

# **What You See Is What You Get**

**Organizational Change that  
Drives Financial Performance**

By

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*“Profit is like oxygen, food, water, and blood for the body; they are not the point of life, but without them, there is no life.”<sup>1</sup>*

Why are some companies able to change in the face of plateaued or declining organizational performance, and others can't? Why do some change initiatives succeed, while most are frustrated and undermined by an “invisible bureaucracy” that owners and managers don't really understand? Companies that *can* affect positive change know that their organizations are like a self-regulating system in nature that balances the internal and external demands on their *resources, time, attention, and energy*. Ultimately organizations reach a state of equilibrium within a given business environment. This equilibrium may be the direct result of conscious intent and organizational strategy, or the indirect product of automatic-pilot responses in relationships, work practices, and unquestioned assumptions (e.g., your organization's culture). Either way, your company's configuration of structures and systems will produce predictable business results – good or bad. As David Hanna puts it,

“All organizations are perfectly designed to get the results they get!  
For better or worse, the system finds a way of  
balancing its operation to attain certain results.”<sup>2</sup>”

This state of *cultural equilibrium* can be your best friend or your worst enemy because it resists change – all change. When it's working *for* you, you can balance the internal and external demands of the business environment, so your revenue streams are strong and reliable, and people are motivated from a sense of abundance. But what happens when the business environment changes, customer preferences shift, competitors take market share, and inadequate revenues threaten the company's survival? Then the state of cultural equilibrium works *against* you because it fights positive change and produces a climate of fear in the organization.

The See-Do-Get Process™ described below is a powerful tool for understanding and managing the cultural equilibrium in your organization because it is built upon the timeless principle that organizations are collective-cultural entities that are led, managed and changed one person at a time.

*What Is the See-Do-Get Process™?*

Prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, millions of people died from diseases that could have been easily cured by an antibiotic like penicillin. For years, the world's leading bacteriologists had searched for the missing piece to this medical puzzle. Many times they were looking right at it. But they always “saw” the penicillin mold as a pest that contaminated countless bacterial cultures and slowed their progress toward finding a way to save innocent lives. In the late 1920s, a London doctor named Alexander Fleming suddenly began to see this so-called “pest” as exactly the bacterial killer scientists had been searching for. From that moment on, people began to “see” penicillin differently. It was instantly transformed from a problem to a resource. The new challenge then became how to quickly produce it, not to protect ourselves from it. This is one example of the principle, “what you see is what you get.” Something you “see” as a *negative* can be transformed into something *positive* by changing how you “see” it.

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<sup>1</sup> James C. Collins and Jerry I. Porras, *Built to Last: Successful Habits of Visionary Companies*, (New York: Harper Business, 1994), p. 55.

<sup>2</sup> David P. Hanna, *Designing Organizations for High Performance*, (New York: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1988), p. 38.

The See-Do-Get Process™ is simple, yet profound.<sup>3</sup> It's a way of describing how our knowledge and beliefs are shaped by how we see ourselves, other people, and the world around us (see Figure 1). First, we see the world a certain way and specific behaviors and emotions naturally flow from that worldview because we believe that it is "reality." When we act, people read our body language and respond to the message they see in us. Their response then reinforces how we see them. We see, we do, we get. It's just that simple.

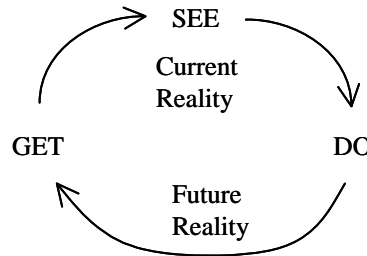


FIGURE 1

For example, a customer (Curt) walks into a store and a sales person (Sarah) at the counter recognizes him from a previous visit. Sarah *sees* Curt as someone who gave her a hard time, so she ignores him, trying to avoid conflict. Curt reads the emotional message in Sarah's behavior and actually feels ignored. After a few minutes of just standing around, Curt snaps critically, "Hey, young lady! I need some help over here!" Sarah thinks to herself,

*See - I knew he'd give me a hard time!*

James is the general manager of a construction company and he sees one of his project teams as not being able to handle the pressure of larger jobs. James assigns an important project to the team thinking it will force them to step up to the plate - then he stays on their backs through daily reports, detailed weekly summaries, and surprise visits to the job site. As the project proceeds and James turns the heat up, the team withdraws from interactions with him, do only what's expected, and stonewall him by withholding information. They're tired of being criticized. James finds out from a member of another team that his team just missed a critical milestone. Incensed, James calls a special meeting to confront them and demand an explanation. The team gets defensive, and blames the problem on James for not providing adequate resources, manpower, and for burdening them with excessive reporting. As he leaves the meeting, James says to himself,

*See - I knew they couldn't handle the pressure!*

In each example, the person sees themselves, others and the world in a certain way, and then specific behaviors and emotional messages flow from that worldview. People read these behaviors and emotional messages and respond in ways that reinforce how they are being seen. This only deepens the conviction that this perception of them is reality. In other words, what you *see* is what you *get*.

