Thriving – The "All in" Mindset . . . First Comes the Test, and Then Comes the Lesson
— James Hart and Paul Nakai

> It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.
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> — Theodore Roosevelt

I (Nakai) was getting ready to work with the CEO and the executive team of a global service organization. Other than the unique crucible issues that this executive team was looking

to resolve, the upcoming two-day process was promising to be very similar to the many other executive team processes that I've facilitated over the past 35 years.

This client was far from "broken" or in need of a major overhaul. Over the past ten years, this visionary CEO and his team had an enviable record of growth and profitability. They had created a reputation for cutting edge thinking and doing so with the highest of integrity. A few of their executives were recruited away to bring the same leadership qualities to other companies or left to start their own firms as respected contributors to their communities.

However, looking into the future, this CEO anticipated retiring in a few years. His concern was that much of the organization's success was being attributed to his leadership abilities, his character and his foresight. Although reassuring, this reputation concerned him as he did not want it to lead to the organization's obsolescence . . . much less its failure. He wanted to avoid the malaise that comes from the "hero's farewell" of the belief that when he left the top operational role, he would take the "magic" with him.

Based on considerable pre-work with the executive team, I was planning my consulting agenda and preparing my slides to illustrate the points I wanted to make. I would introduce concepts such as passing the leadership baton, redefining the organization and its values, heightened accountability, using deep-seated change as a springboard, raising teamwork and coaching to a more profound and authentic level . . . and then I would assist the participants in applying their lessons to

resolving their situation. We would explore the transformation of their leadership team and aligning behind an even more compelling statement of purpose and core values.

However, early on the first day, I realized that this executive get-together was going to be very different from what I've experienced before.

Within short order, I noticed that with little to no prompting or facilitating, the team launched into enthusiastic discussions about the principles and concepts presented. They were extrapolating the discussions beyond the present moment to include other facets of organizational leadership and coaching. They were consistently updating, clarifying and resolving their crucible issues. There were no by-standers and every conversation was punctuated by everyone's assurance that they were "all-in" and how that manifests itself.

Over the course of their conversations, they displayed authentic personal disclosure, questioning and exploring individual strengths and challenges. They kept the discussion going beyond the superficial comments as they openly discussed their purpose and the desired positive impact on their people and in the world in general. Their discussions usually ran 2 hours at a time but the time went by ever so quickly. They journaled their thoughts and insights in the moment and when the conversation became labored, they put the topic in a "parking lot" to be discussed later. They requested support and input from each other and openly declared their intentions going forward. It was as though they were each a facilitator to each other and a student of each other.

At the end of the session, although I did not know exactly what enabled their active dialogue to be so successful, my ego initially took credit for the results. Yes, I didn't find the need to speak for more than an hour or so over the course of the two day get together. I was certain that my prior conversations with the team and the written executive summary of my observations led to empowering the team to make the most of their time together.

However, it wasn't until the following week that I realized that, with one exception (the CEO), my efforts had little to do with the actual interactions during the process. I discovered that the conversations and discoveries that I've just shared with you were the result of the mindful insightfulness of the CEO.

The CEO and I had discussed a number of topics beforehand. I shared with him an intriguing series of research findings that we had been exploring over the past ten years.

One set of findings was of especial interest to him. It has come to be known as the "Principles of Thriving".

Not only were these principles identified, but they were further corroborated by in-the-field performance, both by individuals as well as by the collective performance of organizations. In every case, we discovered that there were three distinct principles that contributed to sustained high performance, well-being and fulfillment. There may be more than three, but these three were always present.

In addition, we discovered that these principles were optimally effective when they became integrated and internalized into how individuals observed the world around

them and how they responded to what they "saw". We called this state of "being" as their **"mindset"** or **level of consciousness**.

The three mindsets we discuss are:

- The Purpose Mindset: Seeing life as opportunities for meaningful action and as opportunities to contribute for the good and well-being of humanity, innate conscience and spirit
- The Vitality Mindset: Seeing everything and everyone as having an individual "voice" as well as being inter-connected, accessing our energy potential, resilience and restoration, forgiveness and fresh start
- The Growth Mindset: Everything man-made can be improved upon, open to explore, learn, change and innovate. Knowing what to change and what to keep fixed. At its core, this mindset is the heart of agility and adaptability

The CEO shared with me that upon reflection, he became clear that we needed to awaken the "mindset" in his leaders that would enable them to consistently create value and results for themselves and for those whom they lead. He felt that focusing on behaviors and traits would only go so far. He wanted their journey to be one of an accountable "mindset" regardless of the situation or the challenges that they faced . . . or who was present or absent. He also felt that "accountability" was an "inside-to-outside" stance that one assumed. By this, he meant that accountability was not driven by external circumstances, i.e., blame, intimidation, compensation or

popularity. He wanted to minimize, if not eliminate, their placing any conditionality on their ability to achieve what was needed to insure the growth and wellbeing of the firm. In essence, he wanted the team to completely "own" the progress of the company and to embody the unconditional success of the firm. This was how he interpreted "all-in".

