

Metamorphic Change

Leadership As Strategic Introspection And Serious Play

By:

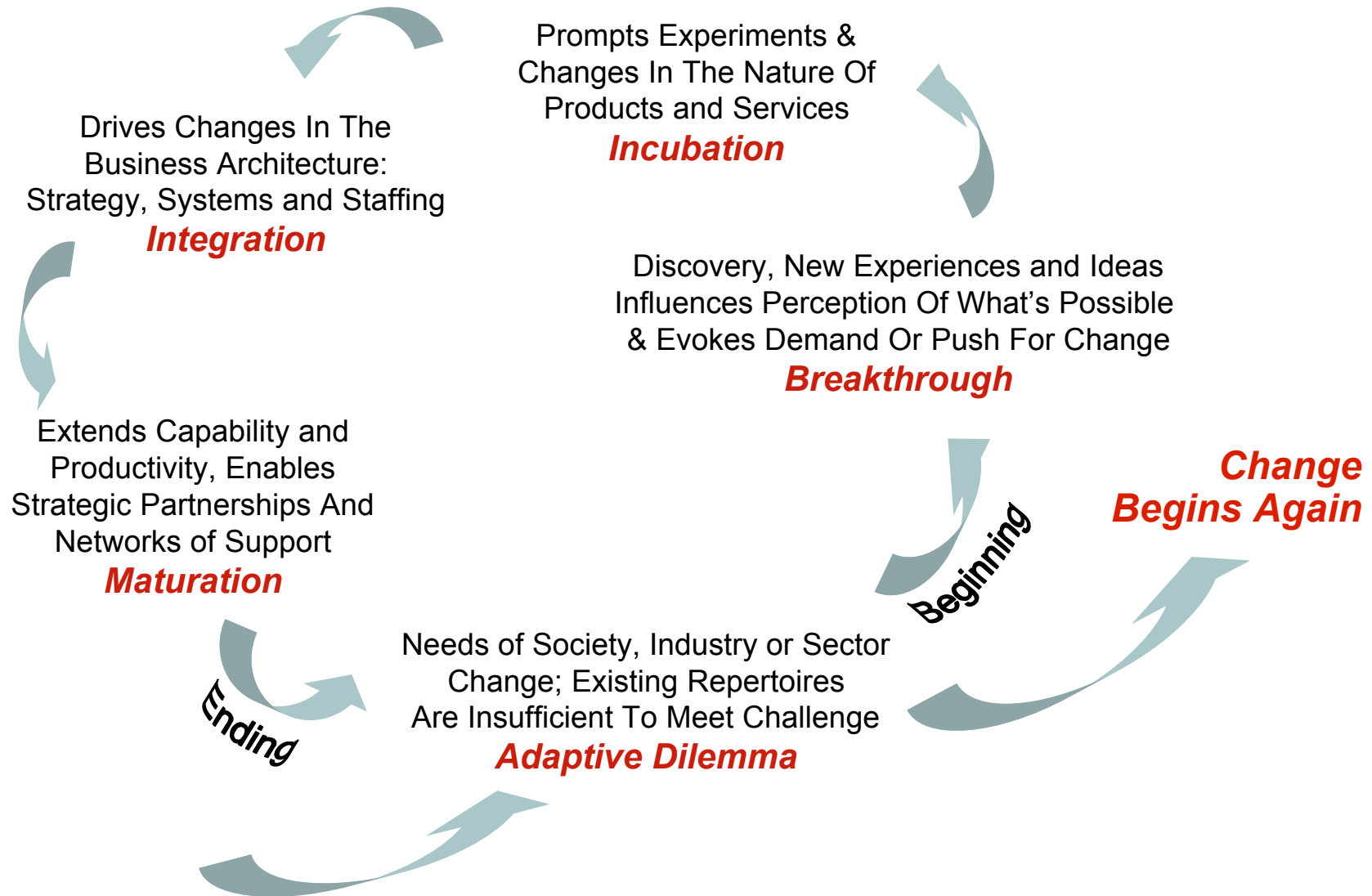
Mitch Saunders

At some point, society's needs for any product, service or institution changes.

When this happens, the entire system confronts an adaptive dilemma.

Creative leadership recognizes these endings and beginnings and knows what to do when facing them.