Stephen R. Covey tells us that 55% of all communication is visual (body language), 38% is tone of voice and inflection, and only 7% is word choice. This is why e-mail is so problematic - it

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<sup>3</sup> Stephen R. Covey proposed the see, do, get model in 1995 as a way to operationalize Thomas Kuhn's notion of paradigm shifts. See Stephen R. Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, (New York: A Fireside Book, 1990), pp. 29-32, and Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 10 ff.

leaves out 93% of the communication and people fill in what's missing with their own interpretation, meaning, and ways of seeing. When someone "says" one thing and "does" another, always believe what they do, not what they say. What they *do* contains most of the emotional message they're sending you, so don't pay too much attention to the words they use.

John Gottman's research has identified at least twenty emotional messages that people constantly send each other. He then narrowed them down to the four most damaging ones: defensiveness, stonewalling, criticism, and contempt.<sup>4</sup> His extensive data confirms that people accurately read and respond to our emotional messages, not the words we use. These responses act like a self-reinforcing loop that creates more evidence to support our way of seeing them. Research and consulting experience by Breckenridge Institute™ staff members confirm that these same four emotional messages create toxic relationships and conflict in the workplace.

Let's say someone named Sally sees her significant other (Dave) as self-centered and resents the fact that she spends so much time and energy doing what Dave wants, that she never has time for herself. Lately, Sally has been wondering if Dave will ever support her goals and help her find her unique calling in life. Sally walks through the door after a really tough day at the office. She hasn't even taken her coat off and Dave yells from the living room, "Hey, can you help me with this project I brought home from work?" Sally assumes a critical tone and says, "Why don't you ever help me with things I'm interested in?" Dave hears the emotional message Sally is sending loud and clear, then Dave launches into a defensive diatribe about how important this project is to his career and Sally's future. Sally says to herself,

*See – He never does things to support me, and what I want out of life!*

What if Dave could begin seeing Sally as someone who needs his support now? What if Sally could start seeing Dave as someone who actually *is* working hard for her long-term future? How might their relationship become mutually supportive? How might this different way of "seeing" each other allow *both* of them to get what they want out of life?

Over time, a definable *pattern of interaction* emerges in one-on-one relationships or between groups of people as they move through myriad cycles of the See-Do-Get Process™. This pattern of interaction becomes the unique *signature* of that relationship. Other people can see it, but most times the couple can't. It's like a blind spot, meaning decision-making biases, negative behavior traits, or emotional messages that others see in us, but we don't see in ourselves. Having a blind spot is like having a piece of food on your face. Your date sees it, but you don't. Because this pattern of interaction exists below the surface of consciousness, the couple becomes like two characters in a story whose plot was shaped by the conclusions they came to about each other years earlier. Not surprisingly, the future of such relationships can be predicted with high-levels of accuracy. In fact, Gottman and his research associates have discovered that they can watch a thirty-minute video of two married people talking about almost any topic, analyze the pattern of interaction, then predict with 94% accuracy whether or not the couple will still be married in 15 years.<sup>5</sup> Given the unconscious nature of the See-Do-Get Process™, is it any wonder that deep change in relationships or between organizational units is so difficult to obtain and even harder to sustain?

Knowing how the See-Do-Get Process™ works can open a Pandora's box because it causes people to question how they see all areas of their lives. Think about it - a single mom sees her

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<sup>4</sup> Malcolm Gladwell, *Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking*, (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2005), p 32 ff.

<sup>5</sup> Gladwell, *Blink*, pp. 18-23.

child as an unwanted intrusion on her busy life, and then wonders why her kid always gets into trouble. High school teachers see students as lazy and unmotivated, then wonder why they drop out. A family sees their oldest son as a loser who'll never go anywhere in life, then can't understand why he can't keep a job. You see your boss as a moron, and then wonder why he never assigns you to more interesting projects. You see your neighbor as a hard-nosed gossip, and then wonder why he argues with you about the fence that runs along the property line. You see your spouse as flirtatious at parties, and then wonder why she hates how possessive you are. The See-Do-Get Process™ applies to everyone, everywhere.

The See-Do-Get Process™ is not just something that's "in your head." When we *see* things a certain way, we actually configure our world of relationships, lifestyle, possessions, business processes and organizational policies to support our way of seeing, and to get the results we want. In the case of James, the daily reports, detailed weekly summaries, and surprise visits to the job site were processes he created because of the way he saw his project team. Likewise, the evasive tactics and stonewalling techniques of the team members grew out of how they saw James and how he treated them. Most of these behaviors, attitudes, and processes would be unnecessary if these people could learn to *see* each other differently. As myriad cycles through the See-Do-Get Process™ produce more and more evidence that James' perception of the team is correct, the configuration of behaviors, attitudes, and processes that he created solidifies. It becomes increasingly difficult for James to question the way he sees the team because he has so much evidence to support his way of seeing. What is most tragic is that the behaviors and emotional messages that James sends the team *actually create* many of the problems he criticizes them about.