As competent and inspired as his team was, the degree of non-contingent success that he was referring to could potentially be a tall order. He acknowledged that when he first stepped into the organization's top position, he did not have the full conviction to do what he needed to do to grow and strengthen the company. He felt that hard work and surrounding himself with talent would carry the day.

But he had learned and internalized this "all-in" mindset over the course of his tenure at the helm of the company. As he shared with me,

> I was fortunate to find out in time that there were no legitimate excuses for final failure . . . nothing other than not being able to find the solution. If that were the case, you would need to be open to exploring solutions that you might not consider. You would have interim failures and successes along the way . . . but, in the final analysis you had to keep believing, changing and trying new ideas. It did not really matter what the Board allowed or disallowed . . . what was happening in the economy . . . finding unethical or immoral leaders among your ranks . . . driving inaccurate strategies . . . devious or competent competition, etc.

He went on to say,

> There are so many variables that I can't control or even influence that could impact our existence. But that's not the issue. The issue is how I can react to these events. I need to be more committed to our success than these forces are committed to our failure.

Am I inspired by "why" I do what I do? Am I open to discover and change with different paradigms of performance? Do I have the vitality and relationships to be resilient?

It may be too absolute a statement for people to hear but he felt that if the purpose is a worthy one, "all-in" is an appropriate stance for the senior managers to take. We are not saying that the "ends" justify the "means" . . . both are tremendously important and should not be compromised. By learning this lesson, he felt that it enabled him to know the difference between a stance of "tolerance" and of "wait and hope" versus a stance of "patience, faith, progress and mentoring".

In addition, as he shared with me, he had many failures and mis-reads over the course of his career. He made strategic business moves which did not pan out. He's had his wife, children, nieces and nephews all work for the company. Although none of them occupied managerial positions he later discovered how debilitating it was for many others. He made inappropriate declarations about needing more youthful leaders, being too us-centric and on occasion losing his temper in public. Throughout it all, he had to learn that when something did not work, he needed to acknowledge and sincerely "own"

the failure (regardless of the cause), apologize when necessary, learn from it and do something different. This was different than what he noticed in many people. Many people just do the same thing over and over with the expectation that this time it will work . . . or they are obsessed with placing the blame for the outcome elsewhere.

He thought that the upcoming executive get-together would be a perfect venue to see how much of this message of non-contingent accountability for success was believed and internalized by his leadership team. Equally important were the mindsets that the team evolved that enabled their achievements, i.e., the Thriving mindset. Although he and I discussed the principles of Thriving as well as the notion of the "sweet spot" (Hart & Nakai, 2011, p. 270), he was still wondering which one of the three principles would be the "front burner drumbeat."

Should we focus on strengthening the alignment and commitment to our worthy purpose? By doing this, would it enable and inspire the leaders' to keep moving the organization forward? However, the CEO felt that the purpose and mission was well in place and that, for the most part, each leader had internalized and manifested this intention in their leadership and in their part of the company. He felt that, although important, it was not the "grab them by their ears and look into their eyes" revelation he was seeking.

Should we focus on building healthy relationships and resilient energy? However important and crucial this was, the CEO was concerned that the senior team had been together for

a number of years and during that time, there were old tensions, disappointments and long-time bad feelings that needed to be untangled. However, he also felt that the existing long term relationships on the team were pretty much established and they appeared to work. By focusing on this principle, he was concerned that too much energy would be spent on forgiveness, relational fresh starts and trying to create new working relationships with one another. Although strengthening their EQ level was important, he did not feel that the focus of consistently creating new ways of doing business and operationally trying and implementing new protocols and strategic initiatives would be the key message received by his leaders.

The inexhaustible exploration and discovery of new ways to bring success to the business was key in his mind. He wanted these leaders to explore, define and embrace these new ways of performing. He wanted them to find ways to keep their people abreast of these changes and to grow with each improvement. He wanted them to identify and take on challenges, work hard, think hard, do this more effectively, and to persevere in the face of struggle and uncertainty. He wanted them to design and create the cultural and procedural structure that promotes this way of thinking and be willing to change these protocols on a moment's notice.

