

Flow on Stage

the art of sustainable performance

CHAPTER 0: OVERTURE

By [frankheckman](#) /



A “break-out” into a new arts world (view) began during the early spring of 2009 in the city of Den Bosch, southern part of the Netherlands. The break-out involved a small group of academics from the University for the Arts in Rotterdam (Codarts). On this three-day journey they kick-boxed in an Olympic facility, brainstormed in the back of a taxi bus, cooked deliciously healthy meals together, and drew their collective future in scenes with an artist. The result? These Classical, Pop, Jazz, and World Music, Modern Dance, Circus Arts, Dance Therapy, and Music Theatre Creative Directors created a striking new world view: Codarts, Rotterdam — the Artistic Gateway to the World! No more isolated artistic islands, but instead, a total ‘Artistic Ecosystem’, inviting students to use their own compass to navigate and sail to their arts future – a self-steering, spiral journey past the walls of the academies. Just as the Berlin Wall was played down with Bach Suites by cellist Mstislav Rostropovich in 1989, these artistic directors “played down” the walls of their own academies and institution. Talent above the structure, no longer structure over talent.

This opened the door to a new possible world... They created a professorship for Sustainable Performance to help students and professors re-discover that the Holy Grail is not a record deal, it’s waking up to your own power and responsibility! That yesterday’s paternalism is replaced by your own responsibility. So they can see again that artists play an important role helping people to see and create the new epoch. When jass/jazz exploded in New Orleans, it lit up entire new ways to see and express the world. It’s great-great grandchild – world hip-hop can even be seen and heard in the new China, India, and Arab Spring. “Codarts, Rotterdam — the Artistic Gateway to the World!” sees itself as being the gateway the next future! Their professors and students will hear, see, sense, perceive more directly and with greater nuance than most.

They see beyond the horizon with their eyes shut or listening real deep. The Irish have a saying in Gaelic: ‘Iske Fay Halav’, ‘he, who can hear the river beneath’. Or as the R&B lyric says – “Night was dark, but the sky was blue, Down the alley, the ice-wagon flew, Heard a bump, and somebody screamed, You should have heard just what I seen” (Bo Diddley – Who Do You Love? – 1956).

Sustainable Performance is about learning how to be a great performer. Giving you the concepts, tools, skills and insights to do so. In that, it is practical and certainly aimed at the professional teacher and young professional. But it is more than a practice-based guide, for it is about life, the path you take, how you resonate with the environment you are in, the space you share with others, the communities you are part of and the role you (wish) to play in it. In that myriad web of relationships you are ‘alive’, give and take, change and evolve. In short, it is

about learning how to continuously re-see and re-hear the world and then re-enter your creative zone to help create and/or inspire another new vision/dream/world.

THE MAGIC OF THE MOMENT

What's Sarah Brightman's secret of changing her voice in an instant from pop to opera, to rock, outperforming the best of the best?

How does two times Olympic Judo Champion Deborah Gravenstijn prepare for the final match in the Beijing Olympics?

How does Jazz legend contra-bassist Hein van de Geyn create the 'intimate grounding' that elevates people like Jean 'Toots' Thielemans in their performance?

How does Meryl Streep transform into the pure essence of a character over the last thirty-four years from 'The Deer Hunter' (1978) to the 'The Iron Lady' (2011)?

What's going on in the mind of Mark Tuitert when he wins the 'King's Race' (1500 m speed skating) at the last Olympic Games?

How does trumpet player André Heuvelman make us 'hear the silence' when playing Monteverdi?

What's the secret of Grammy Award winning New York Orpheus Chamber Orchestra when they perform Gershwin with a magical togetherness?

How does Annamaria Mazzini keep the New York audience completely under her spell while she's dancing Paul Taylor's Esplanade.

How does 7 Fingers Circus juggler Joris de Jong completely involve his audience in the concept of his act?

...and how do they reach such high performance levels again and again?

They all experience **flow**, a moment, a movement which pushes the boundaries, opens up new horizons. Furthermore, they all know that this movement starts from a very powerful, still point within...

SETTING THE STAGE

I accepted an invitation from the Board of Directors from Codarts, the University for the Arts in Rotterdam to research the phenomena of excellence in performance to help them make sense of, understand, and apply knowledge of the "flow" of the performers noted above. Based on my applied research on 'flow at work' in the nineties in Chicago and during the Athens 2004 project, the mental training program with the Dutch Olympic Team, we began to design Sustainable Performance.

STORIES TELL IT ALL

'For me it was a holistic experience to go beyond circus, to go beyond your little box...' Gregor Kiock, Object manipulator and teacher at the Rotterdam Circus Academy ([watch video](#))

'I play the trumpet pretty good but I want to do much more.....' Andre Heuvelman, trumpet player and teacher at the Rotterdam Classical Academy ([watch video](#))

'I teach, produce and perform. For me, The Journey was a trigger to start positive change. It returned the joy of performing to me....' Juan van Emmerloo, percussionist and teacher at the Rotterdam Pop Academy ([watch video](#))

*'Every time you go on stage, you have the opportunity to do something special, to go beyond your standard routine...'*Zoe Wijnsouw, dancer, student at the Rotterdam Academy for Modern Dance ([watch video](#))

*'I had to learn how to put a spell on my audience, so they were no longer focused on me dropping the ball, but caught up in the suspense of the act...'*Joris de Jong, juggler, ex-student of the Rotterdam Circus Academy ([watch video](#))

SUSTAINABLE PERFORMANCE

These five artists were part of the tribe of forty students and teachers that went on a two-year journey to reach 'Sustainable Performance'.

Sustainable Performance is about the interplay between performers and their environment, the factors affecting the realization of their best performances.

- How do musicians, dancers, circus artists realize their best performance?
- How do they ensure that they continue to grow, constantly increasing the quality of their performance?
- What factors – physical, mental, social and emotional – can affect this process?
- In other words: How to sustain-the-ability to perform on a high level again and again.

PUTTING THE GIFT ON STAGE

At the start, all had one thing in common: they truly wished to express artistically what they have to give. They seek to manifest their gift.

- For trumpet player Andre Heuvelman, who is already a successful musician at one of world's best symphonic orchestras, this meant to reinvent himself, expanding and realizing his untapped creative potential.
- Teacher/percussionist Juan van Emmerloot, in the 'music business for a long time, is rediscovering the power of playing, the sheer joy of it.
- Dancer Zoe Wijnsouw's path is to become conscious that she really needs her fellow dancers to realize a great performance.
- Circus artist Joris de Jong begins to understand that strong concepts can move him above and beyond fabulous techniques.
- Teacher circus arts Gregor Kiock shifts learning paradigms and levels the playing field with his students.

Where it all comes together for each of them, in fact for all of you, is 'on stage'. The physical space where we perform. In the theatre, the arena, in the streets, the classroom, in front of the camera, wherever we decide to step in the middle of the moment and share our gift with others. In that moment, on that place we perform. And if we decide to be fully present, we are learning at the same time in an extraordinary way.

CHALLENGES

Let's back up for a moment.

You may wonder: 'is this still about me?' 'Because I always feel so out of it when the curtains are drawn and I'm facing the audience, nervous and shaky', or 'I hope they don't see the bow trembling', or 'I was doing much better during practice, I don't understand what happened'. Or possibly 'I played the piece faultless, but don't feel any satisfaction'. Also, 'how can I really get my own 'style', really express myself'; 'touch the audience through my passion for my art'. 'Hope somebody out there recognizes how special I am'. And 'I want my students to excel, show the world how well they are trained and prepared'. I keep my fingers crossed, see if they can withstand the pressure in performing this really challenging piece'. 'Really hope they'll be at their best at tonight's broadcast, so much depends on it'.

LEARNING TO PERFORM

Do you recognize one, some or all of the above? Here's good news. You can learn how to become a good performer. You can learn to be a great performer. Given circumstances, the best you can possibly be. Not just once, but again and again, and again, and again...

This is not the instructional or training manual: 'the seven steps towards successful performing'. It really is a radical shift, in the way you learn and develop. Not just for tomorrow's audition or next week's concert. It goes deeper than that. For starters, we are tossing all the stuff about 'born to be', 'endowed with charisma', 'too emotional, high-strung etcetera, out the window. We are not saying that you don't need to practice, hone your skills, and really invest effort and time to reach the level of mastering your art. You need, just like your brothers and sisters in the athletic arenas, about ten thousand 'flight hours' to get some operational freedom within your talent.

HERO'S JOURNEY

Therefore we urge you to go on this 'Journey'. It is an exploratory expedition towards unsuspected forces, an inward adventure. You discover new qualities within yourself and others, you learn to conquer fear and resistance, to experience the magic of the moment and to eventually take the 'treasure' back home with you.

We employ the concept of a journey to detach ourselves from fixed frameworks, just as the nomads do. 'Stripping life to the bare essentials'. Going on a "walk about" to open ourselves to the possible and impossible. This is one of the cornerstones of what we named Sustainable Performance. But please think twice, this is not for the meek of heart, for this is the: 'Hero's Journey'.

The 'Journey' is a cyclic, learning model, which links the metaphor of the Hero's Journey (Joseph Campbell) to the principles of Social Ecology and Flow, the Psychology of Optimal Experience (Fred Emery, Eric Trist, and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi).

We use the Hero's Journey, because we believe that if you're serious about performance, a 'shift' is needed, a shift in attitude, behavior and belief. As in all processes, there are too little resources and not enough time. So we designed, based on our Olympic experience, a deep process in which the learning could really stick, possibly change lives.

During the 'Journey' you will travel through five dimensions:

- Calling – about 'dreams', knowing purpose, knowing yourself and setting goals |
- Fellowship – about key relationships, the social fabric, reciprocity and the environment |
- Dragons – about truth, facing and embracing the 'shadow' and overcoming set-backs |
- Performance – about stepping in the middle of the moment, being fully present, giving the best, the state of Flow |
- Return – about bringing home the 'treasure', celebrating, explaining and sharing the learning.

What you hold here is not a book! It is an expression of a group of people who decided to step into the 'midst of the moment'. To share the experience we are using different strands of the same tapestry; different streams into the same ocean:

- Now you are reading.
- You can also 'click' on the many clips to see, hear, experience and learn.
- Next, if that fits you better, use the apps to hone your performance skills.

To succeed in this journey or adventure you must, like a warrior, learn through and from experience but also equip yourself with the right skills to get the job done. Each dimension in this Journey provides you with the tools, concepts and skills to become the ultimate performer. The key skills, the bare essentials we selected and made into a skill set, apps. These apps, in the context of the Journey, naturally make it the best possible and practical performance survival kit. There are many ways to learn, we strongly prefer learning by doing.

The next chapter is called Base Camp. A point of departure before you go for the summit. In it we'll explain a bit on 'whose shoulders' – theory and practice – we stand and we will give you an overview of the 'Journey'. Once

you see the whole picture you can decide the route you need to take, set your personal GPS, click on your navigator, and.....go!

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CHAPTER 1: BASE CAMP

By [frankheckman](#) /



‘Through focusing the attention and overcoming a challenge, we are changed – we end up feeling more capable, confident and looking forward to overcoming new challenges. As a mountain climber was saying: ‘ You look back at yourself, at what you have done, it just blows your mind.’ (Csikszentmihalyi ‘90)

‘Without question, flow as the preferred state of mind has a greater likelihood to emerge in an environment in which people have more freedom of choice as to how to apply themselves. When a structure of enforced demands and enforced isolation gives way for an environment where expression and function are more balanced, flow becomes part of the natural order of things, a predisposition waiting to be triggered.’ (Heckman ‘97)

I’m sipping my coffee, pigeons cooing on the rooftop in the quiet early morning, the thought crosses my mind: ‘Will I be able to pull this off?’ ‘Is performing on stage the same as *performing in the arena*?’

Putting down my cup, I look over my shoulder, back to the beginning of my career, bringing to awareness many of the tasks, disciplines, skills, work, cultures and languages, picked up over the years that seem to crystallize into this project. Realizing this, I felt sensations of excitement and energy.

The key difference from the Olympic program is the emphasis on sustainability, the performing artist on a life-long journey.

Annelies Schrijnen van Gastel, sociologist and senior researcher at Codarts, looked into the factors, relationships and other elements that play a role when professional musicians are ill or hindered to fully perform. She called her study ‘Musical Time-Out’ and found clear evidence that healthy performance not only resides in the physical/mental condition of the musician, the mechanics of singing or playing the instrument, but is also as

much a result of the 'DNA' at the core of the structure of organization(s). In the way we are 'organized'. Her 'target' group was the professional musician playing in a top Symphonic Orchestra or ensemble and meanwhile teaching at the Conservatory Academy for Classical Music in Rotterdam. I then realized that the (healthy) life of a performing artist is a real balancing act: to be technically adept, completely in control and at the same time letting go, surrendering to the heart of the music. This was certainly not about world records and split seconds. We reframed our goal into sustainable performance. Peaking for gold isn't good enough here, managing that precarious balance is.

The challenge would certainly be to get a sharp focus in the definition and execution of the research. Having flow experiences expanded the consciousness of people as Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi was telling us in his publications. Having regular or frequent flow experiences on the job – practicing and performing as an artist – would imply a real transformative experience, life would never be the same again. Being on that 'track' of stringing flow experiences, ongoing learning becomes the name of the game. Thus after an initial period of experimentation and some tough and honest critique and feedback from the academic world, we came to a conclusion. Our research was to find out if the 'Journey' would be the platform for accelerated learning, measured through the increase in frequency of flow experiences of our fellow travellers. And how this on-going learning was leading to changes in skills and behavior that had the potential to 'stick', to sustain. To make our focus clear to understand and simple to follow we stated: Frequent Flow = Sustainable Performance.

Let's back up and look at some of the past endeavors and applied theories that explain why the Journey is such a transformative experience.

THIRTY-SIX YEARS AGO

Eddy Thung, my mentor and retired Director of the Royal Dutch Naval Intelligence Service, was instructing me on a rainy afternoon: 'Put your feet firmly on the ground, sense your legs, back, arms and hands, your head and face, listen to your breathing, just follow your natural breath, in and out, all by itself, there's nothing you have to do',

Around my left hand, a cast to support my broken thumb. One 'flying rings' gymnastics routine separated me from finishing my studies at the Academy of Physical Education in Amsterdam. Problem, no chance to practice.

'Now,' Eddy says, "close your eyes and visualize the environment, see yourself approaching the rings, and now your routine begins..." Over and over again, every other day I sat on the kitchen stool, eyes shut, doing the 'flying rings'. Three weeks later, in June 1976, I passed my gymnastics exam with flying colors, doing the routine for the first time for 'real'.

'This stuff really works' said a little voice in my head.

And now, 36 years later and many, many experiences richer, I take Uncle Eddy's place as the 'tribal elder'.

ON WHOSE SHOULDERS ARE WE STANDING?

The knowledge, skills and experience come from several scientific fields and disciplines.

Martial Arts, with its rigorous physical discipline and the more subtle energy or ki training had a big influence. Tenth Dan Sensei Jan Kallenbach led our group to the experience of 'grounding' and 'centering' and directed attention on the 'kneading' of the body and mind to reach resilience and ultimate freedom of movement. Blackbelt and social innovator Wim Keyl actually brought us into a 'real' fight, taught us to communicate to take our rightful place.

The outstanding choreographer and concept artist Conny Janssen immersed us in rhythms, nonverbal group encounters, bringing alive the invisible, essential social fabric of the group. Robert Hlatky, dance teacher and movement specialist worked with us through a special movement program for dancers called Gyrotonics, turning mechanical motion into living movement. And Ciel Werts, one of the elders of the tribe, contributed her extraordinary skills of movement observation and notation. She used performance videos of our students to produce a series of portraits, revealing the Laban Movement Analysis of flow experiences! Other inspiration

came from a variety of fields. The common ground is that these all contribute to what I would call 'human nature'.

Some examples are: the trail-blazing work of Candace Pert in the field of neurotransmitters and Damasio's work and research on how the brain works and the importance of emotions. Practically this meant that we teamed up with Gert Jan de Haas, a neuropsychologist and musician who works at the Medical Center for Musicians and Dancers in The Hague and with Guusje Roozmond, who runs a Neuro-Therapy/Feedback Research and Treatment Center in Hilversum.

The use and the power of symbols and rituals from the work of Joseph Campbell and my friendship with native Americans Bruce Hardwick and Duane Kinnart, 'Firekeeper' and 'Drumkeeper' for the Anishnaabeg Council of Three Fires and the Ojibwe, made sure we were feeding the unconscious, nonverbal, 'other self' during the Journey.

The phenomenon of the 'relaxation response' of Harvard's medical researcher Benson and Jon Kabat Zinn translated into the application of Buddhist breathing and meditation techniques and what is now popular under the name of mindfulness.

Advanced expertise on ideomotoric learning from the field of human movement sciences we put to use through a variation of imagery techniques. New theoretical findings about the working of DNA strengthened the premises about sustainable performance. Nobel laureate physicist David Bohm's notion on dialogue and the 'implicate order' or unified field theory inspired us to delve into 'deep listening' experiments. And much more.

CHICAGO

When I moved to Chicago in my late thirties to study Social Ecology, Human and Organizational Development at the Loyola University, my world expanded greatly with new knowledge and experience. I became very much aware that development far extends the boundaries of the individual human being. Development and certainly the development of talent takes place and thrives when the context is right. Put differently, in the dynamics of the individual, others and the environment 'real life' takes place. I began to understand that in the absence of meaningful relationships talent goes to sleep.



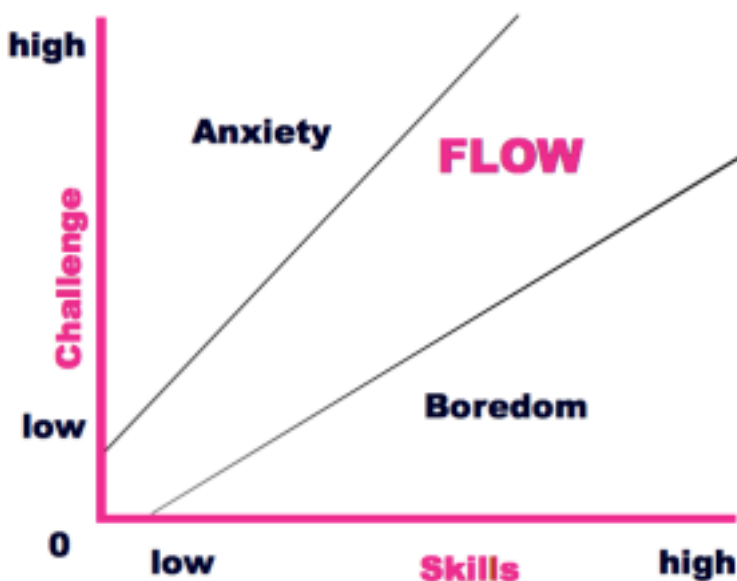
FLOW – CHALLENGE/SKILLS

During the celebration of the (Dutch) Queens birthday at the Drake Hotel in Chicago, Ernst Krijgers Janzen, chairman of the Dutch Club cited from the book 'Flow.' Immediately, as if stung by a bee, I was sitting straight up in my chair, instant recognition. Not much later I was having my first conversation with the white bearded Hungarian-American Professor in his room at the University of Chicago.

