Overview

**AT THE INTERSECTION WHERE WORLDS COLLIDE**

*An Exercise in Ethical Leadership for Leaders*

We are proposing *standing at the intersection where worlds collide* as an appropriate metaphor for the crisis in leadership which plagues our society and world; and as a platform for a larger discussion about leadership which wedds moral imagination and public action. *Lifeworlds* refer to the commonplace, everyday traffic of life where people meet and greet one another, where common values and presuppositions about order and the world are held. *Systemworlds* refer to the vast, often impersonal bureaucratic systems dominated by *money* and *power* (economics, politics, communications, technology), which are frequently at odds with the pedestrian traffic of *lifeworlds*. *Lifeworlds* are built upon social practices, traditions, and institutions that are often at odds with *systemworlds* where technical reason and the relentless quest for power and money assault their very fragile existence.

Leadership in the new century will depend largely on how well new generations of leaders negotiate the traffic at these intersections and *inspire* and *guide* others to create community. This is an awesome task and an ominous responsibility.

**OUTCOMES**
The exercise will assist leaders in identifying:

1. Personal core values that present themselves in “defining moments”
2. Need to align personal values that drive thoughts, feelings, and behaviors with their public roles as leaders
3. Their vision and sense of legacy, i.e. how they desire to be remembered by others
4. Critical issues and challenges that affect ethical leadership practices
5. Critical skills and competencies that ethical leaders need to address challenges and issues that impact policy and decision-making

**PROCESS**
The process places emphasis on the use of *story telling* and *critical thinking*:

- **Story telling** has long been recognized as an important part of self-knowledge, and personal development for leaders. Stories make claims on our minds and hearts often before we know why or how. We are drawn into a tale without permission, forethought, or desire to be involved.

The remembering and re-telling of personal stories helps leaders, in the words of American philosopher John Dewey, to “form, reveal, and test” themselves which is part of the ongoing work of developing *character*. An important feature of character is what Joseph L. Badarcco of Harvard Business School, “defining moments.” Unlike purely ethical decisions that ask questions of right and wrong, “defining moments” ask us to choose between competing values and ideals in which we intensely
believe. Hence, “defining moments,” asks leaders “to dig below the busy surface of their lives and refocus on their core values and principles. Once uncovered, those values and principles renew their sense of purpose and act as a springboard for shrewd, pragmatic, politically astute action.”

- Critical thinking is a natural outgrowth of the work of story as it is the skill of imaginative speculation that produces and sustains the critical thinker. Exercises in critical thinking can serve as an appropriate vehicle for the enhancement and internalization of leaders’ newly acquired imaginative skills. The three forms of critical thinking with which the Ethical Leadership Model™ is concerned are: 1) reflective learning or reframing, 2) dialectical thinking, and 3) experiential learning. Reflective learning, in particular, is the process of internally examining and exploring an issue of concern, triggered by an experience, which creates and clarifies meaning in terms of self, and which results in a changed conceptual perspective. The outcome of reflective learning is a change in assumption about oneself and the world requiring a corresponding change in one’s behavior and relationships.

With these skills, leaders develop:
1) confidence about their potential for changing aspects of their worlds as individuals and in collective action
2) appreciation for creativity, innovation, and a life full of possibilities
3) understanding of the future as an entity that is malleable, not closed and fixed
4) agency to create and re-create aspects of their personal and public lives

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