individual responsibility and transformation could be helpful to achieve sustainable change. “Especially after 9/11, the dot.com bomb and the 2000 elections, we’re seeing an increase in individuals within companies with leverage and some discretionary spending finding a way to create some kind of a culture change within their immediate purview that can be shared by others. People are saying, ‘Let’s have a

conversation about what sustains a human being at work, and not impose a culture.' It's not a bad thing that interest in this area is not company-driven anymore – it's the only way it can be. Company-led movements have to be tactical, like Six Sigma, etc." And tactical change efforts that are touted to bring together the head and heart are at best short-lived, and at worst a disaster in the making.

### **Distractions that Pull Us Off Course**

As critics of corporate life, E. Lawrence Kersten and Justin Sewell, explain in the May 2005 FastCompany article, "Soul Assassins," many of our distractions are caused by the solutions. "What executives fail to realize is that the life-changing insights sold by the motivational industry are the source of their problems rather than the solution. The primary objective of the motivational industry is to stoke the fires of your employees' narcissism so that they fall in love with themselves all over again, just as they did when they saw their own beauty in the distorted reflection of their mother's adoring gaze."

Experienced consultants take a less sarcastic and broader perspective, and point to a number of distractions, such as our ego's interests in pursuing professional awards and recognition, our perpetual state of busy-ness, the culture of speed and the competition for time and resources from other corporate initiatives that have taken us off course. "Twenty years ago I thought we'd be further along," said Schuster. "It is hard to do — the difficulty is real. There are lots of distractions. And all of those distractions keep us from going deep — we tend to get by with as little as we have to. We are tempted by the shallow parts of life and only if you decide to do something about it could we get to a different place."

Wheatley contends that our perpetual state of busy-ness is numbing us, while Neal points to the culture of speed: "Before 9/11 and the dot.com bust, our major competition was discretionary funds. Now, it's time. With flattened organizations and companies creating double-duty people, they have created a culture of speed that has accelerated, so people feel unable to leave work for a program that isn't 'directly contributable to next quarter's bottom line in some statistically proven way.'"

Cryer points to the competition with other corporate initiatives, "The resistance is coming from the corporation's commitment to other efforts; IT redesign, culture change – it's overwhelming and difficult to embrace new ideas."

### **Why Go Through the Struggle?**

Why go through the struggle of being a whole integrated person and finding more meaning and fulfillment in your work? Some would say the answer is, why not? Still others would argue that America's way of doing business today gets the job done just right.

In the April 18, 2005, issue of *Newsweek*, Robert Samuelson credits the new breed of CEOs who are devoted to improving the organization's economic performance first, and other goals second or third, with the country's improved economic performance at the end of 2004. "The true

transformation of CEOs is not the recent plunge from public grace. It's a slow-motion evolution that, despite many excesses, mistakes and some crimes, has served the nation well. ...CEOs have changed from bureaucrats to warriors. You can glimpse the effects in several statistics. The first: in the fourth quarter of 2004, after-tax business profits were 9.2 percent of national income, the highest since at least 1950, says Mark Zandi of Economy.com. The second: from 2001 to 2004, annual growth in productivity (output per hour worked) averaged 4.3 percent, the best since — again — 1950.”<sup>20</sup>

But at what personal cost to the workers and their families? Herbert Lingren, Ph.D., Extension Family Life Specialist at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln putting an interesting framework around this issue in a newsletter on work, family and personal growth. He said that most active people spend a certain amount of time in crisis mode; the problems occur when the crisis mode becomes a way of life. “When that happens, you start doing the only thing you can. You economize. You short-change your investment of energy in certain areas of your life so you can invest it in other areas – usually in the performance-oriented areas to which your self esteem is tied. In every other area of life, you become a miser: you hoard your energy, you engage minimally, you touch superficially, you slide along the surface, you skim.”<sup>21</sup>

### **Forces Leading us Forward**

Experts, consultants and authors agree that as forces impacting business and demands on leadership are changing, we are being pushed toward a crossroads.

Many guides are available to show us new ways of working. In their book *Leadership The Challenge*, Kouzes and Posner point to a changing context for leadership: a heightened uncertainty and greater need to connect with family and friends brought about by 9/11; a smaller world due to technology and the global economy; the changing nature of, and different tolerances for, the culture of speed; an increasingly diversified workforce; an even more intense search for meaning stemming from generational differences; and a broader religious reawakening, with values and virtues discussed more openly as people worry about the legacy they are leaving.<sup>22</sup>

Savage says it differently: “The truth is we are running out of gimmicks. It used to be that quality management is what the top told the middle to do for the bottom. But the heart can't follow that. The leader can't ask others to make an emotional connection to their work, coworkers or the company if he/she hasn't done it him/herself. All workers are getting more sophisticated — at all levels. Authenticity is the wave of the future. In the future, it can't be about a strategy — it has to be a human commitment to honor the whole person.”

