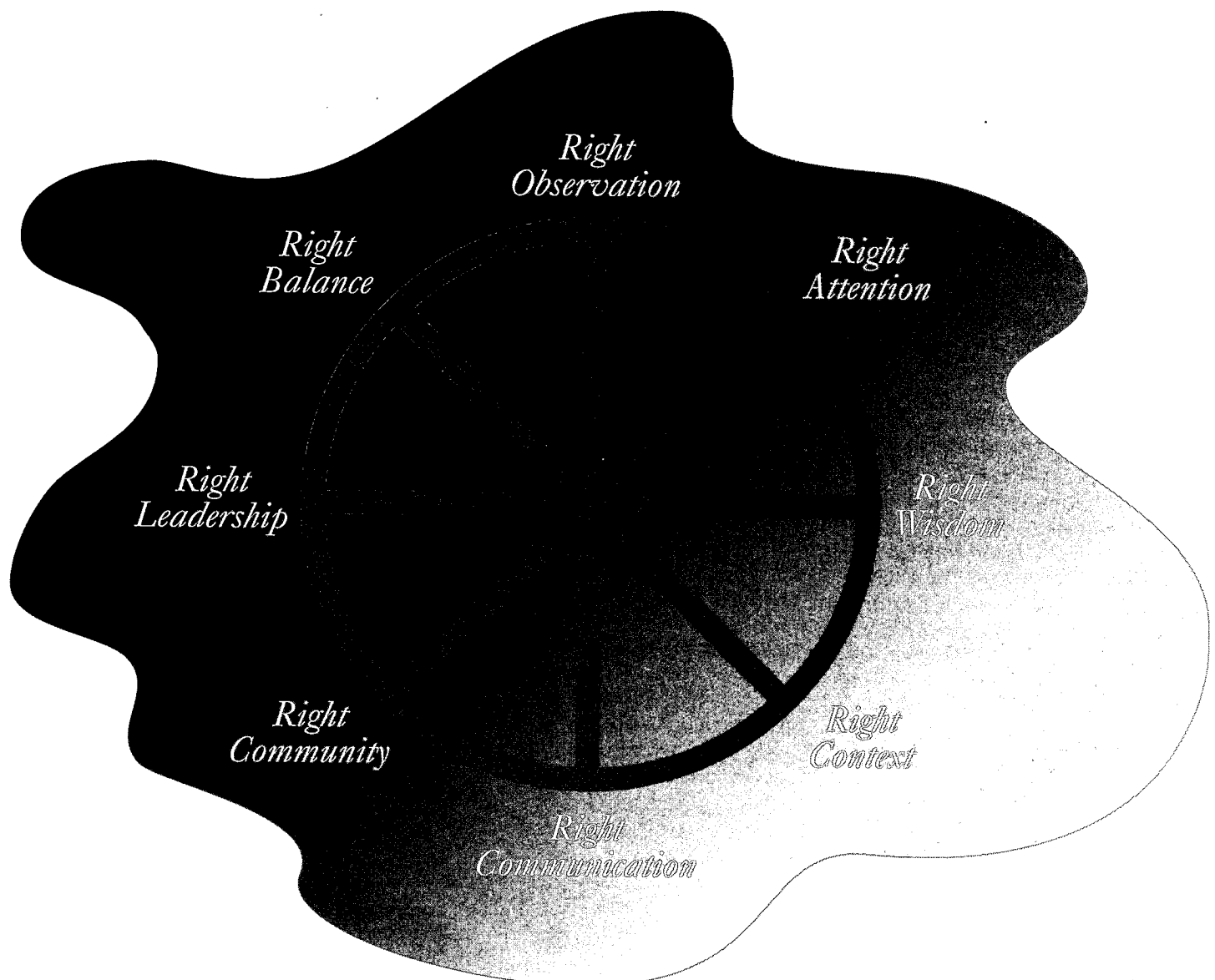


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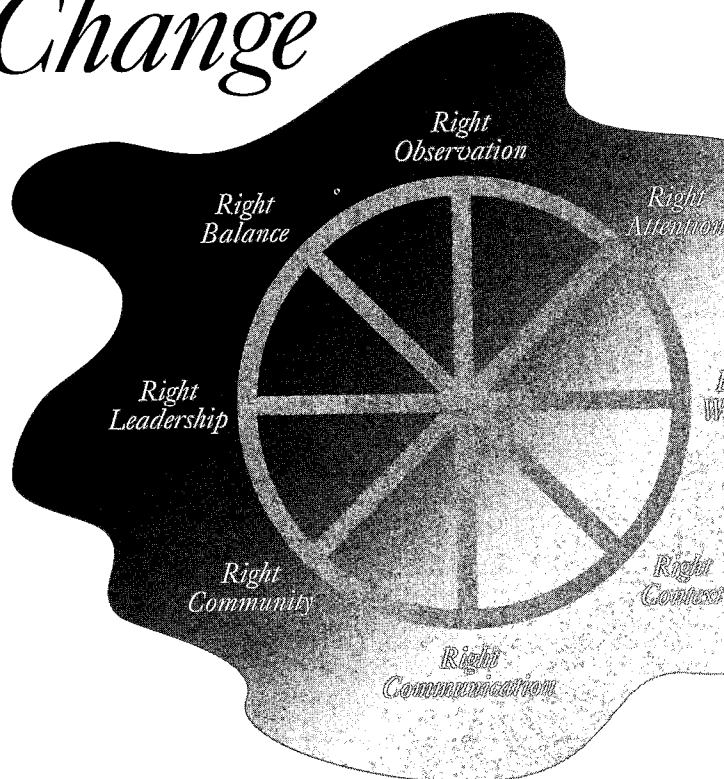
EDGES

N E W P L A N E T A R Y P A T T E R N S

The Wheel of Change



The Wheel of Change



The Wheel of Personal and Organizational Change

*Change is all there is. There isn't something else.
The question is: how am I going to relate to it?*

LARRY WARD

In my work, I use many templates and models from the world's various traditions and cultures. I first came across what the Buddhists call the Eightfold Path when I was working in India in 1977. The Buddha's first sermon, the Four Noble Truths, has always caught my attention: 1) There is suffering or anguish in life. 2) There are causes for this anguish. 3) This anguish can end. 4) There is a path you can practice to end the anguish. So I focused on the Eightfold Path: that's right mindfulness, right view, right speech etc. In the last five years I've been working with Thich Nhat Hanh, the Buddhist master from Viet Nam who lives in southern France. He has re-inspired my appreciation of Buddhist philosophy, psychology and practice. This is not about the religion, because Buddhism is not something to believe, it is something to do—or not do. So, over the last five years, as I've been working with organizations and my own company, I've developed the eightfold path into a template that helps me work with the change process. I don't try to sell this model to a company. I use it to keep me mindful of the journey I am attempting to guide.

My application of the four noble truths to the change process goes like this. The first truth: Change is all there is. A friend of mine just recorded a gospel song called "Everything Must Change"—a beautiful song, in a Jean Harris album. Change is all there is; there is nothing else. Organizations are slowly waking up to the fact