



INTRODUCTION

RETURNING TO COMMON SENSE

The Map vs. The Road

**“What is common sense is not
always common practice.”**

-- Stephen Covey

Many years ago, as the sun dawned over Organ Pipe National Monument in southern Arizona, my college professor turned to me and a group of fellow students and presented a challenge: “You are to travel from this Visitors Center to the campsite on the other end of the park in one day. There will be no trails to guide you. I’ll be waiting for you at the campsite.”

At the time, we were participating in an off-campus college study program on the deserts and natural history of the Southwest. We had hiked, camped, and studied the flora and fauna. Now, for our midterm exams, we were being tested on our ability to work together as a team by traveling via map and compass through the desert. We loaded our backpacks and moved out.

By mid-morning, our line leaders were arguing about our location. We all pulled out our maps and began to look for familiar landmarks. After considerable disagreement, we got out our compasses and attempted to orient the maps. Upon lining up true north with the correct markings on the map, we realized we were completely lost.

One member of the group argued that since we had learned our compass skills in Indiana, we should modify them for Arizona. His argument was that the compass reading should be adjusted since we were at a different geographical location. This seemed reasonable. So, after adjusting our compasses for

potential changes in longitude and latitude, we all agreed on our location and set out once again.

It was a long march. The sun moved across the sky as we hiked, and as it slowly set, we still had not arrived at the designated campsite. Finally, we came to a gravel road and decided to set up camp. By then, the group was despondent and upset. Not only were we lost, but we had failed our mid-term exam.

My hiking partner and I decided to walk along the road to see where it led. After 20 minutes, we found a sign that read: "Visitors Center - 1 mile." We had hiked all day in a 15-mile circle, arriving one mile from where we started!

The next day we tried again -- this time with better results -- and arrived at the designated location in time for a much welcomed hot dinner. After the meal, our professor gathered us together and reviewed what happened.

"Common sense needs to guide your actions," he admonished us. "The Visitors Center is in the east and this campsite is in the west. All you had to do was follow the sun across the sky! A good hiker never argues with his compass." Each of us learned an important lesson that day.

During times of change, many of us feel lost or unsure. We may struggle at times with issues of self-confidence. Challenges or poor communication in the workplace can wear us down. We forget that true change requires us to step outside of our "comfort zone" and into our "challenge zone."

When we try to impose control and order, we often sacrifice trust, clarity, and courage. We forget that the map can only describe the territory -- and only certain aspects of it at best. It is the compass that sets the course. We need to return to the compass, and to common sense.

Common sense tells us that people are our most important resource, and yet, in too many businesses this is far from the norm. To return to common sense, we need to explore a

few aspects of human nature.

First: People do care. Unfortunately, all too often people's capacity to care is buried under layers of cynicism resulting from negative experiences with work or life. But this doesn't change the reality that fundamental to human nature is the capacity to care, and to care deeply. The desire for our lives to make a difference is intrinsic.

Second: People want to engage in meaningful work. Yet, some are taught at an early age that it isn't wise to dream big, and many end up selling themselves short. We all need to meet financial commitments and to create a life for ourselves and our families. But ultimately, people prefer work that is meaningful and compatible with their talents, personalities, and values.

Being a cog in a wheel is a waste of human potential. Each of us has interests, dreams, and desires that are as varied as the colors of the spectrum. But issues of *meaning* matter, and a smart executive -- whatever the size or scope of the organization -- knows this, and sets his or her course accordingly.

Third: People need community. We have a fundamental human need for integration, for pleasure, for accomplishment, for meaning, and for contributing outside the realm of mere self-interest. And we need the support of others.

Every person needs to know there is someone who can offer support -- and more importantly, who will take the time to listen -- when they fail, when illness strikes, or when a child is struggling. We need community within which to share, to tell our stories, and to test our dreams. Even dyed-in-the-wool introverts appreciate the value of a few good friends!

Fourth: It is fundamental to human nature to learn throughout the life-cycle. We exercise this capacity every day. No matter what our educational background, or our intellectual or developmental capacity, we learn every day in formal and informal contexts.

In short, it is people who are our primary resource during change, and successful individuals and companies understand this. Taking time to understand the marketplace, the customer, the rules and regulations, and the competition is critically important, of course, but not at the expense of the fundamentals.

People run the world, including people in positions of greater and lesser power, and people from various backgrounds and experiences. People bring the sum total of who they are to their work -- their experience, their creativity and ideas, and their tapped and untapped potential. In strong companies, this is recognized; these resources are brought to the forefront in ways that make the organization a stronger whole.

When we look more deeply into organizational change, we recognize that work is at the heart of business and life insofar as it represents not only the investment of a great deal of time and energy, but also the opportunities for many people to give, to serve, and to make a difference -- whatever form that work may take.

In the end, our commitments are inevitably worked out in human terms. Our decisions and responses affect human lives either positively or negatively, regardless of what field we work in. At the same time, of course, we must be fiscally responsible. For-profits need to make a profit to survive! However, it is all too common for that profit to come with unacknowledged *hidden costs* that at times run deep within the organizational culture. The root of many problems in change, in fact, is the lack of awareness of the human element, the lack of the creation and ownership of both outcome and process, and the inability of individuals to function authentically and creatively within the workplace.

Today, global competition and the ongoing need for innovative products, services, and systems are revolutionizing the

ways we do business. And while these forces provide us with a wealth of challenges and tremendous opportunities, those eager to capitalize on these challenges and opportunities must move at an increasingly accelerated pace.

Clearly, these pressures demand a kind of leadership that is different from previous ways of thinking, acting, and managing. With men and women in business seeking to achieve first-class results while maintaining profitability and competitiveness, top-level executives are learning that they personally cannot provide all of the answers. Instead, the organization needs the creative contribution of each and every person.

During this time of fundamental reshaping, many executives are seeking new tools and perspectives on how to plan and manage change effectively. They realize they must clarify their organization's vision and transform this vision into reality. And significant choices must be made in order to succeed.

Success, however, has no definitive formula. The ultimate viability of the organization, as represented by its ability to effectively serve a particular clientele, is worked out gradually over time -- indeed, on a daily basis -- within the context of the environment within which it serves, as well as within the context of the organization's strategy, goals, culture, systems, and structure. In order to grow and expand, an organization's potential for greater service requires focus, patience, and persistence. Clearly, to be successful an integrated approach to strategic change and leadership is needed.

The **From Vision to Action Booklet Series** offers this integrated approach through unique perspectives, stories, and insights. In each booklet, I share ideas and concepts that nourish effective leadership, sustainable growth, and productive change. These concepts are not only applicable in our work lives; they also can be applied to our personal lives. They are the bedrock of effective change, effective leadership, and ef-

fective living. They are a resource for leaders at all levels of the organization.

In this particular booklet, *Planning For Change*, we will explore four components of successful organizational change:

The **first** is how to prepare for change on the personal level. The **second** is how to build strategic ownership, clarity, and understanding plus the strategic plan. The **third** is how to roll out the new strategic plan to the entire organization. The **fourth** is how to transform the strategic plan into a one-year plan.

In the subsequent **From Vision to Action** booklets, namely, *Developing a New Organizational Culture*, *Turning Challenges into Achievement*, and *Working Through the Trough of Chaos*, we will explore other steps, including how to execute the one-year plan and how to hold regular strategic reviews.

In short, we will unfold the map, consult the compass, and exercise common sense in the interest of personal, professional, and organizational growth.

I invite you to join me as we transform vision into action.

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Author's Note

Details within each story have been changed to shield the identities of both people and organizations. What matters most is the lessons learned from the experiences.