

TWO

Capitalizing on the Human Element

“Increasingly, today’s most successful companies are bringing love, joy, authenticity, empathy, and soulfulness into their businesses; they are delivering emotional, experiential, and social value—not just profits.”¹⁰

—Wharton School of Business in recommendation of the book
Firms of Endearment: How World-Class Companies Profit from Passion and Purpose

Buckminster Fuller often referred to the principle of the trim tab.¹¹ A trim tab is a mini-rudder attached to the large rudder of a ship. How is it useful? In order to turn the ship, the rudder must be redirected. However, the rudder is a large flat plane that meets with a tremendous amount of resistance from the water pressure around it when it’s moved. In fact, if the rudder is turned too much too soon, it can break. As a small end piece, the trim tab is easy to turn in comparison to the larger rudder because of its size. Once it turns even a little bit, it breaks the flat plane of the rudder and creates a vacuum of low pressure into which the big rudder can then easily turn. The point is that a relatively small change can redirect a huge ship that would otherwise require a tremendous amount of effort to turn.

If we think of an organization or team as the ocean liner and the people involved as the rudder that sets its direction, then empathic

connection becomes the trim tab. The empathy factor can drive strategy, team productivity, marketing, product and program development, sales, and eventually, profit and success. How? It's linked to collaboration, innovation, and managing changes in the market and workplace.

Similar to a trim tab, empathy can facilitate interpersonal collaboration and the connection of individuals to organization-wide initiatives so innovation, growth, and change can happen more easily and fluently. It's the catalyst that fuels the future we want to see.

Speaking to collaboration, on October 2010 John Chambers, chairman and CEO of technology giant Cisco, told a conference group of the Association for Federal Information Resources Management that the next generations of virtualization software would forever link collaboration with improved portability, manageability, and compatibility of everyday technology applications in the workplace.¹² It's easy to think of technology as impersonal and our workplaces as distinct "silos," separate from each other. However, with the advent of new virtual technology that invites collaboration, such as cloud computing, Google documents, and other web-based sharing of resources, the most highly collaborative people will very soon be those most valued in the workplace. The skill of empathy is a critical element of collaboration, and it's becoming more important because it involves an understanding of needs. Meeting needs is crucial for organizational success.

The common denominator in key current organizational research is a connection to needs at multiple levels within the organization and with its key audiences or customers. With a needs awareness, this common denominator becomes apparent. Without it, the organizational research looks like a variety of unrelated findings. I believe learning empathy as a workplace skill and supporting it as a business best practice stands out as the one focus area that can drive everything from productivity and profit to morale and meaning in the workplace.

Before we get into the mechanics of creating empathic connections as a



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workplace practice in the next chapters, I'd like to share with you some of the research that reinforces the confidence I feel about the critical nature of empathy in organizations.

For many years, I've been enthusiastic about Kimball Fisher's *Leading Self-Directed Work Teams: A Guide to Developing New Team Leadership Skills*. Among many work groups, it's a standard for empowered work team training. Fisher presents the results of studies involving more than seven thousand work groups and firms as well as organizational case studies and quantitative data. The research points to three consistent attributes associated with the most successful work groups and work environments. In these, the leaders:

1. have the ability to create strong mutual respect between the workers and the leader.
2. assure that the job gets done.
3. provide leadership in getting problems solved.¹³

When I first read this list, I was relieved and gratified. The connection piece is listed as the first attribute, while the doing piece is listed second. Someone had actually researched and documented this in a clear and direct way that I had not seen before.

Within the next decade, a mountain of research would build to support the efficacy of having and developing qualities of connection such as trust, respect, compassion, and empathy in the workplace.

Emotional Intelligence, the Empathy Factor, and Trust

Psychologists Peter Salovey and John D. Mayer first introduced the idea of emotional intelligence in 1990.¹⁴ Then, in 1995, Daniel Goleman published *Emotional Intelligence*, which expanded interest in the topic. In 1998, he wrote an article in the *Harvard Business Review* titled "What Makes a Leader?" In this article, Goleman calls emotional intelligence "the sine qua non" (an indispensable element) of leadership and lists empathy as one of its five components. He defines empathy as "the ability to understand the emotional makeup of other people" and the "skill in treating people according to their emotional reactions."