"What brings you here", Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi asked me. I replied: 'I've read your book and I believe there is hope for humanity'. 'Why is that so', he questioned. 'Well, I grew up in a society where the norm is that when the pressure is on, people look outside and up for answers, your research shows unequivocally that when people

face tough challenges sustainable solutions come from inside and around’.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, had been studying the states of “optimal experience” or “flow”, a state of concentration so focused that it amounts to absolute absorption in an activity. His book on the subject, “Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience” (Harper & Row Publishers Inc., 1990), has been lauded by such heavyweights as Bill Clinton, Tony Blair, and Jimmy Johnson, who credited it with helping him coach the Dallas Cowboys to a Super Bowl win in 1993. Csikszentmihalyi was fascinated by the question of how one can turn daily life into a form of art. He looked at those people who are able to create order and harmony in their lives: artists, musicians, athletes, rock-climbers; all people who become completely absorbed in their activities without receiving a direct external reward. Apparently, they find their reward within the activity itself. He called it ‘flow’. After having collected data worldwide, it turned out that when it really comes down to it, people have a built-in compass that guides them on the path that runs between boredom and anxiety.



The key element of an optimal experience is that it is an end in itself. Even if initially undertaken for other reasons, the activity that consumes us becomes intrinsically rewarding. Csikszentmihalyi calls this an autotelic experience. The term “autotelic” derives from two Greek words, auto meaning self, and telos meaning goal.

He found in his studies that every flow activity, whether it involved competition or any other dimension of experience had this in common: It provided a sense of discovery, a creative feeling of pushing the person to higher levels of performance, into a new reality. In short, it transformed the self by making it more complex. In this growth of the self, of consciousness lies the key to flow activities.

HEALTHY WORK

At the same time, inspired by and introduced to the field of ‘Open Systems Thinking’ by young Professor Ron Purser, at Loyola University I stumbled across two leading systems theorists, Robert Karasek of the University of Massachusetts and Dr. Tores Theorell of Sweden’s National Institute for Psychosocial Factors and Health. They approached the phenomenon of stress in a totally new, ‘systemic’ way and came up with some really important findings on the relationship between job stress and disease.

[In the beginning of the 60’s, social scientists Fred Emery and Eric Trist developed ‘Open Systems Thinking’, which was inspired by the open systems theory from the field of biology. They foresaw the influence which the growing turbulence and complexity of our environment would have on the way people run their lives as well as

their organizations (global village). Their social ecology stressed the importance of restoring the social fabric and power of communities. Giving people the capacity to actively adapt to the challenges the environment puts upon them.]

Most of us dread intense demands of work, but sometimes such demands can lead to a sense of control and even exhilaration. Basketball star Bill Russell once described the pressures of a pro game as follows: "It usually began when three or four of the ten guys on the floor would heat up... The feeling would spread to other guys, and we'd all levitate... The game would be in the white heat of competition, and yet I never felt the pain. My premonitions would be consistently correct... There have been many times in my career when I felt moved or joyful, but these were moments when I had chills pulsing up and down my spine."

Few of us will be performing in the play-offs competing for the world's most desirable basketball trophy. Yet our dance companies, orchestra's, our bands or ensemble's can, under the right circumstances, provide great challenges and intense satisfactions, the same sense of cohesion, accomplishment and control that Russell describes. A sense of personal control may, in fact, be a critical factor in maintaining health. Karasek and Theorell found that the primary work-related risk factor appears to be the lack of control of how one meets the job demands and how one uses one's skills. In other words, people whose lives and jobs make high demands on them but allow little latitude for decision-making, have higher rates of many diseases. The risk of illness is two to four times what it is for others, independent of all other risk factors. In addition, when possibilities to control were perceived to be small, high levels of demand were associated with not only stress symptoms, but also with poor performance. In layman terms, Karasek is saying that not the pressure is the dominant agent to perform well, but it is the leeway, the elbowroom to have choice, which makes the difference. Decision latitude means that the artist, teacher has the autonomy and skills to make an impact. Leading to healthy work.

THE ART OF SUSTAINABLE PERFORMANCE

The leverage for creating your performance is not just a matter of how you meet the inevitable demands. An important difference is to be found in the alterable 'rules of the game' for organizing task and social relationships,

Cikszentmihalyi's flow concept and Karasek's demand/control research are, by sheer coincidence, two sides of the same coin. Putting these two ideas together results in what we refer to as the 'Psycho Social Balance' (PSB).

In this PSB, development is taking place in the dynamics of the individual, others and the environment. Said differently, development is always inclusive of 'Me', 'We' and 'It'. For example, from this perspective 'performance' is defined by my saxophone solo, through the fine support of my co-musicians in the band and the audience, a group of underground jazz lovers. Simultaneously. Through the 'weaving' of a myriad of vibrating waves/particles called sound and movement, through the resonance with all those present in the space, the performance emerges, becomes a reality. The practice, learning and understanding of this precarious juxtaposition of the psychosocial grid is the 'Art of Sustainable Performance'.

DESIGNING THE BEST LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

I'm sitting in the Café Orloff, at the foot of the medieval Dom Tower in heart of the city of Utrecht and one of the 'good places' on the planet. Across me, Joop Alberda, Olympic gold volleyball coach and the key performance architect of the Dutch Olympic Team. His request: design a mental training program that will knock their socks off, will make the Dutch Olympians 'immortal' at the Games in Athens 2004.

The notion of returning to ancient Athens, the birthplace of many legends, mortals and gods, reminded me of Joseph Campbell, the great storyteller and teacher of the power of the Myth. Campbell brought new life to the age-old image of the Hero and with it he inspired people to trust and build on their own dreams and follow their 'bliss'. He called mythology 'the song of the world', sung by thousands of the different people and cultures. In the mythological world, any experience can be a source of power, without myths life would be no more than a meaningless sequence of ups and downs. 'You don't have to understand everything; enjoy the adventure called life'.

Joseph Campbell was, according to George Lucas, through his seminal work 'The Hero with the Thousand Faces' the great inspiration behind 'Star Wars', the movie in which Luke Skywalker succeeds in navigating on

his own compass and achieves his human goals. Luke doesn't sway from his mission, keeping his destination clear in focus. And above all, he doesn't get stuck in a single frame of mind. What's more, he has the support from his fellow travellers. And that's exactly what happens when Ben Kenobi says at the climax of the last fight to Skywalker: 'Turn off your computer, shut down the machine, do it yourself, follow your heart Luke, trust your feeling.' And then Kenobi says: 'May the Force be with you.'

Back in Utrecht in Café Orloff I put five beer coasters on the table, representing the five Olympic rings and drew on the white flipside the dimensions of the Hero's Journey: Calling, Fellowship, Dragons, Performance, Return and in the middle Ariadne's thread: the experience of Flow.



In retrospect, Campbell's Journey proved to be a very adequate way to create movement and elicit real learning. The cyclical structure blended quite naturally with other preferred learning theories and models. Athletes and coaches reported that this in-depth and more systemic approach brought them something that would 'stick' with them. Realistic, because they were the ultimate consumer, fully in charge and deciding at all times which experience during the Journey they wanted to carry into the arena. And they were telling us that the power of the Olympic community meant the world to them. Just to work for a full day, the length of a Hero's Journey clinic, with some eighty other Olympic athletes and coaches and share stories, issues, victories and fears. That alone, they said, apart from the instructions on mental skills and techniques, boosted their knowledge and confidence. 'It is very cool to be part of the spirit of this Olympic team.'

The 'Journey' not only boosted the social power of the Olympic community, it did indeed accelerate the learning of mental skills and most importantly created a common language around the concept of flow.

FROM ARENA TO STAGE

In short, the Hero's Journey had real didactic/learning potential and with the Olympic experience in the bag it seemed exciting to set up the next 'Journey' as a learning prototype. The chance to really research this came when I shook the hand of Jikkie van der Giessen, Chairman of the Board of Directors, in December 2008 and accepted the Professorship at Codarts. We set up practical research with students and teachers from all disciplines to study the dimensions of the Journey as a prototype for accelerated learning. Specifically, learning to become a sustainable performer (on stage or in the classroom). The two-year 'Journey' ran full cycle with an "action-research community of practice" of forty students and teachers. Meanwhile several other cycles of the

Journey ran, amongst which a modern opera co-production with art students from Istanbul. All input from these cycles was fed into the Journey prototype, continuously improving it, making it to what it is now, a fit didactic model for ecological learning. Helping young artists and teachers to become the good performers on stage and/or in the classroom.

We are excited to see our assumptions confirmed that performers, who repeatedly experience flow in the execution of their art, deliver the best possible performance within the bandwidth of their skills and talents. And our tracking and monitoring to see how they are doing, out there in the wild, wild world, shows that sustainable performance isn't just a wild card, but a very viable objective.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE JOURNEY

To give you a notion what you are embarking upon we'll lay out the Journey in a nutshell. First of all the Journey is not about stages, phases or steps. Those all belong to more linear, extrinsically motivated educational systems.

Remember, just like Luke Skywalker, in order to get a 'license to travel' you must decide and commit yourself to be in charge of your own Journey. Not so easy considering the institutions we are part of, but nevertheless, an extremely important decision.

The design of the journey is circular, swerving and meandering. Because, although the goal maybe crystal clear, you are at the helm and need to decide how to navigate when there's no wind or heavy storms. If you take a birds' eye view of your Journey you'll notice it actually resembles a spiral where the end of the Journey, 'Return', hovers over the starting point, 'Calling'. The spiral makes clear that during our lifetime we make many Journeys, upon return passing on our treasures to the next generation travelers, thus emptying ourselves to get inspired for the next adventure. Further, as the design of the Journey is ancient and archetypical, steeped in the power of the myth, it functions as a hologram, each dimension reflects all the others, always. For example, when you have a set back – the dimension of Dragons – suffer from a hand injury and can't play your instrument, the tendency is to withdraw, get depressed, lose energy. In this not so uncommon 'falling apart' revisiting your initial dream, goal and direction – the dimension Calling – will remind you of your commitment to be in charge and the need to make adjustments, navigate the course. The effects of the setback will also reflect the vital importance of the dimension Fellowship. Connecting to significant others is, more often than not, the solution to sail towards safe waters. And so on. Each of the dimensions of the Journey represents a specific part, which you need to fulfill your mission. You'll need to be familiar, have some knowledge and experience with all five. That's it. Then it will gradually become part of you, infused with your own experiences, readings, skills and stories. And that's the idea, we give you an upstart so you can develop, evolve it on your own, on all the journeys still to come.



CALLING / "If you don't know where you're sailing, any wind will do"

The journey is beginning. You're the one in the driver's seat, knowing exactly where to go. That would make it quite simple, wouldn't it? if you just knew precisely where to go. End goal and starting point known, just a matter of plotting out the course. We use to have a compass for this, now we enter a couple of waypoints into our navigator system. In addition most navigation systems have a very nice coach on board who, in a friendly voice,

tells you exactly where to go. However, in our world the compass still plays a big role, that is, your own inner compass. Carefully paying attention to oneself, deep listening, determining your own course and finding out what the best way is to travel. That's the heart of the matter. This beginning of the journey is about dreaming, seeing with your eyes shut. About challenging and realistic goals. About 'great' goals and small goals. You will come to understand that it is easier to set small goals when there is a great goal. A goal behind the goals, understanding purpose. This stage is also about self-knowledge. Having a healthy portion of self-knowledge is a prerequisite to start the journey. Self-knowledge touches on fear, confidence and self-worth, it is about willingness to learn and ambition. We'll deal with topics such as goal setting, from dream to reality, self-assessment, body awareness, visualization and affirmation.



FELLOWSHIP / "One finger can't lift a pebble"

Fellowship is about the myth of the individual. The very thought that you, as the undivided self, are the sole operator to get the job done and reach for the 'stars'. We will tackle that myth. No matter how much talent, it isn't until people begin to settle, are coming 'home' somewhere that talent reveals itself, becoming evident. A good social environment is vitally necessary for success, fortunately, it is in our genes. And you don't change our genes with two hundred years of industrial revolution and a couple of decades of increasing individualism. We are 'hard-wired' to learn together in a social context that amazingly much resembles the primordial community, the 'tribe'. Some of the topics we're handling are: the web of key relationships; the power of diversity; the magic of conflict; individual and team, practice and performance; team spirit; resonance, intuition and deep listening; co-creation.



DRAGONS / "Where you stumble the treasure lies"

In all the Hero's Tales, meeting the Dragon is a significant moment. A determining moment. 'Will I meet the challenge in the Concertgebouw audition after last month's faux pas in Monte Carlo? And 'is this knee injury going to break my chances to dance in a great company?' And also 'this is my last chance, after so much bad luck it's gotta have to happen now.' And 'with such a lack of means and support I really don't know how I'm supposed to do it.'

Where you stumble, the treasure lies. This means, no more and no less, that you have the nerve to invest in your losses. It takes courage to see the reality as is. It can be very confronting to look at emotions such as anger, fear or shame. We'd rather shut the door on that. Unfortunately, that doesn't make you a better top performer, because shutting the door means stopping the learning process. What is astounding that you often experience yourself in these moments as separate, completely alone, while in reality many of your fellow performers are facing their Dragons as well.

It is honest to say that the 'hero' sometimes needs to go real 'deep' to overcome the hurdle; to slay the Dragon. For us it is important to realize that there is a logic to this. Namely that many great performers have gone deep and that these tremendous challenges will, at the same time, free up often unknown great forces and power! That's the secret and the power of the champ. We'll be dealing with topics such as, rules of thumb for 'mental toughness'; body awareness, listening to the signals from the inside out; sensory awareness; computer based HeartMath program – aligning gut, head and heart; embracing the Dragon – shadow work.



PERFORMANCE / “Stepping into the middle of the moment”

The moment of Truth. Can you be there when you need to be, rise to the occasion, flame? Can you surrender to the moment? In the light of all the preparation, years of practice and training are you able to appear 'full size' on stage? When I asked Freek de Jonge, our national theatre legend: 'Freek, what are you thinking when you enter the stage of a completely sold out Carre Theatre on the night of the premiere?' He answered promptly: ' nothing, emptiness; when I hear the woman in the last row cough twice too much, I need to respond, when the new guitar player in the band misses a chord I hold in, so he can catch up'.

This is about the Ideal Performance State, in the Zone, Flow, or whatever you want to call it. In mythical terms, it is about Ariadne's thread. If you persistently follow it, the great moment is getting closer and closer. The destination is in sight. It is getting exciting. We will address topics such as the stage performer as martial artist; imagery and performance; preparation for the 'moment'; dealing with external (f)actors – geography, physical environment etc.; and of course how do I reach and get into the state of flow!



RETURN / “Bringing home the Holy Grail”

You can't stay forever on top of Mount Olympus. The moment comes when you have to descend with the task to return to the Human Kingdom. Returning with the treasure to serve humanity and to once again take your place in the rat race. This is no small assignment. Many are the examples of heroes who just couldn't do it, who remained on higher ground or just stayed on their 'blessed island'. Even Buddha had doubts if he could get his message with the new insights across. How do you tell in ordinary human language, reducing it to three dimensions, what has happened during your multi-dimensional journey? And explain what can be learned from it? Sometimes, the story can't be explained. You set off to obtain the 'Holy Grail', but things just turn out to be a little different. Take the alchemist in Paulo Coelho's story. If Santiago finally, after a long journey, meets the alchemist, it becomes clear that this man can actually turn ordinary metals into sheer gold. Santiago then asks him why others are failing. The alchemist replies: 'they were only looking for gold'. Alchemy is not so easy to follow for us because it is about the blending of mind and matter. Alchemists are spending years firing, heating and purifying metals with endless patience, to such an extent that finally they themselves become the result. Rather difficult message to tell when returning home from the journey. What Santiago's story re-enforces is that: 'you've got to follow your life's path in spite of what others think about it. Because that's who you are and that's what you do, even if you had all the love and all the money in the world'. Topics we'll be paying attention to are: celebrating success; telling and sharing 'stories'; evaluating performances; scanning the process; transferring knowledge and experience to others.

Every following chapter will be called after one of the dimensions of the Journey. The structure follows the line: Thinking / concepts, theory, philosophy; Sharing / interviews, stories, film clips of guides and practitioners; Doing / exercises, tips, app's. As mentioned before you can read, view, apply the 'book' in every which way you think or feel works for you.

Bon voyage!

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CHAPTER 2: CALLING

By [frankheckman](#) /

CHAPTER 2: CALLING

'The Gods are not in Greece, or in myth books or even in Joseph Campbell's books, they are right on the corner of Broadway and 42nd street, waiting for the lights to change'.

It is four thirty in the morning, the sound of gravel hitting my bedroom window wakes me up. The wind is tearing at the roof of our house. Yesterday we had gale force twelve wind. Down in the yard, my two friends are waving me to come outside. Then three, eight-year-old beachcombers rush off into the dark, under the guiding flashes of the lighthouse. What treasures from far away worlds would be washed ashore this time?

NAVIGATOR



Before you jump into this chapter, just follow me and I will help you see the forest through the trees. Call it your personal navigator for this chapter. To get the whole picture look at the symbol for the Calling. It is made up like a vector with magnitude and direction.

The circle and the dot stand for you, your identity, self-aware and centered in your reality. That's important, because any movement you make in your life, personal and professional, is always referenced by what you call your self. A point for departure, when you go into unknown territory, break through your own boundaries. A lot of what you read on the next pages is about you, your qualities and talents, self-knowledge, your center, grounded-ness. The other part of the symbol is the arrow, indicating direction or that what is calling you and makes you move to your cardinal point. It also stands for identifying your endpoints or goals, which are so critical to move, step by step, toward your desired end state. Working to get clear about yourself and purpose is not, as you will read, a cut and dry method. It requires reflection, analysis, intuition and action. It is about learning, but not just in a logical and orderly way. More like in digging for gold, you drop the sediments in your pan and then shake it back and forth, left and right, underwater. Then when the heavy metal sinks to the bottom of the pan, the gold shines you right in the face. Have fun!

WHAT IS CALLING ME?

Listening

The "Call to Adventure" can come in the form of a message, letter, phone call, dream, temptation, the last straw, or loss of something precious. You get the idea – from any place, time, or person.

