

One Brain and One Heart – Unleashing the Magic in Organizations

by Kathleen Dannemiller and Mary Eggers

The power of truly being able to experience becoming “one-brain and one heart” gives undeniable alignment and strength to any organization, and this result is what the Whole-Scale™ change methodology is based on - helping organizations, across all levels, all disciplines, all locations, all ages and tenures become connected around “one-brain (all knowing the same things) and “one-heart” (all feeling connected around common yearnings).

This “state of being” allows the organization to unleash the magic it needs in order to fulfill its mission, achieve its vision, live its values and be successful in its environment. This article focuses on one of the most vital theories upon which we have built our work –the concept of systems thinking, and on one of the theories that has emerged out of our work - the power of the microcosm to bring about system-wide change.

One of the systems thinkers we’ve learned from is Russell Ackoff. In 1971 he gave a speech to a group of high level Ford executives, which was designed to encourage them to leave the old industrial paradigm as they approached change in their industry. We think it’s still one of the best pragmatic descriptions of why we need to think “whole” if we are to be successful in the future. Ackoff said:

Let me try to give you a feeling of why that [Systems Thinking] is so, by giving you an example rather than trying to give you a generalized proof. I would like you to go through the following thought experiment. I read in the New York Times the other day that there are 142 makes of automobiles available in the United States. So let’s get one of each and bring them into a large garage – 142 cars.

We’ll hire ourselves a good group of first rate automotive engineers and first ask them to do the following: Inspect those 142 cars, test them, do any damn thing you want to, but come out and tell us which one has the best carburetor. So they run a series of tests and they come out and say the Buick has got the best carburetor. So we make a note – Buick carburetor.

Then you say fine, now we would like you to do the same thing on transmissions. So they test the transmissions and they come out and say the Mercedes has the best transmission – we make a note – Mercedes transmission.

You say okay, take the distributor, and they run through and they come out and say the Dodge has got the best distributor.

Then one by one, we take every part until we have every part required for an automobile and we have identified the best part available. Now when that is done, we tell them to now take those parts off those cars and assemble them, because then we ought to get the best possible automobile.

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But, do you get it? You don't even get an automobile. And for a very obvious reason.

Because it turns out that the parts don't fit, and that's what systems thinking is all about.

It says that the performance of the whole is not the addition of the performance of the parts, but it is a consequence of the relationship between the performance of the parts. It is how performance relates, not how it occurs independently of the other parts. That is what systems thinking is about.

So, synthesis is a different way of thinking and looking for explanations. It tries to find it by looking at wholes, larger whole, of which things are a part rather than by taking things apart.”

The last sentence in the above quote illustrates one of several key beliefs that Whole-Scale™ rests upon. You do not analyze and break down issues into smaller problems to be solved. This leads to a waste of energy, the same magnitude of which it would take a mechanic to re-work the separate parts from the 142 cars and work them into a functional automobile.

That's part of our foundation. Now let's focus on one of our own theories – the power of the microcosm. The use of microcosms helps us ensure that we are thinking and acting “whole system.”

If you want to shift the whole system at one time, you must be able to think the way the whole system thinks. A microcosm is a real subset of the larger group that represents all the “voices” of the organization. Working with groups that mirror the “whole” allows us to work with the “whole system” at a different level. The microcosm contains the essential “DNA” of the whole organization. The microcosm creates a perspective that combines and represents all the voices, rather than working only with segmented voices such as the “leader as expert.” The segmented voice will never be representative of, or as accurate as, the “whole voice” represented in a true microcosm.

Our use of microcosms comes from seeing the organization as a living system. The microcosm is the best window we know of that can give you a holistic view of the system in *real time*. We've learned that having a critical mass of microcosms experiencing the paradigm shift helps the whole organization shift. The use of the holistic view from a microcosm affirms our strong and abiding belief in people's ability

to contribute powerfully when given enough information and when simply invited to do so. In Whole-Scale™, the use of the microcosm means involvement from *every* area and from *every* level. This involvement is *all the way* throughout the process, not just the night before implementation.

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Whole-Scale™ processes evoke the system's wisdom without needing to direct or control the results. Thus, when the system is ready, the answer will come. Our job as

consultants is to help the system become ready. The microcosm will have all of the knowledge it needs, once the knowledge has been uncovered and combined. We believe it is our job to set up processes that will help an organization uncover and combine the needed data. In this way it is possible to create identity in the moment and to form new identities, without having to define every aspect of the system or get inside each person's head.

This moment, when new identities have formed within a microcosm, is the moment we call the "paradigm shift" moment. People (individually and as a whole) are seeing the world differently, are seeing themselves differently and are connected around a common picture of their future and the actions they will need to take to get there. After the paradigm shift experience participants are able (and indeed clamoring) to flex their newly uncovered wisdom and build toward the yearnings they have uncovered together. As it says in the New Testament, and is clearly true in the life of organizations, "You can't put old wine in new bottles." Once the paradigm has indeed shifted, for the individual and for the organization, people will be acting in new ways. Once I see the "new bottle" of the new paradigm I will see things differently and find myself acting differently. And that's what causes sustainability in our Whole-Scale™ work.

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