

Twenty-Four Principles and Practices of Presencing for Leading Profound Change

The key result of the above investigation is simple: that the essence of leading profound change is about shifting the inner place from which a system operates: the source and structure of the social field—that is, the source from which our actions come into being.

The following 24 principles of presencing summarize this social technology around five major movements: beginning (co-initiating), connecting to the larger field (co-sensing), connecting to the future that wants to emerge (co-presencing), bringing it into reality (co-creating), and embodying the new in everyday practices and infrastructures (co-evolving). The final three are the meta-principles at the root of Theory U and its practice.

Co-initiating: Connecting with Your Calling and Uncovering Common Ground

The first three principles focus on beginning from nothing and creating some common ground. We start by creating a field or container from which the remaining four movements can come into being. How? By listening. By engaging in three parallel domains of dialogue and listening: listening to what life calls you to do (listening to oneself), listening to other core players in the field (listening to others), and listening to what emerges from a forward-oriented constellation of core players in the larger system (listening to the common ground).

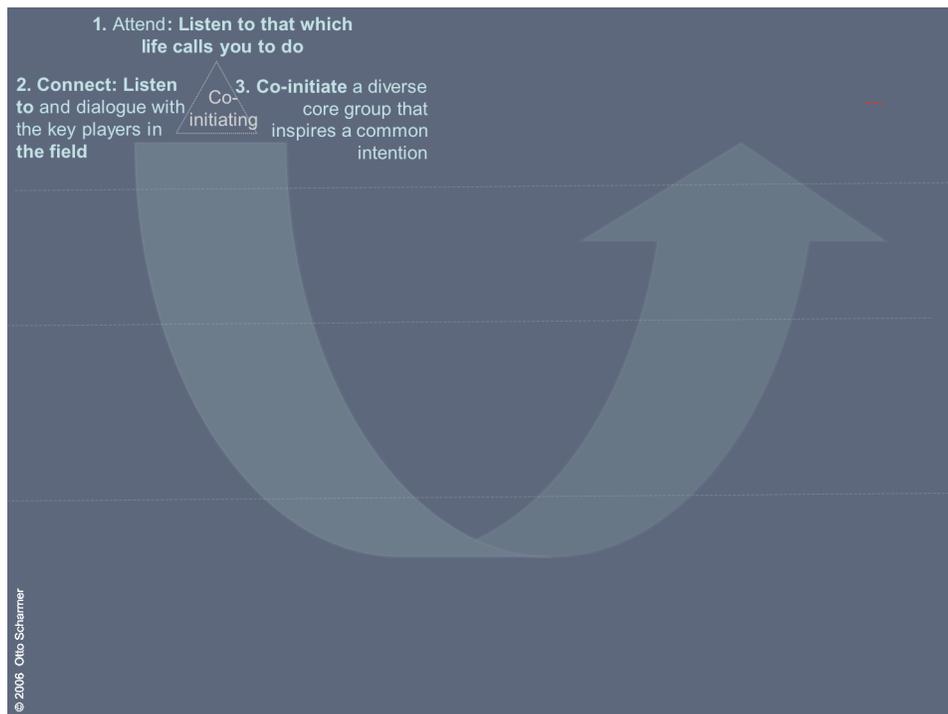


Figure 59: The first movement: Co-initiating

(1) Attend: Listening to what life calls you to do. All great ideas are triggered by something. The essence of the U process is to strengthen our participation and presence in the world we live in and bring forth the new. Just as Ed Schein’s approach to process consultation starts with the principles “always try to be helpful” and “always deal with reality,” the U process of presencing starts with the primacy of perception: “pay attention to what life calls you to do.” As such, the U approach is firmly grounded in process consultation (PC) as one of its principal parent disciplines.¹

Example: The idea to develop what would become my most popular class at MIT was suggested by a first-year MBA student, Neil Cantor. One day he walked into my office and proposed that I offer a class on corporate social responsibility. Because my teaching schedule for the coming term was already set, my first reaction was that I couldn’t do it. On consideration, I realized that what he had suggested was exactly what I had initially intended to do when I came to MIT years earlier. During all those years I had held on to this intention, but it hadn’t yet materialized. So, upon reflection, I realized that perhaps I should change my plan and follow his suggestion.

Practice: Take 4 minutes each evening and review the day as if you are looking at yourself from outside. Pay attention to how you interact with others and what other people want you to do or have suggested that you do. Over time, develop an internal observer that allows you to look at yourself from someone else’s point of view.

(2) Connect: Listen to and dialogue with the core players in the field. The second domain of listening takes you out of your normal world and to the interesting edges and corners of the field that you feel drawn to: you talk to the core players and listen to them in order to learn what it would take to move the current situation toward its best future possibility. You talk to both the highly visible core players and to the less visible ones—the people without a voice who may be shut down or shut out by the dysfunctionality of the current system. As you proceed on your mini journey, you let yourself be taught, enchanted, and guided by the field. The most important players, helpers, future partners, and guides often turn out to be different from what you expect—so your inner work is to stay open to suggestions and stay tuned to the help and guidance that the world offers you.

Example: During the class on corporate social responsibility mentioned above, one of the student teams took a sensing journey to the UN Global Compact offices in New York. They returned with an idea: MIT could develop a leadership development program that would help executive leaders to transform their companies through more sustainable and socially responsible business practices. The students created a joint student and faculty action team at MIT to explore the idea, and during the first meeting one of the senior faculty members turned to me and said: Otto, couldn’t you try to develop such a program? I thought, “Dammit, I can’t do that now” and responded: “Not sure, but I will

think about it.” The next morning I had made up my mind: I couldn’t *not* do it. So I began to think about what would spark my own best energy. I realized that it would be to work with the next generation of executives, the people who in 5-7 years would be in executive leadership positions in their respective global organizations. I realized that if everything continued on its present course, the world would see major global breakdowns and disruptive changes within the next 5-10 years. No one was preparing the future CEOs or executives for their roles; they wouldn’t know what lay ahead of them or how to respond to major breakdowns by leading profound innovation or reinventing the eroding foundations of our global economic, political, and cultural order.

I got my energy from that idea and then went on my own mini learning journey. I approached ten global institutions—international organizations and global companies and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)—and asked all of them essentially the same question: if we created a joint project to help the next generation of executives in leading global companies, NGOs, and international institutions focus on some of the global challenges ahead, develop the practical skills for co-creating profound innovations across systems, and prototype these innovations in hands-on projects—would you play? Very much to my surprise, all of them responded, “Right, that’s what’s missing today—so yes, we probably would want to play. At the minimum we would be seriously interested. So who else have you got on your list?”

Practice: The most important practice at this stage of the process is perseverance. That means not giving up in the face of rejection or (disconfirming) data that the world puts in front of you. I am not talking about the 6 or so months during which I asked the ten organizations what they thought of my idea (for which I had little or no time, funding, or support). I am talking about the 5-7 years before that, when I was holding on to the intention of doing something in that direction. So what was it that helped that intention survive and finally sparked my action?

Answer: A handful of people who knew and supported me and who held similar intentions. The practice here has to do with forming and maintaining your initial holding space, the handful of people that connect with your intention and that provide you with the staying power to keep going. This initial period can continue for five, six, or seven years, or more. In fact, many seed ideas for the future never get beyond this stage. So what does it take?

First: nurture and maintain your initial holding space. Second: never give up. Third: once you sense the invitation to your calling—the invitation to something that you can’t not do—first say yes and only then figure out how to do it.

(3) Co-initiate: Bring together a diverse core group that uncovers and inspires a common intention to create a world that is different from the current one. The essence of co-initiating is to convene a constellation of players that need each other to take action and to move forward. You convene the right folks at the right time and place. The opposite of co-initiation is to try to get people to “buy in” to your idea. That almost

never works because it's just your idea. So part of the art of convening these players is to loosen your own grip on the idea (without necessarily giving it up). You lead by painting a picture that is intentionally incomplete; you make a few strokes, and you leave lots of blank space that others can add their voices to and participate in. By operating this way, you shift the power dynamics from ownership to belonging, to seeing your part in a larger social field or whole.

The barriers to co-initiating are a need for (or attachment to) power (control), ownership, and money. This is exactly why most projects go wrong at an early stage. And *if* they go wrong at this stage you don't need to waste your time micro-engineering the process that follows. It's already too late. The biggest leverage any project has is at the beginning, when you can clearly spell out your intentions and convene the right collaborators.

Although probably most of us have been trained and socialized not to let go of power, ownership, and money, I have come to realize that the net impact of my ideas is positively correlated with my ability to let go of those three things. The result is that I get back a whole lot more than I ever gave up in the first place. That said, I also know (and have experienced) that this way of operating can backfire if people start to exploit you.

Example. When I had completed my mini learning journey with the ten global organizations and institutions about my idea, we held a core group meeting in London at the headquarters of one of the participating companies. It was just a one-day meeting, and the agenda was pretty open. The participants were all the people who had expressed strong interest, including the MIT-based core group that had co-inspired it. We started with a personal check-in about what was happening in each organization, in society, and even in the participants' own lives. And then we took it from there. There was no formal presentation; instead, we talked freely about our real work and what we felt was at stake in our communities and society, and somehow along the way found common sparks of interest and inspiration. Some of those sparks ignited during the first two hours of the meeting.

By the end of the meeting we had decided to design a pilot program for that initiative with a design team composed of one person from each of the seven core institutions. That group included global players from government, NGOs, and civil society. We called our pilot ELIAS (Emerging Leaders for Innovation Across Systems). Six months later that team presented its proposal to a group of executive sponsors—where it was unanimously approved. At that point the center of gravity for power and ownership of the initiative shifted from a small MIT core to the larger core group, which collectively functions as a vehicle for bringing their intentions and vision to light. That shift in the center of gravity required the old center (the MIT core) to begin operating differently: doing less telling and teaching, more learning and inquiring, less conventional problem-solving, and more collectively owned prototyping.

Example 2. When I came into the meeting room at the R&D center of one of one of the top 4 global car companies, I hadn't the faintest idea what was about to happen. There were seven of us: the head of the Research Center and the head of a Development

Center, who happened to be his most important customer; three people who reported directly to them; one external consultant (formerly an employee of that company); and me. The head of the Research Center opened the meeting and suggested that I make a short presentation. I suggested that he go first. He presented his problem and described the existing R&D process at his company. He described where that process didn't work, where he wasn't getting the results that he needed to succeed. Then I presented the U process as an alternative approach to addressing the same issue. It all went very quickly. Time flew, and we had an easy and inspiring conversation. At the end of the meeting we had agreed on the focus, time, and rough schedule of the project (six months), the size of the full-time core team (six mostly younger high-potential future leaders), a commitment of the two center heads to each give their best younger team members to the project team, a personal commitment from each person at the table to help as sponsors for the project, a commitment by the consultant and me to support the project team over the following six months (on a low budget that allowed the center heads to engage in this project without much visibility and noise in the organization), as well as the dates for the kickoff and the final presentation to the project team. Meeting time: 4 hours.

The point of this story is that creating a common spark of intention doesn't necessarily require a lengthy process. What it requires is meeting the right people at the right moment in the right place. In this case it was the other consultant who brought everything together: his earlier work experience and personal connections with most of the key players provided the right timing and place for this idea to move forward.