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20 Samuelson, Robert J., “No Joke” CEOs Do Some Good,” Newsweek, April 18, 2005

21 Lingren, Herbert, Ph.D., *Balance, An Institute Newsletter on Work, Family and Personal Growth*, “Crisis Mode Shrinks Your Heart,” University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources

22 Kouzes, Jim and Posner, Barry, *Leadership the Challenge*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 2002

Wheatley believes the world is already watching this phenomena unfold with the Ukrainian revolution. “Everyday people are where the change is going to occur. The Ukrainian revolution has had an impact in Ecuador, Lebanon and two former Soviet states where the people insisted that they wanted something different. People have unimagined power when they stand up together. If people [in the workplace] stood up and said, ‘No. We can’t do that in two months, we need six months,’ they couldn’t fire all of them. It could lead to a reasonable conversation about how we do our work. People are afraid to say now because they are acting in isolation.”

The current challenge, according to Wheatley, is employee engagement. “We are at a choice point right now. People are feeling restlessness, meaninglessness and shutting down at work. We have the highest levels of worker disengagement in the country’s history right now. People are doing the job, but they are not present nor adding anything — they aren’t creating nor invited to create.”

The future crisis, Schuster and many others believe, will be a shortage of laborers. “Socially and collectively it is the labor shortage that I speculate will occur. And the personal driver is that some people just “get it” and are more motivated to their own personal value system.”

### **The Leadership Role**

Kevin Cashman, founder and CEO of LeaderSource, directs his thoughts specifically to the development of a leader. “Leadership is the developmental movement from self to others. The challenge of leaders is to move from the authentic ‘I’ to the authentic ‘we,’ with results that serve both. With leaders having to serve so many others — teams, organizations, labor organizations, customers, the world, the environment and family — how they juggle all of those in any period of time creates ethical dilemmas. The constant dynamic that presses us to maintain integrity and be there for others is the head/heart connection, which is dynamically playing out all the time.”

And although some change is made due to a gradual shift in consciousness, most progress has been forced through crisis – specifically the events of 9/11 were frequently mentioned as one of the most critical events furthering the exploration of the head/heart connection.

“We noticed a strong individual interest after 9/11, when people said, ‘Hey, we can’t wait for things to change,’” said Cryer. “And executives are more a part of that process now, too. Now there is more evidence that explicitly shows that improving the head/heart connection also improves wellness, stress reduction and positively impacts EI — which also makes a difference on the bottom line.”

“Crisis is usually the condition that causes us to start this (head/heart connection) journey – particularly with the CEO or business owner or the person driving the company,” said Dibble. And the crisis is defined by the mind by fear-based thoughts, beliefs and memories. The more fear-based emotional energy associated with those thoughts, beliefs and memories, the greater

the crisis. However, while not necessary, crisis is a wonderful catalyst for organizational change and transformation at the level of leadership. In fact, the amount of potential change is directly proportional to the amount of emotional energy present. While rapid change can occur in the presence of the emotional energy that comes from love, fear-based emotional energy is the place where the majority of change begins.”

However discouraged and disengaged American workers are, and however busy, distracted, overstressed and scared our business leaders may be, can we afford to push the genie back in the bottle?

Summing up Alan Deutschman’s story on sustainable change in the May 2005 issue of *FastCompany*, Editor-In-Chief John Byrne doesn’t believe we can afford to back in the bottle and not change: “...change is the most important challenge for businesses that are trying to compete in a turbulent world. We can talk forever about strategy, structure, process, and culture. But more than anything, competition is about change — and your company’s ability to stay fresh and vital depends on its ability to change the behavior of people.”

### **Workplace Communication Applications**

According to Cashman, the biggest institution of transformation today is the business organization. “In today’s world, business and organizations, rather than religious institutions are where the real transformation and breakthroughs are happening — it is the institution of transformation.”

As the shift in consciousness continues to move us from focusing on “I” to “we,” here are some suggestions from the experts on how to support and evoke the head/heart connection in the workplace:

- **Focus on the individual.** Neal says that the burden is on the individual within the company, which may not be a bad thing. “Individuals who have a deeper understanding, realize that leadership development is rooted in personal development,” said Neal. “People are saying, let’s have a conversation about what sustains a human being at work, and not impose a culture. It’s not a bad thing that interest in this area is not company-driven anymore – it’s the only way it can be.”
- **Words are energy.** In order to move from a place of fear to a place of love, Dibble suggests that you pull your awareness into the intent of your communication and come from a place of love. “Every word, written or spoken, carries energy,” says Dibble. “Words are tools. They should be used thoughtfully and properly. You can totally transform all of the miscommunication in your email system by choosing the correct words and setting a positive intent. This practice changes everything. So think about what are the words (correct tools) you want to use – are they coming from love or fear. How do you want your words to be received. Do you send your words with the intent that they be received with love. Making this shift will dramatically change your communications for the better.”