He delineates three reasons empathy is so important: the increasing use of teams (“cauldrons of bubbling emotions”); the rapid pace of globalization with its possible misunderstandings of cross-cultural communication; and the growing need to retain talent.¹⁵

In an article titled “What’s Empathy Got to Do With It?” Bruna Martinuzzi, founder of Clarion Enterprises Ltd., a company specializing in emotional intelligence and leadership, further affirms the benefits of empathy. “Indeed, empathy is valued currency,” she states. “It allows us to create bonds of trust; it gives us insights into what others may be feeling or thinking; it helps us understand how or why others are reacting to situations; it sharpens our ‘people acumen’ and informs our decisions.”¹⁶

A Gallup Study completed in 2008 asked followers which qualities they most wanted from their leaders. The expected descriptors—vision, purpose, drive, ambition, wisdom—were largely absent. Instead, the qualities people most want from their leaders are trust, compassion, stability and hope, honesty, integrity and respect.¹⁷

Research indicates that when trust is high, retention tends to be high, which saves an organization both time and money.¹⁸ This study was conducted by the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL®), an international institute devoted to leadership research and training. On another note, the Center conducted a survey in 2002, asking managers to evaluate what worked best when leading organizations through downsizings and other periods of difficulty. Kerry Bunker, a senior program associate for leadership development at the Center concluded: “Effective leaders seem better at blending the softer leadership skills—trust, empathy and genuine communication—with the tough skills needed to keep an organization afloat during difficult times.” Results of the survey showed that leaders who best managed their organizations in times of change were proficient in “honest, proactive communication.” They “listened well, demonstrated sensitivity and were willing to articulate clearly the rationale and necessity for change despite the pain those changes might inflict.”¹⁹



*Empathy engenders trust,
insight, and understanding
important for both internal and
cross-cultural communication.*

Thus empathy proves its worth in building bonds of trust that are beneficial across the board for demonstrating effective leadership.

The Empathy Factor, Meaning, and Customer Satisfaction

Dev Patnaik, author of *Wired to Care: How Companies Prosper When They Create Widespread Empathy*, focuses on how a corporate culture of empathy helps a company thrive because empathic connection with the consumer drives product development and innovation. Not only that, but it creates something very difficult to cultivate in the workplace—personal meaning for the work being done. The empathic connection to the consumer gives workers a reason to get up and go to work in the morning to meet their own needs for contribution and meaning. Patnaik and Pete Mortensen cite numerous case studies from Nike, IBM, Microsoft Xbox, Harley-Davidson, and others to illustrate how using empathy can lead to better products, more employee engagement, more valuable customer feedback, and increased revenues.²⁰

Empathy is equally relevant for end users in social sectors such as government agencies, nonprofits, and universities as it is for business customers. Consider the following example of the power of connecting empathically to the market we serve.

In the 1990s, I worked with an association that represented forty-three thousand members. At the time, it was one of the largest government employee groups in the United States. The association was hosting a series of several dozen meetings statewide for members in different locations over a period of several weeks. Critical decisions were to be made in these meetings. Management was worried because turnout in the past had been lower than what they wanted.

Which staff person would coordinate and attend which meetings? The management team prepared a list of the meetings in chronological order because this made the most sense for

their staffing process. During a series of informal focus groups we conducted with members, I noticed how confused members looked and how much effort they were putting into deciding which meeting to attend. Their eyes scanned up and down the list, then across. Members weren't interested in the date. First, they wanted to know the location because this was the critical decision element for them. But this information was accessible only by sorting through the more than three dozen meetings scheduled and organized by date. So I recommended that management reorganize the list according to location instead. The three events in region A, for example, were listed together under a readily visible heading, and so on. This reformatting coupled with increased communication about the needs of members that would be met by attending resulted in the largest turnout for meetings of this kind in the Association's five-decade history, a three- to fourfold increase. At one meeting, chairs had to be brought in from other rooms to accommodate the crowd. Other meetings reported similar exponential increases in turnout.