Example 3: In the late 1990s, the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) realized that with the rise of civil society and NGOs, social and political change processes had changed. Until then, governments and political groups in individual countries had been the key players for change and therefore had been the main contacts for the UNDP. Today broader societal groups have become key players in societal change processes. The UNDP decided to become a partner in their learning process. The UNDP's Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean began meeting with citizen practitioners in Latin America who had been active change agents in their countries. Their objective was to create a space where the practitioners could articulate their new practices, learn from and consult with each other, and create a network of peers. Instead of giving advice to individuals, the UNDP brought together key players who then worked together to improve their way of operating.²

Practice:

Checklist for co-initiating or sparking common intention among diverse core players:

- build an intention to serve the evolution of the whole
- trust your “heart's intelligence” when connecting with people or exploring possibilities that may seem unrelated to the strategic issue at hand
- connect with people professionally and personally: try to connect with their highest future sense of purpose (Self and Work)
- enjoy the exploration of the problem/opportunity with an open mind and heart
- when convening a core group meeting, include executive sponsors/key decision-makers who have a deep professional and personal interest in exploring and shaping the

opportunity

- include activists in the core group (people who would give life and soul to make it work)
- include people with little or no voice in the current system: patients in the case of healthcare, students in the case of schools, customers or NGOs in the case of business organizations, future participants in the case of the leadership development project (ELIAS)
- include key knowledge suppliers to the degree necessary for building a support team and infrastructure (helper/consultant, internal or external)
- identify the time, place, and context to convene this microcosm as a vehicle for co-inspiring the way forward (sense and seize opportunity).

Co-sensing: Connecting with the Emerging Field

Having initiated a common future intention with the core group, the next step is to put that intention onto its feet by forming a project action team goes on a journey of sensing, discovering, and realizing.



Figure 60: The second movement: Co-sensing

(4) Form a highly committed team and clarify essential questions. It is important that the team reflect the diversity of players and stakeholders mentioned above and commit itself to working (more or less) full-time on the project over a certain period of time (for example, 4-6 or 9 months).

Example: At the car company project we assembled a team of five. Many of them were up-and-coming leaders in the organization and now in their early or mid-30s. The team also included a more seasoned engineer who had an outstanding reputation for competence in many of the key knowledge areas at issue and who proved to be key to the success of the project later. In the case of multi-stakeholder projects such as the Food Lab, the project team includes 30-50 people. Usually I have found that smaller and more focused teams work better than larger and less focused ones. The bigger the group, the more you need to rely on forming smaller subgroups of 5-7 persons, which become the primary units for sharing context, generating ideas, and getting things done.

Practice: Here is a checklist for a foundation workshop, the kick-off event that for the first time convenes all the team members and connects them with the core group that initiated and sponsors the project initiative. This checklist of desired outcomes may be useful for testing the design:

To create clarity and commitment, decide:

- What: what we want to create
- Why: why it matters
- How: the process that will get us there
- Who: roles and responsibilities
- When, where: the roadmap forward.

Additional goals:

- Uncovering common ground by sharing the context and story that brought us here
- Sparkling inspiration for the future that the team wants to create.
- Mini training in dialogue interviews and deep-dive best practices
- Action planning for a deep-dive journey: identifying core people, organizations, and contexts that need to be explored and visited (target list of the places with the most potential)

(5) Take deep-dive journeys to the places with the most potential. The purpose of the deep-dive learning journeys is to connect with the people, contexts, and ideas that are relevant for connecting with the best future potential. The deep-dive journey moves one's operating perspective from inside a familiar world—one's institutional bubble—to an unfamiliar world outside that is surprising, fresh, and new. A deep-dive journey is not a benchmarking trip. It is designed to access a deeper level of emerging reality by observing hands-on practices through total immersion. It incorporates a combination of shadowing, participation, and dialogue.

Example: The focus of the car company project mentioned above was on solving key quality problems concerning the electronic control of the car. After the kick-off workshop the participants began to generate a list of people, organizations, and contexts, both internally and externally, to visit during their deep-dive journey. Three activities were

performed simultaneously: a Web-based learning journey, internal learning journeys, and an external learning journey. Over time, the key focus shifted from the Web to the internal and from the internal to the external learning journeys. After the first month the internal interviews were completed, and the team of six split into two groups of three to begin their external global learning journey. Both started in Europe, with one going east and the other west. Three weeks later they and we would all meet in Shanghai for the sense-making session. The deep-dive journeys took the team to R&D departments in other industries, engineering labs at MIT or other development centers, but also to seemingly less relevant places, like the offices of two healers and experts on traditional Chinese medicine.

Practice: Ask yourself: Given the sense of the future that you want to create—where are the places of most potential that could teach you most about that future and how to make it work?

Deep-dive journeys are usually best when conducted in small groups of five or fewer (so that the whole team fits into one car), when the visited organization can be observed through conversations, shadowing activities, and possibly participation and when the preparation and debriefing are done in a disciplined, structured, and timely fashion. Each team member keeps a journal; each team has digital cameras, cell phones, and Web space for real-time documentation and cross-team sharing; to speed up the process the teams should also receive both strategic and operational support in setting up their learning journeys.

Before each visit:

- gather relevant information about the site you will be visiting (use the Web)
- make it clear that you want to talk to/shadow/work with people and not get a standard presentation
- prepare a questionnaire as a team (but feel free to deviate from it)
- conduct a mini-training session on effective observation and best sensing practices

After each visit:

- do not switch on cell phones or PDAs before completing the after-action reflection
- plan a time for immediate reflection as a group

- during this reflection each participant should describe his or her observations, but try not to reach any conclusions in the first round. Stay focused on what emerges from the flow. Here are a few sample questions:

- (1) What struck me most? What stood out?
- (2) What was most surprising and unexpected?
- (3) What touched me? What connected with me really deeply?
- (4) If the social field of the visited organization was a living being, what would it look like and feel?
- (5) If that being could talk: what would it say (to us)?
- (6) If that being could develop—what would it want to morph into next?
- (7) What is the source that allows this social field to develop?
- (8) What limiting factors prevent this field from developing further?
- (9) Moving in and out of this field, what did we notice about ourselves?
- (10) What can this field tell us about our blind spot?
- (11) What can this field teach us about our future?
- (12) What other ideas does this experience spark for our initiative (the way forward)?

(6) Observe, observe, observe: Suspend your voice of judgment (VOJ) and connect with your sense of wonder. Without the capacity to suspend your voice of judgment, all efforts to get inside the place of most potential will be in vain. Suspending your VOJ means shutting down the habit of judging and conversing based on the experiences and patterns of the past in order to open up a new space of exploration, inquiry, and wonder.

Example: In 1981 an engineering team from Ford Motor Company visited the Toyota plants that operated based on the “lean” Toyota production system. Although the Ford engineers had first-hand access to the revolutionary new production system, they were unable to “see” (recognize) what was in front of them. The reaction of the engineers—that what they were seeing was staged and not a “real” plant because there was no inventory—reminds us how difficult it is to suspend our judgment even when we find ourselves in the place of most potential.

For many entrepreneurs, the “observe, observe” immersion often requires leaving behind an environment that in the past has provided a sense of security. That very security begins to feel constraining and inspires the need to cross the boundary from the known to the unknown. Some people take the step with trepidation, some with glee, but the move always opens up a new world of activity, connection, and “magic.” Alan Webber, the co-founder of *Fast Company*, recalls: “I remember vividly my sense of liberation when I left the *Harvard Business Review*. All of a sudden I started meeting a whole new group of people. The basis for personal interaction was completely different: ‘What are you working on that is interesting and who are you and how does it feel?’ I was seeing the world with fresh eyes. I was learning at a rapid clip, going places I had never been before, and meeting people I would never have met before. It was as though I had escaped the boundaries of a walled city.”

Practice: Take an object (such as a seed) or a situation and observe with undivided attention for at least 5 minutes. When you notice your mind wandering to other ideas or thoughts, correct your course and return to the task of pure observation.

(7) Practice deep listening and dialogue: connect to others with your mind, heart, and will wide open. When connecting to other people and contexts, activate and open up all four “channels” of listening: listening from what you know (listening 1), from what surprises you (listening 2), from empathizing with the interviewee (listening 3), and listening from her or his authentic Source or highest future possibility (listening 4).

Examples: Of all the interviewers I have met, Joseph Jaworski stands out for his ability to create a trusting connection with the interviewee even in high-stakes political contexts. I once asked him how he managed that. His response was that the most important hour is the hour *before* the interview starts. That is when he centers himself in order to open his mind and his heart to the interview about to take place.

Later, as I gained more experience conducting deep listening and dialogue interviews, I began to notice that interviewees often don’t want to stop the conversation when time is up. They want to remain in the field. They may remark, “Boy, this was really interesting. Can I have the tape? I must have said things today that I never did before.” They seem to sense that upon leaving the conversation they will take with them a timeless element of presence from the conversation—something that won’t disappear no matter what. The interviewer feels the same way, as if he or she has entered a field that is more closely connected to a true authentic presence. Something larger than the two participants evolved and became present during the conversation. And finally, when I became even more aware of these subtle shifts in conversational fields, I could tell almost exactly when a conversation shifted from normal reflective discourse to a deeper flow of meaning and essential emergence. When that happens, the quality of space, time, light, and warmth begins to shift subtly—as well as the quality of sound: voices get softer, the conversation slows, the texture of light seems to thicken, a sense of enhanced warmth seems to radiate from the interpersonal space, and at the same time I hear a high-frequency ringing. When these changes happen, the conversation simultaneously deepens to provide a profound sense of timeless presence and flow.

The most important conditions on the side of the interviewer for such a deep conversation to occur are an open mind (genuine inquiry and interest), an open heart (appreciation and empathy), and an open will (attention to the emerging future and authentic self). This brings us full circle back to the four types of listening: listening from what surprises you (with an open mind), from empathizing with an interviewee (with an open heart), and from the emerging authentic self (with an open will).

Practice: Spend 4 minutes each evening reviewing when during the day you engaged in listening 3 (open mind and heart) and listening 4 (open mind, heart, and will). If you cannot identify a single instance of deep listening, take note of that too. If you do this exercise for a month, your effectiveness as a listener will rise dramatically—without a single dollar spent on further training or coaching. All it takes is the discipline to focus on that 4-minute review process every single day.

(8) Create collective sensing organs that allow the system to see itself. Maybe the biggest institutional gap in seeking profound systems innovation is today's lack of collective sensing mechanisms. We have lots of collective downloading mechanisms (commercials, TV, other propaganda, and unfortunately much of our education system). By contrast, collective sensing mechanisms use the power of shared seeing and dialogue to tap an unused resource of collective sense-making and thinking together.

Example: The patient-physician dialogue forum described earlier in the book is an example of a collective sensing organ: when individual sensing activities (in that instance, 130 dialogue interviews and several weeks of shadowing) are convened, they gradually begin to function as a collective sensing organ of the whole: “Oh—look what are we doing to ourselves.”

Practice: One enormously useful practice for creating collective sensing organs is the “world café” method developed by Juanita Brown, Toke Moller, and David Isaacs, among others.³ Larger groups sit together as in a coffee house, around small round tables with four or five chairs. Rather than limiting the interaction to a single table, the world café method focuses on interaction on multiple levels (table talk, whole group conversation) and in small groups (individuals switch tables and groups multiple times). For more detail: www.theworldcafe.com

Co-presencing: Connecting to the Future That Wants to Emerge

After deeply immersing oneself in the contexts that are relevant to a situation and its best future potential, the next movement focuses on accessing a deeper source of knowing: connecting to the future that wants to emerge through you (co-presencing).

