

(from *The 2013 Pfeiffer Annual: Training*, John Wiley & Sons: San Francisco)

“We must build a sense of self-worth, hope and capability to meet the challenges of the next millennium.”

TOWARD A HEALTHY WORLD

Meeting the Leadership Challenges of the Twenty-first Century

Sherene Zolno

SUMMARY

Participating in an educational simulation teaches the next generation of leaders and executive coaches and consultants how to engage as learners, partners and catalysts in today’s complex organizations. As CEOs and managers they seek to lead from the core identified in the *Leadership for a Healthy World* model, ensuring a sense of self-worth, hope and capability in themselves and their followers.

INTRODUCTION

Sixty-five students and seven members of the faculty were gathered in the room on that Friday after lunch – tensions were high; excitement and anxious chatter echoed off the walls as we convened. Marketplace was about to begin.

The simulation that is not a simulation – that is the Marketplace. Conceived of as a capstone event during which second year students could demonstrate their leadership skills as CEOs, managers and supervisors of companies, and where first year students had their final opportunity to demonstrate who they were and what they had learned about systems before their first assessment, Marketplace had come to be the crucible within which ones’ sense of self might be forever changed.

We say that Marketplace is not “pretending to be something you are not”; it is “being as much of who you

are as you can be.” Over the years Marketplace has shifted and grown.

What is Marketplace?

From its humble origins as an educational process within which to experience how hierarchical systems can have a profound impact on an individual, to what it is today – a fast-paced, learning-intensive opportunity to explore new and critical questions facing people in organizations: how can we survive and thrive as a business offering our creative products and services, yet contribute positively to our community, the environment and to our members’ health and well-being? And how do we need to show up as leaders to make this possible?

The question of how to add value in the new global village will be a particularly challenging one for organizations and their leaders in the upcoming decades of the new millennium. Changes in societies, markets, customers,

competition and technology around the globe are forcing us to clarify our values, develop new strategies, and learn new ways of operating. In this environment, the role of the leader is changing. Being a leader today involves having the courage to face a new reality of complexity, uncertainty, and, yes, tremendous possibility – while helping the people around you to face this reality as well.

Marketplace is a hologram of that challenge. The paradoxes of competition vs. collaboration, of leading vs. sharing leadership, of satisfying personal needs in the moment vs. contributing to a team, company, community and healthy world, the here and now vs. taking the long view – all are present. Add them up, toss in some interesting power dynamics, and, oh, don't forget self-management and self-awareness issues, and you know that participants will have learned much more than they imagined.

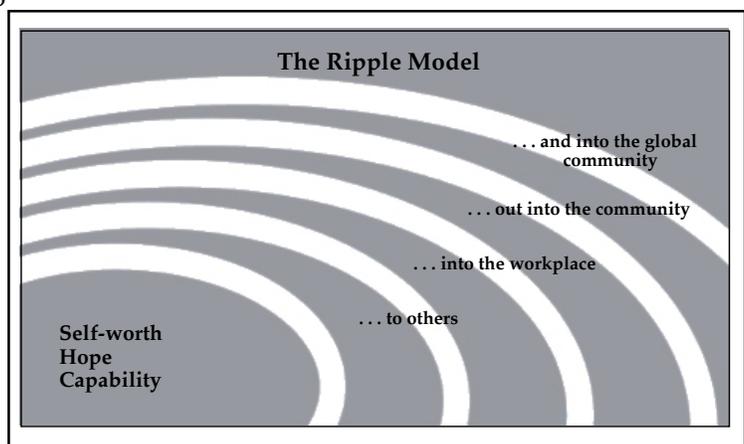
Two Models of Leadership.

With the intention of designing a program to develop leaders responsive to these complex challenges, several years ago The Leading Clinic of Vashon, Washington sponsored the coming together of a team of researchers to examine what could be learned from the experiences of effective leaders, from the writings of leadership experts, and from innovative thinkers in other related fields, such as psychology and psychotherapy, the new sciences, and the study of communication. The integrated view of leadership that resulted from their effort was named *Leadership for a Healthy World*.

At the heart of *Leadership for a Healthy World* are two models that were developed to guide our research team's

thinking about the kind of leadership that could be possible for any level of system: individual, team, organization, community, world. These models illustrate the most significant finding of our research – that when leaders, and the people who live and work with them, feel worthy, hopeful and capable, there exists the potential for exceptional accomplishment.

This theory of leadership sourced our student-leaders in their engagement in Marketplace.