This experience led management to a big aha! Managers realized the value of communicating from the point of view of the member rather than management—with a simple, effective, and empathic solution that yielded significant results.

Consideration of the needs of others is an empathic quality that we can develop by using NVC. Let's look at other ways of being that help us connect with others for more effective outcomes.

Ways of Being

The groundbreaking book *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap . . . and Others Don't* by Jim Collins has changed the way leaders and consultants view organizations since its publication in 2001. It presents key findings, not just about what to do but how to *be* as a leader or an impassioned workforce, based on a study of 1,435 Fortune 500 companies conducted over five years. One of these critical findings

describes what Collins calls a “Level 5” leader in the companies that outperformed their competitors and the market over a sustained period of time, even in industries that were struggling. Of this type of leader, Collins says, “. . . it is important to note that Level 5 is an empirical finding, not an ideological one. Humility + Will = Level 5. Level 5 leaders are a study in duality: modest and willful, humble and fearless.”²¹ These are not business practicalities to do, but instead ways to connect with ourselves and others.

How are these leaders developed? Collins suggests “the right circumstances—self-reflection, conscious personal development.” He states that some of the leaders in the study had “significant life experiences that might have sparked or furthered their maturation,” such as cancer, World War II experiences, strong religious belief or conversion.²² Again, we see that the human aspects that come from self-connection and self-awareness serve as the foundation for actions at work.



High-performing companies have leaders who are self-aware and possess certain qualities that enable them to connect with others.

Passion, Purpose, and Values

The Hedgehog Concept is what Collins dubbed a laser-like focus that requires reflection on what you’re passionate about, what you can be the best at, and what drives your economic engine. Why “Hedgehog”? Collins ingeniously named his concept after this little creature that can do only one thing well—roll up in a ball with its spikes out for protection. Hedgehogs don’t run and don’t even see particularly well, but they sure know how to roll up into a ball!

When I read the piece about passion, I was excited because at that time, eighteen years into my career, I had been looking for more empirical evidence that confirmed the power of feelings in the workplace. When I facilitate a group and the people start discussing what they’re passionate about, I can feel a palpable energy when

they get out of their heads and into their passion. For many people, conversations about how they want to contribute to others through work and the meaning they derive from this can be a personal sharing they enjoy and don't have opportunities to engage in as often as they would like.

Collins stated that less than one half of 1 percent of the companies in his research qualified for the criteria of "great." Many were what he considered to be very good companies, but what distinguished the best of the best? They were fanatical about the elements of the Hedgehog Concept. Even though many of the companies in the *Good to Great* research have experienced major upheavals in recent years with the global economic downturn, Collins's findings remain seminal in the study of organizational success.

So are these companies great places to work? Yes and no, said Collins. They are great places to work for people who share the same values. For example, if you're not a smoker, working at R. J. Reynolds would be like listening to a dentist's drill every day. He writes that the companies that were crystal clear about who they were—I call this concept organizational *Identity*—actually repelled people who didn't match their values. They're so consistent and clear about who they are that it's easy for people to determine if they fit or not and to choose companies where they would like to work. The benefit for these companies, of course, is they attract people who are more likely to fit in with their values. This, in turn, increases the likelihood that employees can fulfill their passion and purpose for work.



Companies that exceed market performance are "fanatical" about their purpose and clear about their values.

Engagement and Empowerment

Both Collins and Fisher contend that the idea of managing employees is passé. If we have to manage somebody, he or she is not a fit for the job. We want people who are self-motivated, can garner for themselves what the company or team is about and decide how they can contribute to

the team, and then go and do what needs to be done. William Bridges (*Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change*) has talked about de-jobbing for a long time and so has Fisher. Great companies un-box their people and give them freedom in their roles. Employees who are in alignment with the company's identity, purpose, and passion will take their oars and happily row.

A stellar example of this passion can be observed in the development of Pixar Animation Studios. The company attracted enthusiastic people of genius and talent because of its commitment to and focus on innovation and excellence in animation. You can't argue with the results, which include but are by no means limited to twenty-four Academy Awards, seven Golden Globes, and three Grammys. Add to that \$6.3 billion in earnings worldwide²³ and you have what many call outrageous success—largely due to identity, purpose, and passion. Yes, doing and creating were necessary, but these values and qualities of *being* fueled the fire.

