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Executive Book Summary
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Flourishing Enterprise

THE NEW SPIRIT OF BUSINESS

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Executive Book Summary of **Flourishing Enterprise** The New Spirit of Business

About the Authors

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About the Book

The idea of responsible business has taken over our markets and concepts like 'going green' and sustainability have become the norm for businesses. Chris Laszlo and Judy Sorum Brown argue that sustainability as we know it is not enough and we should strive further to become flourishing (the aspiration that all life will thrive on earth forever). The authors set forward a plan for companies to attain this goal by drawing on decades of research and in-depth interviews. The authors argue that strategic, organization, and operational efforts to become sustainable can be expanded towards the ideal of flourishing by adding one core ingredient: reflective practices. This book looks at how the addition of reflective practice to existing businesses efforts can change the way we do business and the results that we achieve.

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From Sustainability to Flourishing

Over the last decade, corporations have begun implementing plans to increase their sustainability but have achieved limited success. The social entrepreneurship movement hasn't made as great of an impact as desired. Laszlo and Brown (2014) argue that the reason for this is because of a flaw in philosophy. Instead of only trying to reduce their footprints (reducing their negative impacts), they should shift to thinking about how they can create a positive handprint (a measure of making a positive contribution to the world). This shift in thinking creates the basis for their argument of shifting our goals from becoming sustainable to flourishing.

Laszlo and Brown (2014) explain that flourishing isn't about passing on to future generations what we already have, or in some cases, simply minimizing the damage we do to the things we already have. Flourishing, the authors explain, is about bringing the world we yearn for to fruition. Instead of thinking about how we, as corporations or communities, can survive over the long term (i.e., 300 years from now), we need to start thinking about how we see ourselves thriving now and in the distant future. Laszlo and Brown (2014) define spirituality as "a way of experiencing the world and taking action that leads to caring, based on a personal quest for connectedness and meaning" (p. 13). The authors argue that incorporating the ideas of spirituality into your personal and professional lives enables a way of being that supports the ideas of flourishing. Although religion attempts to embrace the ideas of spirituality, it is possible to be spiritual without being religious. In this way, no matter what faith, if any, you follow, you may pursue a spiritual life that will take you on the path towards flourishing.

Laszlo and Brown (2014) explain that there are two paths one can take towards spiritual experiences. The transcendent path results from the recognition of a transcendent force or being and the notion that spiritual meaning comes from somewhere other than the physical world (Laszlo and Brown, 2014, p. 16). The immanence path results from the appreciation of the oneness and interconnectedness of the world and evidence of the spiritual dimension is found within the material dimensions of our lives (Laszlo and Brown, 2014, p. 16). These two paths to individual experiences and to awareness are essential for businesses to contribute towards a flourishing world. Laszlo and Brown (2014) summarize their thoughts by saying that "when a business shifts its sustainability goals from *reducing harm to creating prosperity and flourishing*, it assumes a greater purpose and responsibility for the health and well-being of a complex whole" (p. 19). They continue by explaining that in order for a business to "embed sustainability as flourishing in its strategy and operations", they would require "a transformation of its workforce and many stakeholders outside the organization" by developing a "broader perception, a greater sense of connectedness to the community and to the rest of the world" and drawing on the "wisdom that will lead to natural and automatic caring for others and for all life" (p. 20).

Reflective questions to help you explore whether or not you are on the path to flourishing.

Laszlo and Brown (2014) framed their ideas about spirituality into the following set of questions:

"To what extent am I undertaking a personal or collective exploration that

Connects with my complete self, others, and the larger world around me?

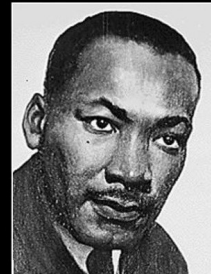
Creates increasing degrees of calm, wisdom, peace, and love?

To what extent would others say of me, from observing my behavior, that

I live from qualities such as personal responsibility, commitment, gratitude, compassion, patience, tolerance, forgiveness, contentment, and a sense of harmony with my environment?

I live from the "golden rule" (or its equivalent)?

I am in altruistic service to others?" (p. 18-19)



Every man must decide whether he will walk in the light of creative altruism or in the darkness of destructive selfishness.

— Martin Luther King —

AZ QUOTES

Voting for Change with Every Purchase

More people today are becoming aware of their power to influence markets through their purchases. As Laszlo and Brown (2014) explain, they hear people openly and proudly say “I’m voting with my dollars. I’m creating the world I want by where I spend my money.” (p. 32). These values-driven consumers are making choices in the marketplace that reflect their personal values. They support companies and products that share their values and by doing so hope to make a positive change in the world. If more people did this, companies who share our vision for a flourishing world would prosper and those who have an old-world view of business would wither away.

“ Every time you spend money you’re casting a vote for the kind of world you want to live in ”

-Anna Lappe

EVERY PURCHASE MATTERS

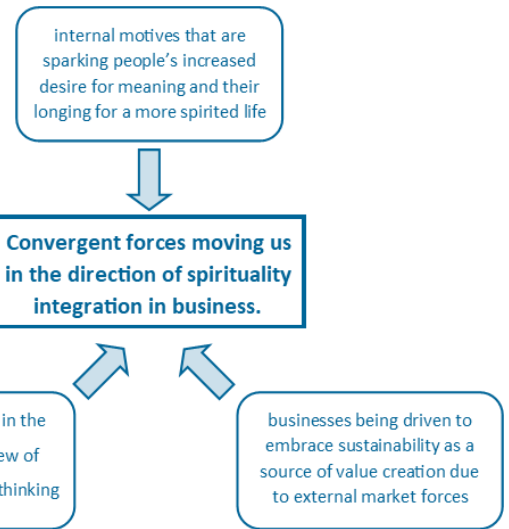


Why This, Why Now?