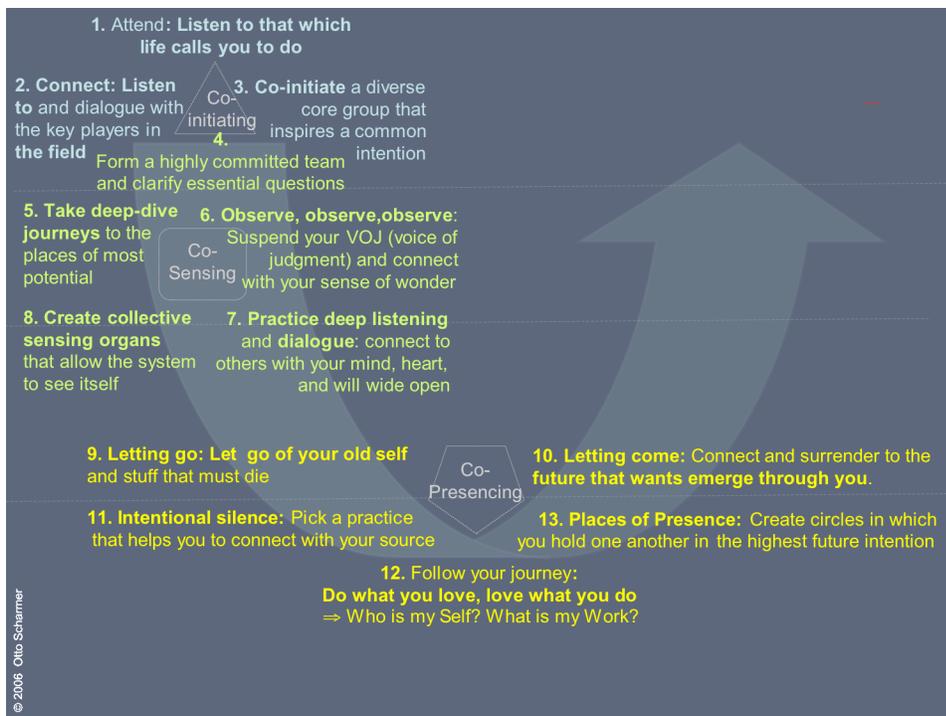


Figure 61: The third movement: Co-presencing

(9) Letting go: Let go of your old self and stuff that must die. The biggest obstacle to moving through the U comes from within: it is your resistance (individually and collectively). Dealing with resistance is essential when moving down the left side of the U. Don't be surprised when your resistance shows up again and again. It happens to everyone. But as you become a pro you know in advance that it will pop up at certain stages, and that your work is to be prepared to meet and deal with it through calmness, appreciation, and focus. Moving down the U means *suspending* your voice of judgment, *reversing* your cynical view of a situation, and overcoming your fear of *letting go* of your old self, that part that must die in order for the new to take shape. Dealing with these three forms of resistance requires—to use the classical language of virtue—commitment to truth (having an open mind), to love (having an open heart), and to courage (having an open will).

Example: The letting-go principle is about letting go of everything that isn't essential. Alan Webber recalled what kept him going on his journey to co-create *Fast Company* despite all of the obstacles he encountered: "People who have genuinely been taken over by an idea or a belief usually can't answer the question 'Why are you doing this?' in rational terms. Years ago my father bought me a collection of interviews of great fiction writers. The interviewer was George Plimpton. He'd say, 'Why did you become a writer? Why do you get up in the morning and write?' The answer invariably was, 'Well, I can't not.'

“People would ask me ‘Why are you doing *Fast Company*?’ At first, the answer was very rational: ‘Well, you know, it’s a magazine about this and that, and the world doesn’t have one.’ But I soon realized that those reasons weren’t the real ones. The reason you do it is because *you can’t not do it*. But it’s hard to explain that to people without sounding like a lunatic.”⁴

Practice: Go through the following four-step meditation (by way of reflective journaling or visual imagination).

- 1) What in your life and work are the situations, practices, and activities that connect you most with your best sources of energy?
- 2) Consider these activities and situations as small seeds and building blocks of the future: what might a possible future look like in which these small seeds and building blocks are interconnected and grow into an inspiring whole that resonates with your best energies?
- 3) If you were to take this on, to bring that future into the world, what do you need to let go of? What is the old stuff that must die?
- 4) If you took the risk and your project failed—what would be the worst case, and would you be ready to face it?

Courage comes from the willingness to “die,” to go forth into an unknown territory that only begins to manifest after you step into that void. That is the essence of leadership.

(10) Letting come: Connect and surrender to the future that wants to emerge through you. The most important leadership tool is the leader’s Self—*your* Self. At the foundation of this principle—and at the foundation of the whole presencing approach—lies this simple assumption: every human being is not one, but two. One is the person that we have become through the journey of the past. The other one is the dormant being of the future that we *could* become through the journey of the future. Who we become will depend on the choices we make and the actions we take now. That being of the future is our highest or best future possibility. Both these beings are real in the sense that each one constitutes a specific body of resonance—the field of the past and the field of the future. I can evoke an active resonance with either field. Usually these two fields of resonance—and the different dimensions of our evolving self that they represent—are poles apart. The essence of presencing is to get these two selves *to talk to each other*, to resonate, both individually and collectively.

Example: The authentic self can be experienced each time you engage in a deep generative conversation that enters the fourth field of emergence. When you finish such a conversation you leave it as someone different from the person you were when you entered it a few hours earlier. The difference between these two qualities of presence is caused by a subtle shift in the social field. In these situations you may sometimes sense a

subtle shift of atmosphere, a *clearing*-like field of presence or energy that surrounds the conversation between yourself and your interviewee. Most people actually experience some version of that shift. However, more often than not these experiences go unnoticed because people aren't paying attention

Practice: Such an experience could be likened to a seed. Just as a seed needs a nurturing place and loving attention to germinate and grow, this inner seed also needs a sustained nurturing place and loving attention to evolve to its highest potential. Thus the question is how to create such places in our everyday life. One approach is simply to always attend to the deeper social field from which a situation arises when two or more people connect, to be acutely attentive as this common field opens up to the deeper streams of presence and self, and to *hold* the field such that the deeper flow can be sustained.

In addition, I have seen three practical leverage points that help to sustain the capacity to access the bottom of the U. These are explained in principles 11–13.

(11) Intentional silence: Pick a practice that helps you to connect with your source.

The currency that counts at the bottom of the U is not ideas, words, or insights. What counts at the bottom of the U is a different currency: practice. Practice is what we do every day. Thus this principle is about picking a personal practice that helps you connect to your future resonance.

Example 1: In conducting interviews with 150 thinkers and practitioners of innovation and leadership, I realized that many of those who impressed me most seemed to be doing a similar thing: they all practiced something in their everyday lives that helped them to access their best source of creativity and self. For example, many rose early in order to use the silence of the morning hours to connect to their own purpose or essential self. What people do, when they do it, and for how long differs widely. Some people seek the silence in nature. Some people meditate. Others pray. Some people practice an exercise that gives them energy and control, such as qi gong or yoga. Some simply drop into their sense of purpose. Some people do it in the early morning, some in the evening, some midday. Many people do a combination of the things mentioned here. Whatever the activity, the principle is that sometime during the course of the day you create for yourself a small place of deep reflection and meditative silence.

Practice 1: The morning practice can be likened to the moment after the last note of a symphony and before the applause begins. At that moment your whole being is resonating with the music. Likewise, when you wake up your whole being is still resonating with the tacit music of the night's deep sleep. The trick is not to lose it right away. You start developing that capacity by listening, by paying attention to the music of that moment so that it resonates throughout the day.

Morning Practice (an example, 10-25 min.)

Rise early (before others do), go to a place of silence that works for you (a place in nature is great, but you also may find other places that work for you), and allow your inner knowing to emerge:

- Use a ritual that connects you with your source: this can be a meditation, prayer, or simply any kind of silence that you enter into with an open heart and open mind
- remember what it is that has brought you to the place in life where you are right now: Who is Your Self? What is Your Work? What are you here for?
- Make a commitment to what it is that you want to be in service of. Give it all you have, all you are. Focus on the outcome that you want to serve (the larger whole).
- Focus on what you want to accomplish (or be in service of) on this day that you are beginning right now.
- Feel the thankfulness or true appreciation that you are given the opportunity to live the life that you have right now. Empathize with all of those who have never had all of the opportunities that led you to the place you are now. Feel the responsibility that comes with those opportunities, the responsibility that you have to others, to all other beings, to all of nature.
- Ask for help so that you don't lose your way or get sidetracked. Your way forward is a journey that only you can discover. The essence of that journey is a gift that can come into the world only through you, your presence, your best future self. But you can't do it alone. That's why you ask for help.

I have found a few things that help me. Once I took a two-week course in awareness training with John Milton. Part of this training is a 7-day solo retreat in a special spot in nature. That week of silence, fasting, and meditation helps one to sustain and deepen a daily practice. And it also helps one to forgive small failures. Like most people, I have often started a practice and failed to keep it up, ending up feeling bad and blaming myself (enacting my voice of judgment). Only years later did I realize how dysfunctional such a pattern was. The trick is to pay attention to the small things that you *do* accomplish and to correct your course instantly when you deviate from it—that's where the energy needs to go, not into the blame game. It is also useful to have a partner with a similar (or a different) practice. Finally, the busier you are, the more mileage you may get out of even shorter periods of intentional silence. If you really can't afford more than 10 minutes a day without violating your core commitments to the other people in your life, these 10 minutes will have the same positive impact that 30 or 60 minutes would have for those with a more flexible schedule.⁵

This practice is the opposite of waking up and turning on the radio. Turning on the radio during one's first waking hour kills the inner space of silence that the practice described here is supposed to cultivate (I use the radio example because I used to have that habit). Regardless of our profession—manager, physician, farmer, educator, inventor, entrepreneur, venture capitalist, architect, artist, or parent—after that first hour of the day most of us face the same situation: chaos, change, and unexpected challenges. It's a part of living in this century. The question is how to deal with it. Panic? Freak out? Get defensive? Or would it be better to meet the events of the day from a different kind of place: from the field of the future that you want to create? Grounding oneself in that field of the emerging future is what the morning practice is about.

While we have many good examples for situating the intentional silence principle in individual cultivation practices, we have far fewer good examples of situating intentional silence in collective work settings. And yet, going forward, the development and refinement of practicing collective silence will prove to be one of the most important leverage points for future leadership work. The example and practice below are first steps into that territory.

Example 2: When the two teams from the global automobile company met in Shanghai after their learning journeys, each arrived with an initial analysis and with numerous artifacts gathered along the way. The presencing retreat session takes six days and has three phases: sense-making, silence, and crystallizing key initiatives.

The sense-making part focuses on sharing key insights and ideas from the deep-dive journeys and beginning to connect the spaces of possibility (for example, through the use of scenario-thinking techniques). The silence part breaks the flow of initial analysis and puts each individual and the whole group into a quiet space (which can last from a few hours to two or three days and nights). The ideal context of this silence is nature, particularly places that are conducive to clear and deep thought (such as a mountain top or someplace built of granite or stone). The group then collectively breaks its silence in a dialogue in which each participant shares some of what he or she experienced during the silence. This dialogue may happen around a campfire or in some other peaceful setting; then the group returns to the base camp. When it resumes its work on the team task the next morning, it is apparent that the team is no longer the same. It operates from a new level of energy, excitement, and collectively flowing conversation and thought. In this mode, the task of identifying and crystallizing ideas for prototyping living microcosms is done swiftly and with the greatest concentration and focus.

For the global car company project team, a visit with traditional Chinese medicine experts in Cambridge sparked some further interest. Most members of the group joined an optional 6 a.m. qi gong session with Chinese citizens in a nearby park. Inspired by this environment, the group developed a prototyping idea focused on creating a dream state for the car. They speculated that, just as human beings have different states of awareness—waking, dreaming, dreamless sleep—the same could apply to vehicles. The car might run through certain stages of self-analysis and self-repair just as the human body does during the stages of sleep. At the conclusion of the workshop, the sponsors chose this initiative as one of the two most promising and selected it to be prototyped in the next stage of the U cycle.

Practice 2: The location of the presencing workshop must be carefully selected and prepared: physically and logistically, mentally and emotionally, and intentionally and spiritually. It cannot be an office. It should be a remote space with a centered and focused energy, with windows on two (or three) sides and access to nature for extended (overnight) solo retreats, and it should be spacious enough for the whole team to live and work there more or less non-stop for a full week. Other items on the checklist for the retreat include artifacts from deep-dive journeys, sunrise seminars (such as qi gong), a toy box for sculpting,⁶ and props for scenario-planning exercises (body storming).