that change is not an event. When you try to handle change in an organization as if it were an event, you set yourself up for huge stress, because it doesn't work. Change is a continual process. One of my clients is Hewlett Packard. When I first started working with them six or seven years ago, it took two to three years to move a new product from the idea stage to the shelves of Office Depot. This year that's down to eight months. They keep calling on the telephone, saying, "We are reorganizing again." So I finally said, "Don't you all understand?—That's your business, your business is reorganization, because if you don't do it well, nothing else works." So it is important to help organizations understand that first truth. Without change, nothing's possible. Seeds don't turn into flowers without change. Children don't grow up. In

many organizations, change is viewed as the enemy, when, in fact, it is the source of life itself. That's the first premise of the Wheel of Change.

The second truth: It's possible to manage change well. It's possible not to be a victim, not to lose yourself in the process of change; it's possible to go through change with excitement, vitality, ease and power.

The third truth: It is also possible to manage change poorly. There is a strong tendency in organizations to react to change and to be cynical about what can happen. There are reasons why people manage change poorly; it's not a big mystery. I was at a conference in San Diego two years ago with three hundred general managers of Hewlett Packard, including their executive team and Bill Gates. It just so happened that I was in the elevator when Bill Gates got in. He saw my name tag, and said, "Heard about what you're doing in my organization. If you had one word for me, what would it be?" And I said, "STOP." (He asked for it.) The elevator door opened and I got out.