The See-Do-Get Process™ can be your best friend or your worst enemy. It can work for you when the world you shape makes you successful. But it can also become a self-defeating cycle that causes you to fail again and again without knowing why. Consider the example of Luke who is a highly competitive, aggressive, and image conscious VP of Sales in an engineering firm. Luke sees himself as the best at what he does. He sees other people as his competition and believes that all of life is a zero sum game where some people win and others loose. This worldview has made him wildly successful at the office, but has cost him two marriages and his current relationship is on the rocks. When left on automatic pilot, the See-Do-Get Process™ becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy that can have devastating, long-term effects on your life.

But as in the example of penicillin, what if you could transform the See-Do-Get Process™ from a problem to a resource? What if you could learn to see yourself, other people, and the world differently? Can you see how this would positively affect your relationships, your career, and your organization's performance? It might even influence your chances of finding meaning and significance in your life.

### *In the Beginning...*

How we see the world develops from our earliest years as we build and accumulate underlying patterns of thinking, emotions, behavioral responses, and other characteristics that become what we commonly call our worldview and our personality.<sup>6</sup> By the time we are two or three years old, these underlying patterns shape and define how we see ourselves, others, and the world around

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<sup>6</sup> There are a variety of tools that can be used to characterize the underlying patterns of personality. I use the Enneagram and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator tools. For the Enneagram see Don Richard Riso and Russ Hudson, *Discovering Your Personality Type*, (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2003), and for the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator see Isabel Briggs Myers with Peter B. Meyers, *Gifts Differing: Understanding Personality Type*, (Palo Alto, CA: Davies-Black Publishing, 1995).

us. They powerfully define the kinds of people and experiences to which we are attracted or repulsed and over time these preferences shape our relationships, families, careers, lifestyles, and the companies we own, manage or work in.

Healthy mental and social development demand that these underlying patterns go on automatic pilot as a way of freeing up the psychological energy we need to navigate through a world of constant demands, decision-making and problem solving. In fact, as Malcolm Gladwell shows us in his bestselling book, *Blink*, the vast majority of knowledge that causes our behavior is tacit – just below the surface of consciousness.<sup>7</sup> Unconscious knowledge and beliefs allow us to skillfully perform tasks and make decisions in the blink of an eye without consciously thinking about what we're doing. As adults, without this type of unconscious decision-making, it would be impossible for us to manage the on-going stream of responsibilities that our personal and professional lives place upon us.

But this cognitive efficiency is a double-edged sword. While the underlying patterns free up the psychological energy we need to live our lives, they can become *too* automatic and ultimately self-defeating. They become like *Unconscious Creeds* that we live by. For example, a young child named Tony adopts the Unconscious Creed that failures and making mistakes point to intrinsic flaws within him - characteristics that he is helpless to change. Another child (Linda) comes to believe that failures and mistakes are the result of things that *can* be changed and that learning new approaches to problem solving will help her succeed at these things the next time she tries them.<sup>8</sup> Twenty-five years later, Tony becomes Linda's boss.

His Unconscious Creed (you can't make mistakes) makes him hyper-aware of every mistake he makes, as he constantly tries to correct, fix and improve himself. He's also hyper-sensitized to every mistake that Linda makes and feels obligated to point out and correct even non-work-related mistakes, despite the fact that Linda doesn't want his advice. Whether it's the weekly status report, quarterly reviews, her annual performance appraisal, or where she goes on vacation, Tony sees "mistakes" as something to be fixed or punished. Linda views them as opportunities to learn and to start over. It's ironic - it's the same world out there, but they see it very differently.<sup>9</sup>

Over time, our talents, education, personality traits and professional connections solidify into a portfolio of personal, professional, social, and business competencies – the kind of things you'd write on a detailed resume. While this process may seem like the result of conscious intent and strategy, our underlying patterns of selection significantly narrow the field of possible choices. We are drawn to or repulsed by a sub-set of relationships, professions, and opportunities that shape how we relate to, and interact with, people and situations. They powerfully color how we feel about, and experience, life itself.

When we unpack the automatic pilot operation of the See-Do-Get Process™, we discover four distinct, but related, elements that are shown in Figure 2.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Gladwell, *Blink*, p. 32.

<sup>8</sup> For a discussion of optimism versus pessimism, see Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More than IQ*, (New York: Bantam Books, 1995), p. 88 ff.

<sup>9</sup> I discuss the process of identifying your unique calling in life in, Mark Bodnarczuk, *Diving In: Discovering Who You Are in the Second Half of Life*, (Seattle, WA: Elton-Wolf Publishing, 2003), p. 59 ff.

