



Creating a pathway
to change

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**Icatalyst, LLC
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The thing always happens that you really believe in; and the belief in a thing makes it happen.

[Frank Lloyd Wright \(1869 - 1959\)](#)

The Paradox of Belief

Any time is a good time to assess where you are relative to those things that are important to you, such as business, career, life, family, health, relationships. It seems especially right to do so at the beginning of the year. It's early enough to set benchmarks and there seems to be sufficient time to put plans into action. When I set out to do my own goal setting, I asked a simple question – what do I want to accomplish this year that will make a significant difference to how I work and how I live? As I attempted to answer that question, I went back to review the topics I covered in previous newsletters. The thread that seemed to run through all of them was change. This seems to make sense. After all, [Icatalyst, LLC](#), is a coaching and consulting firm, and we specialize in helping clients like you to create and manage organizational as well as personal change.

Starting with the self

Whether I work with a corporate client or an individual, whether the issue I am called upon to help with is related to organizational culture, systems, or individual transition, I find that first, I have to get the client to look at their role in the change they want to see happen. In other words, what changes do you first have to make happen in yourself and how you manage and move about in your environment, before you can affect the outcome you want? Simply put, the first person in change is you; and the first lesson in change is to change yourself.

Changing yourself and the stages of change

Change happens for all of us through a series of steps or stages. We've talked about a few of them in the past such as **Inspiration**. This is when you first get an idea to embark in a new direction. This first phase of change is mostly instinctual. Although that doesn't necessarily mean that it's uninformed. Often lots of research, reflection, experience, discussion and observation have gone into that instant. But, the moment when some new thought comes to the consciousness, it frequently feels like an instinct, an epiphany, or a flash of inspiration (hence the name of this first stage). The second stage is **Assessment** – the phase through which you begin to analyze the feasibility and merit of your new idea(s). What will you risk in order to move this new idea forward? Who will be your natural allies and who will have to be convinced to come on board with your new way of thinking? What types of resources will you need? What kind of timetable will you need to consider?

Just as the first phase was led by instinct, and perhaps, even intuition, this second phase is almost the complete opposite. It is guided by practicality and analysis. The phase of assessment brings your big ideas down to the physical world where there are

limitations, and tries to evaluate all the possibilities for success and failure. Some of you may be familiar with a strategic planning tool called the SWOT Analysis. SWOT is an acronym for strength, weakness, opportunity and threat. Either on a formal or informal basis, when you reach the stage of assessment in your transition process, you naturally end up by examining the idea against a set of evaluative multipliers. It is an inherent examination of your environment that allows you to gather more information from different perspectives and, eventually decide whether or not your idea warrants your commitment. It should not be surprising that almost without exception this is also the stage where most people begin to entertain doubts regarding the validity of their ideas.

The third phase in the process of change is what I call **The Critic's Corner**. When you decide to move forward your idea, this is the space where fear and doubt reside. It is where you ask yourself questions like: Is this the right thing to do? Is it the right time to take on this risk? What if it doesn't work? A few things begin to play out at this stage also -- The fear of what if. Mostly, though, what if it doesn't happen? What if you had to leave someone behind by moving forward? What will happen then? Encountering indecision about your idea at this stage is natural. Often, those fears are rooted, in part or in whole, in the some measure of the unknown. They can result from not having all the information you need in order to move ahead with your decision. Or, if the decision to move forward will affect some primary relationships you don't want to jeopardize. They may even be the result of a fear of disappointment. What if you got what you wanted and it's not what you thought? Or, what if when you finally get there, you don't really want it? More often than not, however, indecision is rooted in incongruence between an expressed intention and an underlying belief. When confronting periods of indecision, check-in with yourself to figure out what is triggering your feelings.

Belief: The Elephant in the Room

When I work with clients who are experiencing a state of indecision, which can result in inaction or feeling stuck. I find that it's often because there is a disconnect between an expressed desire and the underlying beliefs which surrounds that desire. For example, let's take a client I will call, Tom. He had a long-held desire to lose weight. He wanted to lose 50 pounds. That is, in fact, probably the tenth time he'd made the decision to lose that weight. Tom had always been a little bit overweight, even in high school; although, nothing like he was when we started working together. When he was younger they called him husky. Because he had an outgoing personality, he fit in very well as school. His older brother, by two years, who went to the same school, was also very popular. He was the captain of the football team. He went out with the head cheerleader, and still managed to have pretty good grades. His brother, who I will refer to as Dave, was the apple of his father's eyes. In fact, his father, a former U.S. Marine, and still physically fit for a man of his age, was always saying to Tom, "Why can't you be more like your brother? Look at you. You're fat, undisciplined and an all around idiot"!