Carlo de Wijs, creative director at Codarts (University for the Arts-Rotterdam) tells me: "*when I heard that Rhoda Scott's new album was coming out (1974), I took the train to Paris to get hold of this first release. I just knew this would change my life.*" Carlo was only 13 when he embarked on his one-day odyssey (nobody knew) to Paris. Micha Hamel who just composed 'Requiem' and 'The Red Kimono' for Holland Festival 2012 recalls: "*I was five but I knew I had to play the piano, read and play the music. Funny, I could read music before I could read a book. By the way nobody in my family is a professional musician.*"

And then of course we all heard Star Wars' Leia's holographic plea: "*Help us, Obi-Wan, you're our only hope!*"

In my life's experience, the *call for adventure* is always there, it may be dormant, or overrun by the demands of everyday life, but in the quiet moments; or in crisis it will knock on your door, reminding you of *your dream, your call*. Helping you to re-member the 'you' of you. Then it is up to you to respond. Those are the moments where you feel you should step forward and onto that path. From there on they will be your footsteps marking your path. And then, of course, fear appears. "Can I do this?" "What will my family and friends say?" Or you may say to yourself: "I could respond to the invitation to do audition for Itzhak Perlman's Master Class, but I'm not sure if I'm ready". Or "how, after my father's death, do I act and respond to that gut feeling about the future of the family business?"

For MIT physicist and philosopher Danah Zohar, author of '*Spiritual Intelligence*,' the answer to those moments doesn't reside in that part of the brain we call logical, analytical and rational – the 'how to' intelligence. Nor is the answer in the 'adaptive intelligence' or 'emotional intelligence' (which does set you on fire). With the

emotions settling, the deeper feeling tones will lead you to what you could call 'spiritual intelligence,' our most fundamental intelligence, the vital essence of us being human. This is our transformative and creative faculty. Here's where the 'call for adventure' can be heard. Not analyzed and pulled to pieces, but coming into awareness.

And answering the call is really more about connecting with the image, which in essence resides in us. Pablo Picasso said it: "I don't develop, I am." Yehudi Menuhin received a children's violin when he was four years old. He had a fit and threw it on the floor. Even at that young age this look-a-like violin was an insult to the great musician in the nutshell.

In Plato's myth you come into the world with a destiny, although he uses the word *paradigma*, or paradigm, instead of *destiny*. The same myth can be found in the kabbalah. The Mormons have it. The West Africans have it. The Hindus and the Buddhists have it in different ways, they tie it more to reincarnation and karma, but you still come into the world with a particular destiny. Indigenous Americans from North, Central and South America all have it very strongly. So all these cultures all over the world have this basic understanding of human existence. Only modern psychology *doesn't* have it.

The Call is Within

Pulitzer prize nominee and father of the *Archetypal Psychology* James Hillman turned the world of practicing psychologists on its head by deflating the lob-sided attention to childhood trauma, parents and analysis. Hillman's 1997 book, *The Soul's Code: In Search of Character and Calling*, outlines what he calls the "acorn theory" of the soul. This theory states that all people already hold the potential for the unique possibilities inside themselves, much as an acorn holds the pattern for an oak tree. Hillman describes how a unique, individual energy of the soul is contained within each human being, displayed throughout their lifetime and shown in their calling and life's work when it is fully actualized. Hillman suggests a reappraisal for each individual of their own childhood and present life to try and find their particular calling, the seed of their own acorn.

No, You Can't

All well said by the trailblazers and scholars of the human psyche, but on the other end of the spectrum we have people like Mr. Babbit, from Sinclair Lewis's book 'Babbit', who responds to his young son's request in a restaurant for a special dish: 'No, you can't!' Then justifying his response: 'I have never done anything in my life that I really wanted!' A fascinating personality. But let's face it, there are countless men and women who never do what they really want, who never have a sense of influence over their own destiny, who have never given themselves to anything with heart and soul.

Let's have a look what's happening with you, where you stand. Are you doing what you are? Do you have a calling? What are your talents, what is driving you, what's in your genes? How do you fill in the dots: 'I'm a born...?' Put your head in the clouds, what is your dream? What's in your backpack that you've strapped to your shoulder at the beginning of the journey? What are your coordinates and what 'gear' is available to you for this journey and what is the beautiful final destination matching all this? As long as that is not clear, you can, of course, enter some waypoints into your navigation system, but are you going anywhere? In such a case, any global position is good enough. As is said: 'If you don't know where you're sailing any wind will do.'

According to musician, Frank Zappa all of this isn't too complicated. His credo: "*just dream that you're a great composer, and all will fall into place. 'Because isn't it so that everyone can compose!' Just hold on to the following simple instructions:*

1. *Express your intention to make a composition*
2. *At one point, begin*
3. *Make sure something ever happens (it doesn't really matter what is happening, critics will certainly tell us what it's worth, so we don't need to worry about that)*
4. *Finish, at one point. Or, keep at it and just tell the public: 'work in progress'*
5. *Take a part time job so you can be busy with these sort of things."*

It is of course possible that Zappa is right, but I wouldn't bet on it. Be assured that in most cases when people are in search of their calling, they'll discover it over time through adequate effort.

Great minds have purposes, others have wishes. (Washington Irving)

A Goal Providing You with Energy

Mostly, the goal or purpose behind the goals isn't at all so evident at first. This is frustrating, because your navigation system doesn't really know how to serve you without it. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi said it beautifully in one of his books on 'flow': *"Almost everybody has a goal behind a goal. A goal that justifies what you do, providing you with energy, a goal to which all smaller goals are subservient. You can have it pretty much together at a rational level, but without such a goal it is difficult, if not impossible to discover and attach any meaning to life"*.

Csikszentmihalyi gives a great example when he describes a man who works in a New York deli and his task is to cut the smoked salmon into slices. The man describes how different every salmon is and how he always first needs to feel how the fish is constituted, how it moves when he slams it on the marble table top. That's how I get a 'feel' for the salmon. 'First I sharpen my knife, I really take my time for it, and then cut the fish into paper thin slices: schttk, schttk!' He is proud of his work, completely immersed in his activity. He wouldn't want to do anything else. His story is lyrical; this man is an artist.

In short, we can try to organize our life in such a way that the chances for flow experiences increase, but we must also learn that it doesn't appear out of the blue. It's through our own conscious efforts that we can give meaning to our life. Looking for one's calling is a good path, although it may sound to some of you a little abstract, flaky, or too spiritual. Still it is an absolute prerequisite to deliver top performances: one must try to turn that which gives meaning in life into an autotelic, or self-rewarding activity.

"If one sweeps the street for a living, then one must sweep like Michelangelo painted, like Beethoven composed, like Shakespeare wrote" – Martin Luther King jr.

Touching People's Hearts

Are you a Goethe, a Yehudi Menuhin? Martin Luther King, Mozart? When you were six years old, did everyone in your environment recognize your genius, drive, your inevitable destiny? Or are you, just like us, someone who is aware where the talents are but at the same time conscious of limitations? Or are you endowed with so many talents that you have a hard time choosing what to do? "I can do many things and I really enjoy many things. But what in the world is my calling, for what do I make a real choice, to what will I dedicate myself?" "If I choose one then I'm going to lose my other options, how do I find out what's really best for me?" Or are you someone who makes the decision promptly, realizing that fulfilling an ambition means hard work, tough choices, discipline. Still waiting to see what's happening?

Your dream makes it all worthwhile, the great goal which keeps you pleasantly awake at night, thinking about what steps to take, which targets to set, to eventually reach that dream.

For violin player and teacher Mischa Molthoff searching for the essence or deep purpose in his artistry took an interesting turn. Confronted with the question how he, as an artist, would express himself without the violin clearly put him off balance. His thought process took him back in time, the many thousands of hours of practice as a young boy, the way even his body had shaped itself to the typical violin posture when growing through his adolescence, the voice of his Russian violin teacher, always ready to stop him for improvements, the disciplined and strictly organized life as a musician in the renowned Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orchestra and now his active current life as a tango violin player and teacher. His heart pounded when he realized: "I can't remember seeing myself, not even one day, without the violin!" Then, from a very deep place he responded: "All I really want to do is touch people's hearts." Sometime later, he told me that he picked up an old passion and started to write poetry and that he had, for the first time, left his violin at home during his summer holiday.

As you see the goal behind the goal doesn't have to be a huge insight or revelation. The discovery of your talents, your purpose is important. But it goes beyond self-knowledge, because is equally important that you have an understanding how your talents are working for you. In becoming conscious of these key talents or

qualities you will help yourself to follow your own path. Making it possible to bring who you are to what you do.

When I was doing interviews for the 2004 book I was writing back on the Olympic games in Athens, I was talking to Tineke Bartels. Tineke is an equestrian who competed in four Olympic games, twice a medalist. When I asked her: "Tineke, what was the dream, your Call for Adventure that set you off on this heroic path of four Olympics?" Tineke answered: "I don't dream, I am way too realistic for that." "Then how did it happen, how did you do it?" I asked – somewhat confused. "Well, my father always believed in me, and so does my husband Joep." Then she added: "You could say, the world is my indicator. I just know to what I need to respond, it has always worked that way for me."

And of course there are situations when people are just called upon by fate to rise to the occasion. Young men, like my father, going to war risking their life to serve God and their Country. Or let's go to Berlin November the 10th, 1989, what Pink Floyd couldn't do ten years earlier, human rights activist and best cello player on the planet Mstislav Rostropovich does. He sits down on his folding chair playing Bach suites until the **Wall** stands no more.

Or when singer Bono 'rose' to it – the heart wrenching horror when British troops shot and killed unarmed civil rights protesters in Derry, Northern Ireland was instantly played on every radio station worldwide when U2 turned the tragedy into their signature song 'Sunday, Bloody Sunday.'

The best way to make your dreams come true is to wake up. (Paul Valery)

Nature or Nurture

That we carry the effects of our upbringing with us in the quest for meaning is illustrated in the 'Song of the Bird' by Anthony Demello. A man found an eagle's egg and put it in a chicken's nest. The egg hatched and the young eagle grew up with other chicks. He clucked and fluttered his wings getting barely off the ground just like chickens do. He scurried around pecking into the ground looking for little worms and insects. Years went by and the eagle was getting old. One day he saw an impressive bird floating in royal fashion through the skies. The old eagle looked up in admiration. "Who is that?", he asked his neighbor. "That's the eagle, the king of all birds", said his neighbor. "Wouldn't it be fantastic if we could skim the skies like that?" "Forget about it", answered the chicken, "you and I are chicken." So the eagle forgot about it.

Finding your 'calling' can't be that hard, can it? Then why is it so difficult? Because many of us are resisting it. It seems there is a build-in resistance against this notion of a 'super goal.' Because, suppose that it is true, then what remains is only one true goal. No more choices, no rationalizing, no more subtle considerations. Our ego is revolting, feels threatened by too little elbowroom.

In Joseph Campbell's version of the *Hero's Journey* he calls this 'Refusal of the Calling'. At the moment when the 'crack in the wall' appears, and you need to surrender to step through it, but you hesitate... then in the 'myth' a figure comes forward, a scrawny old man with silvery white hair and a beard. In our reality this is our mentor, coach, teacher, who knows the labyrinth, the salt of the earth. They will mirror, encourage you to take that significant first step. Of course the 'mentor' can be your group, the tribe, your peers that can act as the guide in uncharted territory.

I AM THAT I AM

Much of what you will read below is born out of an attempt the bridge the gap between body and mind. This split, so well established by physicist Isaac Newton, philosopher Rene Descartes and later mechanical engineer, father of scientific management Frederick Taylor, makes it very difficult to get into the experience of a total performer.

Place in the Center

Getting back to my childhood, that early morning when I slipped out into the dark with my friends to collect washed ashore treasures. We were certainly the main actors in a big adventure. The whole world was there for us and we believed so. Like that scene in the wonderful Brazilian movie *Black Orpheus*. Orpheo, a streetcar

conductor in Rio de Janeiro, asks three little boys who are consistently singing every early morning on the same spot overlooking the city: 'what are you nino's doing?' The boys look up disturbed and reply: 'We are helping the sun to rise, can't you see?'

Talking about trusting the quality of your own experience. It will be different when you are six or seven, but nevertheless partaking in your own, subjective experience can prove to be quite magical.

My notion is that when you are capable or have the courage to do so, take the 'place in the center', you are on the Journey. That implies breaking away from the controls that restrain your autonomy, freeing yourself up. Let's realistically say: 'create enough elbow room to make your own choices'. For the *Hero's Journey* is about self-direction.

One reason why it is sometimes difficult to connect to our calling is that many of us tend to live too much in our heads. Getting in touch with our body is absolutely a doorway to a more intuitive path.

Let's Get Physical

To make sense out of the 'landscape of your experience' you need to go beyond cognition, the mental stuff. A different language, a new set of skills is needed to operate in that landscape. It comes down to building on what you could call 'a felt sense', or the bodily awareness of situations, persons or events. Don Juan tells Carlos in 'Tales of Power, Journey to Ixtlan:' 'When someone does something with people, the concern should be only with presenting the case to their bodies. That's what I've been doing with you so far, letting your body know. Who cares whether or not you understand'.

Unique Rhythm

One way to become aware of how the energy within contains or manifests itself is to realize that each of us has an unmistakable identity with its own, a unique rhythm. The beauty is that both are expressed in the way you move. There is a vital link between how you move and how you perform. Movement helps you to get in touch with the wisdom of the body, and the feeling that connects it to your thoughts. Movement is not just the motion of limbs and body in some haphazard way. It is the visible manifestation of your intellectual, emotional and spiritual state. From this core rhythm you reflect and focus your energy and power to the world around you. Movement makes your intentions visible.

"Standing like a tree, thinking like a placid flowing river and full of energy like a hibernating dragon, moving like a tiger. Smiling Potato-man, having no deficiencies, who calmly can stand any attack, yet ... can be swift as the wind, quiet as the forest and fierce as a raging fire. His whirling arms are everywhere and touch and hit unexpectedly as he likes and seem to finish the fall the opponents have to make. His mind is already there before you can think of and even when you start moving before he does, he will arrive before you do."

This is how Jan Kallenbach, my 10th degree martial arts teacher introduces himself. In a real 'movement signature;' he shares his 'palette' of talents and innate qualities directly with us. How different from the common ID's stating gender, length, nationality and race.

Given that each of us have their own movement signature also means that educators can break unintentionally right through it. Because of their drive to deliver top students, they may fail to connect to this core rhythm and fine movement fabric of their students, thereby ignoring their natural and innate talents.

Movement is the link between one's intention and its translation into action. The best mirror you could hold in front of young professionals is to make them aware of how their movement is expressing who they are. Having awareness about how the feet connect to the earth, how the body uses space and what the deep rhythmic patterns are of how we move is a key asset to the performing artist. There are many ways to acquire this 'physical consciousness;' through reflection, meditative practices, yoga, martial arts, to name a few. Jon Kabat-Zinn was the early pioneer (1979) who created stress reduction programs for terminally ill patients. He found that his combination of Buddhist meditation and Hatha Yoga was boosting their immune systems. Later, after much practice based research and many publications, the phenomenon was called Mindfulness. Mainstream today, with useful applications for the performing artist.

'I want to know God's thoughts, the rest are details.' – Albert Einstein

Least Known and Greatest Power

Here's what Arnold Mindell, author of *'ProcessMind, A User's Guide to Connecting to the Mind of God'* says in what he calls 'Process Work': 'What they [Jungian psychologists] are really saying is that there's a flowing or dreaming process at the bottom of it all. This process manifests itself in many different ways, depending on the channel in which we perceive it. One of the channels is *proprioception* — you feel things inside your body in terms of temperatures, pressures, pains, aches, joys, sexual stimulation, and so forth. Or you experience things in terms of visual imagery, or in terms of auditory phenomena, like voices, or in terms of movement — the way you trip over your shoelaces or make certain kinds of gestures — or even in terms of relationship processes. Other people can act as sensory channels for you; you can experience yourself in terms of the behavior of others. And the process also manifests itself through extrasensory or parapsychological channels: The trees do things; the sky appeals to us. This is the channel of the Native Americans, you might say. The unconscious has many ways of manifesting itself.' We can all access it, he says, it is perhaps our least known and greatest power.

The Art of Movement

My own development in becoming more aware about how my body was touching the planet and carving through space came for a good deal through many years of martial arts practice, but my training in Laban Dance in the late 70's early 80's made a huge difference. Laban Dance provided me with a grammar for movement, giving my martial arts practice a new and powerful quality. Not much later, I began teaching and coaching our martial arts club team for competition, combining Laban's dance principles with Japanese combat techniques.

Rudolph Laban (1879 – 1958) was one of the main springs behind the Dance revolution that took place in Europe in the first decades of the last century. He devised a brilliant movement notation system, which makes it possible to work with movement (like in musical score) in new and innovative ways.

At Codarts, when I came on board as a research professor in 2009, I found myself quite soon involved in observing Master of Music students enrolled in the Master of Music artistic research program. At that first hour, I had called out loud that any research activity in need of support could call upon our *Sustainable Performance Team*. With the condition that the research needed to be performance related. Within a week we had a handful of master students from the classical music department knocking on our door. They had dedicated themselves to make their own performance issues subject of their research. A lofty, but tricky challenge, as some of the research topics such as 'stage fright', 'underachievement', 'technical perfection' were difficult to separate from their personal issues. At one point I asked them to bring their instruments to the next session and actually play their research. I needed to see them in action, performing in front of their peers. Then it became apparent to me: 'there is an under appreciation of the body as a means of expression!' I saw head, torso, hips, arms and legs leading lives of their own. At the same time these young, very talented people were doing amazing things. But this way of doing was breaking them up, sometimes literally. The old paradigm of Newton and Descartes was doing its work, separating body and mind, breaking apart the physical structure. I was convinced of the need to help them piece it back together. It became a very basic part of the whole Sustainable Performance program, to resolve, what James Joyce so succinctly says in *Dubliners*: 'Mr. Duffy lived a short distance away from his body.'

Teacher Ciel Werts, part of our 'tribe on a journey', with many years of experience in Laban Movement Analysis, took it upon herself to observe our young artists during performance and afterwards mirror them, in her very subtle manner, as to what the 'movements' were telling... Marijke Tielenius Kruythof, singer/songwriter: "Beautiful stuff and very effective, the objective description of my movements really helped me reflect on my performance."

Coming Home on Earth

With the fire burning at the campsite, I set forth for my early evening barefoot run in the French Vosges Mountains in the summer of 1984. For weeks I'd been camping out in the wild, gradually shedding city life and taking on the much slower rhythms of the rugged wilderness of the Vosges region on the French German border. My aim this summer is to let nature be my teacher, to discover useful and exciting directions for my practice in sports and physical education. My inspiration came from Myamoto Mushashi, the swordsman legend from

ancient Japan, who retreated in nature after surviving 120 life and death sword duels. There he wrote about the underpinning principles of his lethal art in a book called *Go Rin No Sho (Five Rings)*. To open up to the lessons of nature I walked on my bare feet, later on I learned to run, increasing time and difficult (sand, forest, rocks) circumstances.