(12) Follow your journey: Do what you love, love what you do. For many people the gateway to accessing the deeper sources of knowing involves a deep dive into the essence of their work. Michael Ray of Stanford University frames this principle as *do what you love, love what you do*. His motto captures what I have heard many successful creators and innovators say: that to access your best creative potential you have to go on a journey, a journey in which you follow your bliss, your feeling, your felt sense of the emerging future. You trust that sense more than all the good advice you get from other people, which also may be valuable. But at the end of the day the essence of your creativity is about accessing that deeper source that is unique to you, your life, your future. To unlock that deeper source, you need to take a journey that, if it ever is going to unfold, has to go through the eye of a needle—and that eye of the needle is your Self—it is your capacity to access the uniqueness of *your* journey *now*.

Example: Joseph Campbell described the journey as a call to adventure, crossing the threshold, following the road of trials, the supreme encounter, and returning with a gift. These terms refer to an underlying developmental path of accessing the full power of one's creativity, which is dormant in every human being (in different ways). Unlocking it requires going on a different and deeper type of journey in which we follow a path—*our own* path.

When I was completing my Ph.D. thesis I received some good job offers, but none really grabbed my heart. What spoke to my heart was leaving Europe and joining the MIT Learning Center in Boston. With no connections there, I simply applied to do that. No one responded. Then I called. They said they needed to discuss whether to invite me for an interview. No one called back. I called again. Then someone said: Oh yes, come interview with some of the principal researchers at the Center. I had to borrow money for a plane ticket to the US. At the end of my last interview, Bill Isaacs, the founder of the MIT Dialogue Project, explained that MIT had a hiring freeze in effect and that the only possible position would be that of a visiting scholar (without compensation). “Can you provide your own funding?” Bill asked. “Sure I can,” I heard myself responding, knowing that the door that I felt was open a crack might close again in an instant. Then he asked whether I could start September 1st. Although I knew I couldn't finish my thesis by then, I heard myself say, “Sure, not a problem.” And sure enough, the first week of September I started my post-doc project at MIT, working on that during the day while completing my thesis at night, and living happily on maxed-out credit cards. Only years later did I realize that the project that first took me out of my funding crisis, the global dialogue interview project, would have never happened if I had started with a real job at MIT. And that project, as mentioned earlier, was probably the best thing that ever happened to me in my professional life.

Another time I chose to follow my inner instincts rather than the unwritten rules of conduct was when I applied to Germany's Witten/Herdecke University. Getting my education in the founding class of the Management School at that university was, in retrospect, absolutely critical. However, when I applied to the university I was turned down. When I received the rejection letter, I was shocked. I had felt such a strong sense of my emerging future related to that university that I simply couldn't believe what my

eyes read. I felt that I was losing my way. My life was going in the wrong direction. So after a day of deep depression I called the university admission office and asked why I was turned down. Because I hadn't completed the requisite amount of in-company work, I was told. That same night I wrote a letter to the dean of the Management School. I told him about my experience in formal (company) and informal (social movement) systems, as well as about other work experiences (on the family farm). I also told him what initiatives I would launch as a student if they would admit me to the first class. I wrote the letter because I had to do something (not because I thought I could change the school's decision—I knew that my chances were smaller than slim). The next morning I mailed the letter and the following day the dean called. I almost fell off my chair. He said: OK, if I could satisfactorily complete the two missing months of company experience in a textile company in western Germany, then I would be invited to join the founding class of the school. "Can you start that job next Monday?" he asked. "Sure, not a problem," I heard myself responding. "OK, let's do it," the dean said and hung up. I looked at my watch: Friday, 4 p.m. Two more hours to get into the city and buy a suit to wear on Monday morning. When I hung up I knew that this one-minute conversation with the dean had put my life back on track. It may sound strange, but that was my felt sense then (and now).

Practice: As always, much of the credit should be given to one's parents. My parents never gave their children money for work and always encouraged us to follow our inner motivations rather than the promise of exterior rewards. We had to figure out what we liked to do and were encouraged to follow that path. By contrast, much of today's environment for kids is focused on dragging them through back-to-back activities (that others organize for them) and socializing them to a system that rewards "good behavior." This poisons their capacity to act from an inner source, to act out of intrinsic motivation and love.

The road to accessing one's creativity includes the stages of (1) nothing much happens, (2) boredom, and then (3) noticing and responding to an inner motivation that evolves within yourself. It is difficult to learn how to do these things when you are managed by a tight system of exterior activities and rewards.

The same goes for companies: much of corporate motivational and reward system is probably more dysfunctional than helpful because it imposes a culture of reward-driven behavior rather than a culture of doing the right things *because* they are right.

So the practice here is about creating environments that allow people to do what they love and love what they do. Both things are important. Do what you love: follow your bliss. Listen to what calls you and follow that journey as it unfolds. Love what you do: fully appreciate the context that life offers you. Do what you do with love—and you will be amazed what life gives back.

13.Places of Presence: Create circles in which you hold one another in the highest future intention. There is an invisible movement going on in the world. It's a movement

that is manifest in a variety of forms and practices, practices that rest on the same underlying principle: to form a collective holding space in which the participants support one another in making sense of and advancing their life and work journeys. It's also an old movement. It is what the band of real friendship has always been. But it's more vigorous, fragile, and vital today than ever, because social norms and structures are disintegrating and dissipating left and right. As the world turns into a burning platform we also need to somehow progress with the ordinary business of life. In the midst of chaos and breakdown, we must develop the ability to stay calm and discern the path forward. Developing the capacity to operate from the nothingness of the now, the ability to discern and take the next step in situations where old structures have broken down and new structures haven't yet emerged, is perhaps the most important core capacity of navigating work and life in this century.

Example: The most advanced example of this that I know of is the Circle of Seven (see a detailed description in the chapters on sensing and presencing).⁷ That circle of seven people cultivated the practices of deep listening and presence over a couple of years. The result has been a collective field of presence that can be activated during circle meetings as well as outside them, a field that functions as a gateway to deeper professional and personal presence and proficiency.

Practice: Having seen how some of my student and executive groups succeed and fail with this concept, I offer the following notes on place, people, purpose, and process for use in exploring this principle with your own group.

Place: Form this circle in a meeting space that is cocoon-like and provides a sense of intimacy. Apply all the well-known criteria of good meeting spaces: spaciousness, natural light, windows on at least two sides of the room, simplicity, beauty, the place feels alive, it makes you feel at home. The place should be like a cocoon—that is, a safe and intimate space where you are sheltered from exterior disruptions.

People: A group size of five or six people is probably ideal, although sometimes a “group” of two can also work. It's not necessary (or even helpful) for this circle to be limited to your established (old) friends. What matters most is that you personally feel some bond or (possible future) connection. The group should consist of people who are interested in exploring some of the deeper issues of their personal and professional journeys and how they relate to organizational and societal transformation—people who share this interest because of a *deeply felt need* to pursue this deeper inquiry, not out of purely intellectual curiosity. You want people who are willing to put themselves on the line, not those who would limit their role to sitting in the audience to criticize others. You want people who may be connected to your future journey; you don't want to get stuck in the mud of past karma (although sometimes you need to work through some of that to uncover the deeper common ground).

Purpose: As you pull this meeting together, uncover a common intention that is larger than yourself. Create or discover a purpose that connects the being of your circle to the larger

global field that you and the members of your circle feel a part of. Connect the presence of the circle to serving the larger whole.

Process: Develop a process that works for you and your group. As the circle evolves, that process is likely to change. And yet you may want to consider some basic building blocks such as intentional silence, personal check-in, story-sharing about the golden thread in one's life's journey, the cultivation of deep listening, and developing the personal courage to raise issues and discuss challenges that require a lot of trust to be shared.

Co-creating: Prototyping the Future by Connecting to the Wisdom of the Hand

The movement of co-creating focuses on turning ideas into practical prototypes and microcosms of the future that quickly evolve and adapt based on fast-cycle feedback from all key stakeholders.

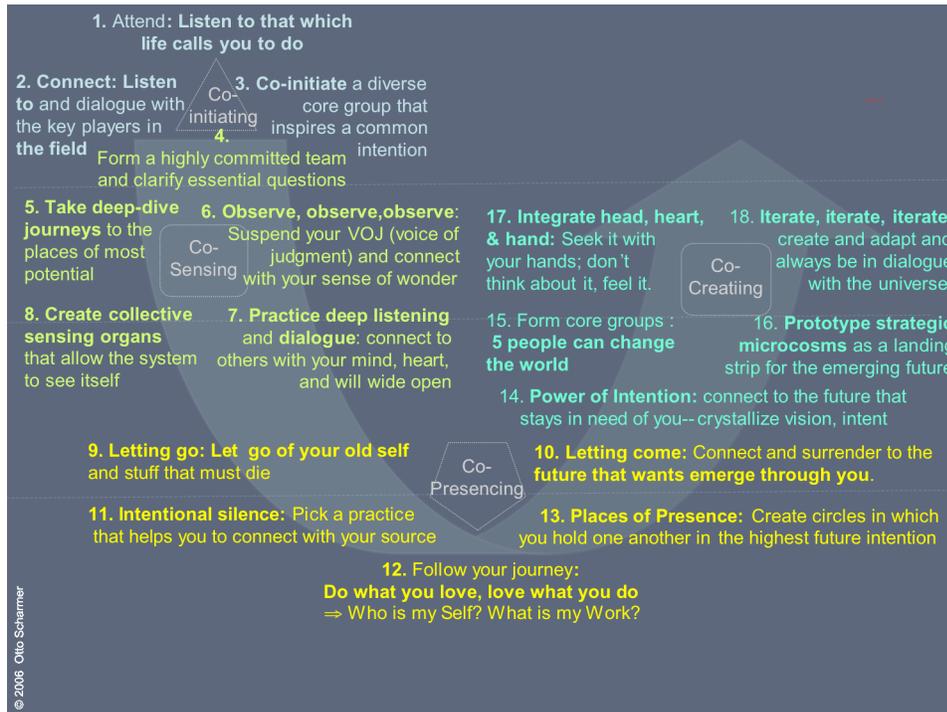


Figure 62: The fourth movement: Co-creating

(14) Power of Intention: connect to the future that stays in need of you—crystallize your vision and intent. The philosopher Martin Buber made the distinction between two types of will: the small will, instincts, and the Grand Will, which is the future that stands in need of us to come into reality. There is something deeply magical about tapping into that deeper creative force. It has to do with a different kind of energy economics. It's not the sort of neoclassic economics that you learn in school. It's a

creative or spiritual economics that describes a quality of energy dynamics that highly creative people and high-performing teams are able to activate and thrive on. It functions on a simple principle: *If you give all you have and all you are to your essential project, everything will be given to you.* But notice the sequence: *first* you have to give everything away, and only *then* will everything you need be given to you—maybe. That’s a different kind of economics. It has nothing to do with exchange value. What it describes is a gift economy: the more you give, the more you get. But it works only if you fully let go of what you give without the certainty of getting anything in return. This kind of creative or spiritual economics is at the heart of every profound innovation in science, business, and society.

The spiritual energy economics at issue here can be summarized with a simple equation: $E = m \Delta$, that is: personal energy (E) is a function of making a difference (Δ) on something that matters for me (m). If your work doesn’t make a difference, that’s a problem. Or if you work on something that doesn’t matter to you, that’s also a problem. In those cases you will tend to deplete your energy. The work itself won’t recharge you. But if you make a real difference doing something that truly matters to you, then you are on a loop of ever increasing energy: the more you give, the more you get back.

The practical bottom line of this equation: if we are going to spend a lot of time and energy on our work anyway, why not focus on something that matters? By contrast, many of our systems today are designed around paying people for work that doesn’t matter and that doesn’t make a difference—for example, an institutionalized healthcare bureaucracy that drains people’s energy, makes them depressed and sick, and would have them fill their inner void with material things, which in turn result in exponentially rising healthcare costs and environmental degradation.