A major cause of poorly managed change is the inability to stop. In our hyper, nano-second measured world, the demands of stockholders and the expectations of Wall Street and our quarterly reports literally drive us like cattle. If you're in a non-profit organization, it's even worse—you don't need shareholders to drive you like cattle. Yet, the ability to stop gives you the capacity to stand at attention to what's happening. You cannot manage change well if you don't know what change is taking place. The manager of an international construction company and I interviewed people in his organization. As I was talking to a manager in the finance department, I could see he was really nervous about change. I said, "There's no reason to be nervous about change, because it's happening. It's not about a program. Change is an indicative: it's just there. The question is, how am I going to relate to what's there?"

The fourth truth is that there is a path that can help manage change, which brings me to the wheel. I refer to it as the wheel of personal and organizational change. It is one of the templates I use to relate to change. I'll walk around the wheel, and say a few words about each of the spokes.

1. Right Observation

To me managing change begins with right observation, which involves stopping. Think of Margaret Mead's ability to go into a village, pull up a chair, sit, observe and note what she sees. That's the first spoke. It refers to the kind of observation that helps you manage change well.

2. Right Attention

The second spoke is right attention, or right focus. I like to ask executives two things: On one side of the room I put up their goals and priorities, and on the other, where they have actually been spending their time. The gap that appears between where our energy is actually going and where we intended it to go is vast. I also do this ritual on myself. Every day I ask myself, based on my vision of my organization, Where, today, did I touch my vision? What action kept my vision alive? This is right attention: focusing energy where it matters. You know the difference between urgency and importance (a la Stephen Covey). The capacity to focus on what is important, rather than what is urgent, is right attention.

3. Right Wisdom

The third spoke is right wisdom, which in this context means insight. When I meet with an organization, I'm looking for something to happen—not to the organization but to me; because if nothing happens to me, I'm the same person I was yesterday, which means I'll see the same thing I saw yesterday. So, as I work I look for an insight, an aha!, a fresh perspective—some inspiration from my encounter and interaction with them. I'm looking for an insight in myself that I can then carry through the organization in its process of change and transformation. So I try to stay open, while always having a plan—some people would say I have too much of a plan. However, I worry about my plan less and less—I prepare it and then leave it in my briefcase. From doing the preparation, something happens. That flows from the interaction between people, the wisdom that comes from listening, and my own readiness to experience transformation.

With some clients, I use a particular practice. I arrive early and spend five minutes walking through the facility. It's amazing what wisdom can emerge when

The (original) Buddhist Eightfold Path

*Right attention is
right observation*

*Right wisdom is
right view*

*Right context is
right thinking*

*Right communication
is right speech.*

*Right community is
right livelihood
(no perfect livelihood)*

*Right leadership is
right action.*

*Right balance is
right energy.*

you do this. I took the entire management team of a medical company on a walk through their organization—in silence. When we returned, we wrote down what we had noticed. Now this organization made medical equipment—instruments you see in doctor's offices, surgeries and hospitals. There was not a single picture of a human being on the wall. Not one. The only thing on the wall was metal equipment. Today they have art throughout the facility with testimonials from patients and customers, and thank-yous from those who underwent successful surgery and thanked the company for the quality of their products and services. Now, when employees at that company come to work, they are connected to the way users and patients experience the technology they create, and they are proud to contribute in that way to people's lives. We noticed other things on our walk through the organization. Now, that company is so different! There is energy, excitement, pride, and a heart connection. My insight in walking through there was that the staff had lost the heart connection to their product.

So for each spoke of the wheel, I develop practices for myself like this, and experiment with them in different ways to create opportunities for wisdom to occur. My story is just one example. There are a hundred ways and more to create opportunities for wisdom to occur.