The Evolution Of Product and Organization: A Systems View

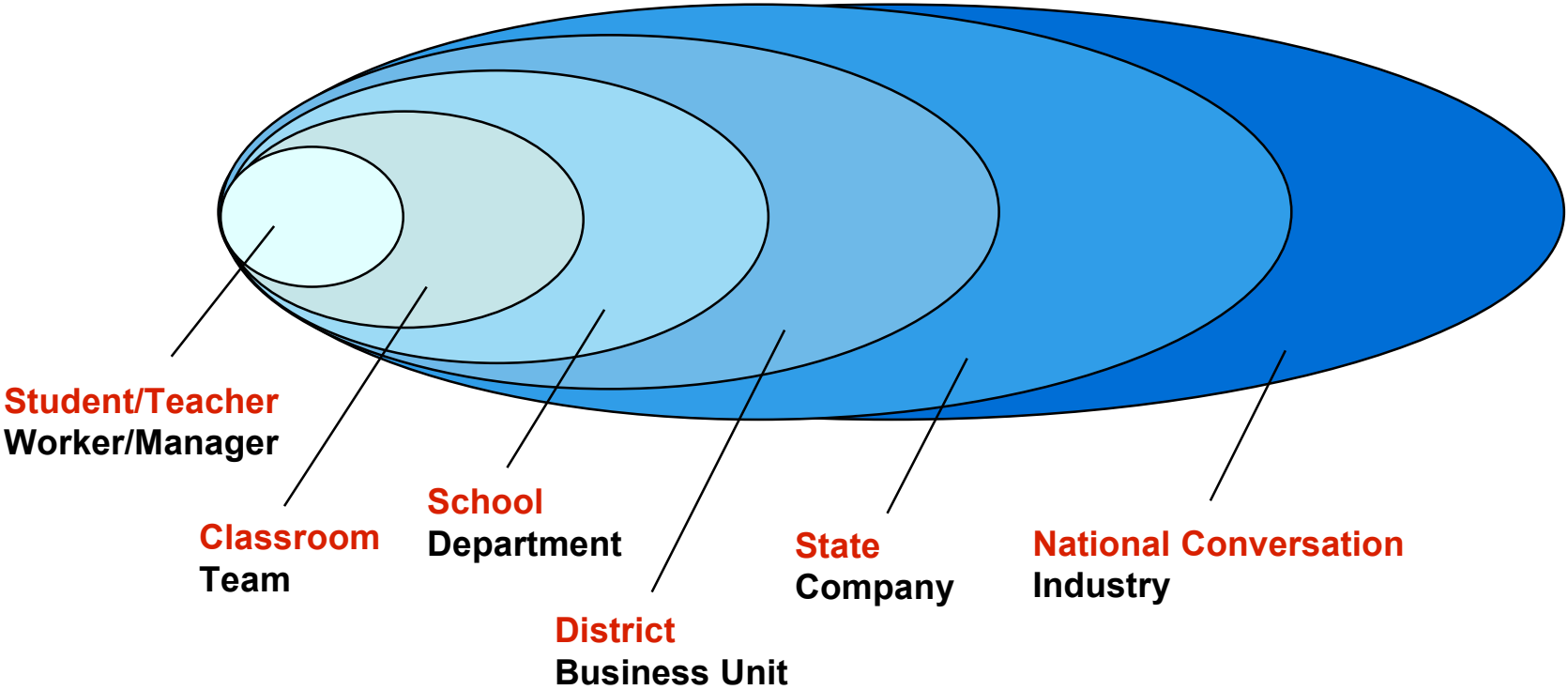


What's An Inflection Point?

Facing an unprecedented demand or opportunity for which there are no easy answers often signals that the tide is turning—one phase is ending, while something new is struggling to emerge.

We can think of an inflection point as a fissure between past and future that creates an opening, a unique window of opportunity for leaders and companies.

Underlying Dynamics Are Reflected Across Levels

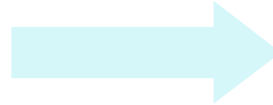


Fundamental changes in the nature of a product or service prompt corresponding shifts in the nature of leadership, organization design and culture; and vice versa. These facets of the organization are inextricably linked and evolve together.

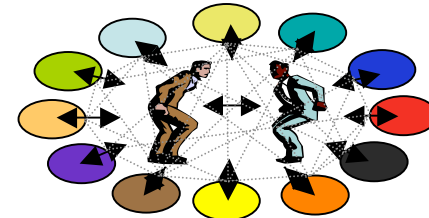
Leaders can sense and shape this multifaceted evolutionary process. There may be no higher leverage arena for strategic attention and contribution. Yet traditional leadership development has not addressed this.