- **Host the conversation.** Neal uses the example of how the Values Coordinator Richard Barrett at World Bank started the conversation by hosting brown bag lunches and created a work-in-spirit lunch group to discuss culture change. He holds regular conversations with the employees regarding personal values, how those values work in the workplace, and throughout the company. Gap was trying to demonstrate how a new CEO was accessible, vulnerable and bring those differentiators into the conversation.
- **Tell the truth.** One of the most helpful things is to tell the truth, including acknowledging how hard it [a particular situation] is, said Wheatley. “When you allow people to be in a truthful conversation about what’s real, that is very empowering...then we get creative... that’s when you can fix it...that’s where indomitable spirit lies. That is the paradoxical part of work. You can engage human spirit by not pretending it’s all great. People will rally. The most powerful way to make the connection is to be willing to tell the truth and talk about the darker side, deal with fear and anxiety, fear, betrayal – all the things that leaders avoid for fear of endless grief. Most don’t understand by suppressing the heart, we are suppressing what’s best about humans. Otherwise all you get are robots – angry robots.”
- **Let silence work.** Savage suggests that there isn’t enough silence in the workplace and shared a story about a company she used to work for that had a company policy about not having any meetings from 1:30-2:30 p.m., every day. “There were no meetings, you had to be at your desk doing what you do.” She went on to explain that silence is important in making the head/heart connection because not only do you need to wait for the slower thinkers, we all need to find a deeper part of ourselves where the brain makes a connection to the body and the heart. This does not happen instantaneously, but requires a sort of inner silence – which takes moment to find. “The emphasis on quick communications in meetings, you throw something quick on the flip chart, keeps us all operating from the frontal lobes of our brain. And the head/heart connection is made in the back of the head where there is the deeper connection with the body where deep thinking can occur, which evokes our deep feelings, pondering and thinking. It’s where we can call on the deeper part of ourselves.
- **Utilize the tools of the corporation.** In their book, *The Heart of Change*, John Kotter and Dan Cohen introduce eight steps companies can use to engage an employee’s feelings to create sustainable change: create a sense of urgency; pull together a guiding team; create clear, simple, uplifting messages; communicate the vision through simple, heart-felt messages; empower people; create short-term wins; maintain momentum; make change stick.
- **Focus on listening and dialogue skills.** Savage noted what Peter Senge suggests is needed to unearth mental models in his book, *The 5th Discipline*. “To allow meaning to flow, you need to balance advocacy and inquiring skills,” said Savage. “You can advocate, but in a spirit of inquiry. If you take their words at face value, you only get part of the meaning. But by knowing what you listened for and listening to the whole person, you get more information. And if you silence one voice, the whole will not hold. What allows the center to hold is when everyone is pulling on the rope. When one voice gets louder, then the center collapses. We need all of the voices in order for a real understanding to occur.”

## Coaching Applications

Coaches can be key to seeking, identifying and evoking the head/heart connection. According to Wheatley, coaches are the ones who help leaders find their hearts and spirits, and become spiritual companions who focus their clients by asking the right questions. That means being willing to jump into the difficult and messy struggle between the head and the heart, the ego and the soul. For coaches seeking ways to make the journey, here are some applications:

- **Own your own story.** In her new best-selling book, *My Life So Far*, Jane Fonda provides a candid account of her own journey in finding her power by owning her life story. Mostly focused on issues for women, it involves not giving yourself up, being fully inside of yourself and claiming your own voice. She also encourages men to do the same thing by claiming their hearts. According to Fonda, you can't be creative if you are living in your own head on willpower.
- **Set your intent on sending love.** Send love – energetically speaking – to your clients. This may be too esoteric for some, but Dibble says that he puts love into the words he speaks and puts in writing. The real transformational work is being done energetically at a transformative level, and love is the great accelerator. For example, it's been shown that if we pray for someone who is sick in Australia, who we don't even know, they heal faster. And, if we meditate, especially in large group settings, we can change reality. Oh, and don't forget coaches. Be systems literate. Your clients come to you because they want to change. In order for your clients to change, they will have to shift the existing systems in which they live and work. A great coach must have the skill to make existing systems visible to clients and assist clients in shifting those old systems and agreements to support the new reality.
- **Meet people where they are.** Savage suggests that we engage in too much telling and not enough questioning. "You meet people where they are. When people feel they are being met where they are, their feelings appear. When genuinely asked, 'How are you,' and you show that you really care, and then real feelings will show up. You might even say, 'How do you feel about that?'" And she says that you have to have a culture that allows people to say they don't know without fear of repercussion.
- **Probe for what is imagined.** John Schuster says that in a coaching situation he assumes the head/heart connection is already there. "Coaching wise, I assume it is already there and try to find how much is there, and in what way it is there. If I can't find any, I assume I am not going to have too much success – but that's not always true," said John. "I use the word imagination a lot – the human imagination is where that connection is automatic. So I frequently don't probe for the connection, I just probe for the imagination and bring it in to the coaching process and where they have gotten stuck and it happens naturally."