4. Right Context

Right context is creating a story that makes sense out of the change through which the organization is moving. Most organizations create very poor contexts. If there were Academy Awards for doing really dumb things, they would be awarded in this arena. When I hear a poor context, I just say to the CEO: "You know, if I were a shareholder in this company, I'd want to make some big changes. A CEO will get up in front of 5000 people and say, 'This company is going through changes: we're going to move to Pville, and a bunch of you will be let go—Sorry about this.' How stupid can you get! If he is going to give a context that will open up the future rather than close it down, he has to do a whole bunch of things in that context. First he has to connect this move to the past of the organization; then he has to connect it to the energy and insight of the founder(s) of the company; he must also

connect the move to the quality and values and the vision that got this place started. Then he needs to describe what's happening now, what's changing in the market place and what's going on in history that requires this change. Then he has to paint a vivid picture of the destiny beckoning to the people of the company. He has to put all that in a speech, and give it to people. He just can't say, "Sorry, folks—we're moving to Pville."

What astounds me is the millions and millions of dollars at stake, yet nobody knows what's happening. If it were my money, there would be an absolute zinger of a context, because the poorer the context, the longer it takes for people to internalize the change. Poorly internalized change carries with it a host of consequences: productivity decreases, stress increases, commitment fades, absenteeism and job quests increase because of the fog about what's happening. The absence of a compelling story about what's happening does not call people into the future. It scares me. So, we spend major time working with executives and leadership teams on creating exciting contexts that capture the hearts and minds of not just employees, but the entire value chain of the organization.

I was working with a software business that was introducing an exciting new change. They were planning the best way to get their employees on board. So I said, "What about the people who supply stuff to you?" (That's where they make their money). "How about your suppliers?" And they went, "O-o-o-oh, we forgot all about them." So the context is not merely for the people who are right there. The context has to go through the entire value chain, because you're asking that entire chain to change. Your customers, too. You have to educate your customers to the change, or else they will hold you back, not because they're bad, but because it's natural. They want you to do what you did before, not necessarily what you're going to do next. And so it's important to create a context that bridges a service you previously provided with what you're providing now and where you're going into the future.

Last week I had the opportunity to do such a context with a client of three years, Albertson's, the grocery chain headquartered in Boise, Idaho. My com-

pany, the Ward Group, is positioning itself to move into informational education products in the next year, so I spoke with the person in charge of education for the company which we coach. Now, they want us to help them build a corporate university for their organization. I was saying, "Well, you see, the Ward Group is only now getting into the business of producing tapes. We can have one tape for you by the end of the month." Then I referred to the shift we're making into building intellectual property with products. So this person said, "Well, I think we shouldn't just have one tape. We should have eight. Then why don't we have an eight-year series of this material; then when we get our Internet system really moving, could you guys be our content providers? Then could you train people in our organizations to be teachers?" I said, "Sure." All of which goes to demonstrate that, if you educate the client on the change you're about to make in a way that makes sense, people will go with you. Not only go with you; you can't tell them this, but they will capitalize your transformation. So I'm using my clients to capitalize the evolution of the business, which they are happy to do—because of right context. We can all remember experiences where the right context was not created and shared in an honourable way, and people's commitment and energy suffered.

5. Right Communication

This one is truly amazing. There is a Martin Buber quote about right communication: Not saying what I mean, and not meaning what I say are the two fundamental problems in the world. In every organization we go into, one of the key issues is always communication. We were called into a company where a new manager had taken over the manufacturing business. They were planning to build a plant in Singapore. He had told all the 2000 workers in the company about this. He spoke of the new plant to be opened in Singapore because they needed the capacity, etc. The hell that broke loose in that company because of poor communication was a sight to behold. So we led them through a process—a practice—that you can do with yourself or with a team after the fact. It has four parts:

- What did we say?
- What did people hear? (Here is another

place the Grand Canyon lives: what you say and what people hear are never the same. That's OK, but you have to close the loop. Then you have to ask:

- What did we intend to say that got missed or misinterpreted or confused?
- How do we close that gap?

So we led them through that process; then they went back out to all their factories and asked people in small groups what they had heard. And what they had heard is not what the team intended to say. People heard that they were losing their jobs, but that's not what was said. Today, in that company, everything is realigned and communication is much clearer; people thought they were losing their jobs, but actually things are expanding. They were able to work through the practice of right communication. And that's just one model for doing it. These are practices you can use to enhance people's ability to communicate. You can have a bank of ideas around this whole spoke.