In the boom years of Google hiring, it was common for applicants to go through a dozen—yes, twelve—interviews to meet everyone they would work with on a regular basis. At Starbucks, interviewers might ask if an applicant wants a cup of coffee before the interview. They aren't being polite. They want people fanatical about drinking coffee.

Organizations that incorporate into their thinking, planning, and doing the empathic connection that generates employee empowerment experience such far-reaching results as the following, cited in the Collins and Fisher research:

- 45 percent lower costs²⁴
- 250 percent improvement in productivity²⁵
- 100 percent increase in revenues and profits²⁶
- 50 percent cut in accidents, absenteeism, and sickness²⁷
- 3.42 to 18.50 times increase in the general stock market value²⁸

People want to be empowered and have passion and purpose for the work they do. I've found in working with groups all over the United States and also in India and with companies from Japan that one of the most powerful and intimate topics people can talk about

in the workplace is how they want to contribute. It's quite personal to them; they desire to make a difference. They want to get up in the morning and do something that counts. It's a need that people want to fulfill. When they don't have that opportunity at work, it starts

a cycle of frustration. Then sometimes managers judge them as being unmotivated, when in fact, Deming said that most interpersonal issues in an organization are not personal. They're systemic. Something in the system is putting these people at odds instead of their personalities.²⁹

To encourage engagement and contribution to happen naturally, people want to know where the organization or team is headed, why it's going there, and how they can help. The more explicit an organization can be about its identity, purpose, and direction and every employee's role in advancing the cause, the more people will self-select and self-direct. The more they self-select, the more passion and energy the company in general will have from their efforts. The more passion it has in combination with other key factors, according to Collins, the more profitable it will be.³⁰

Speaking of profit, the IC process considers profit as one leg of a three-legged strategy under what I call the organizational or team need for *Energy*. Peggy Holman, one of the editors of *The Change Handbook* and an organizational consultant, told me she found this to be one of the more exciting aspects of our process. She liked this new way to look at profit as a means to an end rather than the goal itself. People want to engage in a meaningful purpose that results in profit, which in turn fuels their work.

Fortuitous events unfold for companies that make a commitment to focus on what Stephen Covey calls the "important but not urgent"³¹ questions of who do we want to be and how do we want to be together. One of the key elements is to operate from a commitment paradigm, where people act from self-motivation, and not a control paradigm, where people act out of fear, guilt, or shame. The aim is a balance of authority and accountability.



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Let's use Pixar as an example again. In his blog for the *Harvard Business Review*, Tom Davenport analyzed how organizations build their capacity for sound judgment and decision making. He states that Pixar makes “better decisions” in part because the company's managers give its directors a great deal of autonomy, and the directors, in turn, seek feedback from the entire production crew. Another reason for its success is Pixar University, which not only educates but engages Pixar's people in the company's purpose and passion.³²



The more explicit an organization can be about what Integrated Clarity terms the organizational needs of Identity, Life-Affirming Purpose, and Direction as well as every employee's role in fulfilling them, the more people will self-select and self-direct.

Self-Awareness and Strategic Conversations

Increased individual and organizational self-awareness help people engage with others and the organization as a whole in more productive ways that meet more needs and goals. Leading books in the field of organization development endorse contemplation, self-reflection, conscious personal development, and individual coaching, for example.

In addition, many may be surprised that academia recommends consideration of feelings and needs along with mental disciplines. The Harvard Business School Executive Education Program included a course called Leadership in a Time of Turbulence and Change. The course description read that change happens by influencing people's feelings with truths, not analysis and data. A course for executives at Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management offered by writer, physician, and spiritualist Dr. Deepak Chopra has a similarly nontraditional description. It states, “In *The Soul of Leadership*, you will gain an increased awareness of your own and others' needs and a deeper understanding of your leadership potential to make a profound change

in the way you lead.”³³ Once again we see the importance of that third dimension that adds depth to thinking and doing.