Spirituality in business is a rapidly growing social movement that has “people seeking to find more meaning and to feel more connected to purpose, to others, and to the natural world” (Laszlo and Brown, 2014, p. 22).

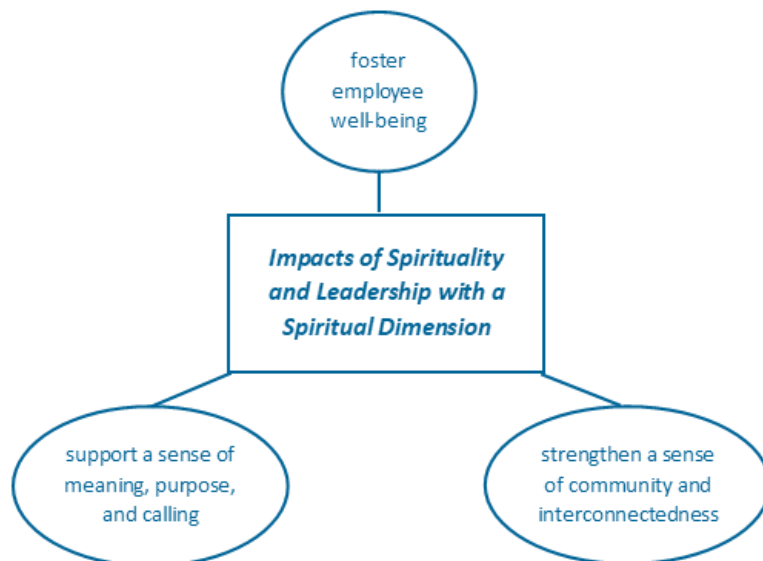
Historically, the culture of business life has been mostly void of the concept of spirituality. The interest in workplace spirituality began growing in the late 1990’s and resulted in the development of the Spirituality and Religion Interest Group of the Academy of Management in 1999 and the *Journal of Management, Spirituality & Religion* in 2004 (Laszlo and Brown, 2014, p. 26-27).

The global decline in natural resources, a radical shift in corporate transparency, and an increase in the expectations of stakeholders demands that the current state of business change (Laszlo and Brown, 2014). Companies that find success will do so by finding innovative and profitable solutions to these global issues that threaten our futures. Laszlo and Brown (2014) explain that there is “a growing desire in individuals at all levels of organizations to find greater meaning and to lead lives of service to others that will lead to better prospects for future generations” (p. 32).



Laszlo and Brown’s (2014) interviews with sustainability thought leaders indicated a “deep and growing desire for meaning and connectedness that they see spreading within the business community” and suggested that “spirituality could deepen sustainability by helping organizations become more aware of interconnectedness by helping people ‘bring their whole selves to work’ - in other words, helping them to be more authentic” (p. 33).

As more people grow spiritually and engage in their work with the understanding that they are part of a connected whole, we will begin to thrive and flourish as consciously thinking and feeling beings (Laszlo and Brown, 2014).



Flourishing at Every Scale

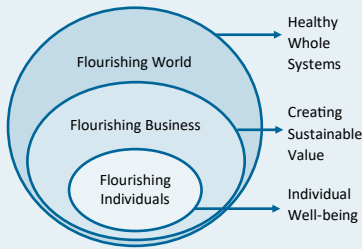


Figure 3.1 Flourishing at Every Scale (p. 44)

Flourishing World: Societies that are economically, socially, culturally, and politically thriving as well as resilient. A natural environment comprising healthy systems, whether at the level of local forest ecology, the oceans, or the earth itself. A world in which other species coexist with humans and thrive in their own milieu.

Flourishing Business: Organizations that generate sustainable value by creating value synergistically for shareholders and stakeholders. Engaged teams and high-performance groups operating in a culture of effectiveness and living the personal values of their members. By creating value for society and nature, they find ways to create even more value for their consumers and investors.

Flourishing Individuals: Individuals who are full of vitality, for whom the “spirit within” is awakened, who are deeply in touch with their own purpose, and who feel connected to others, to community, and to all life on the earth. For such individuals, being becomes increasingly more important than having, and caring becomes an intrinsic quality of their way of being.

(Laszlo and Brown, 2014, p. 44-45)

The Roots of Flourishing

Laszlo and Brown (2014) explain that reflective practice can help us change our beliefs, which in turn can open the possibilities that allow for flourishing. Reflective practices can help us become aware of our current beliefs, develop a greater connectedness to different points of view, and consider adopting a new set of beliefs that embody our values so that we can think and act in ways that support flourishing (Laszlo and Brown, 2014).

