

Being Leaders...In a New Way

Kim Scott

An essay contribution to
Conversation 2014

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GHC Conversations

Annually, Gary Hubbell Consulting convenes and hosts a small hand-picked group of social sector professionals for three days of intense dialogue and critical thinking. We strive to create a thought-provoking, mind-opening, and stimulating conversation about the social sector, philanthropy, and leadership. This deep exploration of the nature and challenges of the environment is intended to engage, inform, and inspire senior leaders to be catalysts for change in their own organizations and communities of influence. With each GHC Conversation, we seek to establish the seeds of a continuing and enriching network that nourishes us as individuals and helps each of us change how we converse, inspire, and seek new dimensions of impact.



Participant Bio

Kim Scott

President and CEO, Trillium Family Services

Kim Scott is responsible for providing executive leadership for all Trillium program operations. He provides direct supervision to the Medical Director, the Director of Clinical Quality, the Chief External Affairs Officer, the Chief Administrative Officer, and the Executive Director of Human Resources.

Kim provides leadership in the development of organizational policy and procedure, compliance with national accrediting bodies, and program and business development activities.

Kim also provides statewide leadership in the development of intensive treatment services that are family focused and integrated with local communities and planning structures. He serves on the Advisory Board of the American Association of Children's Residential Centers, on the Strategic Planning Committee of the National Alliance of Children and Families, and has been invited to participate in the Building Bridges Summit sponsored by SAMHSA. He is actively involved with the Oregon Alliance of Children's Programs.

Prior to joining Trillium Family Services, Kim served as Associate Director of the Children's Farm Home in Corvallis, Oregon. In this role, he was responsible for directing all the residential care and treatment services operations and supervised coordinators responsible for managing residential, community-based and clinical services program operations.

Kim started his career as a childcare worker at Waverly Children's Home in 1978 and he became the Residential Services Coordinator in 1983. In 1985, he moved to Alaska, where he served as Detention Unit Leader for the Department of Health and Social Services in Juneau and as youth counselor at Johnson Youth Center, also in Juneau, Alaska.

Kim has presented at conferences for the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA), Oregon's Children & Adolescent Residential Psychiatric Programs (CHARPP), the Council on Accreditation (COA), and the University of Southern Florida's Research & Best Practice conference and has provided quality assurance, accreditation and electronic record consultation for mental health agencies in Oregon and Alaska.

Kim received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Counseling Education from Columbia Christian College in 1980. He received a Masters in Public Administration from the University of Alaska Southeast in August 1995.

This is Kim's second GHC Conversation.

Being Leaders...In a New Way

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"Acting within Community"

Last year I was fortunate enough to be invited by Gary Hubbell to *Conversation 2013*. The meeting focused on the concept of resilience from the personal, organizational and broader community perspectives. I must not have done anything too embarrassing because Gary invited me back to GHC *Conversation 2014*, which is focusing on "Right Being...Wise Action...In Community"

For me *Conversation 2013* was a significant experience and a call to action to re-awaken previous commitments to being intentional in thought, action and deed. By taking a deep dive, as Gary and Ken Hubbell might say, in conversation and with support from colleagues, I was able to see that resilience might require courageous decisions. In a moment of clarity, I realized that resilience in its deepest form, that being, true social impact, may require me to make personal decisions on behalf of the organization and the community that could lead to scenarios where I might not be part of the solution. In a time of resource scarcity, increased complexity, and a universal call for collaboration and consolidation, taking the "high-road" might mean working myself out of a job that I am most passionate about. I shared these thoughts with 2013 participants and voiced that I hoped I was strong enough to make decisions and support actions that led to stronger community resilience regardless of potential personal consequences. This concept of subordinating personal goals or needs for a higher purpose seems to me a fundamental cornerstone of "Right Being" and without it I don't believe we can get to Wise Action In Community.

By design, I refer to my *Conversation 2013* experience as a re-awakening of **previous** commitments that focused on being more intentional. I believe all of us in our youth in one way or another understand the possibility of "changing the world" and that is our intention as we enter the workforce. Only after years of experience, upward mobility, and increased responsibility, is this innate understanding slowly drummed out of us. In essence, we give in to external pressures or "realities" and most of us become more focused on personal and organizational success and what started out as a transformational process becomes more transactional in nature.

In a conversation with Ken Hubbell, I described to him my dream for the organization I represent (Trillium Family Services in Oregon), a dream that would move the organization to deeper community involvement and engagement--becoming a catalyst for building stronger communities. Ken's response is one that I have cherished and used many times and it is beautiful in its simplicity. He said, "It sounds like you want to move from acting *upon* a community to acting *within* a community." This concept of acting within a community and not upon a community is foundational in how I think about "Right Being...Wise Action...In Community."

When we are truly acting and accepting our place within a community we can't help but see many of the gaps that exist in our social fabric. Schools, neighborhoods, and support systems in one way or another all seem to be eroding before our very eyes. The problems seem almost impossible to address and they probably are if we approach them from a myopic perspective. We tend to think about and value interventions that are highly specialized or technical in nature but the problems we face are more about people, beliefs, and core values and these problems may require a different set of solutions. These solutions must be collective in nature and will require skills and a way of being that focuses on opportunity mining, dreaming, engaging, learning, visioning, and leading.