Our work with organizations always begins with a listening campaign, no matter what we've been asked to do. We literally sit and listen to people. That's all. No agenda, nothing to prove. We ask people some simple questions, besides

the introductory stuff of who are you and where do you work. Ahead of time, we tell people they are going to be interviewed and why. The first thing the head of a construction company told us is that they had spent two million dollars the previous year on consultants, with absolutely nothing to show for it. I was sitting there, thinking what! I could have figured that out for two mill! After the introduction stuff, we asked people four questions—in the context of confidentiality. (We do not attach names to information in organizations—that's the key to the listening campaign. We are known for not doing that.) So we ask questions like these to the team members, who are half engineers, and half accountants:

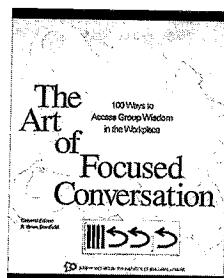
- What's working well in this project with this team?
- What's not working well?
- What suggestions or ideas do you have to improve the situation?
- In the meeting we are going to have together to work with your team, what happening would have value for you?
- What discussions might we need? What product could we create together?

These questions help get their suggestions into our agenda.

After the first day's interviews, we think 've got the answer—but we always do the second day to hear from the other people. You're always having the Hindu experience of the elephant and the blind man. So, until you talk to enough people, you've just got a foot in the ear! If you designed what you're going to do on a foot in the ear, you have a problem coming. So listen to enough people. So now we know exactly what we have to do to help that team increase its performance to its next level. And they understand that we heard that. This is modelling to the organization how it needs to communicate with itself. And so we encourage people to go on listening campaigns in their own organization.

6. Right Community

Right community is about teamwork and leadership in the sense of the team as leader. Community is the ground out of which leadership grows. It's vital to create a sense of "we're all in this together". I've translated another practice of Thich Nhat Hanh into the language of organizations—beginning anew. It's something that can be done monthly. The basic question is, What happened to



The Art of Focused Conversation

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General Editor: R. BRIAN STANFIELD

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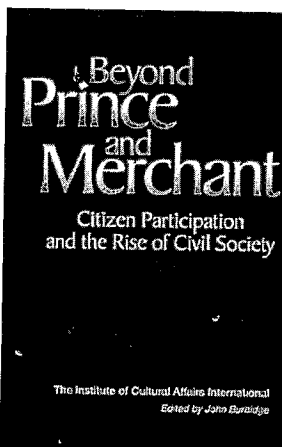
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our team in the last month? What did we achieve? What didn't we achieve? Where did we feel we were wonderful? Where were we disappointed? Where did I feel undervalued as a team member? This is about truth-telling, and it's important to create a safe space where it can happen. I like to use two rules or skills here: one is the capacity to apologize, so the questions are asked, "Does anyone need an apology, or feel like they need an apology? Anybody feel like they need to give an apology?" You've got to work this through in the team, otherwise people carry this stuff around with them and it masks their creative possibility. How do you unload that, honour what happened, rebuild our connections with each other, and begin again? Many of us have experienced other ritual forms of this in other parts of our lives. How do we confess? How do we praise? How do we celebrate? How do we intercede with each other? And how do we dedicate ourselves to what we intend to do next?

This can only happen when you create a safe space for the people on the team. There are many ways you can design the process. In some cases, it starts to happen, but can easily veer away, unless you manage it to make sure the circle gets closed. You can't be in a hurry. You cannot open this door if there's not time to process what comes out. We've seen situations where that's happened, and someone has to clean up the mess, like after the circus—clean up behind the elephant. You have to have enough time to do honourable closure.

Another tool is related to the ability to say "thank you". We ask people who work together to write "thank-you"s to each other together once a week, so that people practice gratitude which builds community. Simple. We've had people in corporations write letters to each other. What happens when someone reads a letter about how someone appreciated their mentorship, their support on a project. They're transformed. You can take the trust that's created in that environment a very long way.

7. Right Leadership

I believe right leadership grows out of community. One of the many practices I like to use for leadership is related to risk. I use this tool for myself. Once a month I ask myself what risk I have taken in the last month. What physical

*A facilitator is someone
who went to the gates
of heaven and got in,
but decided to come back
for everybody else.*

risk have I taken? intellectual risk? emotional risk? spiritual risk? I notice that I have patterns even in risking: I get comfortable in one area of risk and tend to ignore other areas. Leadership is really about the ability to risk. I figure out where I've got comfortable, and then I figure out some place in the next month where I can scare myself a little—just a little—so that I'm alive, not on automatic pilot. Right leadership is not going through the motions. Right leadership is being really present. It is our presence that makes change possible.