The Metamorphosis of Conflict Resolution: From “Getting To Yes” to “Getting To Peace”

1980 - 1990's



2000's



Service:

- Methods and tools to resolve differences impacting 2 parties

Strategy:

- “Get to yes” by employing specific protocols to manage a conflict
- Identify interests at stake for each side
- Search for a “win-win” solution--where interests of both sides are satisfied to some extent
- If necessary, a neutral, 3rd party mediates

System Architecture:

- 2 sides
- Mediator, if necessary
- Expert-oriented culture: Success depends on adherence to protocols; expertise lies beyond those in conflict (e.g., methods or skillful mediation)

*Adapted from Bill Ury
Trent, Italy • July 2001*

Service:

- Community of leaders contains and assists with conflict negotiation in the context of an ongoing, multifaceted dialogue

Strategy:

- “Get to Peace” by surrounding 2 opposing sides with a “3rd side”--a context or larger ecology within which the conflict is held and witnessed
- Expand the stakes and exploration to include others who may be impacted
- Encompass conflict negotiation methods and tools, *and* encourage dialogue at 3 levels, e.g., to facilitate shifts in habits of thought, problem re-framing, testing ripple effects of proposed solutions, etc.:
 - Between conflicting parties
 - Among & beyond larger community of interests
 - For each participant

System Architecture:

- 3 “sides”--a circle or community dedicated to the viability of the whole system or ecology, not just the resolution of the immediate conflict
- Collaborative culture: Success depends on expertise or knowledge of conflict negotiation *plus* the ability of all to participate in multidimensional dialogue

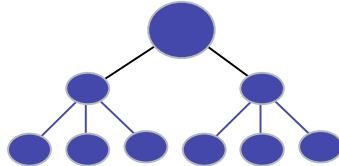
The most powerful opportunities lie not in a search for problems to fix, but rather in sensing, cooperating with, and actualizing what is already emerging. This also involves allowing certain things to recede, and providing “hospice” for what needs to end.

In the 1980s, three competitors, Advanced Micro Devices, Intel, and National Semiconductor, experienced a precipitous slump. However, only Intel’s leaders recognized that period as a key inflection point. In response, the company dropped its DRAM product line and refocused the full force of its attention and resources to seize the market for the next generation of semiconductors.

The company’s leadership used that transition period to catapult Intel into a new market space, and has enjoyed the lion’s share of market share ever since.

IBM's Metamorphosis: The Evolution Of Product, Strategy & Business Architectures

1950's - 1980's



Product:

- Monolithic system comprised of mainframes, servers, and “dumb terminals”

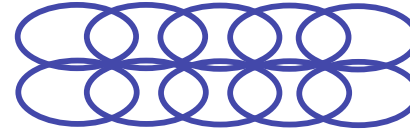
Strategy:

- Provide “secure choice”—one system anchored by best of breed mainframes
- Engineering/Research focused

Business Architecture:

- Hierarchical & bureaucratic
- Success measured by equipment performance
- Directive culture: Middle managers implement strategy from senior executives; individual contributors analogous to “dumb terminals”

1990's



Product:

- “End to End Solutions”
- Customized customer solutions deploying leading technology: some might buy PC's only; others, servers and PC's; still others, systems integration services

Strategy:

- Aggregate strengths of different products and services into integrated solutions
- Market/Customer focused

Business Architecture:

- Customer-facing, Cross-functional, cross-organization teams develop and deploy customer solutions
- Success measured by customer adoption
- Collaborative culture: risk-taking encouraged; entrepreneurial preoccupation with productivity

*Adapted from Lou Pambianco
“The CEO's Projection” © Corporate Development Partners, 1997*

Co-evolving Your Leadership & Organization

Evolving Your Self

Keys For Leadership Resilience:

- **Reflexes**
- **Myths, Guiding Ideas & Images**
- **Repertoires of Response**

Sensing & Shaping The Future:

- **Focused Awareness**—Appreciating What Is Ending/Emergent And Your Signature Approach To Leadership
- **Embodied Practice**—Cultivating Informed Choice & Neural Connections For New Patterns Of Behavior
- **Ongoing Support**—A Network or Partnerships of Encouragement, Focus, and Dedication

Systems Change

Keys For Organizational Resilience:

- **Product or Service Architecture**
- **Vision & Strategy**
- **Organization Design & Structures**

Sensing & Shaping The Future:

- **Strategic Introspection**—Appreciating What Is Ending/Emerging And The Organization's Characteristic Responses To Change
- **Serious Play**—Prototyping To Test Scenarios And To Generate A Pull Towards The Future
- **Infrastructures for Learning**—Special Places and Methods for Working "On" the System Not Just in It

It can be challenging to perceive and influence the nature of change in organizations. Often, disparate voices herald seemingly divergent aspirations, problems, and future scenarios.

One way through this veil of complexity is to search for common themes and dynamics underneath diverse perspectives. This kind of strategic introspection usually reveals an organization undergoing a shift in the nature of its purpose, product and organization design.

Strategic introspection allows leaders to reframe seeming chaos, and to notice and come to terms with ending's and beginning's. Serious play enables experimentation and discovery, which is essential when no one is sure about which path to pursue.