<sup>10</sup> This loop is an adaptation of Peter Senge's notion of the ladder of inference in, Peter Senge, Art Kleiner, Charlotte Roberts, Richard Ross, and Bryan Smith, *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook*, (New York: Currency Doubleday, 1994), p. 243.

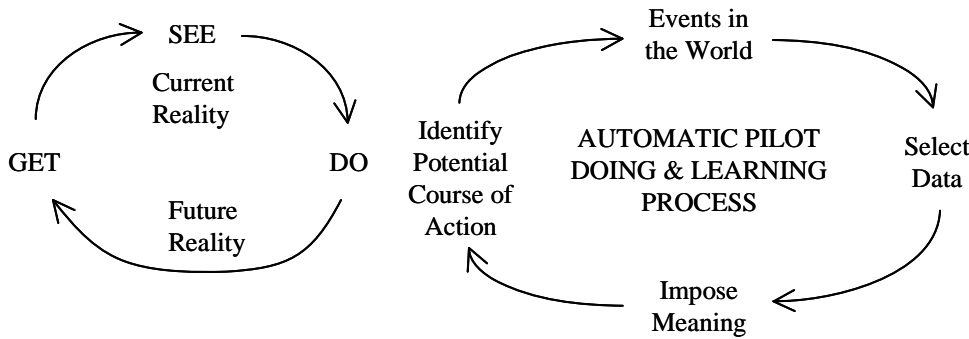


FIGURE 2

1) There are events in the world like those you'd record with a video camera. A video camera doesn't have a personality or worldview and doesn't interpret or impose meaning on situations. Video cameras record events in the world as they are.

2) Our underlying patterns of worldview and personality select a small sub-set of data from the total events in the world. These data are selected again and again, regardless of how often others occur, or even how important other data are to the total picture. That's because they have special meaning and significance - they match the underlying patterns of our worldview and personality and allow us to feel more comfortable in a world of constant and frenetic change. Not surprisingly, countless cycles through the See-Do-Get Process™ reinforce our worldview and ultimately convince us that the way we *see* the world, is actually the way the world *is*.

3) We take this sub-set of data and impose meaning on them based on our worldview, personality, Unconscious Creeds, and life experiences. In other words, we interpret them through the lens of how we see ourselves, other people, and the world.

4) Potential courses of action are shaped by, and naturally flow from, the first three steps, so we act these behaviors out and communicate a spectrum of positive and negative emotional messages. The rest is history.

For example, let's say you have poor self-esteem and see yourself as nobody special. You "see" Paul, a colleague at the office, as someone who doesn't think highly of your work although unbeknownst to you he has complimented your abilities to numerous co-workers. During an important presentation that you're making to your company's senior managers, Paul yawns repetitively because his neighbor's dog had barked all night. Of all the events happening in the meeting (including the fact that the company's President is really engaged in what you're saying), you focus on the fact that Paul is yawning, and then impose meaning on it, saying to yourself,

*He never did think much of me, or my work.*

Paul is actually interested in what you're saying, and he's embarrassed by the fact that the President is there and he's struggling to stay awake. When the meeting is over, you make a defensive comment to a colleague about Paul falling asleep and he overhears you without you knowing it. Offended, Paul throws his hard copy of your presentation on the table, and as he's walking out the door he says contemptuously to a co-worker, "Boy, I'm glad that's over." So you think to yourself,

*See – that proves he didn't think much of me, or my work!*

Now you're absolutely certain that Paul is out to frustrate and undermine you and your career. Over time, a definable pattern of interaction for that relationship solidifies and it becomes a blind spot for you. Having a blind spot is like having a learning impairment because it filters out any information that doesn't agree with how you see Paul. It powerfully shapes your interactions with him, divides your team and negatively affects your performance by squandering enormous amounts of time and energy. Most importantly, the path to seeing Paul *differently* is demonized by your blind spot as you become increasingly sure that Paul really is trying to make you look bad in front of everyone.

Out of concern for you, a colleague, who you consider to be a friend, takes you to lunch and raises the "Paul" issue. You immediately get defensive and exclaim, "Whose side are you on? If you only knew the kinds of things he's done to me!" Your friend tries to explain that he sees Paul's behavior and attitude toward you differently, mentioning the times he's praised your work to others on the team. But the cumulative weight of the evidence that your See-Do-Get Process™ has produced resists any attempts to see him differently. The pattern of interaction that you've established with Paul becomes more deeply entrenched and becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. It's a powerful predictor of where your business relationship with Paul is headed if things don't change.

Within a year, Paul gets promoted to department head and becomes your boss. You try to change your attitude toward him – to no avail. You know that if your relationship with Paul continues on its current path, that he'll begin to *see you* as a performance problem and may ultimately fire you. But trying to change your behavior and control the emotional messages your body language transmits is useless without changing how you *see* Paul. There are no shortcuts.