Three weeks later, at that early evening I commenced my run. First part up hill on a rocky path, my feet finding their way smoothly, more like cushions adapting quickly to the structure of the earth underneath. Then downhill, fast, onto a broad deep meadow covered in the fine mist of twilight. Fast pacing, with my feet touching the soil lightly, I became aware of ‘life’ on my right side, the solid presence of a deer, running at two arm lengths besides me. Sensing a connection I continued my trance like pacing, not breaking the spell. Time seemed to slow down, becoming infinite, as we paralleled across the plain. Then in the middle of the plain, the deer hooked abruptly to the south. I came to a standstill, feeling excitement and at the same time a deep peace. I just knew that this was the experience I had come for. I often refer to that magical summer of 1984 experience as coming ‘home’ on Earth.

In coming to your senses, in search for yourself, never underestimate the powers of Nature. Even the park that runs through the middle of town will do. The medicine of mother Earth, if you’re open to it, can replace tricks, drugs and other aids to wholeness in the wink of an eye. It reminds us, helps us to re-member our own nature. The experience of earth has a rebalancing effect on us. Ever hear the ocean argue with the beach: ‘I don’t want to touch you, my water doesn’t like your sandy structure, let’s draw a line between us. No, of course not. Instead Nature will, if you let her, very swiftly bring your busted, outside in, spreadsheet kind-a-space to a more connected, inside out, spiral-like path. Not stuck in life’s cycles, but co-existing with them.

Just like the Earth, your body is mostly water and minerals and both are excellent conductors of electrons. The free electrons pulsating perpetually on the surface of the conductive Earth, fed by natural phenomena – solar radiation, thousands of lightning strikes per minute, and energy generated from the core of the planet – are easily transferred up, into and throughout the body as long as there is direct contact with the ground.

The Chinese practice of Chi Kung is based on that principle through the art of standing still – connecting to Earth and charging up on Chi (energy). In our practice of *Sustainable Performance* connecting to Earth is a key element for every performer, teacher and student. We are not stuck to any Taoist or other specific method, we just recognize the incredible power of being grounded. It will show its ‘face’ throughout the book.

‘Be what you is, cuz if you be what you ain’t, than you ain’t what you is’ – Gunslinger’s epitaph, Texas

Who Am I?

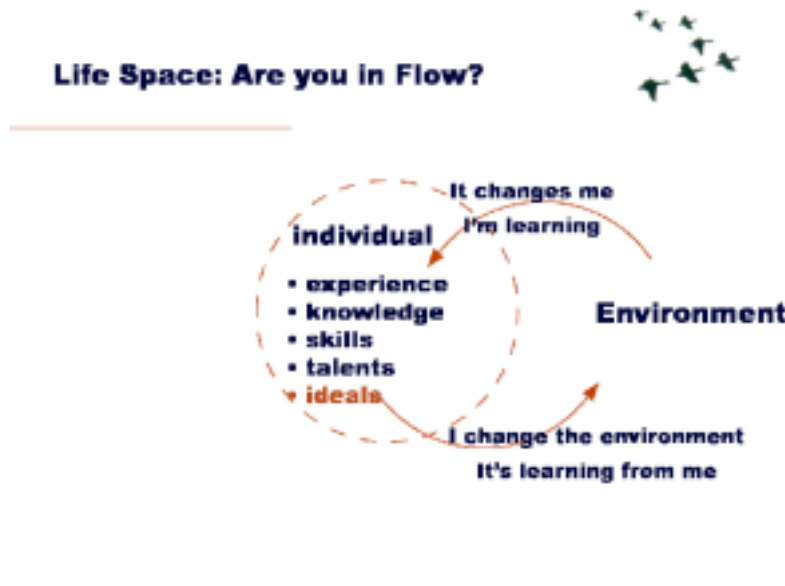
Gert Jan de Haas, neuropsychologist and musician, helped us understand more about the challenge of performance excellence and even the way we study by explaining how the brain works. He is part of the Orthopedic Unit at The Hague Medical Center specialized in treatment and recovery of professional dancers and musicians. Each team member from the surgeon to the O.R. nurse has or has had a music or dance background. Gert Jan is strong at the prevention and recovery side. His basic premise is: “Don’t try to change the nature of the beast, because if you do, it will certainly come to haunt you.” In our *Calling* clinic, he used a self-assessment instrument to give people some idea from which basic ‘drives’ they operate. The assessment is based on how our neurotransmitters work. It sheds light on the measure by which one applies energy to the task at hand, meets obligations (discipline), plans ahead, competes for a ‘place.’ In the end, it explains something about our orientation and motivation. With performing in mind it is interesting to study how these four basic drives really effect us in different ways. For example if someone scores very high on competition it means that you are always comparing yourself to what others are saying about you. Or high on discipline, then practicing hard and on time is a no brainer, etc. The combinations are of course where it becomes really interesting: high energy and high competition and so forth. You get the picture! There are of course many assessments, some of them better than others, but they always require careful delivery. As was the case with our group when Gert Jan explained the difference between someone with high discipline and low planning and vice versa. The discussion was extremely intense, members running the risk of becoming their profiles. After much sharing, we saw how useful this is in terms of understanding different approaches in learning, practice and performance, adding value to the question: ‘who am I?’

LIFE LONG LEARNING

Life Space

Much of what is written before can be seen through the prism of learning. So far I've presented different pathways to connect to your calling. Hoping to create awareness that learning, as we know it from our formal education, is but one aspect of a much broader spectrum.

Twentieth century social scientist Kurt Lewin, used the term 'life space,' or an individual's 'field' to describe that person's motives, values, needs, moods, goals, anxieties and ideals. Lewin believed that changes of an individual's "life space" depend upon that individual's internalization of stimuli from the physical and social world into the 'life space.'



Lewin, just as Csikszentmihalyi, stresses the notion that we can learn from our own experience. Moreover, that's the way we evolve. If you look at the picture above it shows how our learning and development is really contextual. We are 'open systems' in the world, our society, community and families. Our point of reference is linked to our identity, our history, the shoulders we stand on, talents and skills, our perspective and ideals. The environment in which we co-exist is very dynamic, even turbulent at times. It provides us with multiple stimuli and patterns. The way we perceive and process these is called learning. In other words, the environment can change us! The way we respond and act as a result of this learning can, reciprocally, change the environment! It's on that leaky boundary of 'me' and 'the world' that renewal and development takes place. Or in Csikszentmihalyi's terms: 'on the edge of boredom and anxiety we can reach a state of consciousness so focused that it amounts to absolute absorption in an activity. It provides a sense of discovery, a creative feeling of pushing to higher levels of performance — into a new reality.'

Dominant Way of Knowing

We aren't always aware that the way we relate to the world is rooted in the way we think about and view the nature of reality. Our basic assumptions about (institutional) learning determine much of how we develop in our arts. Epistemology is a philosophical term for theories about how it is possible, or not possible for people to gain knowledge about the world. The conventional educational paradigm says that people are basically incompetent to learn from their own experience. The distrust of the individual's perception then makes place for rote memorization of a vast comprehensive body of facts and figures. These beliefs about knowledge and learning, also called the scientific method, have become by far the dominant way of knowing in modern society. By sharpening the powers of analytical abstraction and logical inference.

Ecological Learning

The conventional educational paradigm has been challenged since the last century by modern pioneers such as the social psychologist Kurt Lewin and social ecologists Fred Emery and Eric Trist. Psychologist James Gibson

published his ideas on 'direct perception' or ecological learning in 1966 and 1979. His research shows that the environment has an informational structure and that people have adapted and evolved over time to recognize and extract information directly from the environment. In the ever-changing environment, they can directly perceive meaningful invariances and patterns relevant to their survival. When I asked Australian Professor Merrilyn Emery, my mentor in 'social innovation' in the nineties:

"What's the idea about direct perception and informational structure?" She responded: "When I was a 12 year old kid my parents, both teachers, were working in an Australian Aboriginal community in the South East. I would be playing with the other children in the rugged, arid and very hot outdoors. Looking at the ground I would just see sand while my aboriginal friends saw all at once many forms of life taking place beneath the surface!"

Ordinary People Can Make Sense Out of Reality

In the summer of 1992, Australian Fred Emery and his wife Merrilyn were resolving a long lasting conflict on the American Mexican border. The habitat was being destroyed by the fast growing, cheap labor production industries on the Mexican side of the border. Environmental rules and regulations were stepped upon grossly. Years of court cases had worn the parties out. The Emery's put fifty of the key stakeholders in a 'room' for three days to end this tragic and costly conflict for once and for all. Being an observer of this incredible process and, in retrospect life changing experience, I saw the impossible happen. People, who in daily life were fighting each other over the past years in US and Mexican courts, were actually finding common ground, creating a shared future and tackling the issues. No experts, talking heads, or a special breed of leaders. Just fifty people engaged in deep dialogue, writing the facts and data on huge sheets of butcher paper, standing in front of their joint 'data base', extracting the meaning, drawing the lines connecting the dots. Later, in the evening in our hotel in Las Cruces, I asked seventy-year old Fred Emery: "Old man, what's the secret?" He replied: "Well mate, ordinary people can make sense out of reality!"

As stage performers you are exactly doing that: making sense out of all those stimuli called sound, movement, light, texture, space, all at once. During an optimal performance, you are continuously 'reading and responding.'

GOALS

Nuts and Bolts

Once our 'fellowship' had some clarity around the process of finding purpose, the *Call for Adventure*, we began to converge into more practical and tangible end points. 'If your dream is to have a solo career in one of the world's Philharmonic Orchestra's or if you want to dance in one of top ten dance companies on the planet, what will you have achieved one year from now?' 'What are you capable of in technical sense, what key experiences have you undertaken, what mental/psychological and social skills are within your reach, and so forth?'

Research, back from the Olympic days, shows overwhelmingly that people with a concrete and clear goal in front of them are many times more successful than those who are wavering and vague about their end-points. It makes sense. When I first ran across the literature on 'flow' it struck me that, against popular belief, people were reporting their flow experiences more at work than in their free time. It turned out that meeting an above average challenge with an above average skill – one of the principle flow conditions – is more easily found in a structured output oriented work environment with than in our unstructured open ended leisure time.

Once, quite a few years ago, we delved into the failures of so many research projects. Why did they take so much longer than expected, amply exceed their budgets, and why didn't they deliver the expected results. The answer was simple. Failed research projects had as their most significant factor a lack of clarity in their purpose/goal definition. So nobody was really paying attention during the 'ride', as to timing or achievements or, more importantly, whether the research was still on course. An impossible situation to begin with, because with no clear goals, there is no feedback. Any wind will do, any global position goes. Moreover it appeared that the questions to which the research needed to answer were all but formulated in a clear and focused way. Too many questions, too broad and often ambiguous. In any case, no questions that helped to set the clear course for the research, let alone making it possible to check progress.

The above is just as relevant for any project, ambition or 'adventure'. But it is one of the weakest parts among athletes as well as artists. When preparing for the 2004 Athens' Olympics with the Dutch Olympic Team, I realized through the exercises in the *Calling* clinic that many athletes and coaches did not have their goals and

targets clear in front of them. They, of course, had their worked-out training programs and agenda's filled with competition and qualifying matches. All activity based. I was aiming to put athletes and coaches in charge, with personal, responsible determination. Not puppets on the string toward the greatest sport event on the planet. The result was that we organized special workshops with all the Olympic coaches to overcome this blind spot.

When we, tribe on the *Journey* at Codarts in 2010, got to this 'nuts and bolts' part of the departure we split into a buddy system. Pairing off would ensure that in between *Basecamps* and *Clinics* partners would check, mirror and support each other in realizing their targets, which we called 'stepping stones'. After defining a tangible goal a year out we spoke out that creating momentum was crucial in the beginning stage. It is like crossing a river, jumping from stone to stone. Once on the other side, nothing can stop you any longer from reaching the end of the year goal (and eventually your dream). Every time you get closer because you have attained or overcome something you feel energized and stronger and, as a result, more confident. We invested time and energy in this first stretch, keeping the community together, talking about our 'human condition' openly – 'I forgot about it, was too busy, scared, can't do it' - resourcing ourselves to really 'cross the river'.

And the beauty of it is that in learning together on this very practical level of the 'stepping stones', targets and goals, we truly enjoyed ourselves. Stepping stones ranged from: 'by the end of next week I will perform Mozart's piano sonata 3 in C for my peers' to 'My performance level at the final exam at Circus Arts can go up two notches if I keep up the daily practice on the balance board and apply the mental rehearsal (visualization) program, or 'with my currently initiated acting lessons and coaching I feel more confident to do next month's opera auditions.'

LET THE JOURNEY BEGIN

License to travel

One by one, some forty students and teachers from Codarts enter cafe 'Le Vagabond', an old well-known music cafe, in the heart of Rotterdam. It is a midweek November night and now is the time sign up for the journey. Today, this place looks like the recruitment point of the VOC, Dutch United East India Company (1602 – 1798). I'm sitting behind a little table, interviewing each of the potential 'sailors', asking them why it would be opportune for me to let them on board? What useful or rare qualities are you bringing with you? After hearing their special and useful 'gifts', we both sign their *License to Travel* and drink the traditional 'oorlam' (a small glass of Dutch gin) in one big gulp, to mark the moment of 'contracting'.

Put Some Tobacco into the Fire

Sustainable Performance team member Maarten's old VW bus with the side panels hinged upwards is the coffee & tea checkpoint on this cold, crystal clear, white February morning. The journey is about to begin. Down the snow covered path, in the middle of the open field in the park, the crackling, the flames and the white smoke of a fire is looking for company. Not much later the whole tribe is standing around the 'sacred fire' offering one by one tobacco in the traditional indigenous way to say 'prayers' and intentions for a good and safe journey. Breaking through the membrane

We are standing atop the 600 ft. Euromast, Rotterdam's observation tower. Way down we can see the fire still burning in the middle of the park, way out over the Rotterdam sky line, the sun is breaking and we can see infinitely far on this early Monday morning. 'Go to where you face the direction of your childhood, of where you were raised.' People go in all directions on this huge 360-degree deck at the top. 'Go back in time and remember that first time you pushed the boundaries, broke through the membrane, felt in charge, undertook something at your own choice (most likely without consent). Riding your bike to school for the first time, using your dad's power tools. Step into the experience. What is that felt sense, what is your body saying.' 'Now, start walking, over the deck, sense your feet, your body and pick up any clues, signals or gut feeling from where you're being called. Face the direction and perceive what happens. Step into the unknown.'

SHARING

Jump into the Deep End

I'm talking with Brian, active member of our wandering tribe, who teaches voice at the pop academy. Also an active musician, semi-professional soccer player, and he just started a new business, a recording studio in which

he fulfills the role of coach/producer for young beginning musicians. I ask him: 'Brian, what's your motive to help these youngsters?' He responds: "Our Journey made me think, I saw the advantage of a development path in building a career. The Journey has a structure, it is easy to understand and simple to follow. Yeah, to think of it, it starts with the calling, if you know where you want to go, then you can figure out what it takes to get there. You might need to write a certain song to get where you want to be. In that process I can provide support."

"Getting to know yourself, what your strengths and weaknesses are, what you want to express, how you want people to see you and how you materialize that. Then you can make the translation to your 'instrument'. What's possible with your voice, what's the best use of it, maybe you shouldn't be singing in the middle range at all, maybe just singing, very delicately, in falsetto will do, because it makes it so much more interesting and matches with who you are." "There are quite a few unhappy artists in the music scene. Partly due to their own fault, but also how the 'system' works. It is hard not to jump on the 'band wagon' to get your share of exposure, make 'the deal', sign the contract and end up getting stuck, not really doing what you're capable of. Or you can, of course, run your own show, but for that you really need a vision, a clear concept. If you're not up to that yet, it helps to have the right support."

'What in the Journey really left a mark on you?' Brian pauses, then responds: "Boxing! In the clinic Fellowship, I'm still using it, powerful stuff, that such a basic exchange of two people boxing, attitude, intention and emotion, can tell the whole story. Revealing to experience what it does with oneself even looking at the others in action. Very real, if you realize how to get in control and respond in the 'fight'." [In a workshop of a few hours participants learn the basic moves of boxing and test themselves to reality in a real boxing match. Wim Keyl and Robin van Solingen sublimely facilitate contestants in their 'emergence of reality'. They belong to a group called Chu Chin. Chu Chin in their daily work helps to confront the 'Youth at Risk' and supports them into a more constructive and healthy life. They use fighting as their point of entry and communication philosophy].

"Sustainable Performance was enormously useful. It really inspired me to look for ways to get myself in the best possible shape to perform. I've always been operating on the safe side, to start this business I had to take risks, make investments. It's kind of a jump into the deep end, but at the same time with a sense that I can't make a bad fall, because I know very well how to stay afloat."

You Kind of Go through a Keyhole

Jet graduated from Codarts the year the Journey started, for us an opportunity to work with a young artist who is dealing with the reality of earning her bread as a musician. She is also one of the three people in the program who ran through a special neuro-feedback program aimed at improving performance. We will expand on it later when we talk about performance. Jet is building on her career as a professional singer and just finished her own production under the name of 'Farewell Jamaica.' She is also partaking in a series of roundtable talks where theology, philosophy and the meaning of existence are discussed. Reflection is part of the practice at the roundtable [during our Journey we often used 'deep listening', a form of reflection on the space we occupy with the use of our instruments]. She sang for the roundtable just recently.

My partner said: "you are so wrapped up in the past, let go, focus on the future!" And I said: "Yes, you are right." "For example, not so long ago I had to sell my piano, which I've had for the last 15 years, I'm just ready for a higher quality one. My response was: but it is such a sweetie (laughing). And then I'm really happy that the buyer is such a nice person. As if the piano is a living being! But breaking ties, cutting strings, I find it very difficult. It feels very physical because for me it isn't so obvious that there is something where I am at home, because I never really experienced it. So I tend to hold on to things I've grown accustomed to, it makes me feel good."

"Singing at the Round Table went real well. I noticed it had an enormous impact. It created a profoundness in one way or another. Music can have that strange effect, that if everyone is really listening, you kind of go through a keyhole and you all come out the other side with less limitation, the walls have vanished. In fact one should be singing with all people. There is something about singing, whether you're a singer or not, something in the use of the voice in combination with music, it is healing, I believe."

"In my branch most classical singers do auditions, get the musical score mailed to their home address, prepare and try to get the job. It's great to make a living that way. I also think that would be great, but still...I do feel

drawn to manifest myself in other ways. Because I feel I have something to tell, it may sound arrogant, but no, I really feel the urge to tell something (laughing).” “Then I realized why I’m singing. Because it is a way, not like music in which I have to show myself as the singer with the beautiful voice, it really isn’t about me, it is more a connecting medium. The very moment that you’re making music together and the musicians are in sync, you’re connected! But also the audience is looking for fulfillment, for what the music can do, I can be the bridge to make that happen. For the singer this is fulfilling as well, to be the connector to the audience. It makes me happy. Simple, think of it, it is like food, food for the human spirit. Doing this with my fellow musicians helps us evolve. Wouldn’t that be crazy and wonderful?”

DOING

“Now and again, it is necessary to seclude yourself among deep mountains and hidden valleys to restore your link to the source of life. Breathe in and let yourself soar to the ends of the universe; breathe out and bring the cosmos back inside. Next, breathe up all fecundity and vibrancy of the earth. Finally, blend the breath of heaven and the breath of earth with your own, becoming the Breath of Life itself.”