Having seen people and experienced the dynamics of this energy economics, I also know how easy it is to lose it. Just because you have it once doesn’t mean you always have it. So what does it take? What practices would help people reconnect to that deeper source and flow? I have found two: practicing creative tension and prioritizing.

Practice 1—Creative tension exercise: This practice was devised by Peter Senge and Robert Fritz. In its classical form it works as a meditation in three steps: First ask (1) What do I want to create? and (2) What does the current reality look like by contrast? Then (3) Picture both images together (e.g., as a split screen) and note the creative tension between them.

This practice is an excellent tool to use as you start up the right-hand side of the U (crystallizing). I have found it useful to modify this exercise slightly in the U context by emphasizing during the second step not only how the current reality differs from the desired future, but where in today’s reality we find the *seed elements of the future*. Then in the third step you go into these seed elements (with your mind and heart) and evolve with them toward the desired future state. Many practitioners use this exercise successfully.

Practice 2: —Set priorities: What is the larger project that I am here for? How do I create conditions that allow me to focus on and serve it? And how do I prioritize my time so that it is spent on projects that matter, rather than on reacting to issues that do not? This tool is all about using the different qualities of the day, week, and year in a more intentional way.⁸ Ask yourself the first thing in the morning, what are the one or two most important things for me to do today? How are you going to use the best quality time of the day? The underlying principle here is that energy follows attention. This means that the biggest leverage we have is what we pay attention to (and what we ignore) and how we attend to a situation (or do not).

(15) Form core groups: Five people can change the world.. The World Bank in a recent study reviewed almost 5,000 of its projects in order to understand what key factors drove their success and failure. The study revealed that the most important variable for explaining success was the existence of a committed person or *core group* that moved the project forward, no matter what. That single factor was more important than content, processes, or cultural variables.⁹ The finding of this study certainly mirrors my own experience: whenever I have encountered successful projects and organizations, I have found that there is almost always, behind the scenes, a small group that somehow functioned as a vehicle for generating a larger energy field that was manifest through relationships and actions.

Example: In an interview, Nick Hanauer summarized his experiences founding half a dozen highly successful companies, his board membership at Amazon.com, and his work helping to reinvent the education system in the State of Washington as follows: “One of my favorite sayings, attributed to Margaret Mead, has always been, ‘Never doubt that a small group of committed citizens can change the world. Indeed it’s the only thing that ever has.’ I totally believe it. You could do almost anything with just five people. With only one person, it’s hard—but when you put that one person with four or five more, you have a force to contend with. All of a sudden, you have enough momentum to make almost anything that’s immanent, or within reach, actually real. I think that’s what entrepreneurship is all about—creating that compelling vision and force.”

I have found that a core group of five or six people can accomplish amazing projects almost effortlessly once they succeed in tapping into their intention. I say “almost effortlessly” because you become part of a much bigger stream of emergence and energy. But “effortless” doesn’t mean that there is little work involved. Progress happens only if you make a huge commitment (to avoid the term *sacrifice*): you basically have to give everything you have. That’s not something that people like to talk about because it often means putting the work ahead of some people. How to reconcile these two aspects—work and life—will remain a constant tension.

Practice: Ask yourself these questions: Who in my current life and work are the 4 or 5 people with whom, when connected in the right way, I could change the world? What do I need to do to really connect to them? What obstacles or barriers do I need to remove in order for this core group to function more effectively? Once you do that, you realize that much of the other B.S. just fades away.

(16) Prototype strategic microcosms as a landing strip for the emerging future. A prototype is an experiential microcosm of the future that you want to create. Prototyping means to present your idea (or work in progress) before it is fully developed. The purpose of prototyping is to generate feedback from all stakeholders (about how it looks, how it feels, how it connects with people's intentions, interpretations, and identities) in order to refine the assumptions about the project. The focus is on exploring the future by doing rather than by analyzing. As folks at IDEO have put it succinctly, the rationale of prototyping is "fail early to learn quickly." Prototyping is not a pilot project. A pilot has to be a success; by contrast, a prototype focuses on maximizing learning.

The key idea in prototyping strategic microcosms of the future is to create a landing strip for the future. A strategic microcosm is a small version of the future that you want to create that includes all core elements of the future field. It requires you to have the confidence to move into action before you have figured out the entire plan. You trust your capacity to improvise and to connect to the right places and communities, and through them to the right individual people. The process of prototyping strategic microcosms itself is a mini U that starts with clarifying intention, forming an initial core group; taking deep dives to connect to and engage with other practitioners, partners, and places that matter; returning and sharing everything that has been learned; reflecting and listening to the inner source of inspiration and knowing; crystallizing jointly the immediate next step and then going back to involve other players in the practical next steps forward.

The trick is to move through the U not once but many times, maybe even daily. Establish a team practice of beginning the day jointly (if possible with the use of intentional silence), check in on overnight insights, review and change the agenda for the day, go out and do it, and return in the evening to share what has been learned. Process it overnight, wake up with a new idea, and do it all again. The key is not to overplan and overschedule the prototyping. You must be able to go with what emerges from the process. That said, you also need to have some tough milestones for progress review and stakeholder feedback; these will help you stay focused and provide useful input.

What differentiates social innovations from product innovations is usually three things. First, with social innovations we need to pay more attention to the context in which some of the innovations may already exist. Second, we need to deal with a deeper layer of social and generative complexity that involves letting go of old identities and letting new ones come (by going through the bottom of the U). And third, we need to be mindful that social innovation always deals with human life; the "fail early to learn quickly" principle must be situated in a fast-cycle learning process that almost allows you to correct mistakes before you make them.

Example: At Cisco, the world leader in networking equipment, the prototyping imperative begins with what that company calls principle 0.8: regardless of how long-term the project, engineers are expected to come up with a first prototype within three or four months—otherwise the project is dead. The first prototype is not expected to work like a 1.0 prototype—it is a quick-and-dirty iteration that generates feedback from all key stakeholders and leads to the 1.0 version.

Practice: The practice of creating a strategic microcosm focuses on three areas: players, project, infrastructure. Here is a checklist for each item.

Convening the players: A strategic microcosm connects key players across boundaries that need one another in order to take their system into the best future way of operating. For a microcosm constellation to be productive, it usually needs five types of practitioners: (1) practitioners who are accountable for results (problem owners, such as the CEO of the hospital); (2) practitioners on the frontline (e.g., physicians); (3) people at the bottom of the system who normally have no voice and no say about how others spend their money (e.g., patients); (4) people outside the system who can offer a view or a competence critical for the success of the project (creative outsiders); and (5) one or a few activists who are wholly committed to making the project work (who have the right heart and who are willing to give their lives to make it work).

Another view of these five categories is to determine who should *not* be involved: you don't want 95% of all the experts (who tend to be the world champions in downloading—exceptions confirm this rule); you don't want people who are only interested in defending the status quo—in short, you don't want people who, when they use the word “change,” mean that only *other people* need to change. You want to link and convene players who have the networks, knowledge, power, and intention to co-create change across boundaries for the benefit of the whole. And you want to keep the group small enough to get the work done. Larger groups may need to set up subgroups in order to work efficiently. As a rule of thumb: the more comprehensive the representation of all stakeholders, the slower the process. The more selective the microcosm, the faster you can move to rapid-cycle prototyping. In the business of innovation, it is a mistake to involve everybody before you move into action.

Comprehensive representation can quickly turn into an enemy of innovation. Innovation is based on the courage to act on the basis of selected data and players. The trick is to select correctly. In social innovation we of course have to be much more inclusive. But still the same principle applies: you want to focus on the stakeholders in the system that is about to be born; you don't want to simply reproduce another gathering of special-interest-group-driven stakeholder interaction.

Selecting the project: Here are questions to ask as you select and evolve an idea for prototyping. Is it?

- Relevant—does it matter to the stakeholders involved? Select a problem or an opportunity that is relevant individually (for the persons involved), institutionally (for the organizations involved), and socially (for the communities involved).
- Revolutionary—is it new? Could it change the game?
- Rapid—can you do it quickly? You must be able to develop experiments right away, in order to have enough time to get feedback and adapt (avoiding analysis paralysis).

- Rough—can you do it on a small scale? Can you do it at the lowest possible resolution that allows for meaningful experimentation? Can you do it locally? Do not start on a grand scale. Let the local context teach you how to get it right. Trust that the right helpers and collaborators will show up when you issue the right kinds of invitations.
- Right—can you see the whole in the microcosm that you focus on? Get the dimensions of the problem or project definition right. In a prototype you put the spotlight on a few selected details. Select the right ones. For example, when doing the patient-physician study we didn't focus on all the stakeholders. We started with two: patients and their physicians. You have to be courageous in making these choices, and you have to be right—right in the sense that you clearly see the core axis or the core issue of the system. Ignoring the patients in a health study, the consumers in a sustainable food project, or the students in a school project (just to name a few examples that I have encountered recently) misses the point.
- Relational effective—does it leverage the strengths, competencies and possibilities of the existing networks and communities at hand?
- Replicable—can you scale it? Any innovation in business or society hinges upon its replicability, whether or not it can grow to scale. In the context of prototyping this criteria favors approaches that activate local participation and ownership and excludes those that depend on massive infusions of external knowledge, capital, and ownership.

Creating the infrastructure: Prototyping teams need different types of help: (1) a place (a cocoon) that helps the team focus on its creative work with minimal distraction; (2) a timeline with strict milestones that forces the team to produce preliminary prototypes early on and generates fast-cycle feedback from all key stakeholders; (3) content help and expertise at important junctures and process help that enables the team to go through the U cycle of rapid experimentation and adaptation every day (after-action reviews); and (4) regular prototyping clinics in which to present the prototypes and to benefit from peer coaching that focuses on the key challenges of the way forward.

(17) Integrate head, heart, and hand: Seek it with your hands; don't think about it, feel it. As the master coach puts it in the novel and 2000 movie *Bagger Vance* when helping a golfer who has lost his swing: *Seek it with your hands—don't think about it, feel it. The wisdom in your hands is greater than the wisdom of your head will ever be.* That piece of advice articulates a key principle about how to operate on the right-hand side of the U. While moving down the left-hand side of the U is about opening up and dealing with the resistance of thought, emotion, and will, moving up the right-hand side is about intentionally reintegrating the intelligence of the head, the heart, and the hand in the context of practical applications.

Just as the inner enemies on the way down the U deal with the VOJ, cynicism, and fear, the enemies on the way up the U are the three old ways of operating: executing without improvisation and mindfulness; endless reflection without a will to act (analysis paralysis); and talking-talking without a connection to source and action (blah-blah-blah). The three enemies share the same structural feature: instead of balancing the intelligence of the

head, heart, and hand, one of the three dominates (the head in endless reflection, the heart in endless networking, and the will in mindless action).

But the key virtue required on the right-hand side of the U is the practical integration of head, heart, and hand that prevents getting frozen into one of the three one-sided ways of operating (mindless action, actionless mind, blah-blah-blah).

An interesting detail during this stage is that the sequence in which the new shows up in the human mind is contrary to conventional wisdom: (1) It usually begins with an unspecified emotion or feeling. (2) That feeling morphs to a sense of the What: the new insight or idea. (3) Then the What is related to a context or problem or challenge where it could produce a breakthrough innovation (the Where: the context). (4) Only then do you begin to develop a form in which the What and the Where are framed by a rational structure and form of presentation (the Why: rational reasoning). This sequence can be traced in almost any type of breakthrough innovation. The biggest mistake when dealing with innovation is to put the cart before the horse by first focusing on the rational mind. In order for a new insight to emerge, the other conditions must exist first.

In short, connecting to one's best future possibility and creating powerful breakthrough ideas requires learning to access the intelligence of the heart and the hand—not only the intelligence of the head. The rational mind is usually the *last* participant on the scene.