Helping to increase self-awareness and healthy interaction, the movement called Appreciative Inquiry has gained a foothold throughout the organization development field. Appreciative Inquiry is based on sociological studies that reveal a human tendency. If you and I meet and I tell you all the things you’re doing wrong, you tend to increase the error. If I meet with you and say, “Tell me about a time when you did something exceptional that was similar to this,” and I help you access your own intelligence about it, you gain in confidence and competence.

Along with a high degree of self-awareness among its members, healthy organizations have high rates of oral tradition and social interchange versus reliance solely on written documentation. They tend to use the Socratic method of inquiry where questioning one another is seen as support versus doubt. These companies hold many interactive and collaborative strategic conversations and dialogues as part of their structured strategic planning. They practice participative management, engaging the whole system and particularly the worker at the level of implementation.



Effective leaders tend to have a high degree of self-awareness, and healthy organizations have high rates of social interchange, including interactive and collaborative strategic conversations.

Pulling It All Together in Integrated Clarity

I considered much of the organizational research as I developed the process of Integrated Clarity. Again and again, I found compelling evidence for capitalizing on and celebrating the human element, for maximizing focus on feelings and needs in the workplace rather than ignoring, managing, or diminishing them in some way or subsuming them to the intellect or the mind.

I concluded from the work of these researchers and teachers and my own consulting experiences that organizational effectiveness and vitality begins with a state of self-awareness. Success is not driven by what we do, by our actions or behaviors. Rather, it's driven by *who we choose to be* as a group and as individuals and the kinds of empathic connections we create. From that core of who we are moment to moment, all our actions flow. Determining and honing this driving force of an organization is the foundation of Integrated Clarity.

But how do we actually “do” self-awareness? What are the actual mechanics of becoming self-aware?

NVC shows us step by step how to become self-aware as individuals. IC shows us how to become self-aware as a team or organization. These processes include clarifying and meeting both individual needs and six universal organizational needs, using Nonviolent Communication as a tool and Integrated Clarity as a framework.

In 2005, I had dinner with my former boss, Jim Hayes, to discuss Integrated Clarity. I had worked for Hayes in the early 1980s at Time, Inc., where he was regarded in the highest esteem and still is to this day. He went on to become publisher of *Discover* magazine and then publisher for eight years of what has long been considered one of the foremost business publications in the world, *Fortune* magazine. Over a sushi dinner in Phoenix, we talked about the IC concept of organizations having needs—the foremost of which I call *Identity*.

Basically, *Identity* is the core makeup of the organization and answers the questions “Who are we?” and “What are our values as a collective group?” In strategic conversation, the IC process begins with people in the organization inquiring into who they are as an organization and then expressing this identity in their consumer markets, the people they serve. Hayes surprised me by confirming that an organization’s understanding of its own identity was so critical in his mind to the organization’s future that, “if it took one



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year for the organization to clarify its identity, it would be worth it.”

This was greatly reassuring to me given Hayes’s traditional business bent. Traditional strategic planning sessions do not take the time to ask “Who are we?”—a form of connecting to members’ internal sense of organizational self. Most jump right in and begin with “What do we do next?”—a shortsighted form of two-dimensional thinking, planning, and doing in a three-dimensional world.

How is it relevant to us whether or not an organization is clear about its identity? Why does it matter whether an organization has needs? What role and legitimacy do feelings have in the workplace? What difference does it make if we know what our own feelings and needs are?

If we work for an organization that’s conflicted about its needs and values, and if we aren’t crystal clear about what needs and values are important to us in our work, chances are, our productivity is suffering along with our morale. More interpersonal conflicts are likely to occur between people in the workplace, more frustrations may be simmering due to productivity lower than what most want or a higher than comfortable frequency of miscommunication. In addition, depending on our own personal values, we are probably experiencing more dissatisfaction in our workday experiences.