With this in his mind, and unbeknownst to me, the CEO called his team together a couple of times before the get-together to explore this notion. The following are his notes from both of the meetings that he and the COO facilitated.

The CEO first asked his team, "Imagine that our time together was wildly successful and impactful . . . what do you expect to see? What are your highest expectations of the times that we spend together?"

The team answered . . .

- Tremendous authentic conversations . . . guidance but no control . . . not self-conscious of what I see, say and think
- No judgment but plenty of candid feedback . . . a humility and openness to explore
- Practical applications and immediate results/change when possible . . . no more games and exercises
- We can effectively use what we are taught for ourselves, as a team and with our divisions
- Tangible results that make us stronger leaders, a stronger team and a stronger organization
- Something positive and constructive I can take to my people

The CEO asked, "What will enable/guarantee this success happening?"

The team answered . . .

- Paul needs to be grounded in our situation . . . he needs to have the sensitivity and vision to help us move forward . . . he needs to have strong facilitation skills as well as articulate/experiential in putting his ideas forward
- The CEO needs to keep from taking over, correcting, directing or rescuing

- We need to keep our individual competitiveness in check and speak candidly and authentically
- We need to keep the challenges of our business from distracting us
- We need to be open to change
- We need to be able to openly and safely talk about the "elephants in the room" and the "sacred cows" . . . we need to acknowledge what everyone knows needs to be done but we are hesitant to discuss it

The CEO asked,

> That may make success a little easier BUT what if Paul was the world's worse facilitator who only spoke a foreign language or in partial thoughts? What if I (the CEO) was pulled away on an emergency or we faced an unexpected crucible issue? What if some of us became emotional or stubbornly resistant to what was going on?

Considering the investment we are making with our time and resources, how are you going to personally **guarantee** a positive and valuable outcome regardless of what occurs around us?

As I listened to the CEO describe the conversation and some of the statements he remembered hearing, the nature and content of the statements became more profound as a signal of their deepening awareness and awakeness as organizational leaders.

The CEO then told me that he intuitively noticed his team's consciousness moving toward a deeper inner awareness. Early on, many of the comments had to do with what the executive

"saw" or noticed outside of themselves . . . the external world or their interpretation of their situation that they learned to react to. In this consciousness, it was the external world that determined what they could or could not impact or respond to (Results & Behaviors). It was the surrounding events and circumstances that determined the success or failure of the session.
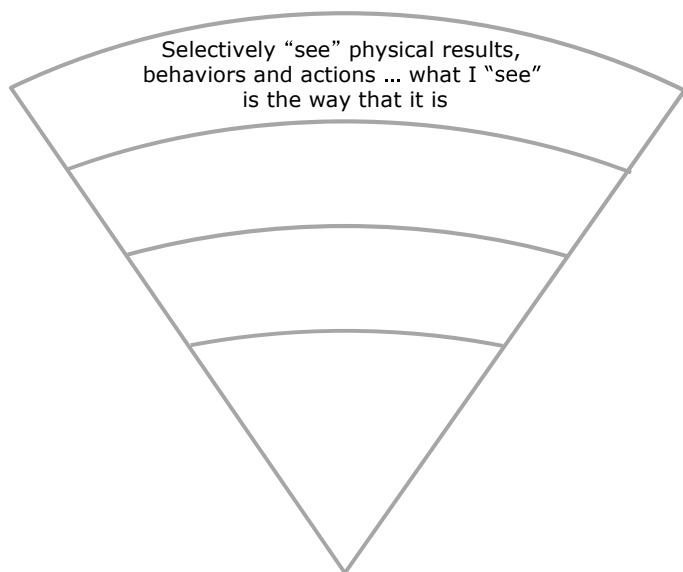

Selectively "see" physical results, behaviors and actions ... what I "see" is the way that it is

Figure 1.

Here are some of the comments that he heard as well as some of his own thoughts that mirrored this state of mind.

Results & Behavior (external criteria and events trigger my reaction . . . reactive and not mindful)

- Paul is not facilitating the session the way that I would facilitate . . . we can't be successful because of that.

- Paul is not grounded in our business and the issues that we face . . . what are his credentials?
- There are too many distractions that are getting in the way . . . I'm already too busy
- What's this got to do with our fiscal performance goals?
- The needs of the business will constantly get in the way
- The team is too political and not as candid as I am
- We've tried this before with limited results
- We should design this as four half-day sessions instead of two full days

Although they were successful as a team as well as individually, they also became acutely aware of how extensive their experience of life was contingent on how life revealed itself to them. They found it curious that the nature of this revelation differed for each person even though they were all viewing the same event. The conditionality of the value they received and the promise they delivered determined much of their effectiveness and contribution. Were they approaching the limits of their existing competency as leaders?