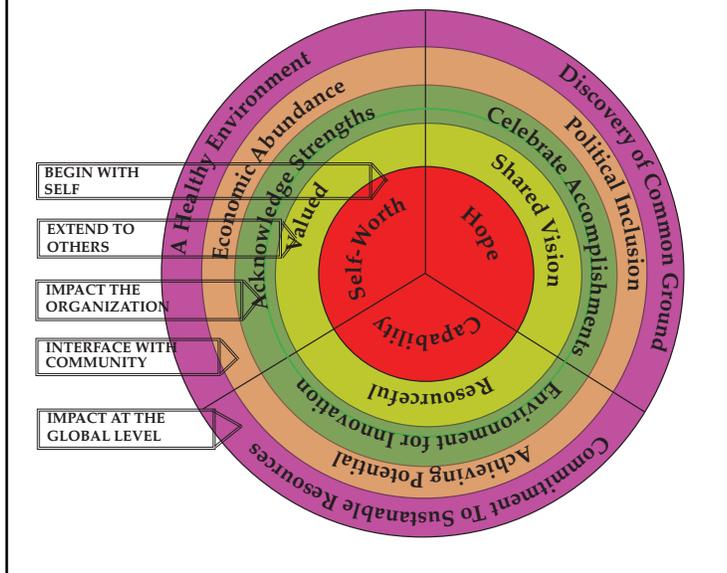


The first model, The Ripple Model, pictures the research team's thinking of how a strong sense of self-worth, hope and capability would act like a pebble thrown into a pond: the impact of having this empowered sense of self expands from the healthy core of the individual, causing overlapping and widening circles to ripple outward, touching everything in their wake.

Building self-worth, hope and capability in oneself and in others allows people, organizations and communities to flourish, and, we hypothesized, would eventually be the key to global wellbeing.

As shown in this figure, the research team began to recognize how essential a sense of self-worth, hope and capability

Leadership for a Healthy World



For example, Abraham Zaleznik, from the Harvard Business School, discovered in his research that leaders with low self-worth apparently begin to think of themselves as having fewer choices, even when others saw many options yet available. And in a recent interview, Richard Skillman, former hospital system CEO and Executive Director of a several major medical organizations, referring to the high turnover among executives in the tumultuous healthcare industry, said, "It's hopelessness that causes us to abandon initiatives in midstream, and to give up on ourselves and our employees."

were in creating healthy, high functioning communities, and through them, the world. The **Leadership for a Healthy World** model focuses on how individuals, teams, organizations and communities who experience this sense of self-worth, hope and capability, as contrasted with those experiencing worthlessness, hopelessness and helplessness, seemed to be able to focus on their possibilities rather than on their limitations.

Whole System Health Begins with Health at the Core.

At the center of the Leadership for a Healthy World model (see the central red ring in figure 2) is placed the self-worth, hope and capability that leaders need to build within themselves. Our research clearly demonstrated that a solid core of self-worth, hope and capability had a profound impact on every experience leaders had, affecting how capable they were in dealing with others, to what heights they aspired, and ultimately, what they were able to accomplish within organizations.

In the diagram of the model, the second ring out from the center indicates the leader's role in maximizing the potential for others to contribute to the success of the system: from their direct contact with the leader, people would feel valued, resourceful and engaged in creating a shared vision.

Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner, in their book *The Leadership Challenge*, refer to this as "enabling others to act." In their research and interviews with leaders across the country, they found that exemplary leaders made others feel capable, and when they did, extraordinary things got done.

Nathaniel Branden, clinician and researcher, compared the need for self-worth, hope and capability to the need for calcium in the diet – if people lacked it, they didn't necessarily die, but rather became impaired in their ability to function. He demonstrated that high self-esteem subjects in research experiments actually persisted at a task significantly longer than low self-esteem subjects.

Two examples of leaders who understood this were Edwin Land, who, in the early days of Polaroid, convinced his managers that they couldn't fail, and Coach John Robinson of the Los Angeles Rams, who once reported that he never critiqued his players until they were convinced of his unconditional confidence in their abilities.

The Ripple Effect

Via the contributions the leader and individuals in contact with the leader make, system effectiveness is impacted. From systems filled with confident, capable and hopeful people, an effective community begins to develop. And, finally, healthy well-functioning communities contribute to global wellbeing. This is the ripple effect that is possible when leaders understand their role in building personal and system-wide self-worth, hope and capability.

As Chunliang Al Huang and Jerry Lynch say in their book, *Mentoring, The Tao of Giving and Receiving Wisdom*, "By cultivating the powerful 'self' we begin to offer the possibility of change to those in our world; change comes from the individual heart and fans outward, creating a unified, interconnected community."

In the Leadership for a Healthy World training program The Leading Clinic designed to develop leaders, based on the Ripple Model, and the Leadership for a Healthy World model, participants initiate the process of transforming their sense of themselves by challenging their own limiting beliefs, becoming **inquirers** and **learners**. Then, to impact others, leaders develop the skills of **coaching**. In the program, coaching is differentiated from other leader-follower interactions, and is defined as "a passionate, responsible relationship

for creating an opening for action and engagement."