The following beliefs have been dominant since the Industrial Revolution:

- (1) “the sole purpose of business is profit and competitive advantage” (p. 41)
- (2) “the main goal for humankind is economic growth and technological progress” (p. 41)
- (3) “nature’s resources exist above all for human consumption” (p. 41)

Some emerging beliefs are:

- (1) “a sense of complete well-being is more important than material success alone” (p. 42)
- (2) “to care for others is an essential quality of what it means to be human” (p. 42)
- (3) “cooperation is a powerful basis for business success” (p. 42)
- (4) “happiness is a more desirable societal goal and measure than gross national product” (p. 42)

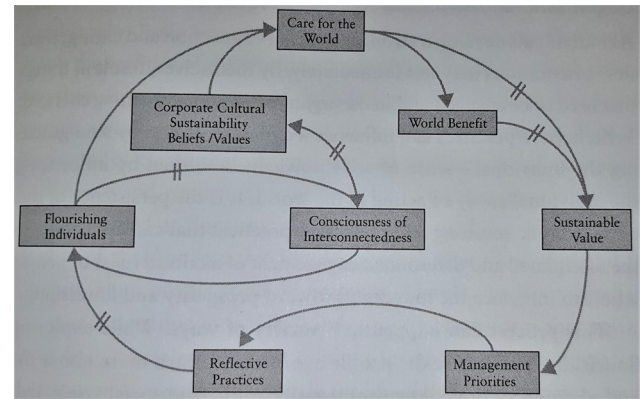


Figure 3.2—Causal Loops Starting With Reflective Practices (p. 57)

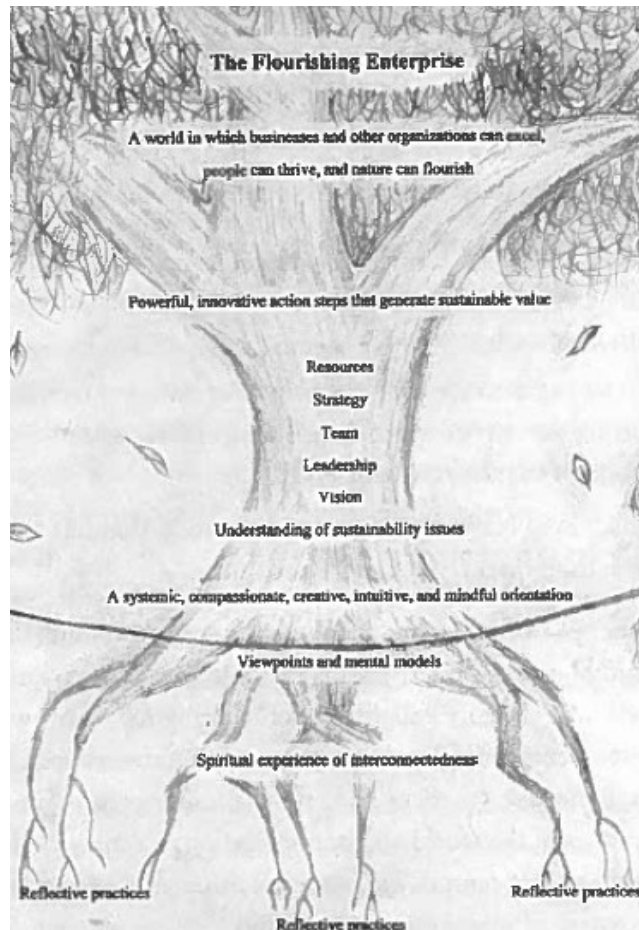


Figure 4.3— The Tree of Flourishing Enterprise (p. 60)

With global crises threatening our futures and ways of life, a shift in our belief systems is required to avoid disaster. Reflect on how the two sets of beliefs summarized above would influence the purpose and strategy of business endeavors and the outcomes produced by them. These reflective practices can help you decide which belief system to adopt and pursue and bring the world you yearn for into focus by aligning your thoughts and actions to your vision. It is in this way that reflective practices form the roots of flourishing that affect individuals, businesses, and the world. Practices that are effective at opening people up to new beliefs and changing behaviors need to be prioritized in businesses. Once enough people are taking part in these practices and they become part of the fabric of the organization you will start to notice positive effects. Laszlo and Brown (2014) explain that “ultimately the beliefs of the organization have to incorporate the new vision of business as an agent of world benefit, ... to let go of old beliefs and behaviors that pose obstacles to operating in the new way.” (p. 65)

Introduction to Reflective Practices

The Five Principles

Laszlo and Brown (2014) outlined 5 principles in support of flourishing that they believe should shape the internal dialogue that influences our thoughts, words, actions, habits, and character.

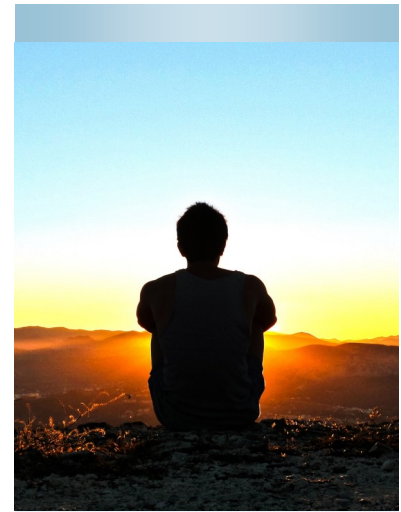
I. All humans are interconnected. All species are interconnected. No one lives in a vacuum and your actions influence all life to some extent.

II. Your actions are manifestations of your thoughts. Your thoughts are driven by your beliefs. In this way, your beliefs shape your actions.

III. You have a choice in the stance you take. You can choose to act from fear of the future you don't want to be a part of, or, you can choose to act out of love and caring to create the future you want to live in.