What if you could begin to see yourself and Paul differently? What if your colleague was correct about Paul having a high regard for your abilities? What if you used your competencies to support Paul and make the team succeed? Could there have been some other reason why Paul was yawning during your presentation? What if you started *seeing* Paul as an ally rather than an adversary? How would this positive change affect your professional life?

### *Deep Learning Requires Unlearning*

The most critical thing to remember is that the See-Do-Get Process™ *happens to you*. It's an automatic pilot process of doing and learning. It's how the human mind works. So the key to transforming the See-Do-Get Process™ from a problem to a resource is making a *conscious decision* to explore how the process works using the lower loop of the process shown in Figure 3.

*First*, you have to hit the "interrupt button" on the See-Do-Get Process™, disrupt the equilibrium and **deconstruct** the current way of "seeing" a person (like Paul), an interaction between departments, or an internal process.<sup>11</sup>

*Second*, you **reconstruct** alternative ways of "seeing," by defining the new results you want, identifying new ways of *seeing* yourself, others, and the world then gaining *philosophical agreement* about how to reconfigure the world to support this new way of seeing.

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<sup>11</sup> It's important to adopt an attitude of Appreciate Inquiry that focuses on what's going well, not just what's wrong. See David L. Cooperrider, Diana L. Whitney, and Jacqueline Staqvos, *Appreciate Inquiry Handbook: The First in a Series of AI Workbooks for Leaders of Change*, (New York: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2004).

Third, you **clarify change metaphors** between the people or organizations involved and reach *philosophical agreement* about what will change and the value and benefit it will bring to everyone, e.g. will the change activity cause the organization to be fixed, cured, built, grown, transformed.

Fourth, you move **from awareness to action** by implementing changes in organizational structures, systems, and human interactions, e.g. you begin acting on the new ways of “seeing.”

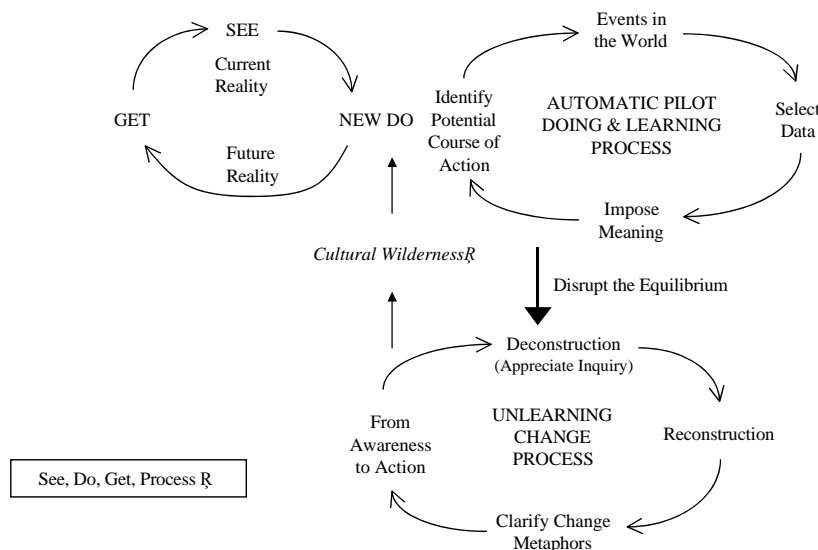


FIGURE 3

Fifth, deep change moves organizations and the people in them into a **Cultural Wilderness™** where it’s no longer clear what the rules of the game are. In other words, they’re caught in an unfamiliar territory that *demands* that they let go of the old, and embrace the new.<sup>12</sup>

Sixth, creating the new Future Reality shown in Figure 3 requires each person involved in the change process to become a Trim Tab™ that continually presses toward the **New Do**.<sup>13</sup>

Let’s explore how the See, Do, Get Process™ works in more detail. It is built on three principles. *First*, that organizations are composed of individuals who are led, managed, and changed one person at a time. *Second*, that deep change is primarily a process of *unlearning*, then defining new, more effective, ways of “seeing.” *Third*, whenever a personal, professional, social, or business problem arises, you *move into the lower loop* and cycle through the Unlearning Change Process until you get the results you want. There are six steps.

<sup>12</sup> At an individual level, people also face a kind of Inner Wilderness where the ways in which the existing culture has taught them to see themselves, others, and the workplace don’t quite work anymore, see Bodnarczuk, *Diving In*, p. 179 ff.

<sup>13</sup> When used in typical parlance, a trim tab is a device on a boat, submarine, or aircraft. In the sense I’m using it here, a Trim Tab™ is a metaphor for a person who becomes a cultural change agent – a facilitator of cultural change who enables an organization to harness the invisible power of its culture.

Step 1: We deconstruct the current reality created by the See-Do-Get Process™ using an attitude of empathic inquiry. The goal is to seriously question how we see ourselves, others, and our world in specific situations.