All kinds of changes happen in the organizations where you and I work and nobody exactly knows how. And it really doesn't matter. We get phone calls saying, "Can you all come out here?" And we say, "For what?" They say, "We don't care! Just show up! Because great stuff happens when you show up!" When right leadership shows up in an organization, people experience a rebirth of their courage and the organization's ability to risk and to be transformed. There is a sense of stability, a sense of freedom. If this kind of leadership is not present in an organization, there is either stability without freedom, or freedom without stability. And the same thing is true for me as an individual. Try that risk exercise with yourself—you'll be surprised.

So, what are some examples of risk? Intellectual risk: I read outside of my comfort zone, so I always have at least one book that I really have to work at to understand, to stretch myself intellectually, so those brain cells get fed. Right now I'm reading this great book about Einstein's life and time, physics, relativity, speed of light, and I go Whoooooah! But I'm hanging in there; it's working on me and I'm working with it.

Emotional risk: I recently took an emotional risk with my father. My moth-

er died five years ago and as a widower my father became really mean. So I took the emotional risk of going to see him. He would not let me in the house. Then I sent him flowers every month. Six months later I went back, and he let me in, with tears in his eyes. Emotional risk.

Spiritual risk: I do talk about spiritual risk in corporations. This is a matter of daring to ask the brave questions about life: who am I? And what am I going to do with my life?—familiar questions.

Physical risk: I've started to work out with a trainer—and she has no mercy.

Staying really alive is the key to leadership. People will follow energy. A great example of this is Hitler: the quality of the energy is secondary. The one time I had a chance to meet Martin Luther King, he said, "It's more important to move with your energy than it is to be perfect." Right leadership. Everything will work out if the energy is moving. And nothing will work if it's not.

8. Right Balance

This is related to the practice of retreat, of taking time out. When I moved from Miami to Hong Kong, I didn't have any tennis shoes or swimming trunks. Fun stuff! Fun for me is a practice. Have fun! I was so serious I was scaring myself. Right balance is about having a whole life, and not part of a life. It's never part of me that shows up in a situation. It's my whole life and the quality of it that impacts my clients. If I'm tired, dead and angry, that's what my clients experience, not to mention my wife, or the neighbours that live close by. Take a vacation, even if it's not your propensity. Somebody said to me once, "You know if everything we are now working on was all completed perfectly, and the world came to an end, and we were all born again, we'd have to start again. So, lighten up. Change is all there is. There's no end to this thing. There's nothing to fix. Everything's fine." That's right energy.

Maybe for you it's the practice of journal writing. Figure out the ways that work for you. I try to spend about sixty days a year in retreat. All my clients know I go on these retreats, and they're totally fascinated—with a dash of fear. So, take time out to take care of yourself—spiritually, physically, emotionally, and mentally. The energy you need will be there for you to manifest what you need to manifest, and transform what you

need to transform. And more importantly, for other people.

A facilitator is someone who went to the gates of heaven and got in, but decided to come back for everybody else. The facilitator is not desperate or confused, but fully present. That's the template I use. And I check myself out when I walk in and out of my clients. Where might they need help around this wheel? Where might there be suffering going on in the organization connected to this? And where do I need help-and I've discovered that I always need help. And so do they-and that's fine.

My framework for the Wheel of Change is not a particular method; it's more like a template, a coat hanger on which I can hang practices that I learn about these dimensions. This assumes in an organization that you know what you're doing with your finances. It works at another level, not necessarily structural. It's about the consciousness we bring to the process of change. ♦

Larry Ward has been a facilitator, trainer, consultant and guide for some 30 years. At present, he is director of the Ward Group, headquartered in Boise, Idaho.