IV. "What we focus on expands." (p. 69) If you focus your attention on what you want most in life, it'll occupy your consciousness and drive you to create the conditions necessary to bring your desires to fruition. Alternatively, if you focus your attention on what you don't want in life, your fears will start to consume your consciousness and will cause you to unintentionally create more of what you don't want.

V. "Flourishing depends on action coming from deep wisdom. Flourishing at all levels... begins in



What The Authors Mean By 'Reflective Practices'

Laszlo and Brown (2014) use the term reflective practices to refer to "practices that some might think of as spiritual, such as meditation, as well as those that might be characterized as secular, such as journaling and immersion in nature." (p. 72) When using the word practice, the authors refer to "endeavors in which certain professional standards and prescribes routines are applied consistently". (p. 72) Just like practicing the guitar every day to get better at it, regularly repeated reflective practices can be a powerful way to open up your way of thinking and being.

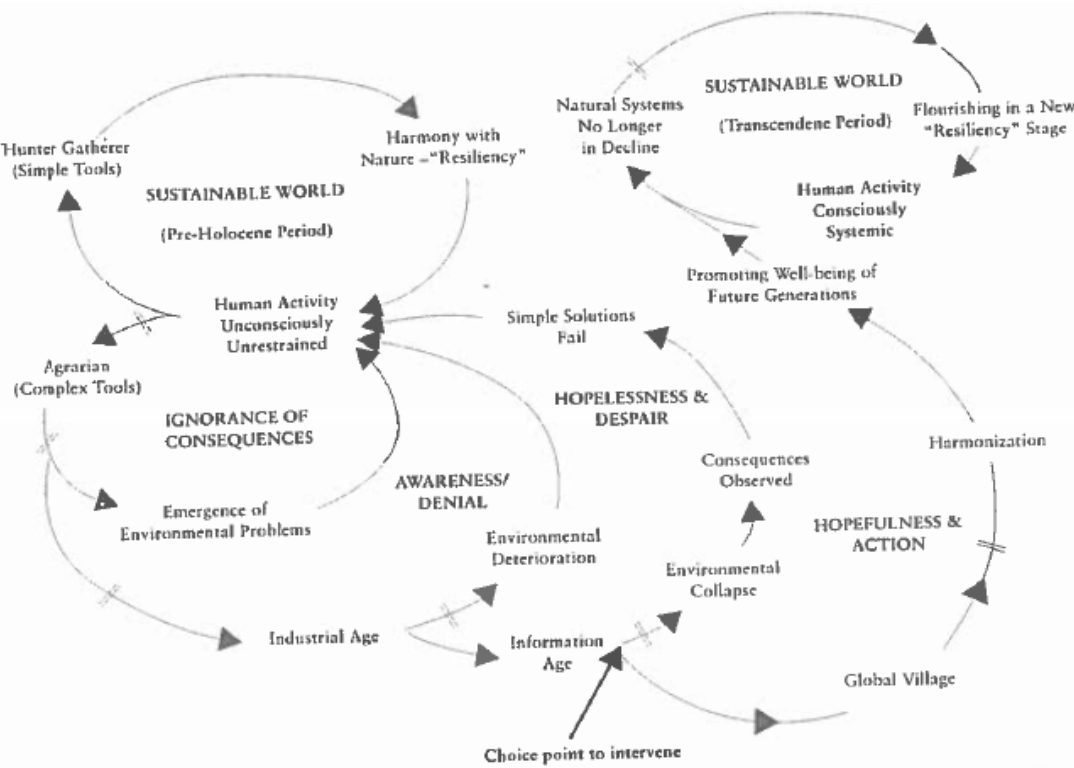


Figure 4.1—Evolutionary Track to Flourishing (p. 70)

"Our stories about our technological power surged ahead while at the same time our spiritual connection to all things natural diminished. The natural world was a world to be subjugated and controlled, and those who wanted to reverse the damaging trends were not only met with resistance but began to feel hopeless and fell into despair which engendered a feeling of helplessness. . . . Although we will never be able to restore lost natural systems to their original state existent in the Holocene period . . . There is the possibility that we can arrest the global decline in natural systems and establish an entirely new balance with the natural world." (Laszlo and Brown, 2014, p. 71) Figure 4.1 illustrates this progressive evolution of our historical actions and their consequences on the environment. It also shows the possibilities which exist to restore balance if we work as a collective whole or the consequences of indecision and inaction.

Foundational Individual Practices

The reflective practices discussed in this chapter help us to “step back, absorb important insights, and see connections that would otherwise be invisible to us. They allow us to digest the realities of the world around us. Such practices ultimately allow us to engage more fully and more authentically in any endeavor. They can produce a sense of spiritual wellness that fuels passion, persistence, commitment, and ongoing connection.” (Laszlo and Brown, 2014, p. 75)

Meditation

Meditating is a practice that has a long, rich global history and in recent decades has gained popularity in Western cultures. Mindfulness meditation encourages practitioners to be “present to our thoughts and feelings, sit with them (literally a “sitting practice”), and establish an increasingly calm equanimity and presence to what the world offers us. Being present, open, and aware makes one more effective in any activity and provides a number of benefits, including improved health, better relationships, better self-regulation, and increased enjoyment of life.” (Laszlo and Brown, 2014, p. 79) Practicing mindfulness helps you to develop a level of calmness, clarity, and insight that allows you to more fully engage in life’s experiences (both the good and the bad) and create opportunities for learning and growing as an individual. Sometimes, just ‘sitting there’ and being present in your thoughts and feelings is exactly what is needed to figure out the best plan possible to tackle a challenging situation.