– Morihei Ueshiba, founder of Aikido

Although the above seems rather philosophical, the truth is that the frail Aikido master Morihei Ueshiba came to these statements through trial and error, in his practical research to what the ‘basic martial stance’ should be under all and most trying circumstances. His ability to maintain and regain his basic composure while defeating multiple adversaries is legendary. In fact, when you look at him in action, it doesn’t look like fighting at all, it has the appearance of a fascinating dance!

But for our interest and practical use, what are these ‘secret’ principles underlying the spectacular performance of great martial artists?

Exercise 1: Wait for Me I’m Your Leader!

Here is how I summed it up. But first experience the following assignment:

- Find a partner, facing each other, put your hands forward, palms facing down.
- If you lead, put your hand under the hand of your partner, barely touching. The ‘follower’ rests her fingertips very lightly on the back of the hand of the leader. The ‘follower’ closes her eyes and the ‘leader’ starts moving his hand, without leaving his position. High, low, far, close, round, straight, all-in absolute silence, with the intention to have your partner follow you.
- Change tasks, follower becomes leader and vice versa.
- Share the experience.

Same assignment, but a bit more challenging. ‘Leader’ doesn’t only move his hand but start moving through the space.

Make sure you keep moving high, low, far, close, round and straight as well.

- Change the lead.
- Share the experience, what happened, what do you feel?
- Were you aware what the effect was of your intentions (direction, speed, connection)?
- How is it to lead? To follow? What’s your preference?

The above exercise stands for many kinds of situations in which we manifest ourselves. The underpinning is to notice how it feels, to be aware of your own body and movements and those of your partner. I have started many a Journey with this exercise, saying that if people would only apply and master the following three guiding principles, even the toughest challenge would be a piece of cake.

First of all, to lead one needs ‘presence’, which means as much as feet on the ground, all senses open, be here, now (no mind wandering off to appointments later in the day). Second principle is ‘contact’, that is, experiencing the whole person whose hand is touching you. That slightest touch reveals a whole world to you. Call it connection or empathy. The last principle kicks in when the first two are in place: ‘attention’. With attention you

can lead your partner safely (closed eyes) to any destination. Energy flows where the attention goes. Without a single word being said you and your partner communicate many thousands and thousands of bits of information in this exercise. As performers make sure you get a grip on these three – regard them as valuable commodities: ‘presence’, ‘contact’ and ‘attention’.

Exercises 2 and 3: Skills at your Fingertips

If you click on the App’s, there are a couple skills that fit right along this line. The idea is, of course, to download the app’s on your smartphone. So they are your disposal at all times. One of the app’s is called ‘Body Scan’ which is a good beginning to experience: relaxation; a better contact and acceptance of your body; a variety of bodily sensations; a better focus, concentration and self awareness; breath as the key between your inner and outer world. Another app is called the ‘Power Spot’, This technique, if you train it regularly, helps you to quickly get into a balanced state (of consciousness), even under high pressure.

Exercise 4: Horse Whispering

I’ve always loved to work eclectically, to piece together the best of certain disciplines and apply them successfully in other contexts. Someone who has done that extremely well goes by the name of Sally Swift (1913 – 2009). Swift, a very accomplished equestrian, came up with the concept of Centered Riding, a method of riding and riding instruction that is based on the idea of having the rider seated in the most effective position. It combines elements of martial arts, yoga, and T’ai chi ch’uan with knowledge of horsemanship to create a system where the rider is centered and balanced in the saddle. Swift worked, when diagnosed with scoliosis, with Mabel Todd, author of the Thinking Body and learned techniques for body awareness. Later the Alexander Technique taught her to work with areas of the body rather than with specific muscles. Through the ancient knowledge of martial arts and the use of ‘both sides of the brain’ she ended up with a balanced approach.

Thousands and thousands of people, young and old, are using this sensitive and very effective method worldwide and when you take a moment (as I did) and really look at the principles of Centered Riding, you realize you just uncovered the secret of Morihei Ueshiba.

With a little imagination you may substitute horse for your martial arts ‘opponent’, or your fellow musician, your instrument, your dance partner or the ‘object’ in your act.

Put these principles to work for you:

- Breathing from your abdomen, using your diaphragm to draw air in as effortlessly as a bellows. This so-called “belly breathing” enhances relaxation and lowers your center of gravity. The effect on your horse can be dramatic—you can actually “breathe him to quietness,” says Swift.
- Soft eyes, or a broader-view gaze, as opposed to a focused stare. Soft eyes allow a greater field of vision, increased awareness of your own and your horse’s body, less tension, freer forward movement and better breathing. “Hard eyes inhibit your breathing and produce tension.”
- Building blocks, or proper balance, with each part of your body aligned according to your and your horse’s center of gravity. This enables you to remain properly positioned and your horse to move with freedom and fluidity. “Think of children’s building blocks and how they must be stacked to remain standing,” suggests Swift.
- Centering, a mostly mental process with a surprisingly physical result. Centering is finding and operating from your true center, located down low and deep inside you, just in front of the bottom of your spine. Centering lowers your center of gravity, giving you a deeper seat and extraordinary security in the saddle. “It makes you bottom-heavy, like one of those pop-up dolls that are weighted at the bottom so they always right themselves, no matter how you tip them.”
- Grounding, or becoming fully aware of your connection (through your seat, legs and feet) with your horse and (through your horse) with the earth. “Being grounded enables you to feel at one with your horse and to influence his movement without developing resistance in you or in him,” says Swift.

Exercise 5: Grounding

You can practice to be ‘grounded’ by shifting the locus of attention several times during the day to become fully aware of what you are actually doing in those moments. Start simple, by taking a walk for example. Just be completely awake to how you walk, which movements you are making, how your feet are ‘rolling’, how the lift-off takes place, what the rhythm of your breath is, etc. In Buddhism these kind of exercises are called Mindfulness (you walk when you walk, you eat when you eat). They are designed to get a grip on reality, to boost the experience of reality. Because these experiences are so obvious, so intimate, so ordinary, they easily go by unnoticed –‘It is a rare fish who knows it swims in the water.’

You could say that being grounded implies experiencing your body in all its fibers, pores and cells. To develop the sense of grounded-ness it helps to be aware of your center of gravity. The center of gravity, in eastern traditions also called Hara or Tan t’ien, is located about a hand width below the belly button (in China they call this the seat of energy, chi). The center of gravity controls all forceful actions, as many of the larger muscles attach around the pelvis. Your center of gravity is the point of departure for putting your actions into the world. The more you are conscious of your physical center of gravity the more you are inclined to act from this center, and not fragment. From this centered position or grounded-ness, your actions have optimum freedom. To experience this, standing or sitting up, shift the body, back and forth, from left to right, to align it with the perpendicular, which, from zenith enters the top of the head, dropping through the pelvis all the way down through the floor to the core of the earth. Place both hands on your belly and calmly breath towards your center of gravity. With both feet (or ‘sits bones’ when you sit) firmly planted in the earth there is a sense of place and stability. Try it out, even though you may feel a bit lost in the beginning. In short:

- Stand on your feet
- First put your weight towards the toes and then the heels: shuttle back and forth
- Come to a halt, stand still
- Make sure your knees aren’t locked
- Hold your hands on your belly, breathe to the ‘center’
- Be aware of your environment
- Feel your feet touching the ground
- Sense the ‘perpendicular’ ->crown -> center ->earth
- Move!

Exercise 6: Imagery

With imagery you can, if you apply it regularly, lift your performance level beyond expectation. With imagery you may experience that the performance for which you are preparing appears like you’ve been there at the moment you are delivering. You strongly feel that you’ve done this before, it seems familiar and easier than you thought. Just to give you an experience: imagine you take a slice of lemon in your mouth and you carefully bite on it. Move the slice slowly with your tongue through your mouth. If all is well, you should by now feel the acidic lemon juice suck into your tongue, and soon sense the forming of saliva. True?

In sports, visualization techniques have been around for some time. The golf player, who first in crisp images sees where the ball is suppose to land, bright white on the velvet green. The next ‘film’ clearly shows how the ball is getting there (flight, from departure to the precise landing). And the last imagery makes clear what kind of shot or swing is needed to turn the prior films into reality. And then to get in the groove, one must repeat this process.

The word imagery is, in truth, misleading. Imagery is not just about seeing, rather it comprises all the senses. People have a preference for certain senses: one can see more easily, the other may prefer hearing, smelling or sensing. Whatever your preference, imagery has a greater chance of success if you’re able to relax. Let the breath get calm and regular. The idea is to get into a sensible receptive state in which you can evoke the whole image with all the senses. In such a state imagery becomes embodiment. For the processing it really doesn’t matter whether the experience is real or visualization. The evoked image has a sensory-motor charge: the body goes to work with that information!

“Visualization not only locks the experience in the brain so the body’s performance is more automatic, but is also stimulates sensations of success” (Maryann Karinch).

How do you do this? For starters make sure you're in a relaxed state. If you use the Body Scan App, it will get you there. The key is, that if you practice more, you can shift quickly into this relaxed or alpha state. But here are some steps:

- Sit in a chair, feet firmly on the ground, or lie down.
- Scan the body, start at the feet, all the way the top of your head. Just be aware.
- Then take notice of your breath. There is nothing you have to do. It goes all by itself. In and out, expansion, contraction. Just ride your breath
- Now be aware of the palms of your hand. Then the soles of your feet. Next the top of your head. Now be aware of all of these places on your body simultaneously, hands, feet, and top of your head.
- Return to your breath. Put both hands on your belly and follow the movement. Put yourself in a situation where you are performing a piece of music, a dance or any other act.
- Really perceive the place where you are. Are you inside or outside? Who are you performing with? Who and how is your audience? Is it light or dark, warm, cold etc. Now really get into the performance, so you can 'physically' experience your efforts. Just stick with the experience. Take your time.
- Then 'wake up' from the experience by counting slowly from 1 to 5. Say to yourself on count five: I am relaxed, sharp, alert and I feel good.
- Now debrief yourself (or each other) by just expressing your experience of the imagery exercise you just did. Don't judge, just report on what you experienced.

Next time, do an imagery workout, get into a performance as you desire it to be. Engage yourself in the imagined most desirable performance with as much senses as you can. The more precise information you present to the subconscious mind, the better your 'body' can execute in real time (re read the example of the golf player). Imagery is like training in the gym. Once a week isn't going to do it. A few times a week can be awesome. Here we started Imagery pretty straight forward, from the lemon slice to becoming aware of your movements during a past experience. Imagery can be put to use towards many ends, from just calming down to preparing a performance to improving a technique.

"When a trick is too fast to visualize in detail, visualize the clean start and finish. Your body will handle the rest" (Maryann Karinch).

Exercise 7: Flow and the Reconstruction of Meaning

Flow is the crimson line running through the whole concept of Sustainable Performance, and you may link it to Ariadne's thread if you shift to the mythological dimensions of the Journey. In other words you really need to practice with it. And we will present many flow assignments and exercises throughout the book.

Flow is an utterly desirable state, a state that kind of strikes you by chance, some people are likely to say. True, if you push for it, or try to force it into existence, chances are that very little will happen. That is frustrating. Because we like to repeat pleasurable experiences. Why is it so hard to realize? Because consciously focusing on the experience is the exact opposite of what is so characteristic for a flow experience: the absence of ego! Compare it to falling asleep, the harder you try, the less it works. Nevertheless, it happens.

Flow is a natural state, happening all the time. It's one of the ways we learn, evolve. There are many ways to work with the experience of flow and the different elements that Csikszentmihalyi's research (e.o) has produced over time.

Now, let's focus on the 'Calling' and see how the recall of past experiences can help us get the job done.

A decade ago, when working with a career management/outplacement firm, we were often confronted with managers/clients who were quite disillusioned. Losing their jobs to mergers and acquisitions, which were quite in fashion at that time, their working lives dramatically tumbled from successful careers and abundant confidence to, in the experience of our clients, absolutely nothing and feelings of worthlessness. To get these people climb out of the hole and take charge of their life we had them do an assignment called: 'achievements'. They wrote a series essays about achievements in their life of which they were particularly proud. I gave the assignment a twist and asked clients to reflect on flow experiences from the past, when they were still youngsters up till now, present time. The essays became a very powerful living document: the reconstruction of meaningful moments and events in their life. And, by putting these 'stories' together the meaning emerged and transcended

as essential qualities giving them the ‘backing’ to readjust their ‘destiny’ and choose a new direction. Amazing how this process was generating so much energy!

Keeping this in mind, it is a small step to tweak the flow exercise to your need to hear your Calling. Get ready, here we go:

- Go sit on a chair and first get some peace of mind.
- Pay attention to your breathing, just follow it, in and out, expand and contract.
- Be aware of your body, sense the weight of your body, carried by the chair, carried by the floor. Close your eyes. If all is well, you are beginning to feel calm, still.
- Now, recall a moment in your life where you got on top of things when facing a real challenge, a situation that was possibly making you a bit nervous, but then you decided: ‘I’m going for it’.
- Really connect with this memory, and relive the experience. Become part of it again. Stay connected and ask: Where am I? With whom am I here? What does this place look like? Is it light or dark? What kind of colors am I seeing? What am I hearing? What do I taste? Temperature? Smell? What movements am I making? How does my body feel? Do I feel emotions? How deep are they?
- Stay with the experience.
- Now return to the space where you are sitting, open your eyes and stretch yourself.
- Share your flow experience with someone else (if possible). Speak in the present tense (I walked down the stairs and then I...etc.). Now write the story the way you are telling it in your Travel Journal. Do this exercise up to eight times over the next two weeks. Write each flow experience in your Travel Journal. Draw a time-line so you can see how these personal stories color your life until this day. You will be surprised that these meaningful moments emerge and announce themselves to you. Make sure you prepare well each time you begin (like a small ritual).
- After those two weeks review, preferably with someone that you know well, your flow essays. What are some of the common threads that run through these stories. What is hidden underneath? I am talking about qualities and talents that underpin the actions in the stories. Are you, for example, consistently ‘seeing’ perseverance, or humor, courage or flexibility at crucial moments? Are there parts in the story that make you proud? The process to get to the meaning that runs through the essays is like gold panning where you shake it in a left to right motion under water to cause the gold, which is heavy, to work its way down toward the bottom of your pan.
- Write these qualities, talents and the derived meaning from these life experiences down. Call them your ‘flow recognition points’. But above all realize that you made sense out of important experiences in your life. And this awareness will help you to stay on your ‘path’.

Exercise 8: Inviting the Future: a Meditation

In the context of this chapter, imagery can also be used to reflect on the Calling. Instead of having a pre-set idea, you can sit, calm down, prepare yourself and invite the images that will shed light on your Calling. This opening up to the unknown or a future state is a form of meditation. The images that appear in your minds’ eye, or the physical sensations and feelings that you experience all contribute to your search for the Calling. Take your time, find a quiet place where you won’t be disturbed and get started. It is probably a good idea to keep a travel journal in which you jot down your reflections and insights.

Exercise 9: Goal Setting

Follow the instructions on our App on Goal Setting!

Exercise 10: Extra Reminders on Goal Setting

The research literature (and my personal experience) shows inevitably that people who are successful in setting goals really exceed their expected performance levels. So boiling it down from the image of a desirable future state to the clear-cut tangible targets is something you should really do. Here are some guidelines you might find useful:

1. Make sure your goals are realistic: they must match the situation, they must be achievable, and based on an honest appreciation of your current performance level, your capacity, drive, dreams and ambitions.
2. Your goals need to be challenging enough. Don't put the bar too low, but also make sure that you can 'stretch' to the next level.
3. Make your goals measurable: define your goals and plans as specific, detailed and concrete as possible.
4. Set goals that you can manage yourself, goals over which you have control.
5. Determine in what time frame you want to reach your goals. Make use of a time-line if you think you need various sub-goals to reach your end goal.
6. Realize that working with several sub-goals is a juggling act: shift your attention when called for, keep the important goals in sight, set priorities but be flexible enough to adjust when needed.
7. Use all the feedback coming your way, and continuously consider if the feedback is cause to fine-tune or adjust your goals.

Also take care that you:

- use targets – concrete short-term goals -, as part of a plan to reach your long-term goals.
- work with goals of different skill domains (technical, tactical, social, knowledge, mental, physical).
- use performance goals.
- put your goals on paper: 'Ink it, don't think it!'
- develop strategies to reach your goals.

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CHAPTER 3: FELLOWSHIP

By [frankheckman](#) /

Through the cacophony of a thousand students, professors, and staff enjoying their Friday lunch in a huge, ancient, coliseum like structure at Istanbul Technical University (ITU-established 1773), the sounds of music emerge. From many directions and levels surrounding the lunch crowd come musicians and a dancer, playing and striding slowly down huge marble staircases towards a ground level area where a keyboard player and percussionist have already pitched camp. When the artists arrive and merge together on the ground level, the improvisation turns solid, charged and focused. Then one voice transcends all of the music, breaking open the entire space.

In an instant people move from their lunch tables to the balconies and the broad stairs, drawn to this unexpected concert. Vocals from classical to pop, subtle sounds of the kemence and the baglama, bass flute, violin, dance, keyboard, percussion and saxophone are pulling in the audience. This continuously moving group is dynamically and rhythmically expanding and contracting like a single organism. The crowd is listening intensely, feeling they are witnessing a very special kind of magic. When the last tone fades, the audience goes insane with cheers, applause, dancing with joy!

World Ports, World Cities, World Arts is the name of the project where Rotterdam meets Istanbul. Teachers and students from Codarts (**Codarts University for the Arts** <http://www.codarts.nl/EN/>) meet with students and teachers from the Istanbul Conservatory. Language, culture, religious barriers? Yes. But NO artistic barriers. Istanbul-based Jazz musician and musicology teacher Robert Reigle drove home the idea that there are no artistic barriers when he stopped all of us on Day Two of our rehearsals, at a point when energy had sapping dramatically during the afternoon. His intervention? ‘Sit still and from complete silence let the dialogue emerge, through your instruments’. ‘It is time you get to know each other’, Robert said in his typical soft-spoken tone. In less than a quarter of an hour, a free flow of music, movement and meaning took place, leaving no doubt who was who in that space. Energy was abundant.

Navigator

Welcome to the chapter Fellowship. My fellow researchers tell that this dimension of the Journey is like the keystone in the bridge. And yes, it is true that many of the fellow travelers that accompanied us on the Journey gave us the feedback that much of their excellence in performance had something to do with being part of this group. I agree, the dimension of fellowship plays a huge part in finding flow.

Let me explain to you what my guiding thoughts are in this chapter. It will give you something to hold on to when going through it. The important idea throughout the chapter is that we ARE social beings. I start by shedding light on the overrated concept of the individual. Firmly kept in place by mechanistic worldviews. Then I shift to how we exist and function in groups from the beginning of time to now. There are examples throughout the chapter. The point I’m trying to make is that creating together in this ‘shared space’ is ultimately simple. It is more like the ‘resurgence of the real’ (title of a great book by Charlene Spretnak). In the last part we’re looking at the phenomenon of dialogue and most importantly, how to be the architect of an environment conducive to flow. And of course in the very end, exercises and practical tips. Enjoy.