Unconsciously, they heard themselves say to themselves "I will learn and develop IF the lessons and opportunities present themselves in a certain way," "I will be productive and happy IF the circumstances and the people act this way toward me," "I will live a meaningful life once I know what my purpose is," "I will succeed as a leader IF everything is properly in place." Their "IF's" pointed out their contingencies.

As they continued the discussion, they noticed how much

their success was conditional upon their thinking . . . that they believed that their external events caused them to feel a certain way or to behave a certain way . . . that their success up to now was because of the attitude and leadership competency of the existing CEO. In their minds it made perfect sense that how they felt or what they did was because of what was going on around them or because of the decisions of the CEO. The executives noticed that their opinion of what they saw or could accomplish was determined by how they thought about the issues. Did they honestly believe that they could succeed in the face of their external events and challenges? Some of their attitudes were based on events that they noticed and some of these events were actually imaginary or something that they made up to fill in the blanks. Regardless, they began to notice that their attitude was founded on their habitual thinking and biases (Attitudes, Feelings & Beliefs) . . . their current mindset.

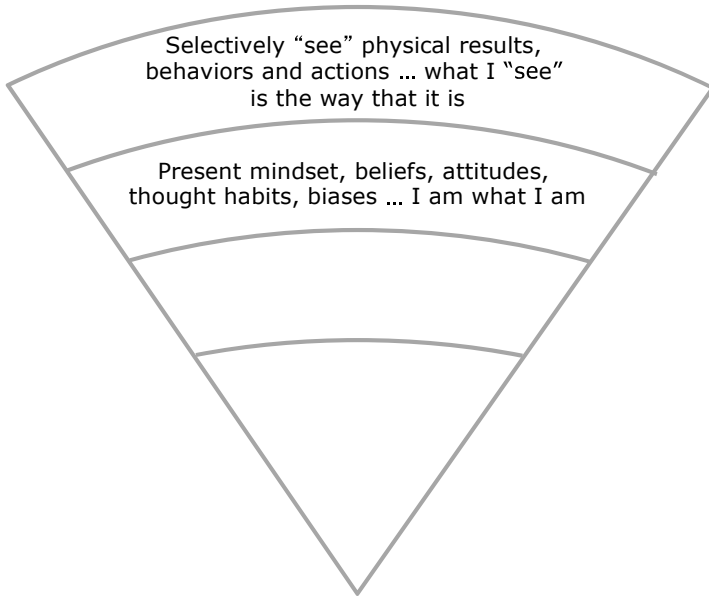Again, reflective of their beliefs, here are some of the comments that the CEO heard . . .

Figure 2.

Attitude, Feelings & Beliefs (existing internal "old" mindset and habitual way of thinking that gets triggered)

- I don't completely trust the team . . . we are competitors . . . my comments could be/have been used against me
- My purpose is different than other's purpose (if they value purpose at all)
- There's no one that has the leadership caliber or insightfulness of the existing CEO.
- There's too much insecurity in the economy for us to succeed
- I don't believe that adults can "change" . . . why are we

doing this instead of just hiring a new cadre of leaders?

- The deck is stacked against us being as successful as we've been in the past . . . the expectations are unrealistic
- Things are OK the way they are (we're making our numbers) . . . there's no need to "change"
- What if the change we undertake is wrong?

Some of the team realized how their current thinking (a.k.a current mindset) was undermining their openness to change. For these individuals, they realized that they were the "thinkers of their thoughts" . . . that they were the ones who were creating their reality and, in so doing, treating their thinking as a "truth".

As they noticed this, they also realized that they could wean themselves from being victim to their habitual thinking and their prejudices. They could be more accountable for their thinking and for their results . . . present and future. Their performance or the possible results that they could achieve were not as determined by their external situation nor were they dependent on criteria they were used to. Instead of being limited by the events or the situation, they could propel their results and learning even further by how they reacted to the unexpected. This was the doorway to their being more accountable for the value that they experience from every event in their life . . . good or bad (Open to Insights).

As they moved in this direction, the CEO noticed that the team members could see and openly declare many of the traits that the CEO felt was holding each of them back. It wasn't

based on someone giving them feedback as much as it had to do with their noticing what was going on in their thinking in moments of ego-less quiet. What made it even more poignant was the fact that his thoughts or evaluations of the team and of the individuals on the team had not been shared with them. He had kept quiet with his perceptions.