Mindful Action and Flow

“Flow can be considered a state of optimal performance and can bring a sense of exhilaration and deep enjoyment as a person’s mind and body are stretched to their limits in an effort to accomplish something that is difficult and worthwhile. Hence, both mindful action and flow each serve to improve performance and overall joy.” (Laszlo and Brown, 2014, p. 81) Entering a state of flow usually occurs when an individual feels challenged and to rise to the challenge must put on their ‘A-game’. When in a state of flow you experience “intense concentration on the present, the merging of action and awareness, the loss of self-consciousness, increased self-efficacy, temporal distortion, and enjoyment.” (Laszlo and Brown, 2014, p. 81)

Remembrance and Transformational Problem Solving

Remembrance is a personal practice that is particularly effective for bringing out the best in people who are facing complex personal challenges. Remembrance “can provide a transformational experience with a lasting impact, enabling us to see ourselves and a given situation in a different light.” (Laszlo and Brown, 2014, p. 82) The practice of remembrance involves repeating the name of your God, or another phrase or word that has significant meaning to you. The repetition helps to connect the practitioner to a deeper source of activity, inspiration and wisdom, to relieve chronic stress, and to open themselves up to creativity and possibility. Transformational problem solving (TPS) is based on two assumptions: “(1) human beings are innately good, and (2) unwelcome developments in life can either throw us into a state of forgetting our innate goodness or, if we take an alternative path, those developments can deepen our experience of our goodness and make us more effective.” (Laszlo and Brown, 2014, p. 84) The alternative path of TPS helps us gain resilience by changing our default response to one that entangles us to one that frees us.

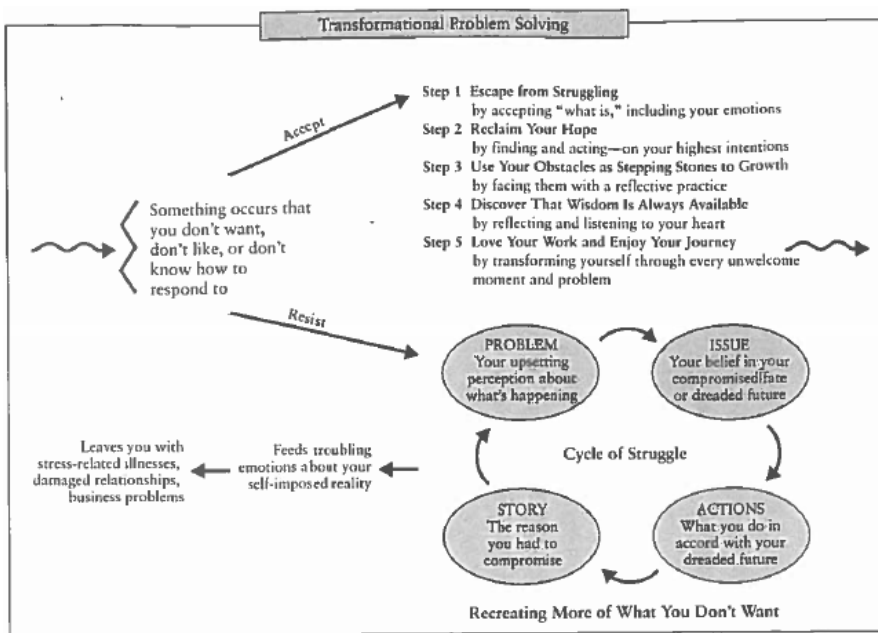


Figure 5.1—Transformational Problem Solving (p. 86)

Figure 5.1 provides us with a visual overview of a step by step approach to transforming how we approach problems so that we can resolve the situation with our highest level of consciousness.

Foundational Individual Practices

Journaling

Journal writing is another way to increase our awareness of our own thoughts and feelings that may be engaging us. Journaling helps to take your own thoughts and feelings seriously and over time, allows you to become willing to speak the truth about your perspective. Journaling increases your ability to notice subtleties that otherwise might be missed. “It also strengthens awareness of one’s self, of others, and of the natural world. It taps into the still, quiet spiritual dimension of the individual.” (Laszlo and Brown, 2014, p. 89)

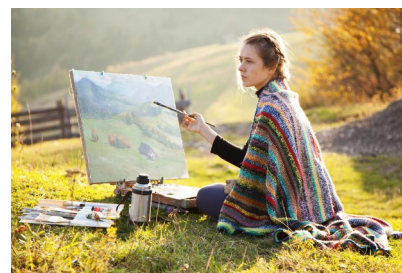


Nature Immersion

The practice of immersing oneself in nature can “create a level of connection with the natural world and a sense of its sacred dimension” (Laszlo and Brown, 2014, p. 91). Being immersed in a natural setting and simply sitting and listening to the sounds of nature and observing the beauty of the natural world allows time for deep reflection and an opportunity to be one with your thoughts and feelings and explore them.

Art and Aesthetics

Art and aesthetics provides “a broad domain of experience that engages our right brain and our deeper wisdom, thus helping us to move beyond the highly analytic modes of being and acting that are so prevalent and sometimes limiting in our work in business.” (Laszlo and Brown, 2014, p. 92) Zen drawing involves drawing an object without ever looking at your pencil or paper. This practice helps to remind us of how often our fixed preconceptions of what something looks like or what is happening in a situation can prevent us from seeing the truth.