Example: Here is how economist Brian Arthur told me he reached his most important scientific insight.¹⁰ He was doing his thesis at Berkeley on a really challenging math problem that many eminent mathematicians had failed to crack. Arthur tried hard for many months, but with no breakthrough imminent, he gave up. His adviser then suggested a less difficult problem, which he solved swiftly. Soon after completing his thesis he was reading in the department library with no specific agenda when his mind suddenly apprehended an image. He could see it. But at first he couldn't fully recognize it. He could see what it was—a topographical presentation of a solution. He thought: okay, that's the solution. But the solution to what? What's the problem that it belongs to? Then he realized that it was the solution to the mathematical problem he had given up on. At that point he was able to begin embodying the idea as a mathematical equation.

The story of course is a beautiful demonstration of the U: create the intention to solve a problem, dive into it, work your ass off, break the flow (stop), pay attention to the ideas that start to slip in through the backdoor of your mind; then develop and embody that idea.

Practice: Focus on what really matters. Work a lot. Take a shower. Get an illuminating idea. Dry yourself off and prototype the idea.

We all know this sequence. It has happened to most of us. What's important here is that all elements work together. Just taking a shower won't get you anywhere if you haven't taken the two previous steps: focusing on what really matters and immersing yourself in

the work. These two steps are necessary but not sufficient. Taking a shower means you break the flow by switching the context; you relax your body by sensing the water, you relax your mind by taking it out of problem-solving mode; and finally you pay attention to what is coming through the backdoor of your mind (sheltering yourself from distractions).

Maybe half of why the shower is such a functional place for getting great ideas has to do with eliminating distractions: you can't watch TV (yet), you can't read a newspaper, and you can't talk on the phone as long as the water is pouring down on you. Accordingly, a practice that accesses this deeper source of intelligence would integrate four activities: (1) focus (clarify intention), (2) work a lot (immerse yourself), (3) break the flow, switch context, relax, and pay attention to what emerges (shift the locus of attention), (4) follow the spark that begins to emerge, prototype it quickly, and learn by doing (iterate, iterate, iterate). Which brings us to principle 18.

(18) Iterate, iterate, iterate: create, adapt, and always be in dialogue with the universe. Don't get stuck with the initial form of your idea. Maybe that initial form was just to get you going. Always learn from the world and hone and iterate your idea from each interaction. The trick is to operate *as if* the world is a helpful place. For if you do, it actually is, and if you don't, it isn't.

Example: This principle has been effectively described and framed by Alan Webber, the co-founder of *Fast Company*. Says Webber: "The universe actually is a helpful place. If you're open in relation to your idea, the universe will help you. It wants to suggest ways for you to improve your idea. Now, that said, the universe sometimes offers suggestions that suck. Part of the adventure is listening to those ideas and suggestions and trying to make your own calculations about which ones are helpful and which ones are harmful. You don't want to be closed and say, 'No, this idea came from my mind fully hatched, and if we can't do it the way we've conceived it, I'm not going to do it at all.' On the other hand, if you listen to everybody else's suggestions, you go mad."

Practice: Here is a practice that may help you connect to a larger perspective:

Step 1: Take three minutes at the end of each day to write down the suggestions the world has made to you during the day without judging them as good or bad.

Step 2: Write one or two core questions that follow from these observations and that relate to current challenges in your work.

Step 3: The next morning, take five or ten minutes to write down the ideas that come to mind regarding the core questions (and observations) you put on paper the night before. Go with the flow of writing when a stream of ideas comes through.

Step 4: Complete the "journaling" by exploring the possible next steps: what would it take to further investigate/test/prototype these possibilities?

This practice is a safe place to explore new or challenging ideas and will significantly increase your capacity to read weak signals and to evolve your concepts.

Co-evolve by Connecting with Innovation Ecosystems

Once the prototypes are reviewed and assessed by the various key stakeholders, the next movement focuses on piloting and evolving the new in the right kind of institutional ecosystem and supporting infrastructure. To date we know about many episodes and stories of great transformational change and breakthrough. But at the end of day they remain merely that: episodes. Sooner or later the larger system snaps back into the old way of operating. The transformational episodes never spread the (positive) “disease” like a wildfire across the remaining system. Why not?

I believe that it is mainly because of two things. One: the still limited ability to operate from the generative field 4 of social emergence, both individually and collectively. Two: the institutional infrastructures that would bring together the constellations of players that need one another in order to transform the system are missing. The final fifth movement of the U is about putting these infrastructures in place. To date, we are only beginning to figure out what it really takes. Principles 19-21 preview the frontline of that territory.

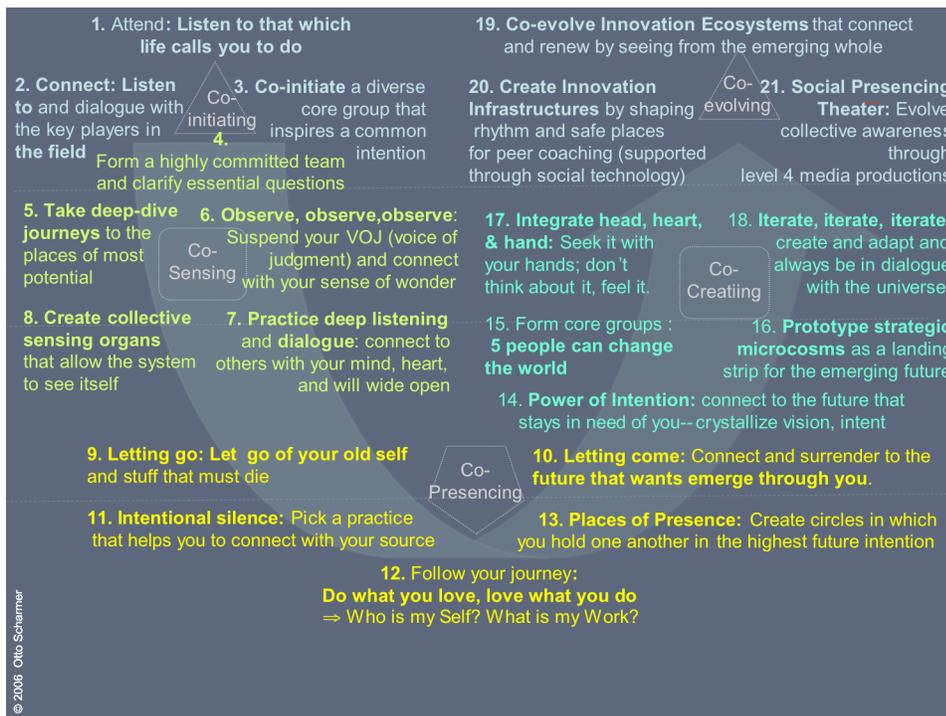


Figure 63: The fifth movement: Co-evolving

19. Co-evolve innovation ecosystems that connect and renew by allowing people to see from the emerging whole. Most organizations today have two types of integration needs: seamlessly integrating the demand supply chain into a single flow and integrating this type of “efficiency machine” with the capability to innovate, renew, and reinvent (creating an innovation ecosystem). Figure 64 depicts the first type of integration along the horizontal axis (supply chain, customer interface) and the second along the vertical axis (innovation ecosystem, demand-supply chain). In order to deal with the complexity through these two types of integration, companies need to evolve their governance system from the three traditional coordination mechanisms to a new fourth one.

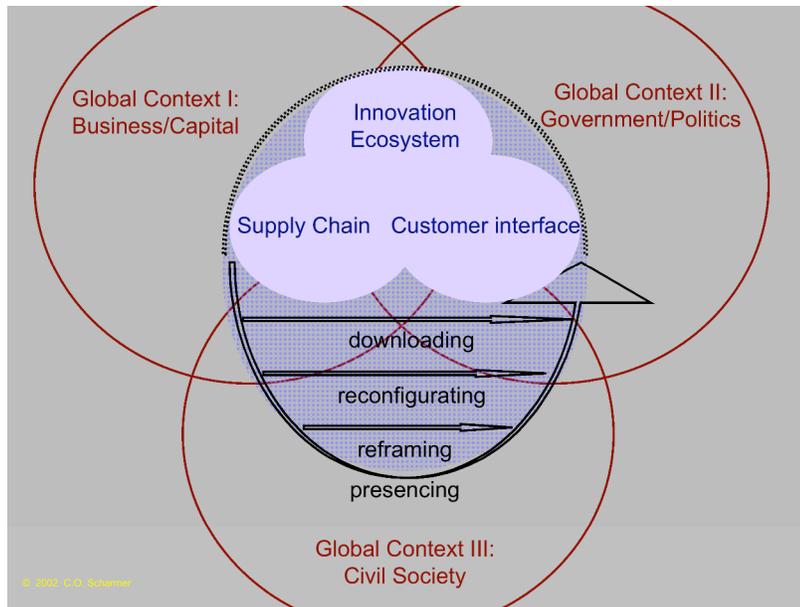


Figure 64: Three Spheres of Ecosystems

The first three traditional governance mechanisms in most systems are already in place and necessary—markets, hierarchy, networking. But they are in no way sufficient to deal with the complex challenges of our current age. To deal with those challenges effectively a fourth governance mechanism is required: seeing and operating from the presence of the emerging whole.

Although both hierarchies and markets help to coordinate complex systems, by adding an overlay of rules, plans, and price information, seeing from the whole means to establishing a direct link to the system or music that wants to emerge.

Think of a master conductor like Zubin Mehta, who, when conducting, focuses on that which is *about to emerge* from his soloist Placido Domingo. The conductor is at one with Domingo and the music that wants to break through from that special moment, from the now (picture 1), and *then* acts in total synchronicity with the emerging presence of that music in order to bring it into the world as it desires (see pictures 2, 3).

Figure 65 place holder

Insert about here: picture (Zubin Mehta)

Think of a master educator who looks at her student, who is at one with her and the presence of her highest future potential, and then acts very quickly in ways that help the student to realize that potential. Or think of a farmer who takes a walk in his field on Sunday, and who uses that as a mechanism to establish a direct connection to the living presence of his fields and then tries to tune in to what that living ecosystem wants him to do next. Think of a physician who takes into account not only the technical-scientific aspects of her patient-physician relationships, but also the deeper mental, social, and spiritual layers of those relationships, connecting to the authentic presence of each patient's self, and then starts to act from that, trying to be in service of that presence. Think of a leader who, like Mahatma Gandhi or Nelson Mandela, has operated by connecting with the presence of a much larger collective field, and who through his actions began operating from the presence of that larger collective field, acting as a vehicle for the best future possibility of that collective field to come into being.

All of these examples are performed by individuals. But the fundamental challenge of our time is to learn to do exactly the same thing: operate from the presence of the evolving whole—*collectively*, not just individually. Almost all of the major challenges of our time require us to operate in this way. And yet we haven't yet learned how to do it.

Example: Many leaders confronting difficult challenges realize that those challenges require new ways of operating, a field 4 approach to organizing: seeing and operating from the presence of the whole (or larger ecosystem).

Take the example of Judith F. from a very influential global NGO. Structured as a confederation, the organization works with partners to overcome poverty and suffering. Judith is the regional director of southern Africa (South Africa, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Malawi, Zambia, Angola). When she took the job the region was considered "dysfunctional": with low morale, low adherence to organizational standards, and an internal reputation of not getting the work done. Judith orchestrated during her first 18 months the organizational part of the turnaround mainly by refocusing her staffs' energies on what had brought them to the organization: a desire to help alleviate poverty and suffering.

In her additional capacity as the organization's Global Lead on HIV/AIDS, she realized that the existing approaches to the problem were inappropriate and ineffective: "The HIV pandemic is - as the word says -an epidemic with a global spread and with world-wide consequences; it should be addressed through and as a world-wide system, but it is not." Continuing the old programs no longer made sense with whole communities, or even societies in the process of collapsing. It would have been like repairing the staircase of the World Trade Tower just moments before the whole building collapsed. Although the goals were noble, the processes were out of synch with the circumstances.