On the flip side, when these organizational needs are met and people needs are met through work, a kind of “humanistic company” develops as described in the University of Pennsylvania’s Wharton School of Business book *Firms of Endearment: How World-Class Companies Profit from Passion and Purpose*:

“What we call a *humanistic company* is run in such a way that its stakeholders— customers, employees, suppliers, business partners, society, and many investors—develop an emotional connection with it, an affectionate regard not unlike the way many people feel about their favorite sports teams. Humanistic companies—or *firms of endearment* (FoEs)—seek to maximize their value to society as a whole, not just to their stakeholders. They are the ultimate value creators: They create emotional value, experiential value, social value, and of course, financial

value. People who interact with such companies feel safe, secure, and pleased in their dealings. They enjoy working with or for the company, buying from it, investing in it, and having it as a neighbor.”³⁴

That describes the connection that takes place with the outer world when an organization is transformed by creating a satisfying and fulfilling environment within.

After I developed IC, I began suggesting to my clients that they pause before making strategic decisions to ask questions that open doors:

- “Who are we?”
- “How do we continuously articulate which universal human needs of our customers we are passionate about meeting?”
- “How do we measure and monitor our connection to this purpose in daily operations and decisions?”
- “How do we measure and monitor our ability to fulfill this purpose with the people we serve, our customers?”

The framework of Integrated Clarity includes answering questions around six basic organizational needs I call *Identity, Life-Affirming Purpose, Direction, Structure, Energy, and Expression*. These needs are fully explained in Chapter Four and referenced throughout this book. When my clients first answer questions around *Identity, Life-Affirming Purpose, and Direction*, strategies about what to do seamlessly flow from that clarity. For this reason, we have come to call these Source Needs. Then, what we call the Leveraging Needs of *Structure, Energy, and Expression* of the organization’s unique place in the market and world fall into place to support those strategies.

The results? People report more fulfilling internal and external connections and appreciation, not to mention revenue and growth. Members of an organization gain deep understanding of one another’s feelings, needs, and requests in the service of shaping a collective



When we first answer questions around the organizational Source Needs of Identity, Life-Affirming Purpose, and Direction, strategies about what to do next seamlessly flow from that clarity.

strategy. One that can be implemented with self-motivated commitment and empowerment versus a hierarchy of control and command.

Proof Is in the Productivity

I began to see levels of results I had not seen previously through applying Nonviolent Communication within the framework of Integrated Clarity. My clients were being transformed by the process of needs-based strategic conversations as opposed to traditional strategic planning.

CITY OF PORTLAND, OREGON

A management analyst for the city of Portland, Oregon, applied the principles of IC to her department immediately after a half-day NVC/IC workshop. She reported a year later that her department was experiencing increased productivity at a rate she had not seen previously. She felt grateful for the ideas she had learned because her personal level of satisfaction with her workplace had improved, as well.

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF FINE ARTS DEANS

Dr. Ron Jones, president of the Memphis College of Art and former dean of the University of South Florida's College of The Arts and former president of the International Council of Fine Arts Deans, reports that this professional organization "was in a steady decline in membership and organizational focus until the board of directors and department chairs participated in a facilitated strategic conversation with the principles and practices of IC at its core. Membership numbers, revenues, and other key indicators are now stronger than ever."

ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

The principles and practices of NVC and IC that nurture high-functioning human connections offer practical ideas, not theoretical ones. They were applied to develop an innovative and highly successful three-year program for businesses as part of a \$220 million transportation construction project in Arizona—the largest single contract awarded in the state’s transportation construction history.

Teresa Welborn, assistant director in the Communications and Community Partnerships division for the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) explained: “This business outreach program was built around connection and empathy in a way that was groundbreaking for the businesses in the project area. The businesses benefited tremendously from this approach and became partners with the project team and advocates of the construction instead of adversaries. ADOT, the public, and the contractor benefited because this public project moved forward with support from the businesses and community and completed six months ahead of schedule, within budget and with a group of new ADOT supporters.”

Once we understand that high-quality human connections are the fabric of high performing teams and organizations, everything we know and understand shifts to a more productive level. A human resources director for a small business of three hundred employees said, “Some processes focus on people issues like improving morale or communication, while others focus on strategic planning and business aspects. What’s exciting about Integrated Clarity is that it addresses both at the same time.”