Poetry and Evocative Language

“Business leaders live in multifaceted, dynamic environments. Their challenge is to take that chaos and make it meaningful and understandable. Reading and writing poetry can exercise that capacity, improving one’s ability to better conceptualize the world and communicate it – through presentations and through writing – to others . . . Poetry can teach us to infuse life with beauty and meaning. A challenge in modern management can be to keep ourselves and our colleagues invested with wonder and purpose.” (Laszlo and Brown, 2014, p. 94)

Emotional Resonance & Resonant Leadership

The ability to develop a “genuine interest in and talent for fostering positive feelings in the people whose cooperation and support you need... and to help them learn how to connect to their positive emotions and use them for both self-development and the development of others” is a capacity Laszlo and Brown (2014) call emotional resonance (p. 99). In resonant leadership, effective teams and powerful, positive organization cultures are created by employing emotional intelligence to motivate and nurture employees (Laszlo and Brown, 2014).

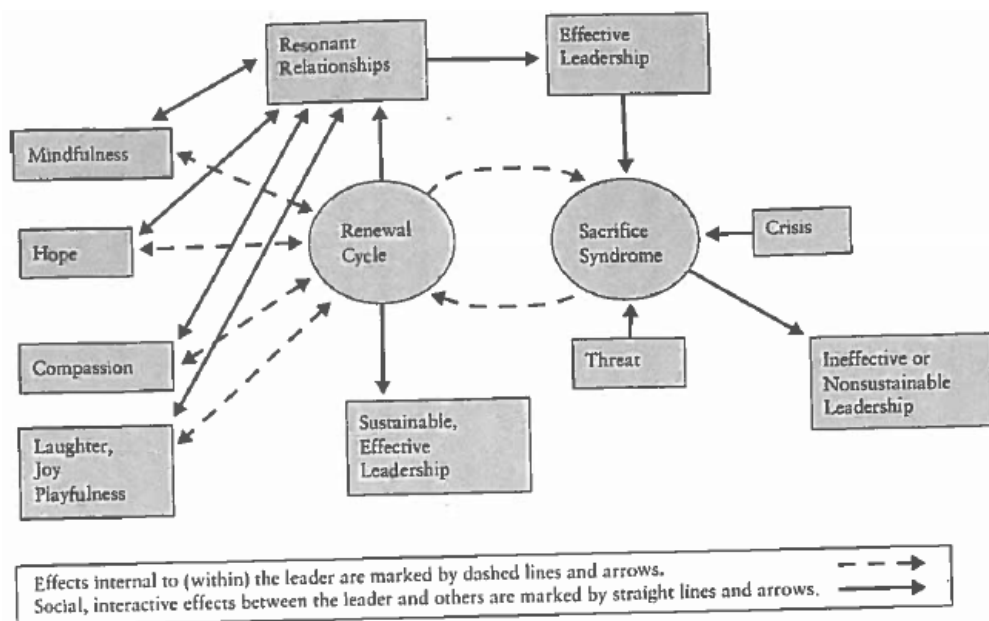


Figure 5.2—A Leadership Renewal Cycle Using Reflective Practices (p. 100)

Figure 5.1 provides us with a visual overview of a step by step approach to transforming how we approach problems so that we can resolve the situation with our highest level of consciousness.

Team and Organizational Practices

Having individuals in your organization take part in foundational reflective practices is absolutely great for any organization; however, if you are able to get groups of employees practicing reflective practices you can create a culture that is more welcoming of the spiritual dimension within the work place (Laszlo and Brown, 2014). The first step to creating this culture is increasing people's comfort with being themselves, with authenticity, and with being able to share their truths about their lives (Laszlo and Brown, 2014).

Story Café

“Inviting people into the practice of telling stories about a central theme or core value creates a much greater sense of connection among them, a valuing of one another’s experiences, and an emotional reconnection with an important experience.” (Laszlo and Brown, 2014, p. 104) Invite participants to get into groups of four and sit at a table. Choose a topic of value that everyone likely has experienced in one way or another and invite participants to reflect on this moment and take notes of their own story/experience.



Then, one at a time, invite participants to share their story with their colleagues who will listen intently within interrupting. This activity helps the storyteller remember that they are the author of their own lives and the listeners to remember the importance of respecting others perspectives.



Figure 6.1 — The MetaSkills Wheel (p. 106)

The MetaSkills Wheel

The purpose of the MetaSkills Wheel is to help people to “shift their attitudes, stances, and feelings, and the context through which they are viewing any issue or situation. It supports them in shifts of awareness that open possibilities for individuals and teams.” (Laszlo and Brown, 2014, p. 105) For example, if you are about to have a tough discussion with a colleague then the MetaSkills wheel can help you work out the best way to approach the conversation. Should you enter the conversation with a stance of deep democracy? Should you enter the conversation with playfulness? Should you enter the conversation with an open hard. The MetaSkills wheel has you envision the possibilities that exist with the different stances and allows you to assess which stance you feel is best suited to the situation.