Says Judith: "The pandemic is not only a health issue; it is an economic, social, and political issue; it needs a multi-disciplinary approach, including technological solutions to the disease, social changes in people's behavior, new economical systems nationally and globally to decrease vulnerability and to increase access to healthcare, and true leadership that is accountable to a diverse group of citizens at local, national, and global levels. The pandemic cuts across sectors, the civil service, corporate sector, and the NGOs; and the effect of the pandemic is different at each level, it needs an analysis and approach at each of the levels."

There is an extreme urgency, she says, because "more than 42 million people are infected by HIV, 2.9 million people are dying of AIDS yearly, in southern Africa alone 2,570 daily. The pandemic has created 10 million AIDS orphans so far, it has eroded community safety nets, and it will absorb all revenues of whole nations and destroy all productive forces within these countries."

So: when your job confronts you with such a challenge, what do you do? Do you turn to traditional responses, or do you stop, let the reality sink in, and come up with responses that do not replicate the patterns of the past?

Choosing to do the latter, Judith saw three immediate stakeholder issues: first, she had to encourage her staff to internalize the HIV/AIDS reality. The behavior of people living in "slow onset emergencies" like the unfolding AIDS pandemic is often compared to the behavior of a frog in boiling water. "If you put a frog into a pot of boiling water, it will jump out. If you slowly heat up the water with a frog in it, the frog will boil to death because it does not detect the gradual increase in temperature. We needed our staff to jump up to see the bigger picture".

Next, she had to empower her staff to propose responses that they believed would work given the cataclysmic and long-lasting effects of the pandemic. They would have to stop downloading corporate models and instead propose responses that would make a real difference without being afraid of stepping "out of line." She did this by carefully listening to her staff and trusting them to "read" their reality.

Third, she needed to work with her boss and her boss's boss (the CEO) at the headquarters in Europe to make the wider organization respond more appropriately to the HIV challenge. This would require a strategic shift in fundraising, resource allocation, campaigning and program development. In effect this meant that the organization would make HIV/AIDS part of its core portfolio. They also needed to bring the other members of the confederation on board.

While the first three items were difficult but doable, the last issue is proving to be the most challenging: the organization needs to quit organizing around standard processes and programs (fields 1-2). Instead, it needs to organize around the ecosystem, or "whole" that that it wanted to address and transform (fields 3-4).

That clearly is the challenge on the ground. Whether it is doable is a different matter. But if it is, the only way of getting it done is by approaching it as a generative multi-stakeholder process (see the inner red circle on the multi-stakeholder interaction map in figure 66). Here, the institutional power moves from the center of the organization to the emerging whole of the ecosystem (which usually resides outside the institutional boundaries of the organization). The organization has recently started experimenting with this new approach.

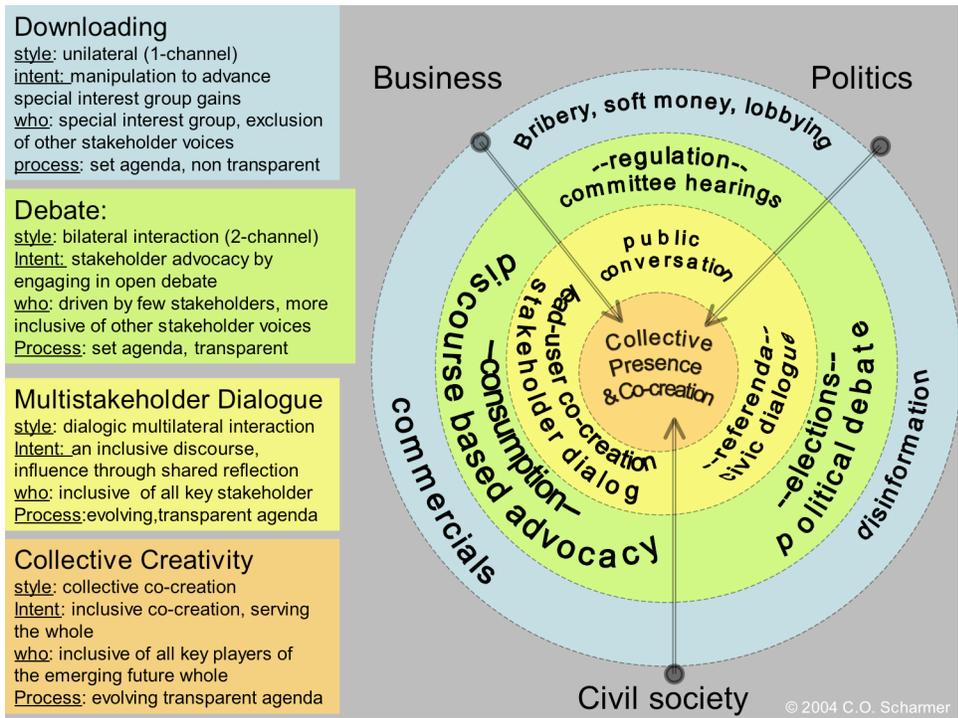


Figure 66: Four Types of Communication among the Societal Sectors

For this global NGO this required suspending and rethinking the conventional ways of approaching the work and opening up and connecting with additional stakeholders. A deeper alliance of players would be needed to address the HIV/ AIDS challenge in more innovative and sustainable ways.

Practice: Use the framework of figure 66 to assess your current system: draw four circles, write the identity of the key stakeholders in your ecosystem outside the circles; in the circles themselves list the communication qualities that define your system: name the qualities (channels) of communication the stakeholders in your system collectively use—and which ones they don't. If possible, use this stakeholder communication assessment as a starting point for thinking together about how to move the system from the outer to the inner circles of communication and governance.

20. Create innovation infrastructures by shaping rhythm and safe places for peer coaching (supported through social technology). Innovation happens in places. Much has been written about innovation networks, but what gets lost in all the excitement about networks is that the creative process also relies on the opposite of networked sharing. Creative processes need a *cocoon*—a sheltered interior place—from which something new can emerge. Just as a seed needs a place and time to grow and a child needs a place and time to develop, innovation needs a place and time to evolve and come into being on its own schedule.

For several years, Japanese management scholar Ikujiro Nonaka has focused on how to better understand the environment of successful knowledge-creating companies.¹¹ He argues that the power of place in organizations includes physical place, virtual place (the Web), social-mental place (shared context, trust), and spiritual place (shared purpose and intention).¹² In every developmental process these four aspects of place are foundational. For a seed to develop it needs a physical place (soil), connectivity (water), nourishment (nutrients, sunlight), and an organizing presence (the farmer's field). A child's development requires the same four conditions: a physical place (home, school), connectivity (movement and touch), social nourishment (loving attention, friends, challenges), and the developmental space in which the Self can come into presence (formative field).

The same four conditions also apply to successful innovation in organizations. Innovations happen in a physical place. But most of the physical office space in organizations lacks any cultivation or intelligent design. Hence, its impact on the psyche of the workforce is depressing rather than uplifting and stimulating. By contrast, a good example of creative workplace design is the space of IDEO, the international design company, which combines elements of design, technology, and creativity with an industrial-style functional and open layout; each team also has its own cocoon, which grows or shrinks according to the needs and requirements of the project it is working on.

Innovations need virtual space and connectivity, which of course rapidly evolve as new technologies come into the marketplace. Innovations also need a shared social space and context, which in the case of IDEO is created by a highly committed and focused core project team that is co-located in one or a very few places. And last, innovation requires a spiritual place—a sense of purpose for coming into being, which is often the inspiration and motivation for the core team.

While companies such as IDEO can afford to allocate resources and create a culture of innovation supported by all of the dimensions of place mentioned above, companies and organizations that are less innovation-centered may find it harder to do so. For those organizations the challenge is to innovate while *at the same time* running the organization efficiently. The leverage points for dealing with this challenge are *rhythm* and *place*: create a pattern of quality time and quality place that allows core groups of players to interweave efficiency and innovation.

Example: Ikujiro Nonaka describes the practice at Kao, a leading Japanese health consumer products company, where executives meet daily from 8:00 to 9:00 a.m. for conversation over a cup of tea. During these conversations they share success-critical context information informally and pass it on to their management teams later in the day. In this case the rhythm is daily, and the place is an informal lounge that allows relaxed discussion. The result is that critical information is disseminated across the organization very quickly without keeping too many people away from their work or in meetings.

Practice 1: Close your eyes and imagine that your area of responsibility—your core team—is a living organism. What would that organism want you to do? What breathing rhythm would be appropriate for the group of key players? Would it be the daily rhythm used at Kao? Would it be weekly, monthly, or quarterly, or some combination of the above? Once you have identified the appropriate rhythm, where should it take place? And what processes and structure do you want to put in place that would make the most of cross-team peer coaching and consultation?

Once you have answered these questions for your core team, try to answer the same questions for the extended network of stakeholders and players that matter most to the future of your project or organization: What is the best way to convene this constellation of players in order to cultivate the presence of the collective field among them? What rhythm, context, and place will be most helpful in developing this ecosystem?

Practice 2: Peer-coaching case clinics. Case clinics and peer coaching need a structure in order for teams to work together successfully. The structure below outlines one example:

70 minutes per session, 4 persons per team

(1) Select case giver and timekeeper.

(2) *10 min.* Intention statement by case giver

Situation / Problem / Opportunity / Project = What do you want to address?

Your intention: What do you want to create?

Help = Where do you need input + help?

Consultants ask clarifying questions if necessary.

(3) *5 min.* Mirroring of images that the case evokes by each consultant

What images does the case bring to mind?

What feelings and emotions do I sense?

What questions occur to me?

(4) *40 min.* Reaction by case giver + Q&A, dialogue by all

Coaches ask questions to deepen understanding.

Conversation to brainstorm solutions, including:

-how to co-initiate a core group microcosm

-identifying the places of most potential (co-sensing journeys)

-identifying the places of stillness and deep reflection (co-presencing)

-how to prototype a microcosm of the future whole

(5) *10 min.* Recommendations by consultants

What is the key issue to be addressed? [diagnosis]

What solution/action do I propose?

(6) *3 min.* Concluding remarks by case giver

What new insights/answers do the solutions offer to me?

How could I use/combine these ideas going forward?

Thank you!

(7) *2 min.* Journaling: Key take-aways (all)

21. Social Presencing Theater: Evolve collective awareness through field 4 media productions. Also missing from the infrastructure on a societal level are effective mechanisms for leveraging a deep transformational experience in one part of the system so that the other parts can jumpstart and leapfrog their development. Although various mechanisms purport to do this, most of them belong to the category of downloading, reproducing patterns of the past. Ninety-plus percent of our media and media production is firmly in the grip of downloading practices. The biggest void in today's culture are field 4 cultural productions that would use the deep transformational experiences in one part of the global field for inspiration and healing in another.

Alternative healing practices may have interesting lessons for healing the larger social body. Homeopathic medicines are produced by applying rhythmic water movements to the original remedial substance; the longer you applying the rhythmic water process, the more the original substance dissipates. The interesting thing is that the more the original substance dissipates, the more powerful the medicine gets. The most powerful dose is produced when there is no physical trace of the original substance remains. Although this may seem unbelievable (particularly if you are unfamiliar with this type of medicine), you probably have seen the same principle applied to the field of individual and social development. Here is a case in point:

Ralf Schneider and his team at PricewaterhouseCoopers, the world's largest global services company, designed a leadership development program that takes deep-dive action learning journeys to some of the current spots of societal crisis and breakdown. Every year he convenes a group of 17 or 18 of the company's high-potential younger partners, splits them into teams of three, and sends them on a two-month deep dive into a developing country development project. During that time, each trio works full time on an existing development initiative such as HIV/AIDS. Their goal is to make the best possible contribution to the community that hosts them.