- **Observe behaviors.** My (very first) client and the client I used for my longitudinal story made an interesting observation about when she knows she has made the connection and when she is traveling solely in her head. “The less I allow myself to think, the more heartfelt [my writing] is. When I am writing from my heart, I write quickly. The thoughts are fully formed, it is conversational — not contrived or wooden — and the internal critic didn’t constantly edit me. As opposed to when I come from my head, my writing is more difficult, there are more pauses (down time between thoughts), and I get wrapped around the axle with syntax — my work lacks flow and the words don’t come like an auto-transmission.”
- **Storytelling and speed traps.** One of the tests I have used in my coaching is the test for speed. My experience is when clients aren’t making the connection, their speech sounds as if they are stuck in fifth gear, barely taking time to breath as they continue running words together to create their stories. I’ve also had the experience where they not only talk really fast, but also at a very high pitch, without imparting much content. So I use a combination of techniques to slow them down, take them back to the original question, and remind me of their goals to snap them out of fifth gear and back into a more mindful presence.
- **Ask the right questions.** In her book *The Right Questions*, author Debbie Ford lists 10 great questions that clients have found helpful:
  - Will this choice bring me long-term fulfillment or will it bring me short-term gratification?
  - Am I standing in my power or am I trying to please another?
  - Am I looking for what’s right or am I looking for what’s wrong?
  - Will this choice add to my life force or will it rob me of my energy?
  - Will I use this situation as a catalyst to grow and evolve or will I use it to beat myself up?
  - Does this choice empower me or does it disempower me?
  - Is this an act of self-love or is it an act of self-sabotage?
  - Is this an act of faith or is it an act of fear?
  - Am I choosing from my divinity or am I choosing from my humanity?

### **What are the Next Steps Needed in the (R)evolution?**

The next steps proposed by the experts are as diverse as their suggestions for how to search for, identify, and evoke the head/heart connection. What they do agree on is that the changes we will see in next 10 years will surpass all of the changes made in past century or two, and that hope in achieving the tipping point lies with the combined forces of the younger generations and a more diverse workforce.

“The Baby Boomers did some good things and made some headway,” said Schuster, “but they also regressed in some ways, too.” Neal takes it further by saying, “As we age, we find our power, and rediscover the values that we came with to the work place and want to leave some kind of legacy. And if we combine [those interests] of the younger generations who aren’t as siloed as the older generations, we will be much more able to integrate their work/life/spirit/ values.”

“The people at the top are really enmeshed in the old paradigm and scared to death,” said Wheatley. “Their fear is leading to more seizing of control, disregarding people and speeding change up. Any revolution will come from everyday people that want something different...that want a workplace that honors living, breathing human beings.”

Having lived through two consecutive incidents with organizations that experienced the head/heart disconnection resulting in significant amounts of negative local and national media, massive downsizing and restructuring, as well as having engaged in the research for this discussion, I am hopeful about U.S. corporations and businesses reaching a tipping point in accessing the head/heart potential--but we have a ways to go. My hope comes from the evidence of a gradual and growing interest in mind-body healing; the public’s increasing dissatisfaction in Western medicine and increasing interest in alternative medicine; the growth in training and use of life/business coaches in the workplace; the large number of aging baby boomers going through their own shifts on their personal journeys; and the younger generation’s desire to give up less of themselves and their lives for their jobs.

And my hope is tempered by several other indicators: no one is doing this really well right now; we lack a common language (even among those involved in implementing the head/heart connection) through which to find a common ground and create critical mass; we are coming out of a very risk averse business climate; and it’s human nature to doubt and fight our own wisdom.

Wherever we are at in achieving a tipping point, I know I won’t be distracted from doing what I can to bring the heart into the workplace. I may not be able to avoid working in situations where the head/heart are disconnected, but I can’t continue to perpetuate what I see as an unproductive, unexamined and imbalanced approach to work life. As I move forward, I feel better prepared to find employers and workplaces that are more in line with my values, to ask questions that will evoke the head/heart knowledge in others, to coach others who are wanting to connect their head/heart, and to provide greater value to myself, my employers and co-workers by accessing the wisdom that comes when the heart and head are connected.

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