Next, as a **partner**, leaders collaborate in developing the organization's potential for high performance. The key to this is how the leader acknowledges the system's strengths and celebrates its accomplishments (what David Cooperrider, Ph.D., refers to as the "life giving forces of the organization"), while creating a resilient environment for embracing change.

For many long-term employees, this acknowledgment is the key to retaining a sense of their worthiness and maintaining a sense of hope during times of chaotic change. With the failed mergers of the past decade still smarting, some of our nation's top leaders claim they learned this the hard way, having seen the plunging morale from poorly planned and led transitions completely incapacitate their organizations.

Ultimately, when change is on the horizon, it is each employee's sense of resourcefulness that enables an organization to be flexible, responsive and open to new requirements.

Moving from the center to the outer rings of the Leadership a Healthy World model, leaders forward the relationships between their organizations and the outside community by learning to view their communities as sources of economic abundance, political inclusion, and support for achieving each community member's potential. In this way, being hopeful and believing themselves and their organizations to be worthy and capable, leaders serve as **catalysts** for creating interrelationships within the community that support the organization's success.

In doing that, leaders, as learners, coaches, partners and catalysts, can create a harmonious world with a healthy environment, a focus on common ground, and a commitment to sustainable resources.

Health in the Marketplace.

This year, equipped with an understanding of the Leadership for a Healthy World model, second year student-leaders in four different companies engaged their 'employees' (first years) in identifying the values that would drive their Marketplace choices: what products and/or services they would offer, and what processes they would use in creating and then selling them. Unlike the global marketplace, however, our Marketplace is made up of 30 minute "days", and there are only eight of them and a somewhat sleep-deprived night available to form, storm, norm and perform as a company! Yet, because of their shared commitment to creating healthy systems, important time was

taken from the rush of this one-and-a-half day experiential curriculum to reflect, to journal, and to step back long enough to notice their own contributions to creating health in the system, while acknowledging the challenge each leader and member had taken on to *live* the Leadership for a Healthy World model.

In today's business climate there is a compelling belief that how leaders lead is the link to how competently organizations run. The information derived from the investigations of The Leading Clinic's research team indicated that organizations filled with and led by worthy, hopeful and capable individuals will be organizations that thrive in the climate of this century.

As faculty, in sharing the Leadership for a Healthy World model with the students, we are hopeful that they will go forward into careers that contribute to the health of our world – from the inside out.

Sherene Zolno, RODC, Certified Master Coach, is a learning and organization development consultant and executive director of The Leading Clinic. Her expertise includes working with leaders and teams and to ready them for the future, and assisting organizations in identifying strategic intentions, improving operations and transforming culture. She has made significant contributions to the field of management and leadership education and is an internationally known leadership researcher and seasoned business coach.

Sherene served on ASTD's OD Professional Practice Area board. Her writing has been published in ASTD's Research Monograph and OD Network's OD Practitioner, The OD VisionAction Journals, and in the Pfeiffer Annuals of 2000, 2002, 2008 and 2009, as well as in numerous other professional publications.

The researched-based Leadership for a Healthy World model serves as an important foundation for her work in whole system, positive-core change. You can read more about her work at <http://www.proactionassociates.com> and reach her at: szolno@comcast.net

REFERENCES

Barrett, F. (1995). "Creating appreciative learning cultures," *Organization Dynamics*.

Branden, N. (1994). *The Six Pillars of Self-Esteem*, New York: Bantam Books.

Chunliang, A. and Lynch, J (1995). *Mentoring, the Tao of Giving and Receiving Wisdom*, San Francisco: Harper.

Cooperrider, D. (1990). "Positive Image, Positive Action. The Affirmative Basis of Organizing," *Appreciative Management and Leadership*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Kouzes, J. and Posner, B. (1987). *The Leadership Challenge*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Skillman, Richard, personal conversation, 2000.

Zaleznick, A. (1965). "The dynamics of subordnacy," *Harvard Business Review*, May-June, 1965.

The author wishes to acknowledge the theoretical contributions of David Cooperrider, Paul Rebillot, Robert Dilts and Frank Barrett to the Leadership for a Healthy World model, as well as Jeananne Oliphant, Research and Design Team Co-leader, and The Leading Clinic's R & D team members, including Geoffrey Bellman, Diana Whitney, Dell Drake, Stephanie Hemingway, Sheila Kelly, Kim Krisco, J. Loux, Marge Schiller, Jane Seiling, and Robert Woodruff, who participated in the early research.