Step 2: We transform the two upper loops from being a problem and a self-fulfilling prophecy to a resource with a three-part reconstruction process.

- We clearly define the new results we want to get
- We identify alternative ways of seeing ourselves, others, and our world
- We gain *philosophical agreement* about how to reconfigure actions, attitudes, interaction patterns, stereotypes, structures and systems to support the new way of *seeing* and cycle through the Unlearning Change Process until we get the results we want

Step 3: Using the metaphors below, we explore and clarify the tacit assumptions that the people involved have about the nature change itself, e.g. “What exactly do they ‘mean’ by change? What do they expect to change, and what will remain the same? Which metaphor best describes the actual change process?”<sup>14</sup>

#### **Physical-Chemical (Fix and Rebuild)**

Machine Metaphor	Fix the problem or reengineer
Travel Metaphor	Move to a new place or turnaround
Construction Metaphor	Build something new or restructure
Chemical Metaphor	Catalyze, mix, compound, crystallize

#### **Biological-Medical (Cure and Growth)**

Agricultural Metaphor	Grow, regenerate, bear fruit, or harvest
Medical Metaphor	Cure, inoculate, cut, or excise

#### **Psychological-Spiritual (Rebirth and Revitalization)**

Psychological Metaphor	Provide insight or change mental models
Spiritual Metaphor	Transform, convert, liberate, or create

The goal is for key players to reach *philosophical agreement* on the expected outcomes of the change process and to build a *convergence of interests* where they sell the change to each other and the overall organization based on the value and benefit it will bring to everyone. This can be difficult because it requires them to put the best interest of the organization ahead of their self-interest, preferences, and personal views. The ability to do so is a signature characteristic of what Jim Collins calls Level 5 Leadership.<sup>15</sup> Once deep philosophical agreement is reached, the new way of *seeing* becomes like a reservoir of shared understanding into which multiple streams of new insights, creative applications and innovative problem-solving techniques are fed.

Step 4: We move from awareness to action by actually implementing changes to the organization’s structures, systems, and human interactions. In other words, offices get moved, the organization chart changes, new software is installed, new buildings are constructed, and

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<sup>14</sup> The categories presented here are from Edgar Schein, *Process Consultation Revisited*, (New York: Addison-Wesley, 1999), p. 57.

<sup>15</sup> See Jim Collins, *Good to Great*, (New York: Harper Business, 2001), p. 17 ff.

compensation systems and formal and informal rewards change to support the new ways of “seeing.”

Step 5: For many organizations, this is the most difficult step and the one that so often frustrates and undermines cultural change. As William Bridges points out, while *change* is external and contextual (a new boss, new performance criteria, or a promotion), *transition* is the internal psychological process that people go through to adjust to the new situation.<sup>16</sup> Organizational change *thrusters* us into a time of uncertainty where we’re caught between the old and new ways of working. I characterize this part of the process as the Cultural Wilderness™ where it’s no longer clear what the rules of the game are.<sup>17</sup> The journey through the Cultural Wilderness™ creates enormous anxiety for leaders, managers, and staff members alike. Schein characterizes it by juxtaposing *learning anxiety* (fear of new ways of working) with *survival anxiety* (fear that we’ll lose our job, lose face, or have our identity undermined).<sup>18</sup> In fact, Schein’s formula for understanding and successfully managing this critical step is as follows:

- The level of *survival anxiety* must be greater than the level of *learning anxiety*
- The level of *learning anxiety* must be reduced by creating a climate of organizational and psychological safety, not increasing the level of *survival anxiety*

Our pragmatic, instant answer, quick fix, globally connected world tries to fool people into thinking that they can move directly from the old to the new ways of working. But unless an organization and its people *consciously* go through this Cultural Wilderness™ *together* as a shared experience, deep cultural change will not happen. When leaders, managers, and workers travel through this critical time of unlearning and relearning *together*, the experience itself bonds them together and creates a powerful sense of social purpose and social unity.

Step 6: The key to this final step is to commit to being a cultural change agent and a facilitator of cultural change. Metaphorically each of these people functions like a Trim Tab™. When large ships turn, the force of the water pressing against the rudder creates enormous resistance to changing directions. A trim tab is a small rudder-shaped device that is mechanically rotated out from the rudder’s surface directly into the path of the water’s resistance. This begins to channel small amounts of water against the ship’s hull, pushing it in the direction of the turn and making it much easier for the huge rudder to complete the turn and change the vessel’s overall direction. In terms of cultural change, Trim Tabs™ are people who move out against the resistance to change and press *relentlessly* toward the New Do shown in Figure 3. They do this in three ways. First, they stay focused on the new results they’re going after, but always within the bounds of the philosophical agreements reached earlier in the process. The second and third are related points made by Jim Collins. Trim Tabs™ know that sustainable change comes from consistent, cumulative momentum (like a flywheel). They also know that deep change is fueled by a passionate commitment to never give up hope that they will prevail in the end, and at the same time to face the brutal facts of the situation they’re in (Stockdale Paradox).<sup>19</sup> Forget trying to get people “aligned” behind cultural change. Collins observes (correctly) that once

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<sup>16</sup> See William Bridges, *Managing Transitions*, (New York: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1991), p. 3 ff.