One finger can’t lift a pebble

The focus is now on Fellowship: about key relationships, the social fabric, reciprocity, and the environment in which we live and work. In the introductory chapter, this is what I said: “Fellowship is about the *myth of the individual*. The very thought that you, as the undivided self, are the sole operator to get the job done and reach for the ‘stars’. We will tackle that myth, again here. No matter how much talent, it isn’t until people begin to settle, come ‘home’ that talent reveals itself, becoming evident. A good social environment is vitally necessary for success. Fortunately, it is in our genes. And while much has changed in our world, we have not changed our human genes with two hundred years of industrial revolution and a couple of decades of increasing

individualism. We are ‘hard-wired’ to learn together in a social context that amazingly much resembles the primordial communities, the tribe, the clan, the band.

Said differently, ‘forcing’ yourself to the top may not get you there. Chill, because the fact is, humans cannot regulate their moods well on their own, at least not for long. Prisoners in solitary confinement have been known to go insane. It’s normal to feel anxious or depressed when isolated. As the saying goes, “Attachment is not just a good idea; it’s the law.” It’s also some of the best health insurance the planet offers. Humans are, under normal circumstances, driven more by a need for attachment than by other sources of pleasure. We need this interdependence, not just at key points of our childhood, as Freud postulated, but throughout our lives.

This is, as is said before, because we are wired to be tribal, pair-bonding primates – not self-sufficient loners. When in balance, you thrive on close, trusted companionship and warm affection. Companionship releases healthy levels of dopamine and other “feel good” neurochemicals, such as oxytocin, which help keep us in balance. “It’s much less wear and tear on us if we have someone there to help regulate us,” explains psychologist/neuroscientist James A. Coan.

Unfortunately our highly “economized” society and many of its (educational) institutions and corporations seem to favor, educate, reward and idolize the ‘lone rangers’. In fact, that’s the world we’re living in.

Test yourself

Now, let’s get back on the path of our journey and take a look at some of the questions from the self-test in the introduction. What would your response be to:

- Who are important to you in trying to reach your goal(s)?
- Who is involved when making decisions about reaching your goal?
- Whom do you really need?
- Do you communicate regularly (like every two weeks) with each of these people about the goal of your journey and your progress? Yes or no?

If it is difficult to answer these questions (you may not yet have thought them through well enough), there is still a lot to learn. And much to be gained in better managing your direct surroundings, shaping your relationships and social environment.

PLASTIC HEROES AND NEWTON

Paradigms

The way you look at yourself, observe others, and the world around you is filtered and fed through a ‘frame of mind’ by which you operate. Paradigm is another word for it. For years the ruling paradigm said that it was humanly impossible to run the mile under four minutes. When Roger Bannister broke through this ‘magic barrier’, all of a sudden plenty of people were able to do it! Your ‘frame of mind’, your paradigm, marks the space within which you can exercise your thoughts, allow emotions to be felt. It is your ‘diaphragm and focal length’ observing reality. Your window to the world determining your view on ‘reality’.

‘Flying machines heavier than air cannot possibly fly’ (Lord Kelvin, president of the British Academy of Royal Sciences, 1895)

This frame of mind, a set of beliefs, has consequences for your self-image and the way you engage and bond socially. The ‘plastic hero’ or better known as the ‘couch potato’, the one who is going berserk over the bad performance of his favorite basketball team, that ‘hero’ is looking at his world through a keyhole – a tunnel view. He sees himself as unchangeable, permanent, fixed. To him the universe is a universe of particles, a constellation of dead matter. Particles which, like billiard balls, show their hit-and-bounce patterns with Newtonian predictability.

The real Hero, on the contrary, takes part in a living universe full of motion. A world directed by the nature of relationships. He effortlessly plays and lives in a world full of possibilities and realizes that his identity is in fact

a dialogue with himself over time. So, now back to you — to really understand which person you are — you have to understand the relations that you are. I am me, I am the other, I am part of a group. If you recognize yourself as the coach potato, then it's high time to shift paradigms.

Lonely but not alone

Let's continue on this intriguing path of personal strife. Because, let there be no mistake, you have the ambition and passion to distinguish yourself from others; why else would you be reading this? But realize that if you take it too far, you run the risk of getting isolated. And there's the rub, because if you attach more importance to the need to belong, you yourself, as an individual will disappear into nothingness, a meaningless number in the masses. The trick is to find that 'fine line', to find balance.

Honoré Hoedt, renowned Dutch Olympic coach of the middle-distance runners, states: "You can't practice being surrounded by tens of thousands of people and with dozens of cameras pointed at you. But you can increase the mental resistance in the build-up to the Games. You have to stimulate the personal growth of the athlete. Humility is worth gold, but in world-class sports you have to stand up for yourself. Furthermore, as a world-class athlete you can isolate yourself as much as you like, but it won't help. It is of the utmost importance to share experiences, whether they're positive or negative. Otherwise you could end up in a tailspin as an individual."

It may help to 'map out' your environment. To get a picture of all the factors and actors that are effecting you on your journey. So yes, take time to recall your direction and relevant goal. Then, against these coordinates find out *who* in your direct environment is or are part and parcel to your success – such as family and friends to professionals, teachers, coaches and more. At the same time make sure you know the difference between important contacts and actual relations. On a Twitter-and-Facebook planet there's huge difference between a 'follower' and a genuine connection.

There is an interesting exercise to get realistic about this stuff, it helps you to figure out who are your companions, who are your allies. You can roughly divide your environment into three categories:

- opponents,
- fence-sitters (spectators who are merely entertained by the whole thing) and,
- allies.

Put yourself in the center. Allies you draw in the inner circle, opponents around the outer circle, fence sitters somewhere in between. Indeed, if you know your fence sitters and opponents, you better know how to direct and invest your energy.

The lesson of the songbird

On a chilly autumn day, when thousands of birds flew south to escape the freezing cold of winter, a little songbird decided that he would not join the rest. 'It's a waste of time', he reasoned. 'After all, next spring I'll have to fly all the way back again.' Soon after that however, an extremely cold weather front descended upon the land and the little bird realized that he would have to leave. He spread his wings into the air, but was quickly paralyzed by the cold air. His little wings froze and he fell from the air. By pure coincidence, his lifeless body landed in a big haystack and then onto the hard ground, next to a group of cows. Just when the almost frozen heart of the bird was about to stop beating, a cow came by and pooped on top of the bird. The warm manure covered the bird and saved its life; his heart started to beat powerfully and his wings defrosted. Happy to be alive, the bird started to sing a beautiful song, which – as fate would have it – drew the attention of the farm cat, who snuck closer, saw the cow dung, located the bird and ate it.

This story ends in a double moral:

- *Not everybody who gets you into poop is necessarily your enemy.*
- *Not everybody who gets you out of poop is necessarily your friend.*

Silent communication

'Jan,' I ask a master student who is struggling to get the focus on his research correct, 'what would you rather have done, besides playing the violin.' To my surprise his quick response is: 'I would have played soccer, I was pretty damn good, you know. They even scouted me to play in the young professionals at ADO (top club of the city of The Hague).' I'm looking into blue eyes that beam with excitement. Why didn't you? 'My parents,' was his short answer. (*Jan is researching the topic of (his own) stage fright. He is a talented musician. When practicing or performing on stage he stands, 6 feet tall, stiff as a board. As if his body is a burden.*)

Acting on an impulse I ask him: 'What position?' 'Striker', he responds. 'OK, I said, while crumbling a newspaper into a big ball, set those two chairs apart like a soccer goal'. 'I'm the mid-fielder giving you a deep pass, you, in a heavily defended goal area, must shoot quick to score'. 'The ball flies through the space and Jan, spinning around on a dime, takes it full on his instep, blasting the ball straight between the chairs'. Unbelievable, this guy is great! 'All right Jan, position yourself again, feel the breath of the offender in your neck'. 'And now be aware of your body' - *alert, grounded, ready to strike*. 'Pick up your violin and play as the striker, play to win'! I now see and hear a very vibrant, very present musician.

By the way, Jan did well, ended up with a scholarship in California. The sessions with Jan got me thinking. It seems that his steepest learning, with the deepest neural connections, combined with the joy of doing it, had its origin in practicing and playing in a group. In the part of the city where Jan lived, street-soccer is very popular. 'Streets' are serious battlegrounds where teams challenge each other to the hilt, pulling the best of their abilities.

Night games

I remember that as a boy scout, we had one of those challenging night games. Our patrol of seven had to transport a big heavy locked box with a loose bell in it. Every abrupt movement caused a clear tingling sound. The idea was to pass through enemy territory without being caught. Pitch dark night, lips sealed, adrenaline rushing. Somehow our team spirit was always there as we made it across.

I kind of figured that you didn't have to learn or practice this. On the contrary, with a lot of discussion these sort of assignments fell dead in the water. It seemed that by observing and allowing, the right action just happened. There was this kind of silent communication that was also very effective.

Much later in the 1980's as I was coaching the school basketball team, I wouldn't be screaming from the player's bench, but sat with the spectators at distance. I followed the idea that the best of the team would come out, if I stayed out of their business.

This has always intrigued and fascinated me. It was the drive behind the research in the 1990s on flow in the workplace, looking at the quality of work of groups, departments at Sears & Roebuck's Allstate Insurance Company.

When reading Csikszentmihalyi's book on flow in '92 it just struck me how important the relationship to and with others is in the experience of flow (development of self-consciousness). The social fabric became very relevant to me. And I held on to the idea.

LESSONS FROM THE KUNG BUSHMEN

Evolutionary path

It's when I stumbled across Stuart Kauffman's *At Home in the Universe* that I thought to myself: 'It now seems very likely that flow has something to do with how we humans have evolved'. Stuart Kauffman, a pioneer in the science of complexity, indicates that Darwin's view of the survival of the fittest (humans had larger brains, thus they were fitter than other species) is too easy an explanation. Kauffman suggests a broader evolutionary path:

"Complex systems that exist on the boundary between order and chaos are the most likely to evolve. They have somehow acquired the ability to bring order and chaos into a special kind of balance. On this edge of chaos is where life has enough stability to sustain itself and enough creativity to deserve the name of life. The edge of chaos is where new ideas and innovative genotypes are forever nibbling away at the edges of the status quo, and where the most entrenched old guard will eventually be overthrown."

Following this line of thought, it is probably more than a coincidence that the potential for quantum change in physical systems, described by chemists and biologists, as existing on the boundary between chaos and order bears a strong resemblance to the complex psychic state of flow that exists on the boundary between boredom and anxiety. In both cases the evolution of new properties or traits and skills proceeds more rapidly at the edge of order and chaos.

Csikszentmihalyi talks about the boundary condition as being not only essential but as being a preferred condition:

“That we enjoy being on the boundary seems a gift from providence; it could almost be interpreted that humans have a vocation for evolution. But it is more likely that all living things – or at least those that will evolve – prefer to dwell on that precarious boundary.”

So a little sidestep into evolution. But what does that mean for our Fellowship? Are we possibly wired for flow and adaptation? The view of Darwinists and neo-Darwinists is that our ancestors were at a great disadvantage living in a wilderness under continuous threat of death from stronger, faster and bigger predators. Supposedly the only reason our ancestors survived (as the fittest) was because of their large brains and their ability to use tools. Today we are coming to a better understanding: that our foraging ancestors seemed to have had an innate ability to create complex, well-knit social groupings and that this ability, much more than the making of tools, accounts for the development of the large brain.

Learning and adapting together

Before the advent of agriculture and much later urbanized living – 98% of our existence on the planet – we worked together as groups of hunter-gatherer bands. Our ancestors had a rich emotional and sophisticated social life, surviving and thriving in circumstances and environments in which modern man wouldn't last very long.

My friend, Charles Ehin, emeritus professor of management at Westminster College in Salt Lake City notes: “The social organization of our ancestors in small nomadic bands, clustered around tribal communities could provide some of the desperately needed knowledge to reshape ourselves, our work, organizations and institutions today.”

Not such a bad idea considering our era, where the ‘old economy’ is under scrutiny and people across the globe are looking for a more people centered, earth based economy.

To illustrate how useful this knowledge is, listen to what Canadian anthropologist Richard Lee, who has studied the !Kung Bushman, has to say:

“The ancient, time-tested strategies for the exploitation of a broad spectrum of local food resources effectively shatters the long-standing anthropological myth that the so-called ‘hunting and gathering’ way of life – to date as the most successful, persistent adaptation man has ever achieved and a way of life that was, until the dawn of agriculture some 10,000 years ago, the universal mode of human existence – was exceedingly grim and precarious, accompanied by chronic hunger and misery.”

“Despite the austerity of their landscapes,” Lee notes that the adults in the community can reliably meet the basic subsistence needs of their nomad population, which includes a high proportion of dependent young and elderly members, by each devoting an estimated twelve to nineteen hours per week — about six hundred to a thousand hours per year — to the quest for food.” Not a bad balance when compared to the quality of work life and home life of modern urbanites.

Hunter-gatherer communities were highly adaptive... The social fabric of our minds have evolved for a great part of our existence in a society roaming about in small bands. The notion of responsible group self-direction in our past puts the *autotelic* experience of flow in a social context. The continuing dynamic situation in which the tribe has to pull all possible resources together to respond and adapt adequately to drought, hostilities from other tribes, seasons, threats of predators and dangers of the hunt, as well as opportunities for culture, health and overall well-being is the ideal context to break through outlived patterns by producing and re-experiencing flow.

Command and control

'Unless a business eliminates all people (it's totally automated) it will always have an informal self-organizing social system that will exert a tremendous amount of influence on its operations' – Charles Ehin

Learning from our past experiences – we can't help ourselves, it's in our genes–, 'shared learning' and 'shared space' are key concepts. The importance of performance in and thanks to the social context can hardly be overestimated. Using the terms 'social assets' and 'social capital' emphasizes this importance. It's pretty bewildering to see how hard it is to convince managers in charge of this importance. Businesses, government, and our educational institutions are full of managers who fight their environments and themselves. And the last thing they want is to give their co-workers the space and responsibility to coordinate and manage their own work. Giving them room to participate, collaborate and learn together? The risk and fear of 'them' taking command is too big.

It takes two

The perspective of Michael Chance from the Social Systems Institute in Birmingham, England should help us see our way back to flow. He says that our social life and corresponding mentality are constructed on a relatively simple underlying framework upon which we weave our affairs. *Two evolutionary choices for organizing ourselves...* Chance says we have evolved in response to the demands of our social existence. This evolution, he notes, consists of the interplay or tension between "two antithetical types of social system with markedly different thrust." "In our evolutionary history," he says, "we tend to function in one of the two mental modes...."

- "In the *agonic mode*," people are concerned most with *self-security*... attention is much taken up of being part of a group and with what others think of us so as to assure acceptance by the group. People are concerned with rank hierarchy, convention and maintaining good order, as an expression of this inbred security mechanism." In an agonic mode people's concerns are *predominantly self-protective* and we engage information processing systems that are specifically designed to attend, recognize and respond to potential threats to our physical self, status, and social presentation."

- "In the *hedonic mode* (typical of nomadic cultures), Chance says, "we are more free to form a network of personal relationships that typically offer mutual support we give free rein to our intelligence, our creativity, and the creation of systems of order in our thought and social relations." This, Chance says, is "because attention when released from self protective needs, can be used to explore and integrate many new domains."

THE ART OF COLLECTIVE FLOW

Jazz at work

Miles Davis, enters the studio with his band, no hard concepts on the table, and records an entire album in nearly one take: '*Kind of Blue*', that's jazz at work! It's the solo player who shines because the rest of the band supports him perfectly. It's one solo leading smoothly into the next. Musicians move easily and frequently between leading and following. It's improvisation. It's jamming.

But these are just big statements for what in fact is a highly sophisticated implicit 'language' amongst the musicians and their environment.

Two San Francisco State professors, Ron Purser and Andrew Speight looked into this language of collaboration, innovation, flexibility, agility, resilience, individualism, exploration, freedom and decision-making.

They explored the mind of jazz to bring the teamwork concepts of jazz ensembles into the business world.

Speight, a jazz musician and lecturer in music and dance, was already exploring how to look at music in unconventional ways. Purser, a professor of management and expert in organizational development and social creativity had long been interested in how jazz could be used to teach teamwork skills.

"If you look at the research on creativity over the past years it's been primarily focused on the individual," Purser states. "It's only in the last 15 years we've started to think about it at the team level.

“When it comes to working collaboratively, businesses can learn a lot from the way jazz ensembles operate. Jazz groups are “forever innovative,” said Speight.

“Jazz musicians have to be disciplined but they also have to be loose and playful,” Purser said. “They have to be able to take risks but also to operate within their comfort zone. You play solo but you also accompany. So the leadership in a jazz group is moving around.”

In conversations with musicians and managers in real time performance, the process of making music was beginning to make sense. This group flow has a vocabulary. Concepts such as flexible structures, shared leadership, dynamic synchronization are pieces of the process.

Jazz and improvisation are often looked at as unique, but it is not an exclusive ‘jazz thing.’ In all the performing arts, from classical music to circus arts, from choir singing to the dance troupe there are ‘free zones’ where, through improvisation or interpretation, the individual and their group are challenged.

Passionate leadership

The Orpheus Chamber Orchestra from New York, whose twenty-six musicians draw full houses in Carnegie Hall and won many prestigious awards in the music industry, performs without a conductor. The unwritten rule is that the person who feels the most passion for a specific piece, is in charge. The members of the orchestra are all so experienced and professional that they always perform their very best within this leadership model. They do have a few understandings which are interesting to review, mainly because it is not apparent that they apply to an orchestra:

- There are no stupid questions and no stupid answers
- It’s okay to admit that you don’t know something
- Keep asking and asking, until you truly understand
- If you don’t agree, say so, and explain why
- Sarcasm, bullying and humiliating are prohibited
- Don’t make it personal, but express your opinion about the ideas of others
- It’s good to have your own opinion

Team flow

In the the business world, the jazz ensemble and chamber orchestra would be called High Performance Teams:

- These teams have a mission.
- They know exactly what they are here to do on earth, and what members can ask of each other.
- And they are good at what I call collective or deep listening.

This model differs dramatically from the one in which everybody has their own little task that he or she performs day in, day out, under the supervision of the boss. It’s also very different from the top-class athlete who trains his specialty in seclusion, and who isolates himself from the rest to find his path to eternal fame using his secret training recipe. The difference is the same as between self-pollution and cross-pollination. High Performance Teams are versatile and resilient; the members of this team are capable of consciously continuing to think and act. They are experiencing *group flow*, as it were.