However, he could see that their "insights" were their doorways to a new mindset. It seemed to start with their willingness to question what they did not question before. These "doorways" became glimpses and impressions of a new emerging mindset.

As he said, if what you already "know" does not immediately provide an answer or lead to the desired results, the solution lies elsewhere. It's what we don't "know" or are not willing to explore that will get in our way.

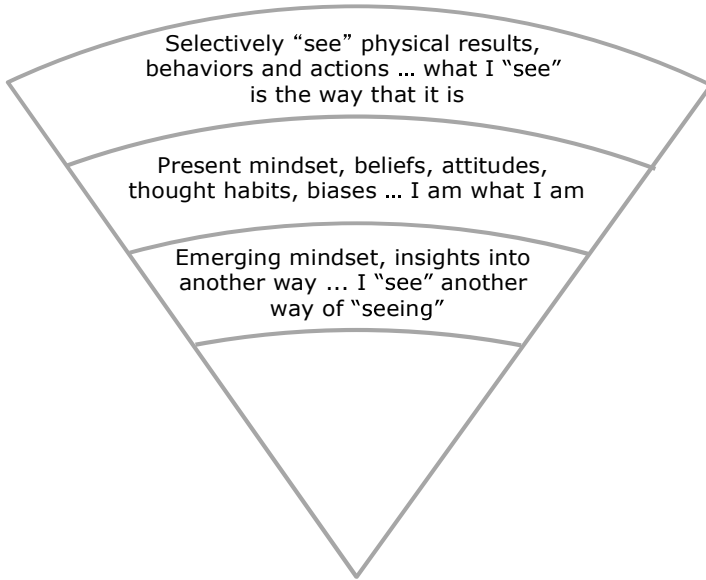Some of these "not-knowing" and insightful comments he heard were . . .

Figure 3.

Open to Insights (glimpses into a new "healthier reality")

- Perhaps what I considered to be a well developed strength is in actuality a liability for future performance . . . I pride myself in making quick decisions even when I am not ready or comfortable doing so ... what would happen if I could spend a moment or more in the discomfort of opposable thoughts?
- I need minimal reflection time to size up the situation . . . shouldn't everyone have this skill? What could I achieve if I spent more time in reflection?
- I am a very pragmatic leader and discount anything that

approaches being esoteric . . . I think that I need to be both pragmatic and esoteric to lead the diverse team that we have. How do I develop something that I am uncomfortable doing?

- . . . and similarly on the other side of the coin . . . I am a very esoteric leader and look down on people that are too pragmatic . . . I need to be both esoteric and pragmatic to lead the diverse team that we have.
- I avoid sharing with others how I feel because I don't want to risk upsetting them. However, I'm coming to realize that the <u>absence</u> of bad feelings is not the same as the <u>presence</u> of a healthy relationship.
- I give people the space to sink or swim on their own . . . perhaps, I should be more of a partner with them in their success and learning. Perhaps the question isn't whether or not they can be successful with what they have right now . . . the question is are they open to input and willing to grow and change.
- I am believing my "press" too much . . . am I that "worthy" or "capable" . . . do I avoid the risk of looking incompetent or stepping into new situations for fear of failure? Am I playing it "safe" to keep my reputation intact?
- I put too much value on being popular . . . I feel that people liking me is so important that I hesitate holding too high expectations of others, sharing my purpose or giving feedback
- I spend too much energy avoiding what's going on at

home . . . I am quick to defend my husband and his difficulties (alcoholism and depression). For fear of upsetting me, please don't edit what, if at all, you want to share with me. I may react but I honor and respect your support of me and that you are coming from concern for me.
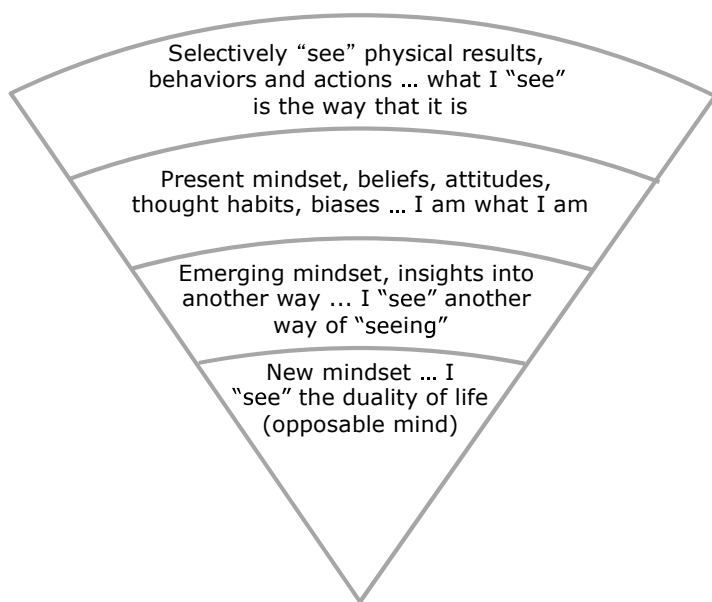
Selectively "see" physical results, behaviors and actions … what I "see" is the way that it is