<sup>17</sup> This echoes William Bridges’ notion of the neutral-zone. See William Bridges, *Transitions*, (Cambridge, MA: Perseus Books, 1980).

<sup>18</sup> Edgar Schein, *The Corporate Culture Survival Guide: Sense and Nonsense about Culture Change*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999), pp. 124-125 and p. 128 ff.

<sup>19</sup> For a discussion of the Stockdale Paradox, see Collins, *Good to Great*, pp. 83-87. He discusses uses the metaphor of the flywheel to describe deep, sustainable organizational change on pages 164-185.

people begin to *see* and *feel* tangible evidence that the corporate ship is really turning and begin to experience authentic change, *they line up* to support the change. Resistance to change becomes a non-issue for all but the most recalcitrant.

Some people find one or more of the steps of the Unlearning Change Process easier than the others. For example, some folks have high-levels of competence in Step 1 (deconstruction), while others find Step 2 (generating ideas and alternatives) or Step 4 (moving from awareness to action) easier to execute. But the See, Do, Get Process™ will not work when steps are omitted or done poorly. Unless *all* of the steps are used, the self-fulfilling prophecy of the former way of *seeing* in the two upper loops will continue, and attempts to create deep cultural change will be doomed to failure.

In some instances it is simply *not possible* to achieve philosophical agreement in the areas defined above because a person or organizational unit's way of "seeing" has solidified (reified) to the point that change is not possible – at least at this point in time. But at the very least, deep organizational change *requires* that those involved reach a firm *consensus*, e.g. where the dissenting individuals or organizational units commit to support the decision or direction of the group, even though they may not fully agree with it. In other words, they commit to *publicly* and *privately* support (not undermine) the consensus of the group when they leave the room. In situations where even consensus cannot be reached, an organization's leaders only have three choices: they can accept things the way they are, they can go on trying to change the individuals involved, or they can transfer, move, or terminate them.<sup>20</sup> In the final analysis, doing nothing is a form of acceptance. What is most problematic is when the organization's top leaders are themselves the ones who cannot (or will not) reach philosophical agreement or consensus with other key players. This becomes a matter of governance and raises philosophical questions about who ultimately "owns" or should be in "control" of an organization, but practically speaking key players who are misaligned with top leaders have the same three choices – accept it, change it, or leave.

More times than not, learning to "see" differently changes our experience of life and the world in enormously positive and productive ways. Once this happens, it's not that we can't go back to our old ways of seeing, for example, we can still think about a time when people saw the world as flat, or when people saw the earth as the center of the solar system. But when you *see* differently and configure your world to support this new view, the old behaviors won't flow *naturally* from the new way of *seeing*. Think about it - once Sarah the sales person sees the formerly difficult customer Curt as a source of revenue that makes her life possible, why would she ignore him when he comes into her store to spend money? It just wouldn't make sense.

### *Misalignment and Squandered Energy*

The most serious implication of *not* transforming the See-Do-Get Process™ from a problem to a resource is the energy that gets squandered through misaligned views of the world. In every aspect of day-to-day operations, leaders with misaligned views pull in one direction, while managers who see differently pull in another direction, and workers drag their feet to prevent even positive change. It's like driving a boat full throttle with the anchor dragging along the bottom, or driving a car with one foot on the gas and the other on the brake.

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<sup>20</sup> Bodnarczuk, *Island of Excellence*, p. 309.

There are two kinds of energy that these misalignments squander: psychological energy and organizational energy.<sup>21</sup> Psychological and organizational energy are like the two sides of the same coin. They can't be separated because business processes don't do work, people do. On one side of the coin, *organizational energy* is the most precious resource that a company has because it makes all the tasks of business processes possible. There's only so much organizational energy in a company and misalignments between how leaders, managers, and workers see themselves, each other, and the company squander energy, making it unavailable to achieve the organization's purpose and business objectives. Examples of squandered organizational energy include rework, poor or inconsistent quality and service, work-arounds, lack of timeliness, downtime, returns, and customer complaints.

On the other side of the coin, *psychological energy* is the most precious resource in life because it makes all of life's tasks possible. We only have so much psychological energy. Misalignments between how leaders, managers, and workers see themselves, customers, and the business environment squander psychological energy. It then becomes unavailable to achieve the organization's purpose and business objectives. Examples of squandered psychological energy include poor or ineffective communication, interpersonal conflict between business units or within a business unit, people who frustrate or undermine positive change, fear of retribution, and withholding knowledge and expertise.