Dialogue

“Dialogue is a conversation for learning designed to draw out multiple perspectives and numerous dimensions of those perspectives (thinking, feeling, stories, insights, uncertainties, possibilities) in order to create a mosaic of collective understanding.” (Laszlo and Brown, 2014, p. 112) Having an open dialogue can be extremely useful when a group feels stuck. Laszlo and Brown (2014) mention the work of David Bohm, who argued that “human communication is a naturally self-organizing process that benefits from the rich participation and open acceptance of people with strongly differing experiences and points of view that are held safe in the process of listening, presence, and respect, with very little imposed structure.” (p. 112-113)



Shared Values Management

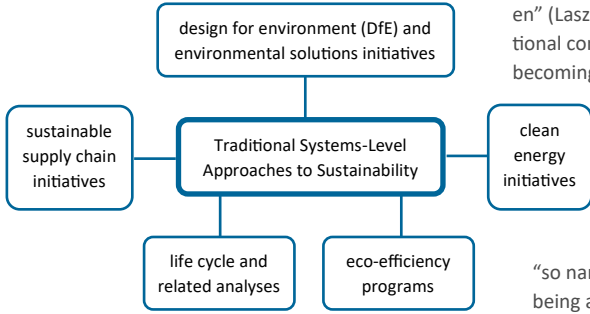
Groups who have mastered the art of dialogue can engage in shared values management which uses the dialogue process to align values and business practices (Laszlo and Brown, 2014). The process begins by getting employees at all levels of the organization involved in identifying the organization’s core values. The whole team must come to a shared agreement of the values that the organization should embrace. The dialogue should focus on what really matters to the people and to the organization. Next, the leadership team must work to align the policies, processes, structures, and systems with the organizations new vision and values. The whole organization needs to be authentically involved in “cross-functional, cross-level action teams to make recommendations on how the organization can close the gap between the vision and values they had collectively created and the current reality” (Laszlo and Brown, 2014, p. 119).

Barrett Cultural Values Assessment

The Barrett Cultural Values Assessment is a “reflective practice that allows business leaders to measure and manage their organizational values” (Laszlo and Brown, 2014, p. 120). The Barrett Center’s assessment is conducted at seven levels which are necessary for a flourishing business culture. “The first three levels (Survival, Relationship, and Self-Esteem) are about caring for one’s own needs. Level 4 (transformation) focuses on continuous renewal, learning, empowerment, innovation, and leadership development and is a bridge to levels 5, 6, and 7 (Internal Cohesion, Making a Difference, and Service). The last 3 levels have to do with finding meaning and caring for societal needs.” (Laszlo and Brown, 2014, p. 120) To do the assessment, all employees complete a survey and then the Barrett Center analyzes the results and provides the organization with a detailed report that informs the organization of potentially limiting values and values that can affect positive change. Using this information to align desired values with the organization’s mission, vision, and structures can ensure cohesion at all levels of the organization and the capacity for growth and collective action (Laszlo and Brown, 2014).

Systems-Level Practices

The systems level includes multiple organizations and their stakeholders. In order to open up new possibilities for flourishing across an entire industry, and even across multiple sectors of the economy and society, we need to employ a systems-level practice in search of a greater world impact (Laszlo and Brown, 2014). The traditional systems-level approaches to sustainability are missing processes that create a “sustained emotional connection



to the sustainability activities and goals undertaken” (Laszlo and Brown, 2014, p. 125). Without this emotional connection sustainability initiatives run the risk of becoming just another thing on an already too full plate. Laszlo and Brown, 2014, have incorporated some of the key reflective practices discussed earlier along with the already established systems process of appreciative inquiry to produce what they refer to as the W-Holistic Appreciative Inquiry, “so named because it focuses on the whole human being and the whole system”. (p. 127)

Appreciative Inquiry (AI)

“Appreciative inquiry is a whole-system change methodology with a global following that focuses on the positive (strength-based) dimensions of an organization within its larger system. In providing an affirmative process for accessing and building on the strengths of a system, it broadens people’s capacity to engage in change.” (Laszlo and Brown, 2014, p. 127)

An AI summit should include stakeholders from all areas of the value chain who will convene to “plan, design, and implement around a topic of strategic importance” (Laszlo and Brown, 2014, p. 131). A summit of only a few days can accomplish what normally would take months and provide extraordinary results. During the summit, stakeholders “develop deep mutual understanding, create road maps together, become committed to a common vision, and agree on a set of aligned projects” (Laszlo and Brown, 2014, p. 132). The summit should include everyone who will play a role in implementing the desired changes.

W-Holistic Appreciative Inquiry

With the addition of reflective practices (poetry, meditation, journaling, nature immersion, etc.) W-Holistic AI “increases opportunities for people to experience not only the wholeness of the system, but also the wholeness of themselves as human beings” (Laszlo and Brown, 2014, p. 140). AI summits can be quite busy, and offering time for deep reflection during the process serves to enhance the experience.

W-Holistic AI “promotes ongoing, sustained actions that arise from a connection to people’s deepest source of creativity, which, when applied to the life of the system, will help the system to flourish.” (Laszlo and Brown, 2014, p. 140)