Modes of Inquiry: A Rough Continuum

<i>Discussion:</i>	<i>Dialogue:</i>	<i>Dynamic Dialogue:</i>
<p>Aims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Isolate discreet problem elements; resolve conflict; forge consensus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reframe an issue or problem; identify and shift thinking and habits underlying behavior; loosen mooring's to current identity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Serious play”; discover and test (current or new) ways of being/working, including system-wide ripple effects
<p>Attributes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Break problems down; generate solutions; set goals and terms of mutual satisfaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore assumptions, habits of thought, identity images, spaces between polarities, and structures underlying behavior (both relational and systemic) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic introspection; explore a system’s efforts to evolve; simulate or enact forces, including interactions at multiple levels; use reflection to perceive the system’s identity (changing) as a whole
<p>Outcomes (Examples):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priorities; policy statements; objectives; agreements; solutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared understanding; new thinking/directions; enhanced self-organizing capacity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prototypes and examples of the shape/s of things to come; common sensing of inherent possibilities & patterns; smarter differentiation & integration

“The real value of a model or simulation may stem less from its ability to test a hypothesis than from its power to generate useful surprise... Yet surprises are not always welcome. More often than not, prototypes and simulations are designed to eliminate surprises, not create them. Models are usually built to test ideas rather than generate new ones and risk management is emphatically not the same thing as opportunity creation.”

Michael Schrage, Serious Play: How The World's Best Companies Simulate To Innovate, Harvard School Press, 2000.

Dynamic Dialogue: Strategic Introspection & Serious Play Combined

Surface & explore the diverse voices/perspectives



Simulate the interactions in the system



Inquire from four archetypal perspectives:

- assumptions, cycles, patterns
- feelings and “emotional intelligence”
- what’s included/excluded, contracts
- ending’s/beginning’s, unfolding essence

Plan or design ways to embody learning’s



Test new ideas and observe ripple effects



“... consumers of innovation discover—rather than know—what new products and services they need. In fast-moving markets, customers and clients are often unable to articulate what they want and need. They know it when they see it.

...the prototype doesn't represent the product of a methodological development path; instead, it emerges from the interactions around iterations of the prototype. The solutions emerge from the evolution of the prototype, enabling users to usefully and productively surprise themselves.”

Michael Schrage, Serious Play: How The World's Best Companies Simulate To Innovate, Harvard School Press, 2000.

Inquiry From Four Archetypal Perspectives: A Way To Enable Useful & Productive Surprise

BEING • PURPOSE

*What is ending? What is beginning?
What is the evolving essence of this living system?
If designed to learn something,
what would that be?*

THINKING • PERSPECTIVE

*What are the different
assumptions/beliefs
at work here?
What cycles, habits or patterns
do you see?*

FEELING • APPRECIATION

*When you take in the whole,
how do you feel this in your body?
What does your “emotional
intelligence” tell you about this?*

DOING • TRUTH

*What is included and excluded?
What’s at risk? To change? Stay the same?
How would you describe the (underlying) contracts?
What hard truths must be spoken?*

“Systems create themselves and pursue paths of their own making. If we want to work with a system to influence its direction..the place for us to work is deep in the dynamics of the system where identity is taking form. Every being, every organization, is an identity in motion creating itself in the world and creating its world simultaneously.”

Margaret Wheatley & Myron Kellner-Rogers
A Simpler Way, 1996

K-12 Public Education In The United States: One View Of Its Metamorphosis

Historic/Current

Aims:

- Curriculum content is delivered to students who are trained to store, file, and retrieve
- Preparation for industrial economy
- Socialization of citizens in a monolithic culture

Strategy:

- “One size fits all”—mass distribution
- Teacher as expert
- School emulates factory; district emulates supply chain; governance emulates corporation
- Evaluation emphasis: “seat time” and memory

Leadership:

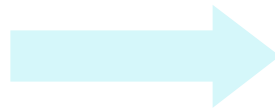
- Centralized and individualistic (e.g., innovation/productivity constrained by personal charisma, skill and tenure)

System Architecture:

- Vertical and independent organizations for planning, delivery and development

Culture:

- Special/local interest orientation; sub-systems compete for resources (e.g., classroom, school, district, unions)



Emergent

Aims:

- High academic achievement for every child
- Breadth, depth & effective development for every child
- Preparation for information economy
- Preparation for relationships, life transitions and a changing world
- Preparation for citizenship in a multicultural democracy

Strategy:

- Student as individual: mass customization and multifaceted pedagogy for diverse learners
- Both teacher and student as learners
- Educational system emulates living ecosystem
- Evaluation emphasis: competency and productivity

Leadership:

- Site based, systemic and distributed (e.g., innovation/productivity enabled by quality of collective intelligence and coordinated actions)

System Architecture:

- Cross-functional and multi-party organizations for planning, delivery and development (e.g., coordinated calendars, school as site for multiple services)

Culture:

- Entrepreneurial preoccupation with learning and outcomes, knowledge generation, learning from experience, and productivity
- Sub-systems strive for standardization *and* autonomy

Recommended Reading

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