Jeroen Delmée, former captain of the Dutch national hockey team, tells of his experiences as the captain of Den Bosch. One national Dutch championship was an meet between them and Eindhoven. The local game was to be decisive. On paper, Den Bosch was not the strongest team. For Jeroen himself, there was another complicating factor: his dad was the coach of the Eindhoven team. This was difficult: he now had two opponents to beat, and neither could be underestimated.

Jeroen scored a goal early in the match. From that moment, the Den Bosch team got wings; it was a turning point in the match. In Jeroen’s perception, it was as if the entire team engaged turbo mode and switched to a higher gear. Positions, anticipation, long-distance passes, blocks: every move was successful, just like that. The whole organized its parts. Den Bosch became national champion. It was a beautiful experience for the team, but

especially for Jeroen himself. Although it's difficult for him to say this – because it could sound like bragging – he had the strong feeling that as the captain of his team, his goal early in the match had been the motor behind the transformation of the team. He felt that he had 'fine threads' in his hand that lifted the entire team to a higher level (of consciousness). He had played an important part in the creation of team flow.

Designing for flow

The obvious questions are:

- Is group flow created by coincidence, or can you evoke this phenomenon?
- Is group flow controllable, is there a way in which you can make sure that this extremely effective and productive state of group flow happens?
- How do you arrange that it's not the boss, coach, bandleader or conductor who decides operational matters, but that the professionals 'on the floor' receive the freedom to do that?

The answer is: yes, you can evoke flow. Look at the New York Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, Miles Davis, or read the beginning of this chapter about the Istanbul/Rotterdam project. In these examples the conditions for optimal performance have been fulfilled. By moving the responsibility for control and coordination of the work to be done to the musicians (players, dancers) themselves. This is essential. To be able to understand the necessary elements for actually making this happen, we have to look at some theory. Get ready.

Social capital

"If you change the environment (the social structure within which the performance is to take place), everything else changes automatically." With this statement, Australian Fred Emery – father of self-management – made a clear point at the end of the 1950s that changed how people/managers thought about the structure of work. Translated into our times: he subtly showed the difference between the expert-driven change methodologies and an entirely different approach that fits our nature much better. As you have read before, his vision stems from open system thinking.

Why did he come to this conclusion? Simple: he noticed that the world was becoming so complicated, that many questions could not be solved by one individual. The all-knowing boss was simply not going to make it on his own. In short, Emery saw that co-thinking and co-deciding worked better. He thought that the work should be organized by the people who actually have to do that work together. Thinking and doing united. An additional advantage was that this is much more appealing to people: it's what we're designed for!

If there is anything we should be proud of, it's that we, more than any other species, have developed the capacity of maintaining an intricate web of social relations! We excel at mobilizing social capital, with the purpose of achieving endlessly more together than individually. People are social animals. They don't only need each other to perform better, but also to feel comfortable and at ease. It helps to know why and for whom you are putting yourself out there. Your talent will develop most if you have a place to come home to.

Fred Emery's basic assumption that the doers decide how to go about the job at hand, inevitably leads to the feeling of responsibility for managing the relationships between the participants themselves and the relationships with the direct environment. It is required that the team members clearly understand which commonly accepted goal they are pursuing. This mobilizes the social assets.

Emery called it the ABX model: A and B are the team members, X is the job they are facing. His advice: stop bothering people with training that aim to change their behavior, there is absolutely no proof that this has ever worked. Rather let them agree about the job they are to do. As they achieve success together, maybe something will happen on a personal level. The fact that professionals are responsible for the coordination and control of their own work, marks a fundamental difference in the attitude and mentality towards performance. Factors leading to failure appear to be hidden in the basic structure of organization.

Six criteria for optimal performance

People do not live to perform. People perform to live.

To be productive means to be creative. To be productive means to have the right to exist. The trick is to design your life in such a way that performing is enjoyable. This should include an environment that is inviting and that nourishes our need to learn and to perform. In the 1950s Fred Emery and Einar Thorsrud went on a worldwide search of the things people need to perform well. They came up with six human needs, six criteria that were clearly connected to performing well. The funny part is that these criteria are not dependent on culture; they apply anywhere in the world, if slightly different for every individual. You should therefore not regard them as demands for you or for me, but as conditions, as a social matrix that should be met by the performance environment. Turning it around it's fair to say that a lack of these criteria cause a lot of pain, on all levels. Maybe Emery's greatest insight was the perceived threats to the individual at work actually reside in the organizational structure! The perceived threats they identified are:

- *No elbow room for decision-making*
- *Lack of challenge to learn,*
- *Repetitive work without variety,*
- *The absence of mutual support and respect,*
- *The denial of meaning in work,*
- *Lack of perspective or future.*

These findings of Fred Emery and Einar Thorsrud have found their way and practical use to literally thousands of working situations and places across the globe. It was this very research, adapted by Robert Karasek, that we used in 1994 to see if these criteria were the conditions that would facilitate flow experiences for people at their jobs. When we found that a positive relationship existed between these six criteria and flow the focus has ever since been on performing and the 'building' of the best performance environment.

Fred Emery meets Orpheus

When flying from Amsterdam to New York some years ago, I read for the first time about the New York Orpheus Chamber Orchestra in the on-board flight magazine. The catch of the article was that the author had used the *social matrix* as a yardstick to review the Orchestra's self-management approach to classical music! A few years later, in March 2007, Orpheus became one of the first winners of the Worldwide Award for the Most Democratic Workplaces.

Diversity

How is this going to help you in the forming and performing of your band, ensemble or dance troupe? Well, you also could use the social matrix as a yardstick measuring the team's motivation and use the findings to clear the path of any obstacles. But before that even, when you are assembling your group, make sure you are not overstepping your own shadow. Most people, when they select members for a team, pick the ones that are 'images' of themselves. In the end that won't work. *Nature is most resilient when it is diverse.* And with us humans, of course, it isn't any different.

Shared Space

Before you start rounding up people for your ensemble, band, etcetera, understand that the ultimate team performance has everything to do with having a clear purpose. Knowing what you're here to do. Then the 'pieces of the puzzle' get clear and with it those people that you want on board. With them you create a 'shared space' in which you can enquire and elaborate on the mission, concept, ideas and direction.

Once you are working as a team, the social matrix is a great tool to check (on a regular basis) how you're all doing and what to improve. This is not, as you may have guessed, a solo exercise, but a piece of research you do collectively with your fellow travelers. Everyone may experience it differently, so you have to look at each other's experiences in mutual coherence. Here is a bit of elaboration that will help you understand what to do. Further down in the chapter you'll find the exercise.

1. Adequate elbowroom for decision-making. The sense that people can influence their own work and that, with the exception of specific circumstances, they don't have to ask permission for everything. Enough elbow room to feel empowered but not so much that they do not know what to do.

2. *Opportunity to learn continually*. Such learning is possible when people can set goals that are reasonable challenges for them and get timely feedback on results...

3. *An optimum level of variety*. Through the avoidance of boredom and fatigue, people can gain the best advantages from settling into a satisfying and effective rhythm of work...

4. *Mutual support and respect*. Conditions where people can and do get help and respect from their co-workers...

5. *Meaningfulness*. A sense of meaningfully contributing to society. Also, to have knowledge and understanding of the whole 'product'. Many jobs lack meaningfulness, because people get to see only such a small part of the final product that meaning is denied to them...

6. *A desirable future*. Put simply, not a dead end job, but one with a career path, which will allow personal growth and increase in skills.

The six criteria are universal. Acknowledging the universal character requires vision; to actually act on it requires leadership. New leadership.

New leadership

When running a business, a band, orchestra, or dance company one has to be vigilant, and possess a set of accurate antennas. You have to know what's going on, sense what's coming and make sure that everyone is involved. The classical role of the leader retains its value, but you cannot deny that the traditional approach is failing to work more and more often. Directors and managers have to be capable of switching from individual, directive management to 'democratic' leadership, in which the entire group shares, feels and carries the responsibility for the results. Each co-worker or artist takes on a bit of leadership. They are of course responsible for their own development, but they are just as responsible for the performance of the team as a whole. If you don't do well, you are putting me at a disadvantage. It's about shared responsibility, whether it's for the nitty-gritty of getting prepared for tonight's performance or for the continuing existence of the company in the face of trying times.

Social architect

True leadership mobilizes the social assets, it creates the possibility to take decisions, mutual respect, suitable challenges and an environment in which the work is not fragmented. It's an environment in which there is room for 'shared learning'. New leadership creates a perspective on the future and mobilizes the knowledge and creativity within the group... the leader in the role of social architect.

Fortunately, this role aligns much better with human nature than the role of the old top-down boss. The new leader navigates much more by his own compass than by any acquired skill. Managers who experience 'wholeness' themselves will build towards the 'wholeness' of the team that will have to deliver a performance. The motto is: know thyself, and bring who you are into what you do. Not everybody will be pleased with this approach, but you'll find that out soon enough. Either way it's a tremendous mental split; you will have to be capable of switching gears fast. In a complex and hectic environment it's important for a manager to find the peace of mind to be steadfast. People in leading roles will therefore have to discover what really matters to them, what suits them and what's actually acquired nonsense.

'Purpose and principle, clearly understood and articulated, and commonly shared, are the genetic code of any healthy organization. To the degree that you hold purpose and principles in common among you, you can dispense with command and control. People will know how to behave in accordance with them, and they'll do it in thousands of unimaginable, creative ways. The organization will become a vital, living set of beliefs' – Deo Hock, founder of Visa

Talking about 'new leadership', here is what Gustavo Dudamel, native from Venezuela, says to his musicians after he conducted Mahler's 2nd symphony with the Gothenburg Symphony: 'I always see music proportionate to life and I see this symphony, which lasts about seventy minutes, proportionate to life. We are living love, we are living horror, we are living passion'. Dudamel continues: 'It is the most amazing beautiful pleasure to be in front

of you. When I came here five years ago I only had two words, perfect, but... All the time those were my words. When I was preparing for a Tchaikovsky concert, I was thinking, how will I explain to them what to do and what I want. But immediately there was this beautiful and special connection, there was love –snapping his fingers – in an instant’. He continues: ‘the instant became eternal, and that is what we are giving today. Mahler’s 2nd symphony is about a new beginning, is about eternity, is about love, is about beauty, is about to believe, about the universe, God. And this, we have achieved my beloved orchestra’.

Deep listening

‘When do I play’, Andre Heuvelman, classical trumpet player, is asking me.

Three hundred senior managers have come together in a program called ‘Beyond MBA’. We are the guides throughout the day, inviting them to shift gears and join us in a (life-long) journey.-’

‘I don’t know yet’, I reply. We are standing in an open space in the middle and people are sitting, like the ripples of a pond in which stone has been tossed, in concentric circles around us. After a short welcome I ask them to be aware of themselves, each other and the space. Now, listen attentively what rhythm wants to emerge here. When you ‘get in touch’, play it with yours hands, your feet, your voice. Let it move through your body!

Then from a deep stillness, rhythm enters the space, finding its way, hands clapping, feet tapping, voices sounding. Andre’s trumpet resonates, bringing out the melody. There is one huge articulated sound, three hundred people in one rhythm.

Over the last four years, my professorship of Sustainable Performance has participated in several project activities in Dutch society. In collaboration with other institutions on topics such as *the Future of the Infrastructure in the Netherlands, Sustainable Agriculture, Transformation of the Economy*. Our contribution was based on the belief that artists may perceive different, may have another angle on the complex issues. Although situations were very different the artists, through their openness, attentiveness, intuition and the faculty to express, were of great value to the process. We called this process of tuning-in: ‘Deep Listening’. In the Economy Transformer project, the entire Codarts Otra Tango Orchestra played to remind participants to keep their feet on the ground, for ‘we are the voice of the people’ (tango in Argentina).

The Dutch Ministry of Roads and Water Management brought five project teams of bright students with very different disciplines from all over the world together. Their assignment? Develop out-of-the-box solutions for the burning infrastructural issues around Climate Change, Traffic Congestion, Transportation, etc. When Codarts students from Dance, Music and Circus joined them for one afternoon in their six-week project, many called it a breakthrough moment. The artists listened in on where teams were with their projects. Then withdrew to create artistic feedback in the form of music, dance and circus arts. Small groups of performers were dedicated to each project team. The feedback performances were in view of everyone. I heard the seasoned Dutch water engineer Andre Noordergraaf exclaim in surprise: ‘This is the first time I see an emotional response from our Chinese students, I thought it was a cultural thing’. The young artists who were picking up vibes and listening ‘deep’ were portraying what was happening on a group process level in those teams. It figured, many of the hurdles that hindered their progress were found just there.

Dialogue, a new kind of mind

What makes the difference when team members unite or when they work in separation, fall apart?

Discussion is like percussion. The higher the verbal skills of the participants, the more interesting it is to listen to. Or to participate, of course. But if the goal is to declare a winner in the end, it’s just squabbling. Discussion is not a suitable tool to invest in your fellow travelers. It is about me against you.

Dialogue fits the bill better: a conversation which allows a group access to a greater pool of knowledge and experience, of common ‘meaning’. The goal of this dialogue is to get beyond the individual concept, to be open to something bigger than yourself, so everybody comes out a winner. ‘A new kind of mind is created based on the development of common meaning’, physicist David Bohm described the result of the dialogue.

Bohm, a protégé of Einstein, is one of today's foremost theoretical physicists. Bohm says: 'Mind and matter are two parallel streams of development arising from a common ground beyond both. Echoing the findings of the new physics Bohm goes beyond them by saying: There is an underlying realm, an implicate order. The implicate order, also referred to as the "enfolded" order, can be seen as a deeper and more fundamental order of reality. In contrast, the explicate or "unfolded" order include the abstractions that humans normally perceive as their reality.

Through Bohm the long held (since childhood) mystery of 'silent communication' is solved on a different level than the social sciences and psychology did. His implicate order is what Gregory Bateson called the 'fabric that connects all'. You can look at it physically and can also feel it internally as consciousness.' Thought, Bohm says, does not merely reflect things; it is something in and of itself. It is a real factor in the world'.

Dialogue proved to be an excellent way of contributing to the Sustainable Performance process. And as we just learned, dialogue does not necessarily have to be verbal. Deep listening - *(self)observing and allowing as I recalled in earlier experience* – brings the group through the point of stillness into the implicate realm. In our own language: in touch with the 'group genius'.

Here are some notions on how to get the dialogue going and what to watch out for in our day-to-day, four-dimensional hustle world. Distrusting each other means having one foot in the grave. Fellow travelers who distrust each other usually mess up their journey. Several failed Himalaya expeditions could serve as examples. A good dialogue brings about the mutual trust that is necessary to travel together.

You need respect and trust in a team. You don't necessarily have to like your teammates. (John Syer, sports psychologist).

To create a good dialogue, a few conditions have to be met.

First of all, fellow travelers demand of each other that they open up, make their knowledge public and express their opinions and feelings. In the dialogue, you accept each other at face value, you take the others as they are. Furthermore it's important that all information is accessible to everyone. Fellow travelers encourage each other to listen well and to find the meaning behind the words, to 'read' the intentions and to explore each other's situation. This approach differs a lot from what we are used to; in a discussion we normally try everything to convince the other person of our ideas, thinking that this will get us ahead. But the opposite is true: that way nothing new could ever come into being, just more of the same. A good dialogue clearly shows the difference between perception and opinion, and will even make you expect and appreciate it. Thus, the level of honesty and sincerity increases. Feedback is of course essential to this process.

Shared ambitions and shared sadness make people aware of what and who they are. (Anonymous)

Secondly, you need to feel like you can share your way of viewing things – the way you see the world – with others, and that the others will accept it. You need to feel like not only your perceptions are respected, but also that your fears and your feelings of insecurity can be heard. You need to feel that you can share your aspirations and your dreams with the others. Sharing perceptions, fears, aspirations, opinions and feelings creates a sense of belonging in the group. It stimulates relationships and friendships; it's an investment in your fellow travelers. And you will find out that there is much more Common Ground than you even thought possible.

Trust develops when people experience an open dialogue, a conversation which welcomes all visions and all perspectives, and in which you notice that your fellow travelers share some of your perceptions, that they have the same cares and dreams.

Wait for me, I'm your leader!

All this sounds great, but how do *you* measure up, I hear you say. Well, the great challenge I was facing when I 'recruited' those forty students and teachers at Codarts was: 'Will these folks ever blend into a real community? Or are they just consumers of an interesting new treat the institution is feeding them. Honestly, I have to admit, I was holding my breath the first months, had difficulty sitting on my hands, and just trusting the process we had designed. Sometimes I could hear the voice of my old Australian mentor Fred Emery ringing in the back of head: 'If you want to put a bet on real change in Education or the Church, I'd put my money on the latter'. He had a

point, and our organization, despite of its great ambitions for the future, was no different. It suffered from the effects of its longstanding organizational DNA. Designed like a bunch of beehives with one queen bee and a lot of worker-bees flying in and out of the hive. From orchestra to gigs to teaching, very busy bees! So we pulled all of our experience, knowledge and tricks to counter this culture, to disorient our group but at the same time have them come home to what's 'hard-wired' to us humans.

'The essence of any experience, any moment, is to be found where people are in the most intense contact with the place they occupy. And paradoxically, it is through a nomadic existence that one occupies a space the most intensely. Whether the nature of this nomadism is largely physical, like wandering tribes in the South Sahara or rather abstract as for the poet or philosopher, is not so important. What they share is that this 'nomadic disposition' strips life to the bare essentials, makes them completely centered human beings. They are not stuck in life's cycles, but are co-existing with them, partaking with a freedom that is unknown to most of us'. – Nicolas Humbert and Werner Penzel

Of course the metaphor of the Journey was powerful. And we kept that mythical structure in place by consequently stressing learning-on-all-levels and by paying attention to the context. In the choice of the spaces for our clinics (workshops) we were lucky to be in Rotterdam, the second largest port in the World, with an amazing maritime history. A typical approach for running a clinic, let's say 'Fellowship' looked like this: 'Next week Tuesday the 30th of August show up, 9 AM sharp at Pier 19, located at the Maaskade'. From there water taxi's ran the group through the huge harbor area to the Rotterdamsche Droogdok Maatschappij – one of the great ancient shipyards of the city -, the site where we conduct the clinic that day. Clear information about the essence of Fellowship, exact data where to show up, the rest unfolding. Creating unknown territory was the name of the game.

We followed through with this concept in all aspects of the program. For the fellow travelers it may seem unstructured, for us the devil was in the details.

After three months the group started to show signs of being a tribe, a community. Thereafter the research began to make sense and our life changed steeply. Now I was catching myself calling: 'Wait for me. I'm your leader!'

FROM THE FRONTLINES

Laetitia van Krieken is a pianist/composer rooted in the European music-tradition, combining the influences of classical, jazz/improvisation, and pop music. She started playing piano at the age of seven. After finishing her studies in sculpture and textile art forms at the Mollerinstituut Tilburg (NL), she studied jazz piano at the Brabants Conservatory in Tilburg (NL) with Willem Kühne.

Her most recent project is called *Big Bang* - a 13-piece ensemble. She teaches composition at Codarts and was one of the fellow travelers on the Journey.