Opportunity Mining

I'm not sure if I have heard this phrase before or if it came to me while sleeping but it seems to describe what I think is a critical skill for navigating complexity and times of great challenge. Not that I have done any mining, but my assumption is that there is a lot of hard work involved--digging, drilling, blasting and sifting through all kinds of earth and debris--before any nuggets, precious metals, or treasures are found. But for those willing to engage uncertainty and continue the hard work there is the potential for great reward. I think the same is true for the work required in bringing about deep social impact. Communities, individuals, organizations and leaders, will have to sort through all kinds of problems and challenges and search for those rare opportunities that bring people together and create alignment around a shared way of being. Much like mining, this work will require us to embrace uncertainty and risk while displaying the patience to invest in long term impact rather than quick fix solutions that bring about short term gratification. Another aspect of this type of work is the ability to stay focused on the long view and sort out what are true opportunities versus distractions that may simply be "fools gold."

Dreaming

We should dream more about the kind of impact we want to see in our community and world. We should spend more time examining what is possible. Beyond my human and social services world I see overwhelming evidence that other industries spend considerable time dreaming and envisioning possibilities; so much so that we take for granted technological advancements such as smart phones, personal computers, and other devices that can pull movies, books, and information from thin air. However, seeing the possibilities is not always easy work and historically there are examples of some very smart individuals who missed the boat entirely. The following are just a few examples:¹

"The wireless music box has no imaginable commercial value. Who would pay for a message sent to nobody in particular?"

—Heads of RCA in response to David Sarnoff's pitch for investment in radio

"TV will never be a serious competitor for radio because people must sit and keep their eyes glued on a screen; the average American family hasn't the time for it."

—The New York Times, 1939

"What use could this company make of an electrical toy?"

—William Orton, President, Western Union when asked by Alexander Graham Bell to buy his struggling telephone company for \$100,000

"Who the hell wants to hear actors talk?"

—Harry M. Warner, Warner Bros Pictures 1927

¹From a presentation by Dennis Morrison, 1-14-14, Netsmart Technologies, At The Speed Of Thought: The Role Of Disruptive Innovation In Behavioral Health - One Year Later, <http://www.openminds.com/library/102513tiidisruptiveinnovation.htm>

"There is no reason for any individual to have a computer in their home."

—Kenneth Olson, founder Digital Equipment Corp. 1977

"There's no chance that the iPhone is going to get any significant market share. No chance."

—Steve Ballmer, CEO, Microsoft April 30, 2007

Aside from the obvious consequences of failing to grasp possibilities or unleashing our imagination, giving voice to our dreams and examining possibilities may be the most important work we can do. In my lifetime every huge social shift or impact started with the articulation of a better world and a call to action. Think of Dr. Martin Luther King and his "I have a Dream" speech or President Kennedy's inspirational challenge to, "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country." These powerful words are more than just speeches or mantras, they are calls to action by individuals who took risks and dared to dream and envision a different way of being.

Engaging

Do we have the courage to discard practices, methods, behaviors and earlier learnings, that we know really don't work, and to be open to engaging people, perspectives, ideas, and new ways of thinking. Are we ready to engage in difficult conversations- the kind of conversations that will lead to new thinking about old problems.

Engaging individuals, groups, and our community and world at a deeper and more significant level requires us to seek understanding while postponing judgment. In the community building context it is about our ability to understand each other's stories and circumstances in such a way that leads to inclusion, investment, support, encouragement, inspiration, empathy, and action. If we are truly engaged, how can we not respond to such deep rooted problems as poverty, social injustice, inequity, and all of the "isms" we experience in our communities.

Learning

At a recent conference I heard a speaker reference the complex world we live in and the need to be constantly engaged in adapting and learning in order to stay relevant. One great quote from his presentation was "Our world going forward is not for the learned but for the learners." I think the message here is pretty clear—for those who think they have all the answers, the future might hold some bleak possibilities. Think about the daily advances in science and technology or social advances, such as national healthcare transformation. We live in an incredible time of learning opportunity and broad sweeping change. Do we have the fortitude and foresight to embrace disequilibrium as a catalyst for learning and innovation or will we be incapacitated by fear or the need to "hunker down" in a perceived state of comfort and stability.

Learning should not be limited to adapting to only what's new but expanded to include the rethinking or re-imagining of historical solutions or ways of doing things--in essence, bringing about disruption. The Harvard Business Review recently published an article about "Reframers." People who are reframers, radically shift the perspective of their world to conjure up disruptive innovations that re-write the rules. From a constructionist perspective, reframers show the power of asking "why not" rather than accepting present paradigms as truth. The article focuses on Indra Nooyi, CEO of PepsiCo, as one example of a reframer. In her role as CEO, she is reframing PepsiCo's business paradigm from "fun for you" products to "good for you products." According to the article she is borrowing and building on a concept from Ayurveda (India's 5,000 year old traditional medicine system)

which states that “food is medicine and medicine is food.” With brands such as Tropicana and Quaker, Nooyi plans to have revenues from these products increase from \$10 billion presently to \$30 billion by 2020.² Our capacity to impact community will only be limited by our inability to imagine a different way of being. If we commit to being the learners and not the learned and if we can master the ability to reframe, question, disrupt and innovate, Wise Action must follow.