International Association of Facilitators

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Saskatchewan ICA Facilitation Guild Update

JIM ROSCOE

Saskatchewan ICA Guild membership is in excess of forty members. We meet monthly, discussing topics such as the Future Search Conference, Mapping Organizational Maturity, Values-Centred Leadership, and Open Space Technology. At our April meeting, thirteen Guild members and ICA trainer Bill Staples met at Saint Michael's Retreat in Lumsden on the topic, "Energize Your Facilitation Skills". We started our event (Friday evening) exploring ice breakers and energizers. Everyone developed comfort and ease allowing the following sessions to be deeper and more meaningful. Out of the varied members' experiences we developed a "rainbow." We were asked to think of one event we had facilitated and answer four questions about it. The four questions were: What was the stated intent of the event? What was the unstated intent of the event? What actually happened? Each question was answered on a different colour card. The cards were posted to form an arc, with each colour a continuous band within the new rainbow. We found this process very profound and a thought provoking way to review the depth of experience in the room.

Then the group reflected on what stopped members from achieving success in their facilitation events. Using visualization along with objective, reflective, and interpretive questions, participants provided a great variety of blocks to success which were grouped into five main obstacles. Groups then worked on methods to overcome these blocks. The variety of experience was again displayed as the different groups creatively presented their solutions. A mind map was used to discuss facilitator preparation, a checklist for facility preparation, a diagram illustrated the "Ideal Facilitator" and a large group experience gave everyone a chance to express themselves. I found Bill Staples' reference to facilitators as "People of the Question" highly moving.

This led into our closing session, when each one wrote a single word on a

piece of paper and placed it in a bag. On the second pass around the circle, we each picked a word from the bag. We promised to keep mum about the word till the next day, and to use this word to reflect on our weekend experience.

Then, on June 17, nineteen members gathered for another meeting. Jo Nelson, in town to facilitate the Prairie Region Associate Facilitator Intensive, led a conversation on gaining consensus within the program room. Then the members picked up the up-front role and we did a workshop that generated themes for our monthly program meetings. The group named the following main themes of interest:

- Dealing with Conflict
- Practice Methods and Receive Constructive Feedback
- Thinking Through Processes Clearly
- Effective Processes (Our Stories)
- Personal Facilitation Experiences
- Creating Environments that Support Action
- Facilitator Development

Based on this framework, a focus group gathered to discuss scheduling issues. The Guild plans to meet either the third Tuesday, or the third Saturday of each month. Initial topics for this year are:

- 19 September: Designing Facilitated Events
- 20 October: "Know Me" Game—team formation based on trust-building, disclosure and feedback processes
- November: Saturday meeting in conjunction with ICA Training in Saskatchewan
- April 1999: Saturday meeting in conjunction with ICA Training in Saskatchewan
- January, February, March, June 1999: TBA
- June 1999: Strategic Planning session for the following year

For more information on the Guild and its activities, please contact Erwin Allerdings at 306-780-5094 (PFRA, Regina) or Sharon Miller at 306-373-8908 (Turning Point Consultants, Saskatoon, weekends). ♦

For ICA members

International Association of Facilitators

For several years the International Association of Facilitators has convened major annual conferences tailor-made for facilitators in Dallas, Tulsa, Santa Clara and, in January 1999, in Williamsburg, Virginia. Participants return home with dozens of practical ideas on how to improve their own workshops, client interventions and facilitation methods. ICA Canada has been invited to host the IAF Conference in April 2000 in Toronto. We are actively looking for volunteers, task force leaders and co-

sponsors to help with the task. On October 17, 1998, we are inviting as many people as possible to help design this IAF 2000 conference in Toronto.

If you are interested in helping to design the conference, work as a task force leader or co-host the event, please contact us. Let us know if you are planning to attend. There will be no charge.

For information, please contact us:
Toll free outside of Toronto: 1-877-691-1ICA (1-877-691-1422)

In Toronto: (416)691-2316

The Art of Focused Conversation

This book, published by ICA Canada in December 1997 has sold like hot cakes and is now in its second printing. Plans are underway by ICA colleagues in other

nations to translate it into Spanish. ICA Japan is interested in having it translated into Japanese.

Another New Book in the Making

ICA Canada is writing a second book about the underlying philosophy behind ICA's methods. This book has been commissioned by the Board of ICA Canada. A group with representatives of Board and staff met throughout 1997 to "get a fix"

on the book. In 1998, a Board/staff group has been meeting every Monday morning brainstorming material for the book. We now have a chapter design, and writing has commenced. A first draft will be ready by the end of 1998. ♦

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