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As you can see by the research, that dual focus is practical, effective, and needed for a company or team to function at its highest capacity.

Do Try This at Home

Since I began using NVC/IC in my work, I've been pleasantly surprised and inspired by how many of my clients tell me that learning these concepts in their workplaces is also affecting those they love at home in a way that all find more satisfying and connecting.

For example, the IC process has been doubly beneficial for Ken, the owner of a small metal fabrications shop, who called me one day. I asked what kind of impact the principles and practices we'd discussed had on his intent to become more connected with his machinists.

"It's working great at work, but you should see what's happening with my relationship with my seventeen-year-old daughter. We're talking!" He and his daughter finally began to share a mutually enriching connection through his practice of some elementary aspects of a needs-based awareness and NVC language.

Make Time for Transformation

Aside from its personal benefits, I hope I've shown that empathy in the workplace can be beneficial for meeting the needs of employees, the organization, and its customers. You'll see more examples of its benefits in the ensuing chapters. Most important, you'll discover ways to develop this skill and how to use it. However, I also want to be clear that implementing the IC model is a journey, an exploration of NVC and needs-based principles applied to the workplace to achieve concrete results. It's a cycle of making observations, adjusting strategies, and taking responsibility to meet our own needs and the needs of our organization or team, while at the same time being focused and driven by the needs of our customers.

This practice creates transformation from the inside out, which leads to both individual and organizational evolution toward increasing levels of harmony and success. A common thread weaves throughout

the work of Integrated Clarity, Jim Collins (*Good to Great*), William Bridges (*Managing Transitions*), and Kimball Fisher (*Leading Self-Directed Work Teams*), and the wealth of other research documented here. The concepts presented by all these approaches aren't just ideas to fill our heads; they're practices to embody and live.

Although the process of Integrated Clarity is easy to learn, it's not a quick fix. It's simple to understand but challenging to live because of our habituated ways to the contrary. Our language is embedded with the constructs of blame, guilt, control, shame, and separation. NVC offers an opportunity to change our habits in the workplace and anchor them permanently with communication that can meet the needs for respect and effectiveness more often. I want to emphasize the importance of having patience with yourself as you learn and forgiving yourself when you slip up. No one is perfect and we can all be triggered, especially when under stress or experiencing health issues. Be easy on yourself. You are transforming entrenched patterns and some of them are subtle. Remember that by changing the next words you speak, you are actually changing the way you think and the way you see the world. It will take a while, but your bright new world will be well worth your time and effort.

Bridges says that change is an external event but transition is an internal experience.³⁵ For example, just because I've received a new title at work and I've moved into a different office doesn't mean I've fully integrated that new role on the same day. It's a similar process when we're learning a new skill.

Putting the concepts in this book into practice in your organization requires the following five phases of learning for integration that produces results:

1. Reading and understanding the concepts



Incorporating IC and NVC into your organization and your daily work activities requires a change in habits of communication, creating empathic connections throughout the organization that become integrated over time.

2. Engaging with the concepts and questioning or seeing where they are already working in your own life, organization, or team
3. Continuing to test the concepts by practicing the process personally
4. Making adjustments to strategies to hone your results
5. Observing and appreciating what's working, enhancing that, and creating more of it

Although it does take time to transform our habitual ways of relating and operating, NVC and IC are the simplest, fastest ways I know of to learn and practice empathy as a professional skill. Empathy is innate to all of us, but NVC and IC articulate how to deepen and develop empathy and integrate needs-based awareness at the individual and organizational levels. Make time your friend and allow this process to unfold. I think you'll find it gratifying.

I invite employees and managers alike to join me in an exploration of who they are, what they value, and how they want to express those values in the workplace and in their consumer markets. Embarking on this work holds the promise of a workplace with a bright future of increasing vitality and prosperity.



Chapter Three explains the basic principles and application of the NVC process, and Chapter Four describes the Integrated Clarity model and how to apply a needs-based awareness to the workplace. Together, these processes can help you develop your own connection power and facilitate workplace breakthroughs into the third dimension. There you'll discover a world of meaningful empathic connections, increased possibilities, and more fulfilling outcomes.