Visioning

Purposefully creating a narrative about what our world will look like out on the horizon is a key element in constructing our future way of being. The narrative will happen anyway as each day we are co-authors of the stories that take place around us. Sometimes this process is all too random and we simply wait for whatever is going to happen. Creating and articulating a collective vision is complex purpose-driven work that clearly sets the course for a desired state and a better way of being, but it is also about being intentional in our daily lives. As Gandhi said “be the change you envision.”

The complexity of the process gets multiplied when you add the word “collective” to vision. How do we ensure that the vision we are pursuing is truly embraced by the broader community? As a human service professional, you would think that the catalytic power of inclusion, convening and listening would not be lost on me, but it is only in the last couple of years that I have come to understand and value just how critical these processes are. Maybe this lack of understanding goes back to my conversation with Ken and his statement about moving from “acting upon a community.” From my perspective, a state of not being “withIn Community” leads to isolated visions, decisions, and solutions that are in the best of interest of something or someone from the perspective of a single individual or a single organization. A critical role we can play in the visioning work ahead will be in convening forums that bring diverse groups of people together to conceptualize a future that captures our best thinking and our hopes and dreams in such a way that creates passion, alignment, and collective action.

Leading

Ultimately leadership is about a willingness to organize, support, and sometimes discover the good will and intentions of others in the achievement of goals (and hopefully) toward higher purposes. From my own experience, effective leaders strike an emotional chord that makes me want to perform better and ultimately to be a better person. I think this emotional chord comes less from charisma than it does courage. Charismatic leaders seem like a comet flashing across the sky for a short while before burning out. Courageous leadership is more about a sustained effort over time to “do the right thing” regardless of personal consequences or disruption of the status quo. Again, from my personal experience, the strong leaders I’ve witnessed were not always the best managers, making me think of the old adage “Managers do things right and leaders do the right thing.”

The strong leaders that I have spoken to often see their roles as stewards who are responsible for capital or resources that are precious. This stewardship does not diminish their responsibility or enthusiasm as change agents but underscores the importance of the thoughtful, and intentional adaptive work required to keep their organizations embedded within the community and at the forefront of social impact. I recently had the opportunity to hear Don Berwick, former head of Center for Medicaid/Medicare Services (CMS), speak at a conference. During his presentation he shared a quote from the Native

²Navi Radjou, Jaideep Prabhu, Prasad Kaipa, Simone Ahuja. July 13, 2010. How Reframers Unleash Innovation in Their Companies (And Beyond), in HBR Blog Network, downloaded January 14, 2014 from: <http://blogs.hbr.org/2010/07/how-reframers-are-unleashing-a/>

American philosophy which states “we do not inherit this earth, we borrow it from our children.” I think this philosophy is consistent with the type of leadership we need moving forward, leadership that takes into account the “long view” and embraces the hard work in understanding the potential future impact of today’s decisions.

I have always enjoyed working with and for optimists. If the work place, or our very lives, only focus on problems and what isn’t right or what isn’t working, then a serious “reframing” is needed. Leaders who can envision possibilities and who are confident that constraints are just exciting challenges attract people. Their positive attitude is contagious. Optimism fans the flames of creativity and focuses collective work on what can be, not what won’t work. This is a critical way of being when you consider that future leadership effectiveness may very well be measured by the abilities to collaborate and partner effectively. I’m quite sure I want to work with people and leaders who know that their thoughts, actions and deeds make a difference in the world around them.

Effective leaders have voracious appetites for learning and continuous development. Not just their own, but they feel strongly enough about it that they ensure that their organizations become environments where learning is constantly occurring. Leaders who convey a willingness to learn and share set the tone for organizational cultures that become incubators for conversation, healthy conflict and resolution, innovation, and effective relationships.

Conclusion

Our society is at an incredible tipping point, where the optimist in me says incredible things will happen. More and more I see evidence of people caring in new ways. As a child of the sixties, I have seen first hand the change in behavior and view of critical issues such as the environment, civil rights, and how to operate business responsibly. Today young and old alike seem more focused on the health of the planet and preservation of natural resources. We have a long way to go on civil rights but the battle is being waged and most people still hold to Dr. King’s dream of a better world. There are businesses that embrace social responsibility with a focus on people, planet and then profit. These are the beginning waves of what needs to become a tsunami of social change. I’m excited because we get to be at the forefront of this incredible time and the fact that we are coming together in conversation is the start of a narrative that will have a profound impact on those who desire to make it so. To borrow from chaos theory, I hope the change in our minds and hearts is akin to the butterfly in Hong Kong that unleashes a tornado in Texas. Not that I want a tornado in Texas per se.



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