



talking about...

December 2010

... *designing better relationships for better outcomes*

Gratitude at the End of the Year

"The more I see the less I know for sure."

... John Lennon, (1940 - 1980) English singer, songwriter and musician

I find it hard to believe, but it is thirty years this month since John Lennon was gunned down in New York. As a child of the fifties, The Beatles were a huge part of those impressionable years for me and the fact he has been dead for thirty years has certainly given me pause for thought. I can clearly remember going to see "Help" and not being able to hear the movie for all the screaming. I remember riding my bike across the car park at Elwood beach and listening to "Hello Goodbye" on my red transistor radio. I remember my excitement when "Sgt Peppers" was released, the hope inspired by "Imagine" after The Beatles had split and, recently, the poignancy of listening to "The Long and Winding Road" at my grandmother's funeral and its relevance to her life's journey, my life's journey and indeed anyone who has been fortunate to have been on this planet for some time. The Beatles have definitely been part of the context to my life.

For the past sixteen years, I have known about and played in the world of ontological coaching. I have read about it, experienced it, philosophised and written about it and used it as the basis of my coaching practice. Like The Beatles, it has been a backdrop to my life, but whereas The Beatles were simply part of the background, the ontological philosophy has become the foundation of my being and my work. I have been blessed in that my work has provided me with the opportunity to meet and support so many wonderful people. I suspect that most of those people don't know how they have helped me. Through their conversations and their breakdowns, I have developed my interpretation of the human condition as it relates to me and my take on an ontological philosophy. Those interactions have also provided the inspiration for my newsletters over the past fifteen years. They have inspired me to develop a body of work of which I am most proud.

So to each one of you, who has given me the privilege of working with you, I simply want to say, "Thank you". Your conversations have enriched my life. To those of you who I do not know as well, but who read this newsletter each month, I also want to say, "Thank you." Your support inspires me to keep developing my ideas and sharing them with you for as I grow older, there is no doubt that the more I see, the less I know for sure!

It has been a joy for Jacqui and I to have my son Ryan join us earlier in the year as a trainee ontological coach. He has brought energy and new conversations, not to mention taking some of the load from our shoulders.

In 2011, we will be seeking to introduce a new leadership program that we are developing around our spatial leadership ideas. We will be looking for some thoughts and feedback on what has worked well for people who do these sorts of programs, what has not worked so well and what are challenges of developing great leaders. We have already begun

conversations with people whom we know to flesh these thoughts out, and we would also welcome any thoughts from you. Simply write back or call us and we can begin a conversation.

Finally, Jacqui, Ryan and I sincerely wish you a joy-filled and prosperous 2011. We hope it will be a wonderful year for you.

Leadership and Alignment

"If being an egomaniac means I believe in what I do and in my art or my music, then in that respect you can call me that. . . . I believe in what I do, and I'll say it."

... John Lennon, (1940 - 1980) English singer, songwriter and musician

I am person who sees patterns. Indeed, I would say it is my great strength and what has allowed me to most effectively as a coach. Having been on this planet for some time, I have had the opportunity to observe many groups of people and those who lead them. As I have observed what has gone on and continues to go on in organisations and our societies in general, one thing seems glaringly obvious about most of the leaders of those groups - a lack of alignment. In other words, there is incoherence in the pattern of their actions.

Human beings seemed to be primed to notice misalignment. We continu-

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ously observe the world, interpret what it means to us and seek to fit those observations and interpretations into our own story of the world. When something does not fit, we notice. Although we may notice the misalignment, this does not necessarily mean we understand it or feel we can do something about it. The key to this lack of understanding can be found in a simple idea. If something is to be aligned then it must be aligned to something else. If we cannot distinguish the foundation of alignment (the "something else") then we will certainly struggle to understand the basis for our sense of misalignment.

How does this apply to leadership? Let's look at organisational leaders as an example. The leaders of larger organisations tend to go through some standard actions to define a mission, a vision and some values. They may use different approaches to come up with these, however most will have them. The mission can be seen as the organisation's reason for existence, the vision as the organisation's direction and the values as the basis on which the organisation will achieve its direction and nurture its reason for existence. There is nothing unusual in any of that. However it seems leaders then struggle to align their organisations to these foundations. This seems particularly valid in terms of an organisation's espoused values.

The breakdown in alignment seems to stem from some background assumptions that are never challenged yet which undermine the organisation's espoused foundations. One example of this lies in the conflict between trust and control. Most leaders will identify aspects of trust in values, such as integrity, honesty or cooperation. Yet there is a clearly a background story in organisations about control - the need to have control over budgets, key performance indicators, the team and so on. It is useful to recognise here that control is the antithesis of trust. The more a manager seeks to control their team, the less it appears that the manager trusts the team. Hence misalignment is created around the values associated with trust.

This seems to be the great challenge and also the great opportunity for leaders of the future. Great leaders act as they espouse. They practice what they preach. Organisation leaders would do well to get back to basics by better understanding the organisation's foundations they have created and aligning their actions and conversations to those foundations.

Christmas Policies...

Thanks to Richard Crocker for this one...

All employees planning to dash through the snow in a one horse open sleigh, going over the fields and laughing all the way are advised that a Risk Assessment will be required addressing the safety of an open sleigh for members of the public.

This assessment must also consider whether it is appropriate to use only one horse for such a venture, particularly if passengers are of larger proportions.

Please note that permission must also be obtained in writing from landowners before their fields may be entered.

To avoid offending those not participating in celebrations, we would request that laughter is moderate only and not loud enough to be considered a noise nuisance.

Benches, stools and orthopedic chairs are now available for collection by any shepherds planning or required to watch their flocks at night.

While provision has also been made for remote monitoring of flocks by CCTV cameras from a centrally heated shepherd observation hut, all us-

ers of this facility are reminded that an emergency response plan must be submitted to account for known risks to the flocks.

The angel of the lord is additionally reminded that, prior to shining his/her glory all around, s/he must confirm that all shepherds are wearing appropriate Personal Protective Equipment to account for the harmful effects of UVA, UVB and the overwhelming effects of Glory.

Following last year's well publicised case, everyone is advised that Equal Opportunities legislation prohibits any comment with regard to the ruddiness of any part of Mr. R. Reindeer. Further to this, exclusion of Mr. R Reindeer from reindeer games will be considered discriminatory and disciplinary action will be taken against those found guilty of this offence.

While it is acknowledged that gift bearing is a common practice in various parts of the world, particularly the Orient, everyone is reminded that the bearing of gifts is subject to Hospitality Guidelines and all gifts must be registered.

This applies regardless of the individual, even royal personages.

It is particularly noted that direct gifts of currency or gold are specifically precluded, while caution is advised regarding other common gifts such as aromatic resins that may evoke allergic reactions.

Finally, in the recent case of the infant found tucked up in a manger without any crib for a bed, Social Services have been advised and will be arriving shortly.

"Reality leaves a lot to the imagination."

... John Lennon, (1940 - 1980) English singer, songwriter and musician

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