Present mindset, beliefs, attitudes, thought habits, biases … I am what I am

Emerging mindset, insights into another way … I "see" another way of "seeing"

New mindset … I "see" the duality of life (opposable mind)

Figure 4.

Again, the CEO mentioned that there was a high level of inspired engagement AND a healthy quiet reflection in the meeting. At the time, the CEO hoped that these insights and attitudes would lead to a positive change in mindset through which they experience life. He was so very pleased and proud in how the team showed up during the first get-together and for

the days following. His confidence and faith that this way of thinking was the start of an ever-improving and insightful mindset has since been justified. It was a new mindset . . . a new way of thinking . . .

Going back to my experience of our time together, the velocity of their insights and solutions to their issues kept everyone engaged. There were times when I tried to summarize or to clarify their progress with one of the pre-prepared slides I came with . . . only to find that whatever I presented was ill-timed and obsolete because their growth and insights were so far ahead of what I was presenting at the moment. So far, in the four processes I've been involved in since then, I have yet to show a slide or feel the need to summarize the conversation. My role has been one of pointing, noticing and on occasion adding to their discussion . . . not one of correcting, controlling and directing.

From these experiences, we're realizing that the traditional model of development is only partially effective. After we were introduced to the three principles of Thriving ten years ago, we were initially focused on creating a model and curriculum that could be taught, measured, reproduced . . . and owned as specific property. We could charge for the privilege of being introduced to this approach.

When we first got started, we tested our understanding of the Thriving principles with a dozen of our CEO clients. These individuals were chosen based on their consistent results, their character and reputation and the size and global expanse of their organizations. Basically we asked them to share with us

the concepts and principles that they felt were pivotal to and guided their leadership effectiveness. Interestingly enough, in each case, we were able to summarize their comments under the three principles of Thriving.

Based on this corroborative evidence, we then developed our lessons, measurement and applications of these principles and choreographed them into a curriculum and consulting approach. Mirroring the current accepted educational pedagogy, this was a familiar model of how we were taught. As such, the first half of the Thriving teaching equation became . . . *"first comes the lessons and then come the tests."*

But is this the appropriate metaphor to adhere to for the development of leaders? In our effort to quantify and normalize these principles, we took something that had universal multi-dimensional, inter-related and integrative applications and turned it into an understandable linear-dimensional skills/competency. We wanted to make sure that our lessons did not challenge or question the way many of our client previously thought. Even in this diluted format, the results were more than promising.

However, what these most recent examples show is that the potential of these principles are fully realized when they are internalized and understood at the most personal multi-faceted level and in the personal language of the leader. This is another way of describing "mindset". One way of noticing ones mindset is in the moment of un-edited dialogue . . . much like the dialogue experienced in the most recent leadership conversations. This form of un-edited and non-self-conscious

conversation and listening captures the existing mindset of the speaker (biases, beliefs, etc.). With this as a starting point, one's ability to notice their commentary and their thinking in an unbiased way, provides the opportunity for insight into one's existing "mindset" and provides the possible ventures into one's emerging Thriving "mindset."

It is the speaker who then notices how they think, how their prejudices impact the moment and how they hold themselves back from full positive potential. It becomes more palatable and deeper understood since it comes from one's noticing one's own thinking. It is rarely based on someone else's feedback or point-of-view.

One stance to develop is that of non-judgmental fascination with the dialogue and the "mindset" that it potentially points toward. I know that for me, what gets in my way of interacting at this level, is my concern for my own agenda. Am I right or am I wrong? How am I being seen? Am I seen as adding value? What do I need to do to convince the other person that I have the answer?

We should focus on noticing the richness or clarity of the moment. In so doing, the second half of the Thriving teaching equation is captured by how life actually appears to work real time, i.e., *"first comes the test and then comes the lesson."*

In hindsight, our discussions with our initial twelve CEOs described these principles in their own ways. Each pointed to the same principles but were different in the ways that they articulated their discoveries. They referred to the three principles in their own language. They "called" them by

different names. But they did not learn these lessons in a class, from a book or in a seminar. They learned these lessons from life's experiences (the "test") and often time when things did not go as they had expected or hoped. First came the "test", and then came the "lesson." They had to be open to both . . . a willingness to be tested and humble accountability to discover the lesson or principle that worked for them.