At the completion of these two months the partners reconvene as a group for a one-week retreat to engage in deep reflection and sense-making and to crystallize the key learnings and their implications. Although most of the participants have profound experiences in the field, it is only through this one-week retreat that they learn to mine the gold of their experience and to integrate it into their personal and professional lives going forward. For the past four years I have worked with these groups both prior to their two-month field immersion and then after they have returned, during the reflection retreat. I have

been always amazed how deep the changes are that this seemingly simple intervention—exposing people to the real world—creates, if supported in the right ways. Meeting with them a year later for a third time also convinced me that a significant number of them had translated this life-changing experience into new kinds of projects, ventures, and behaviors—such as setting up a foundation for social innovation and community work or founding a new school in India by donating, among other things, all of their personal savings.

What we don't know is what it would take to distill such life-changing experiences and make them accessible to others. That is the idea behind Social Presencing Theater.

Social Presencing Theater is the name for a new synthesis of the creative arts, theater, social change techniques, energy awareness methods, contemplative practices, and dialogue. Using a minimalist “blank canvas” performing discipline, it would turn the audience into co-creators of the event. The assumption underlying this approach is simple: if the global field is one, then what happens to or heals one part of the collective social body (in one part of the world) must have the possibility to trigger healing in another part of the world. In reality these communities are already connected through the global social field—the social presencing performance only provides the opportunity for other communities to become aware of the deeper levels of their own experience. A theater performance would take the actors/audience through the stages of the U in less than two hours by combining elements of theater, intentional silence, guided journaling, and generative dialogue.

Example: not yet existing (but possible within months).

Practice: to be defined.

Root Principles: The Three Groundings of the Social Field

The U process can be applied to practical situations in three different ways. First, as a process: you follow the sequence of initiating, sensing, presencing, prototyping, institutionalizing. That's a beginning. But that process operates at the surface. Second, as a set of field principles. On this level you no longer follow a mechanical process blueprint; instead you apply the wholeness of the principles to the situation at hand. You situate and adapt the process as needed in a context. And third, as connecting to and operating from the presence of the Source. At this level, even the scaffolding of the principles falls away. The connection to this source level is articulated in the three root principles below. They are called root principles because they relate to the other 21 remaining principles like the root system of a tree relates to the visible parts of a tree. They establish a foundation that is necessary to evoke the presence of a social field—an intentional grounding that serves the whole; a relational grounding that connects to the collective body of the social field (*I-in-thou*); and an authentic grounding that connects you to your essential self as a vehicle for the future that remains in need of you.

22. Intentional grounding. Our intention (and attention) influences how a situation unfolds: *“I attend [this way]—therefore it emerges [that way].”* Some of the most important variables that determine the quality of a situation—say: a meeting—come into play right before a meeting begins: what is the quality of attention and intention among the people as they enter the room?

Example: When I asked Joseph Jaworski how to conduct deep listening or dialogue interviews in the most effective way, he told me: “The most important hour of the interview is the hour before [you begin the interview].”

Practice 1: On the evening before facilitating or leading a workshop or gathering, take three or four minutes to align your intention with the best future possibility of the group or community that you will be working with the next day. Establishing this relationship will help you to improve the quality of intuitions that slip through the backdoor of your mind when you have to respond to real time situations.

Practice 2: When conducting large group events I have found it useful to hold a collective intention-setting session on the evening before the event begins. It usually takes no more than five or ten minutes. When the room setup is complete and most of the preparations are done, you call the core group together and stand in a circle; everyone then says one or two things about what they personally consider to be the event’s purpose or goal: What should this event accomplish and what future possibility do they want to facilitate and serve? I have found that groups that engage in intention-setting the night before are likely to establish a better field and holding space throughout the event than groups that do not.

Another aspect of intentional grounding deals with covering our currency—that is, grounding what we say about our intention in what we do in our everyday lives. As the saying goes: For every word you say about change, take one action. For every word you say about ethics or spirituality, take two or three actions. It is through what we do that we gain the legitimacy that we need, not through what we say.

Sometimes our initial success can get in the way of serving the whole. The more you apply the above principles, the more successful you may seem, and the more you are in danger of falling into one of the following traps: fame (I did it), money (I deserve it), or empire-building (I should own it). This trio of pitfalls tries to attack our weak spots. Once they have us in their grip, they put a spin on our perception, and soon our interactions are driven by that trio instead of by our essential intentions.

Practice 3: Go through your life story in reverse and think about the people who influenced you along the way. Ask yourself what gift you received from connecting to that person. Complete that exercise back to the very beginning, to your parents and your early family experiences. Then, in your mind, add up all the gifts you received and subtract those from who you are today. Note that there is almost nothing in yourself that you do not owe to someone else.

23. Relational grounding. Whenever two or more people meet and truly connect, something special happens: they participate in the presencing of a social field. That social field connects us not only to one another—it also connects us to ourselves. It’s the medium through which we can wake up to who we really are. The nature of that field at first seems to be bounded by the group we are present with in a particular situation. But as we learn to pay attention to the more subtle aspects of the social field we realize that the social field is both locally grounded and non-locally connected—it is the medium that directly connects us with all other human beings on the planet. Just as the air that we breathe is a shared medium that literally connects all of mankind, the social field is a tacit medium of connection. It is a collective body of resonance that we can tune in to and cultivate.

Example: The current collective body of mankind that has been described in the first parts of the book is like an old social body that is about to die. It has taken many its of direct violence (people killed by the actions of other people), structural violence (people killed by structures such as the socio-economic divide), and cultural violence (people killed by cultures that legitimize the use of structural or direct violence against others they view as lesser beings). We experience the dominance of that dying body, the old social field, in most social systems and on every level today. The dying of that old body and the birth of a new social field is the central event of our time. The essence of the U deals with deciphering this central event. It’s an event that happens every day around the globe. Whenever two or more persons meet and attend to what emerges from the subtle connection between them, it opens a gateway to that deeper mystery.

Practice: Move with your mind and heart around the globe and empathize with people in each community and region. Empathize both with people you know personally and with people you don’t. Develop an intimate relationship with them by “inhaling” their suffering and “exhaling” healing energy. Develop a felt sense of the global field of mankind that connects all of us such that it would be impossible to be happy as long as a single person keeps suffering.

24: Authentic Grounding. The U can be thought of as a social breathing process. The left-hand side of the U is the inhaling part of the cycle: total immersion in the current field, taking everything in. The right-hand side of the U is the exhaling part of the cycle: bringing the field of the future into reality as it desires. Between these two movements, breathing-in and breathing-out, there is a small crack of nothingness. That crack of nothingness is the mystery or source at the bottom of the U. It’s where the letting-go (of the old) connects with the letting-come (of the new). This place can be thought of as the eye of a needle: the Self. It’s the capacity of our *I-in-now* to link with our highest future possibility—a future that is in need of us and that only we can bring into reality. At the moment we begin to operate from that place we evoke the presence of a different social field—a social field that enables its participants to connect to the deeper sources and streams of generative emergence.

The transition from the dying collective body of the past to the coming into being of a future social field is based on shifting the inner state on which the individual and

collective self (Self) operates. While the self in the old collective body is imprisoned by the patterns of the past, the self in the generative social field functions as a holding space for a future possibility to emerge and manifest. The shift from the former to the latter is like an inversion of the self.

Example: An example of the inversion process at issue here is the sculpture “7,000 Oaks” by the German avant garde artist Joseph Beuys. Like the process of authentic grounding, “7,000 Oaks” is a time sculpture. It deals with two fundamentally different streams of time: one that emerges from the past, and another that emerges from the future. Accordingly, the sculpture goes through a process of transformation in which the old body dissolves and dies while another body of life is coming into being.

Figure 67: The sculpture “7000 Oaks” by Joseph Beuys

Figure 67 shows the initial form of the sculpture, a gigantic heap of 7,000 basalt stones in an arrow-shaped column. At the top of the column was a single stone next to a single oak tree, which Beuys planted at the official unveiling of the sculpture in Kassel, a city in northern Germany. Beuys’s vision was to disassemble the column of 7,000 stones piece by piece, pair each individual stone with an oak tree, and plant the tree/basalt pairs throughout the greater city. In its initial form the sculpture was just a column of stones (sculpture 1), but in its final form it had morphed into the greening of a city (sculpture 2). The transformation took five years and the work of many volunteers. The last tree was planted during the opening of the next “Documenta” (an exhibition that takes place once every 5 years) in 1987, after Joseph Beuys himself had passed away. The transformation from sculpture 1 to sculpture 2 is a perfect representation of the inversion process (*Umstülpung*): a process in which one body ceases to exist in order to allow a new living field to come into being.

Practice: Review the current challenges in your life and work and how they resonate with your past journey. Do this as if you are looking down from above. If someone had designed your current challenges in order to teach you an important lesson that is connected to the essence of your future work and self—what would that lesson be? If someone had intentionally designed your past journey to prepare you for your journey in the future—what do you think might be the central theme of that future journey?

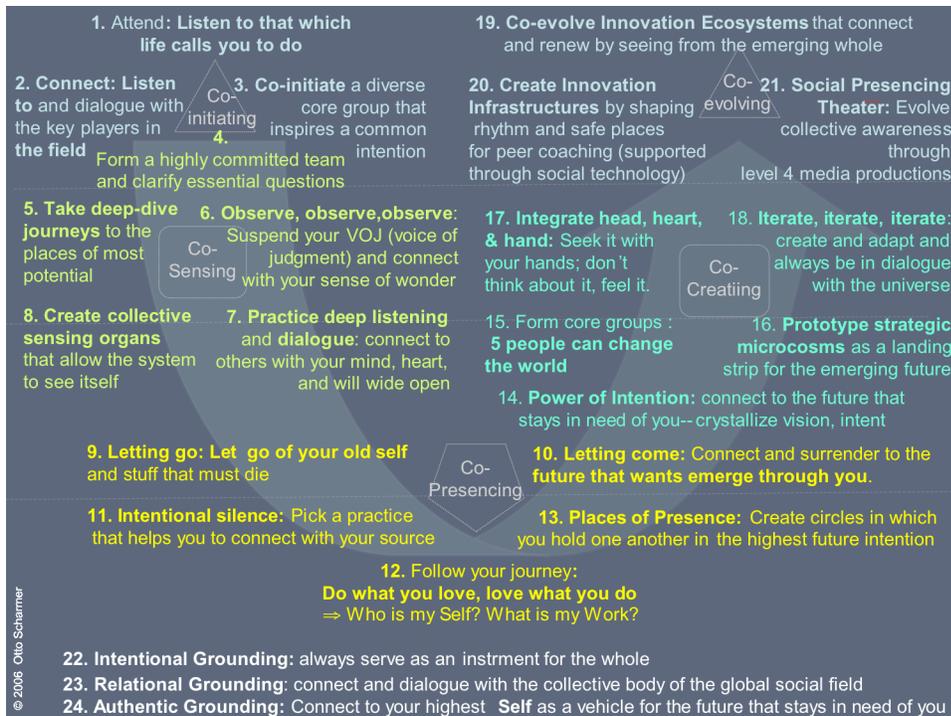


Figure 68: The Foundational Meta-Principles

¹ It broadens and deepens the PC approach through deep-dive journeys and rapid prototyping projects as well as individual and collective practices for accessing the authentic self.

² The “UNDP Civic Scenario/Civic Dialogue Workshop” took place in Antigua, Guatemala, November 8-10, 2000.

³ Brown et al. 2005; www.theworldcafe.com.

⁴ Scharmer and Jaworski 2000.

⁵ Steiner 1994.

⁶ <http://www.ashlandinstitute.com>.

⁷ See <http://dialogonleadership.org/interviewC07.htm>

⁸ Example: getting the most important things done during the first eight hours of the day, 4 AM – noon.

⁹ Get world bank study reference

¹⁰ Arthur is the founding director of the economics program at the Santa Fe Institute.

¹¹ Nonaka 1994, 1995, 1998.

¹² Nonaka, Toyama, and Scharmer 2001.