I talked with her about Sustainable Performance, the project Rotterdam meets Istanbul and of course Fellowship.

'In a practical sense fellowship is about surrounding yourself with people who want to realize the same things you want to realize, and knowing you don't have to do it all on your own. These people give you feedback and are complementary to your work and talents. Almost intuitively you know which people you match with and if it feels right, a collaboration usually works out great. I find it important that I can level with someone personally when we work together, especially when we are in a band.'

'For the last 8 years I made a lot of theatre pieces with an actor/writer who wrote and directed the piece and a visual artist that was responsible for the decor and visuals, I wrote and performed the music. We are a *golden team* so to say. We start off brainstorming coming up with a global idea and then we start working on it separately with our global concept in the back of our minds. A few weeks before opening night we start working together again with the crew and it always fits together perfectly. In some cases you have no idea what it is going to be all put together but there is a basic trust that it will work, and it always does. That is a real fellowship, that you trust each other and know everyone's strengths including your own and that you can rely on each other's qualities.'

But of course there is also the unwanted fellowship. A lot has changed in the cultural landscape over the last couple of years and there are many factors that influence your success. 'Our last project we didn't sell as much as we normally do. Festivals and theaters just have less money to spend. So we had a shorter period of time to work on it and had to come up with other ways to make things happen. We made sure to be autonomous in a practical sense so we could also play at different locations with other facilities. But it is annoying to be bound by finance and regulations.'

Laetitia is an active and important member of the sustainable performance *tribe* and also joined a small group of tribe members that travelled to Istanbul to work with local musicians. 'It was an amazing experience. You start off on the first day without knowing what you are going to do. You meet new people, not knowing what they are capable of. All you know is that in a few days you will perform together. I am usually very optimistic in these kind of situations. I had the assumption that everybody would completely invest himself or herself in the project. We're all musicians. But some things are really important. And in this case how we kicked off. We were asked to introduce ourselves to the group musically, through our instruments. I could see some people getting uncomfortable. I remember one girl with the flute who was really shy and hesitant. And then somebody said: 'Just let us hear what your flute sounds like'. And she immediately picked up her instrument and started playing without a thought. It was very beautiful and moving. And I remember thinking 'Oh, wow, of course, it is actually so easy to break through those boundaries. It reminded me that there's also a fellowship you have with your instrument.'

Marijke, member of our research team and singer/songwriter, remembers Laetitia advising her once to improvise with her instrument, her voice, every morning for 15 minutes, right out of bed, before she did anything else.

I ask her about it.

'It is important for a musician that the first contact they have with their instrument everyday is just about making sound, not about right or wrong, not about getting better, but just improvising on your instrument and make a sound. You have to turn off the critical voice. Fifteen minutes is a long time, sometimes I only make it to five. It is the same skill you need for real improvisation. I greatly admire musicians who make real contact with their instrument. One fellow musician and friend is a good example for me. For him it doesn't matter how rotten the piano -in a bar for example- is he has to play on during a performance. Even if parts of the piano are unplayable, or completely off key, he always accepts the challenge and finds a way to truly connect with the instrument. He always works with it not against it.'

This takes us to a special field of fellowship: improvising. 'When you are improvising it is really important that you are leveling and connecting to your fellow musicians and that you have a lot of trust. You must be able to feel that you can take the space and that others are giving you space. It is also about inspiring each other. Trust is a big part of it. And if you don't feel that trust it is hard to do, because the improvisation turns into battle to get that trust. Sometimes you see some musicians on stage working really hard, and it makes the concert less inspiring, you can feel it's just not happening. I sometimes find myself in those situations, even with musicians that I usually work very well with. When you have a bad day physically or mentally, it becomes hard work. I remember when I had the flu and the whole concert was just about staying on my feet, not about playing music, I had to lie down during the breaks. One of those situations where you absolutely can't cancel the concert, you have to be there, and believe it or not once you're on stage you're able to pull it off. It can actually happen that your fellow musicians are still having a good show and the audience still loves it, but you just don't feel it and are wondering afterwards: was it really a good show? Once I was playing in France and something happened to my sound, I couldn't hear myself at all, and the technicians were trying to fix it below the stage under me, but it just didn't work. It was horrible I could hear everything except myself and it felt like I was playing in thin air. But you have to keep playing and smiling, because there are 600 people in front of you. Half way through I gave up the idea that it would work out, but kept playing. The crowd loved the show, we got standing ovations and everything and the rest of the band didn't really notice what was going on with me. Afterwards I was crying my eyes out, it had been such a struggle, and I had to deal with it on my own on stage. It was such a weird contrast.'

Back to Fellowship.

'I would tell young musicians to always look for people with the same aspirations and ideas. And trust that there are always people around you that want the same thing, but maybe you have to look for them. Once you open up about your intentions and ideas some people will always turn out saying 'I never actually said it out loud, but

that is exactly what I want to do. Don't wait at home for the phone to ring. And be aware that you never have to do it alone. I also like working alone when I'm composing, but having a balance with people you enjoy working with really works out. And sometimes you don't choose the ones you work with, the circumstances choose them. Just keep looking for people's qualities and be aware of what they can teach you and what you can teach them.

Carlo Balemans was also one of the key members of our research tribe. Carlo is a classical conductor, composer and creative artist for all kinds of organizations and ensembles. He has been a guest conductor for the Bangkok Symphony Orchestra, as well as at Carroll College Wind Symphony (USA), NTR (Dutch broadcast), Band of the Dutch Royal Marines and various ensembles of Codarts Rotterdam, University of the Arts. "Meet, Inspire & Create" is the basis of Carlo's way of working. He has a great interest in people and in their talents, which he finds to be a challenging product on every level. As a creative artist he has worked with world top performers like Eric Vloeimans, Bojan Zulfikarpasic, André Heuvelman, Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra, Conny Janssen Danst.

When the topic Fellowship is brought into the conversation, Carlo is coming straight to the point:

'To me it is just no fun at all to do things on my own, Fellowship is a precondition. It implies curiosity and input: who are the people I am working with? where do they come from? I have no interest in telling people what to do, I find it more interesting to state the question "what are we gonna do?" To get to know each other's qualities and figure out what we are going to do based on that. That is always my starting point, no matter the genre or project. When I am composing I do work alone, but I never finish a piece completely, I always leave room for the people I work with. The thing is that once you start with a finished piece, you have to tell people what they should do, you have to work with the concepts of good or bad and right or wrong, I don't like working like that. I enjoy exploring what someone needs, to give an optimal performance and what it is I can bring to make it happen and give my optimal performance.'

'Whether I fail or succeed is depending on other people's willingness to face the challenge. So I am careful to work only with people I presume are willing to do that. It does happen that it doesn't work out and a project doesn't continue. But that always happens in good harmony, it does happen though, that it just doesn't work. I have decided for myself what I will and will not do. If there is a way to solve the problem I will always put in an effort, but experience has taught me that some roads are just a dead end. I have to be straight about that, because if I'm not, the danger of producing rubbish becomes very real, and I will not be a part of something I am ashamed of. When you work the way I do -when you don't see many limitations and are free to just jump in and see what happens- there is a risk of the output not being good enough. When that happens I have to be very honest about it, and draw the conclusions. I don't get angry about it, there is still no harm done, it is just the way it is.'

'Working on the Pearl of Paradise (a co-productions with Istanbul for the Rotterdam Opera Festival) was mostly great fun. Some days weren't as good, but it didn't bother me. It is an important balance, stuff that give me a burden I resolve very practically or someone else does it, either way it always works out and a solution is presented. The first part of the show was mostly about infrastructure and if you organize it well, it's easy. The second part was harder to get together, because the starting point wasn't all as clear, not everybody was on the same page. I do think it is possible to start from the same point as a group but you have to talk it all through to make sure you are on the same page. At that point it is about having enough trust to let go of some control, if the answer is yes it will all work out, if the answer is know you'll end up in a struggle.'

'Ideally you work with people that are able to switch roles fast and accurate. If you have a group of people like that, it will always work out because everybody senses when they have to take the lead and when they are better of following someone else. In Istanbul we had an interesting case because we didn't know what to expect from each other or what to do, so everybody starts off holding back. That is usually when I very carefully take a lead. I didn't know what to do, but I did know that something had to happen, so we started playing the short patterns of the piece 'in C'. There is always a point where something is happening and then there's the point where whatever is happening is becoming fun. That is the point people get excited and bring ideas and stuff to the table. And in this case people wanted to rehearse, and I really thought it was a bad idea. If you want to rehearse and bring a definite structure to the piece you need 10 rehearsals to get it right, you need more time. We didn't have any time so the better choice, I think, is to just let it happen and capture the natural drive and power that comes from the moment. It turned into a discussion and that discussion is necessary, it is an artistic question basically, so it is essential to your product. It resulted in not rehearsing and it turned out great, and I am still convinced it was important that we hadn't rehearsed. During the process I didn't think about why I didn't want to rehearse I

just felt that way, and I trusted that. When I arrived home for the first time I had the time to actually think about it. Normally a creative process starts off with 'feeling', then there's a part 'thinking' and then the end phase is 'feeling' again. In Istanbul, we didn't have time to do the middle part, we had to skip it. It was a risky choice, because it could have gone terribly wrong but it didn't it was great. The middle part 'thinking' is really important in the creative process, the point where you professionally make it happen. You can have great ideas and such but it always has to be translated to reality. That is professionalism; that you arrange your surroundings and the actual reality. Your safety is in there, what do you need to make it click, to make it happen no matter what. Once you're past that you have to let it go again and trust.'

SKILLFUL MEANS

Exercise 1: filling out the social matrix

Social Matrix

Six criteria for optimal performance	Ana	John	Car
1) Elbow Room	-2	0	-1
2) Learning			
A: define targets	-4	+3	-2
B: reception of feedback	-3	-4	0
3) Variation	-3	+5	0
4) Meaning & Purpose			
A: Social Importance	9	9	9
B: Seeing the whole product	4	10	7
4) Desirable Future	3	7	6
* Conditions 1-2-3 have a score from -5 (too little) to +5 (too much). 0 is optimal			
** Conditions 4-5-6 have a score from 0 (nothing) to 10 (much)			

- Sit down with your team, the people who have to do a certain job together. It should be a team, which means that the coherence and direction should be clear to the members.
- Draw a social matrix (as the example above) on a flip chart. Write the names of the team members over the columns, and write the six criteria left of each row in the matrix.
- Start with the first criterion – elbowroom – and discuss how much of this freedom each participant feels within the team at this moment. Write down the score in the matrix for each team member.
- Discuss the scores, and score the rest of the six criteria, working down row by row.
- Score the criteria as follows: Because we strive for optimal results for each individual, we score the first three criteria between -5 (too little) and +5 (too much). This means that 0 is the optimal score: just right.
- You can never have enough of the next three criteria, starting at mutual support and respect, so these are scored between 0 (not at all) to 10 (a lot).

- Remember that this is a group activity. Everybody discusses his or her scores with the other members of the team. Observations about the scores should be shared with each other. Discuss the differences and if necessary change the scores if you change your mind. This way, you're working towards a complete picture of the team: what it is and isn't, and what it needs to perform its best.
- Look at the scores in the matrix again, but this time look for peculiarities and patterns.
- Develop a plan to improve the weaknesses; make sure that all members of the team support the plan.
- Repeat this exercise within a year.

Exercise 2: leading and following

This exercise is about following and leading. It draws attention to the importance of non-verbal communication, which shouldn't be underrated. From non-verbal communication, we read the intentions of other people, and consciously or subconsciously this perception of the other person's intentions has its effect. Whether we like it or not, this is the way it works.

- Make a pair and both hold out your hand with the palm facing down.
- The leader places his hand under his partner's hand, in such a way that they touch only very lightly. The follower rests his fingertips lightly on the back of the leader's hand. The follower closes his eyes and the leader starts to move his hand, without actually taking any steps. High, low, far, close, round, straight: the leader intends to get his partner to follow. Do this exercise in silence.
- Exchange roles: the follower becomes the leader and vice versa.
- Discuss the exercise: what's interesting about it?
- Now do the same thing, but a bit more difficult. The leader not only moves his hand, but actually walks through the room (slowly!).
- Stick to the movement of high, low, far, close, round and straight.
- Exchange roles. Discuss what happened to you (unless it was too intense an experience for you, then call in professional help or something).
- Were you aware of the effect of your intentions (direction, speed, commitment) on your partner?
- What's it like to lead? Or to follow? What do you prefer, to lead or to follow?

Exercise 3: Team spirit

- Make a group of 8 people and sit down with them.
- Find a partner in the group and sit down face to face.
- Introduce yourself, tell your partner about your field of work and the other things you do every day.
- In the conversation, look for similarities and differences. Skip the similarities that are all too obvious; they're a waste of your time.

When you are done exchanging, try explaining to the rest of the team who your partner is. Also give one similarity and one clear or remarkable difference between you two.

Which were easier to express: the similarities or the differences? You probably noticed that similarities are easier to identify than differences. It's because we are used to finding similarities. Its remarkable, but identifying the differences is what benefits the team.

- It's very interesting for the others to know what you are capable of. It could be the things you've learned, but also things you were born with. So, write some skills and some talents on a flip chart.
- Standing at the flip chart, tell the others a little bit more about the things you wrote down.
- The others willingly listen to you, and make notes about what they notice about your story and the way you tell it.

What is so special about your team? What have you noticed? How would you describe your team at home or to friends if you could use only a few words? If you had to name this team after an existing hero, who would it be? What would be a suitable motto for this team, and which slogan or yell would fit this team?

Exercise 4: Conflict solution

If there is a conflict between two team members, the following approach could be of use. Role-play it before you actually find yourself in such a conflict situation.

1. Let the opponents each express his or her opinion: short and concise, no long speeches are allowed.
2. Let team members who are neutral in the matter identify the issues about which the two agree and don't agree; write these issues on two flip charts.
3. Let the team members explore the issues about which they apparently disagree.
4. Allow the opponents to change their own views, or attempt to change the other person's view.
5. Let the neutral team members list the newly found 'Common Ground' – the issues about which the opponents now more or less agree – and write it on a flip chart.
6. If there is no progress in one or more of the 'disagree issues', then park these for now (for example by writing them on a flip chart and sticking it to the wall in a corner of the room).
7. Ask the two quarrelers if they can find any perspective in the 'agree issues'.
8. If the previous item does not provide any results, then ask the two troublemakers if they are willing to accept the majority opinion of the team.
9. Try to reach a (majority) decision as a group.
10. Summarize it and write it down.

Practical lessons from the armed forces

These tips were given by F-16 pilot lieutenant colonel Peter Tankink, whom I have asked to see how the experience he gained with his squadron of F-16's in the Bosnian war, could help us become better and tougher team-players. As you will see many of the points Peter Tankink makes are just as relevant to us. For our purpose I changed the words target mission (bombing) to performance. Peace to you.

- Preparation/planning: 'Failing to prepare, is preparing to fail'
- Visualization (step by step): Go over your ideal performance a few times in your mind: see the concert hall, feel the movements you are making, hear the audience, smell your sweat, see yourself standing on the stage.
- "What-if" scenarios: Beforehand think about the obstacles you could encounter during the performance. During the performance you will not have the time to think of solutions, but beforehand you do. Go through these "What-if" scenarios in your mind as well, it helps if you have experienced the situations once before.
- Follow the leader (no discussion): During the performance there is no time for discussion. Save your 'Yes, but...' for later and follow the directions of the one in the lead.
- Respect dependence: Respect your dependence on your team, your leader, your environment and its circumstances. Let go of things you cannot control. 'The interest of the team counts more than the individual interest.'
- Debriefing: Discuss the match among your team: what went well, what could be better? It is advisable to choose a moment after the performance in a quiet environment: put it all on the table, but keep it in the team. 'Feedback is the breakfast of champions'.

The philosophy of teamwork

Once there were three people: Everybody, Somebody and Nobody. One day, a specific assignment had to be fulfilled.

Everybody thought that Somebody would do it.

And even though Everybody could do it, Nobody did it.

This made Everybody angry.

Because it was Everybody's job and now Nobody did it.

Everybody thought that Somebody could have done it,

but Nobody realized that Everybody didn't want to do it.

In the end, Everybody blamed Somebody because Nobody did what Everybody could have done.

Seven principles of leadership

This tip was given by Dee Hock, the founder of Visa. Dee Hock was a highly original thinker who managed to organize a trillion dollar non-stock membership corporation, owned by its member banks.

He was later particularly interested in forms of social organization that are neither rigidly controlled nor anarchic, a hybrid form he terms chaordic.

An organization, well designed as it may be, is only as good as the people who work there. The style of leadership has an immense impact on the performance of people and organization. Here is Dee's practical advice on leadership:

1. Carefully put together a list of things that were done to you that frustrated you. Never do these things to others. Make a second list, this time of things that others have done for you that made you very happy. Do these things for others, always.

2. Hire people based first on their integrity. Only then look at their motivation, their capacity, their ability to understand, their knowledge, and lastly their experience. Why? Without integrity, motivation is highly dangerous. Without motivation, capacity is impotent. Without capacity, the ability to understand can only be of limited importance. Without the ability to understand, knowledge has no meaning. Without knowledge, experience is blind. Experience can be gained and applied easily by people who possess all these qualities.

3. Never hire or promote people who are too much like you. It's not smart to multiply your own strength. It's idiotic to multiply your own weaknesses. Hiring, trusting and rewarding people whose perspectives, knowledge, skills and vision are completely different from your own, is of essential importance. This happens only very rarely because it takes humility, tolerance and wisdom to be able to do this.

4. Money does not motivate the best people, and it does not motivate people to perform their best. Money can mobilize people physically and mentally, but it cannot steal their hearts or buy their souls. Only faith, principles and morals can do that. Napoleon already knew this: "There is no amount of money that can motivate someone to give their life. But they will gladly do so for a medal."

5. Content remains, form evaporates. It is a fatal mistake not to distinguish between the two. Success sticks to those who are capable of maintaining what's good by wrapping it in the clothes of the future. Keep the contents, change the form, and know the difference. A 'law of nature' of entrepreneurship is that form tends to cost money, while contents prefer to generate income.

6. The problem is not how to get new, innovative thoughts in your head, but how to get rid of the old ones. Each mind is like a room crammed full of old furniture. You need to remove the old furniture of what you think, know and believe, before you can introduce new design pieces. Create empty spaces in every corner of the room of your mind, and you will see that it will immediately be filled with creativity.

7. This is the very heart and soul of the matter. If you are planning to be a leader, invest at least 40% of your time in managing yourself – your morals and values, your principles, your intentions, your motivation and your behavior. Furthermore, invest at least 30% in managing your superiors and 15% in managing your group of reference. Use the rest of your time to educate the people you work for about this theory. We say ‘the people you work for’ on purpose, because if you don’t understand that you work for who are mistakenly called your ‘inferiors’, you haven’t understood a thing. Lead yourself, your superiors, your group of reference, and give ‘your’ people the opportunity to do the same.

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