The effectiveness of these principles was not totally dependent on the intellectual understanding of the principles and what they meant. Each CEO had a wealth of real-world stories that described each principle. The optimization of these principles was based on the intuitive impressions that come from the holistic Thriving mindset of these leaders.

Embarrassingly, we did not notice or put stock in the fact that when these leaders spoke of their leadership principles, they spoke of them in a combined and integrated way. They did not separate them out as individual principles . . . we, the interviewers, were the ones who did that. They were not speaking about individual stand-alone traits but they were sharing an integrated multi-dimensional mindset that embraced all three principles. They discovered and developed this mindset from the lessons that they learned from the life's "tests" that they endured. Unfortunately, although from good intentions, from this combined description, we then tried to cull out the individual mindsets. In identifying each separate principle, we tried to bring simplification to something that loses its impact when simplified. We could hear ourselves when we said "it occurs to me that you've embraced three

separate principles . . . " It made sense . . .

We heard the "purpose-mindset" when they referred to contributing to the betterment of humanity or using personal meaningfulness as a yardstick. Some referred to a grander purpose for their companies or advancing the potential for women. Some mentioned bringing justice or education to the world or acknowledging the universal right to quality healthcare, technology, sanitation or energy. In essence, their purpose was to find different ways of honoring their purpose. We simplified this into the principle of Purpose.

We heard the "vitality mindset" when they referred to honoring the dignity of people, the fact that we are all "brothers" and "sisters" and we should treat one another that way. Some spoke about enabling people to maximize their energy in creating positive outcomes. They used words like empathy, authenticity, engaged and trustworthy rapport. They mentioned creating a culture where people could speak their minds and honor their interconnectedness through their autonomy. Some spoke about being accountable "to" their people yet not being accountable "for" their people's happiness or even "for" their people's success. They used non-business words like forgiveness, redemption and restoration. They spoke about the importance of their people feeling like they were fully responsible for creating their results and that they were innately empowered. These were their value statements that described the manifestation of the Vitality mindset. We simplified this into the principle of Vitality.

Finally, we heard the "learning-mindset" when they

referred to people's capacity for creativity, innovation and creation. They referred to our innate desire for advancement, growth and change. They spoke of the joy of discovery, the inspiration of epiphanies and the need for continual advancement for the betterment of mankind. They spoke of the joy of transformation that occurs through disruption. They spoke of honoring and expecting breakthrough thinking and actions and making it possible for that to happen over and over again. They also spoke of hard work, perseverance and trying new strategies and approaches. Again, these were ways that the Learning mindset manifested itself to them . . . but, we simplified this into the principle of Growth.

As you see, they didn't just speak of their success traits as individual and isolated principles. By integrating and combining their examples, they were pointing toward the "mindset" that made the traits optimally effective.

However, at that time, we went from that diverse experience of the principles to attempting to standardize and simplify their understanding so that we could talk about it, teach it and measure it. However, it appears that based on these revelations, the time is right for us to return to the diversity and personalization of these principles. The question is can we have many impressions of the principles yet still retain the focus and emphasis of a singular definition?

If we use the example with which we opened this article, the first indication would be instead of only focusing on the content, behavior and definition of the three principles, we should now be focused on awakening the *mindset* or

consciousness of what we refer to as Thriving.

Our *consciousness* determines what we notice as we go through life and it determines our ability to make what we notice our "reality." Our *mindset* determines what that reality looks like.

Mindset is a belief system through which we view and interpret the life's events that we notice. This belief system is potentially on a journey of ingenuity, honesty and humanity.

Not only is our mindset self-justifying and made up of multiple linked thoughts and biases, it is also available to change through insights and revelations. It is a firm platform of rigid belief AND an agile platform available to "original" thought.

On one level, it is the foundation for what we accept as the truth of the way it is (what is real). On another level, it defines for us the questions that we ask to move our understanding forward (what could be real).

By focusing on the "mindset" of the leader, it answers the question of how can a leader have a positive impact on people he may never personally physically meet. It enables him or her to pass on the worthy pictures that exist in his/her mind to others and then empowers them to act on their mental pictures.