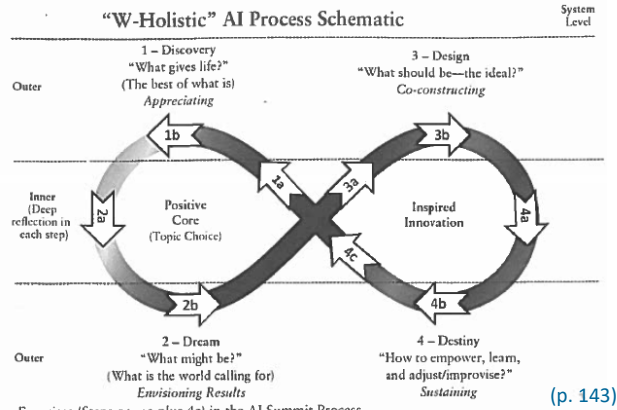


TABLE 7.1 Reflective Exercises (Steps 1a–4a plus 4c) in the AI Summit Process

Phase	Step	Outcomes	Exercises
Discovery	1a	Connection – Readiness to experience connection through wholeness within ourselves, with others, with the planet, and with the oneness of all that is	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflection: A poem or quote, breathing, and/or silent reflection (5–10 minutes) • Letting Go of Judgment and Deep Listening: Open mind, empathetic and connected listening (preferred, 1 hour) • Traditional AI Step 1 collective process
	1b	Collective appreciation of positive core of the organization/system	• Traditional AI Step 1 collective process
Dream	2a	Calling – Discovering the boundless meaning for your life and work and for this project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highest Goal: What is my highest goal, “what I live for,” and how do I need to be to bring it into the future we are creating? • Traditional AI Step 2 process
	2b	Collective vision for organization/system that encompasses individual purposes	• Traditional AI Step 2 process
Design	3a	Creative Source – Access the source of deepest creativity and make it available to realize our dream	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative Source: Experiential exercise in which participants get in touch with a moment when creativity flowed, either in their childhood or at some other time. Feel and draw the experience on a piece of paper. (20 minutes) • Traditional AI Step 3 process
	3b	Unified architecture of key elements in the collective vision	• Traditional AI Step 3 process
Destiny	4a	Values in Action – Thoughtful behavior that reflects the inner states of connection, calling, and creative source	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ways of Being and Ways of Doing Dialogue: (15 minutes) • Values in Action: Who do I need to be and how do I need to be different to realize this dream? (20 minutes) • Traditional AI Step 4 process
	4b	Values, structures, and processes for bringing the vision to fruition	• Traditional AI Step 4 process
	4c	Flourishing Toolbox – Introduction of toolbox for flourishing process that includes deeper exploration of connection, calling, creative source, values in action, and spiritual resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toolbox: Introductory presentation (including live-withs) that can be used with tele-calls (minimum 10 minutes) • Transformational Problem Solving and one other practice from the toolbox (preferred, 2 hours)

Breaking Down The Design Task of AI

Laszlo and Brown (2014) explain that the process of an appreciative inquiry summit begins with the Discovery phase. The purpose of this phase is both to identify the positive core of the system on which the future will be built, and to develop positive and creative relationships among summit participants. This phase has the appreciative discussion focusing on the various strengths that make up the positive core of the organizations and systems that are participating in the summit. This phase builds the platform of strengths from which the images of the future will emerge. In the second phase, Dream, the diverse participants develop their own vision of a compelling future. After sharing, a collective vision emerges that everyone in the room can get behind. In the Design phase, participants identify innovations that will bring the Dream to life. They ‘vote with their feet’ by organizing around initiatives they are most passionate about. The purpose of this phase is to rapidly prototype each innovation through a co-creative process that captures the collective intelligence of the prototype team. The final stage, Destiny, is used to envision how to move forward from prototype to reality in the world. Teams will design the governance and resourcing structures needed to implement the plans and tackle the tasks detailed in previous phases. (p. 133-135)



Application to Educational Administration

Schools are organizations. All staff, from maintenance to administration, would benefit from engaging in the reflective practices described by Laszlo and Brown. The school could employ organizational reflective practices and school districts could hold W-Holistic Appreciative Inquiry Summits to help align renewed organizational values that support flourishing to the organizations mission, vision, and processes. There is no doubt that adding spirituality in the form of reflective practices to the workplace will create a healthier and flourishing workforce that can help make communities, nations, and the world flourish.

Conclusion: The Path Forward

Over the past decade there has been a lot of buzz about sustainability. Large corporations have launched sustainability initiatives and developed 'green' products to be 'on trend'. Consumers, especially those belonging to the younger generations, have shown that they are willing to get behind these initiatives and products and support them with their wallets; however, the results of the sustainability efforts to date have been disappointing at best. The greatest issue with almost all sustainability efforts is that their primary goal is to do less harm. Does less harm isn't enough. We should be organizing our efforts around the vision of having not only humanity, but all life, and the natural systems that support life to flourish in the long term. Our goal shouldn't be minimizing the damage we do to the world, it should be maximizing the benefit we can add to the world. Laszlo and Brown (2014) have put together a map for new understanding and action which includes these ideas: "Taken together, spirituality and sustainability (or we should say reflective practices and flourishing) are powerful combinations. They become vital in the complex and interdependent world in which we and our organizations are expected to offer environmental health and social benefits as an integral part of everything we do." (p. 151) The application of the reflective practices discussed in this book can enrich our work environments by adding spirituality to the workplace. If practiced regularly and at all levels (individual, group/organization, and system) we can certainly change the direction of the ships we are captaining towards the direction of flourishing.



Discussion Questions

1. Why should spiritual experience, fostered by a variety of reflective practices such as meditation and nature immersion, lead to a greater sense of connectedness?
2. How does a greater sense of connectedness lead to caring for self and others?
3. When does caring lead to taking action that supports flourishing at every scale (individual, organizational, system)?

References

Laszlo, C., Brown, J. S., Ehrenfeld, J. R., Barros-Pose, I., Gorham, M., Robson, L., . . . Sherman, D. (2014). *Flourishing enterprise: The new spirit of business*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.