Even a cursory look at the cost of squandered energy is shocking. Think about it – if each person in a twenty-person organization squanders one hour of psychological or organizational energy per day, that can cost the company \$140,000 per year.<sup>22</sup> Breckenridge Institute has conducted organizational assessments where leaders, managers, and workers indicate that they squander three hours of energy per day. This equates to a staggering \$422,000 per year – a hidden cost that's rarely seen on a balance sheet. The cost of squandered energy in a company with 100 employees is between \$700,000 and \$2.1 million per year. This cost soars to between \$4.2 million and \$21 million per year for a company with 1,000 employees. Once you see how seriously squandered energy can denigrate your company's financial performance, how can you *not* use the See-Do-Get Process™ to recapture at least some of these costs?

### *Conclusion*

The See-Do-Get Process™ can work for you when the world you shape makes you successful. But it can also become a self-defeating cycle that causes you and your company to fail again and again without knowing why. Left on automatic pilot, the See-Do-Get Process™ becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy that can have devastating, long-term effects on your life. The key to transforming the See-Do-Get Process™ from a problem to a resource is to make a *conscious decision* to use the Unlearning Change Process in the lower loop of the Island or Excellence™ Change Model (see Figure 3).

To summarize:

*First*, you have to hit the “interrupt button” on the See-Do-Get Process™, disrupt the equilibrium and **deconstruct** the current way of “seeing” a person (like Paul), an interaction between departments, or an internal process.

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<sup>21</sup> I discuss this issue in detail in, Mark Bodnarczuk, *Island of Excellence: 3 Powerful Strategies for Building Creative Organizations*, (Seattle, WA: Elton-Wolf Publishing, 2004), p. 235 ff.

<sup>22</sup> This is based on a fully loaded salary for the manager of \$125,000, her two supervisors earn \$75,000, and the average fully-loaded salary of the remaining staff is \$50,000.

*Second*, you **reconstruct** alternative ways of “seeing,” by defining the new results you want, identifying new ways of *seeing* yourself, others, and the world then gaining *philosophical agreement* about how to reconfigure the world to support this new way of seeing.

*Third*, you **clarify change metaphors** between the people or organizations involved and reach *philosophical agreement* about what will change and the value and benefit it will bring to everyone, e.g. will the activity cause the organization to be fixed, cured, built, grown, transformed.

*Fourth*, you move **from awareness to action** by implementing changes in organizational structures, systems, and human interactions, e.g. you begin acting on the new ways of “seeing.”

*Fifth*, deep change moves organizations and the people in them into a **Cultural Wilderness™** where it’s no longer clear what the rules of the game are. In other words, they’re caught in an unfamiliar territory that *demand*s that they let go of the old reality, and embrace the new one.

*Sixth*, creating the new Future Reality show in Figure 3 requires each person involved in the change process to become a Trim Tab™ that continually presses toward the **New Do**.

Now that you know how to create deep organizational change, what will you do? Now that you have manageable formulas for starting over, rebuilding, and surmounting even the most robust issues in life, will you act on this knowledge? Life is a currency that we spend one day at a time, so how can you *not* use the See-Do-Get Process™ to mitigate the negative impact that squandered energy has on your life?

### *Bio*

MARK BODNARCZUK is the Executive Director of the Breckenridge Institute, a “think tank” for the study of organizational culture. He is an adjunct faculty member at Colorado Mountain College and has a BA from Mid-America University, an MA from Wheaton College, and an AM from the University of Chicago. Mark is a personal and executive coach, consultant, teacher, and facilitator with more than twenty years of experience working with companies in the area of high-tech, basic and applied research, pharmaceuticals, health care, retail as well as government and non-profit organizations.

Mark’s professional work and research focus on understanding the processes by which corporate culture: a) is formed, b) operates, and c) is changed. He uses state-of-the-art assessment tools developed by the Breckenridge Institute in combination with traditional methods of organization development, advanced analytics, qualitative analysis from cultural anthropology, and personality type to study corporate culture. Mark is particularly interested in exploring the ways in which corporate cultures attract (or reject) employees with specific personality types, and the degree to which a uniform portfolio of employees positively or negatively affects an organization’s performance.

Mark has published widely in the areas of corporate culture and leadership development and is the author of two books, *Diving In: Discovering Who You Are In the Second Half of Life* and *Island of Excellence: 3 Powerful Strategies for Building Creative Organizations*. He is currently working on a third book entitled, *What You See Is What You Get* that describes how the Breckenridge Institute’s Harnessing Process™ is used to affect deep, sustainable, cultural change.

He has trained over twelve hundred people in Stephen R. Covey's, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, and Franklin Covey's, *What Matters Most* time management, and is certified to administer the Birkman Method®, Harrison Assessment, Majors PTI™, Natural Abilities Battery, Enneagram, DiSC, Social Styles, and Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® assessment tools. Mark is a professional-level member of the International Society of Performance Improvement (ISPI) and the Institute of Management Consultants (IMC).