That is what has happened with the client about whom I opened this article. You could say that a dynamic strategic shift occurred in their organization over a three month period. This shift occurred in both the domestic population as well as abroad. However, this shift did not occur through a tightly controlled definition of criteria and content but more through

the sharing of the spirit of the message with individuals as well as in groups. It was promoted by everyone in the organization feeling "in the know" and enabled to share their mindset with others. This shift did not depend on teaching people what it meant to be human but it awakened and intensified the humanity of everyone in the company. It was not a process of "pouring in" someone else's genius and sensitivity but it was awakening and bringing forth the genius and sensitivity that we all possess. It occurred through the mechanism of on-going dialogue . . . moments of reflection on the dialogue and the thinking it elicited . . . and declarations of insight and revelation.

GOING FORWARD

I suppose the question is ". . . is the most effective way for a shift to occur through a comprehensive teaching program? Is it based on the completeness of the curriculum and creating an aligned internal consulting force to deliver that message?" Is it dependent on the "bricks and mortar" of a workshop or listening to an expert "sage on stage" expound on his or her discoveries?

Or is there a quicker, more dynamic and less expensive means of impacting adults who want to contribute in a meaningful way? There are so many examples where visionary leaders in all walks of life have accomplished this without sacrificing or compromising the quality and completeness of the effort. They have taken advantage of the advances in technology as well as leveraged their Thriving "mindset" of

believing in the dignity of people, enabling their innate desire for discovery and improvement, and being inspired to contribute to the well being of humanity.

So far, we cannot get away from the fact that it is tremendously important to work directly with the CEO AND the executive team. Considering this level of highly personalized intervention, how much more engagement beyond this level is primarily based on the size and complexity of the organization.

For the rest of the organization, this "high touch" approach may not be economically feasible nor quick enough to reach a multi-thousand, global organization. It appears that there is still a need to create an internal consultancy of "champions" who are more grounded in both the message and its application to the challenges of the business. It is still important to align the organization's infrastructure, policies and procedures, strategy, compensation, etc. to acknowledge and externally promote the desired shift.

However, instead of depending solely on this finite group of leaders and influencers to carry the message to the total organization, it seems like technology needs to step in to be able to simultaneously inform and impact the entire firm. There have been a few examples where a global simultaneous conversation has occurred.

In addition, the good news is that this technology presently exists. It's a matter of pulling the different facets together into a comprehensive package.

However, do not rely too heavily on "outside to inside"

influences to carry the day. We cannot stress enough how crucial the leadership "shadow" that is modeled and cast by the CEO and the senior leaders is in emphasizing and making "real" the desired ecology. It is when this message is believed in the hearts of the organization that its content and direction will be reinforced and clarified. Technology, structure and protocols fundamentally put form and direction to this intention.

Although I am certain that there are many leaders who embody this understanding, I am especially grateful to have had the good fortune to work with a number of them.

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James Hart, as President and CEO of SennDelaney, has helped the company become widely recognized as the leading international authority and practitioner working with clients to create thriving cultures, improved performance, and enhanced spirit within their organizations. He has led engagements around the world in a variety of industries. In 1980, James founded a leading business software publishing firm and led its growth for ten years, twice earning positions on Inc. Magazine's 500. After the sale of the software firm James joined Western National Group, California's largest multi-family real estate development as president. He led the company's growth from sixty-fifth largest to the twenty-eighth largest firm in the country with a 35 percent growth in revenues and profits. Most recently, James has shepherded the sale of SennDelaney to Heidrick & Struggles, the oldest and most prestigious executive search firm in the world. James currently lives in Tahoe, Nevada with his wife, Susan. James enjoys tennis, travel, golf, scuba diving, and the cultural offerings of the world.

Paul Nakai is the founding partner and principal of Leadership Spirit International LLC. Leadership Spirit International is a consulting group specializing in developing and deepening the leadership capacity of executives, in teambuilding and optimizing the performance-based relationships, and in shaping the thriving leadership culture to sustainably be more agile in achieving organizational objectives. Paul was formerly a managing partner and executive vice president with SennDelaney, where he specialized in executive coaching and leadership development to support and lead the organization through crucible challenges such as mergers and acquisitions, shifting corporate cultures, leadership shortages, downturns or upturns in business, debilitating internal strife, constant disruption and the need for transformation. Paul has consulted to and led major cultural processes in numerous industries, including crucial engagements at Three Mile Island Nuclear plant and for NASA in response to critical challenges. Through Leadership Spirit International, Paul is dedicated to thriving servant-leadership in order to assist executives in unleashing the spirit behind their personal leadership as well as unleashing the collective spirit of their organizations. Paul currently lives in Marin County, California, with his wife Nancy and his immediate family.