Like most boys, Tom loved and respected his father. He wanted his approval. He never understood why his father loved his brother, Dave, more than him. His mother would try to reassure him that his impression was wrong. Deep down, Tom never really believed her. Instead, he began to identify with his father's opinion. Even when the father was no longer a constant physical presence, he would continue to talk to himself using his words. When he'd fall short of expectations, his father's voice would run through his head in admonishment. The father's misguided judgments became the core of Tom's beliefs about who he was. His life sentence became – "fat,

undisciplined and all around idiot”.

By the time Tom and I met, it was years after he'd integrated these beliefs into his psyche. By then, Tom had tried to lose weight several times, only to regain that weight back. Are you surprised that he's been unable to sustain attempts at weight-loss? In order for Tom to succeed in maintaining his weight loss, I had to help him to understand that since he had previously been successful at losing weight, he'd proven that he had enough discipline to succeed. I proposed that the underlying issue for him to consider was why he kept putting the weight back on. As we did some work around his beliefs, Tom realized that he had been unconsciously setting himself up for failure. He was harboring misguided belief that did not support who he knew he could be, and who he wanted to be. Tom had brought forward an unwanted souvenir from his childhood, which he now needed to disavow. Together, we were able to help Tom separate who he really was from those distorted views of himself. Tom has successfully lost fifty-five pounds and has kept them off for over a year.

Tom's example illustrates how susceptible we can all be to taking in the messages of others. The tricky thing about beliefs is that they're not necessarily confined to the messages we internalize from our primary caretakers. They can also come from peers, and actions we have witnessed from events at the home of friends while we were growing up. They can even be formed by experiences from adulthood, particularly by trauma. I am though fairly convinced that the foundation of most of our core beliefs is shaped by occurrences from childhood and adolescence.

I was having lunch with a friend who is also a business consultant recently. We began discussing the affects of limiting beliefs on organizational effectiveness. For example, an organization is considering new ways of doing things. But the leadership feels that the staff will be unable to go in this new direction, because they don't have the capacity. The real question is who really doesn't have the capacity to make these changes come about? Is it the staff or, is it the leadership? Leaders are the ones charged with responsibility to merge vision with strategy and create a new reality. I dare say that the biggest impediment in that scenario lies with the leadership. If those responsible to lead are not convinced of their position and their vision, how can they expect their staff to follow? The beliefs they harbor will affect expectations, which in turn will affect the ultimate outcome.

Divide and conquer...Really?

As Americans, we like to compartmentalize things. We group people into categories according to what they do for a living, where they live, how much money they make, their political party, whether they're married, young or old, and certainly what race and gender they are. All those denominations make it easier for us to assign others characteristics that make us feel that we have a handle on things and on those around us. We believe that we know who people are because they fit certain profiles. We also do the same thing to ourselves. We separate ourselves according to what role we are playing at a particular moment such as, parent, spouse, executive, business owner, adult child, friend, and so on. Each of these roles comes with its own set of expectations and personalities. The reality is that when we go into the office and are leading a team, project or even, an entire organization, we take our roles and band of personalities with us. It wouldn't be an illusion to believe that the powerful Executive Senior Vice President is also, on some level, the fresh faced twenty-two year old right out of college; the one who was told by her first boss that she was inadequate, and wouldn't get very far in this business.

This ESVP, wanting to prove that boss wrong, has used the negative assertions to successfully drive herself up the corporate ladder. However, her methods for doing so were to adopt and exhibit the same flawed personality traits that once demoralized her. Also, later, those traits became an impediment to her effectiveness as a manager, mentor and leader. They were keeping her from being seriously considered as the next CEO of the company where she worked.

Such was “Karen’s” story. She was strongly encouraged by her chiefs to work with a leadership coach. Reluctantly, she did so. I catalyst helped Karen identify the tools she needed and strengthen the skills she had, to create better alignment between her goals and her actions. Karen is currently on the fast-track to the head office. Take a look at your environment, by that I also mean your life, where are some of your limiting beliefs showing up?

...And still to come

The process of change does include several more stages than time allows for in this edition of the newsletter. We will discuss those in greater detail in future publications. Consider for example the stages of planning, navigating “*the state of no longer and not yet*”, and finally, seeing with new eyes a new reality. I believe, however, that the stage involving The Critic’s Corner is where success and failure vie for primacy in determining whether and how change happens. The extent to which you succeed at creating what you want means that there is strong alignment between that which you desire and your core beliefs. If, on the other hand, your beliefs are not in line with your desires, you will create an inherent discord between what you wish to happen and what you actually end up manifesting in your environment.

Keep reading in the coming months for more on the subject of beliefs and its effects on successful transitions.

Exercise Corner: Consider this...

Take a look at your life. Are there areas where you are not accomplishing what you’d wish? If so, then ask yourself, what are my core beliefs about achieving these goals?

Contact us at gisele@i-catalyst.us to help you move through some of those blocks.

Quick, Easy Updates

We’re on the Web!

Web Address: www.i-catalyst.us

Upcoming appearances

I will be a guest on WBZ News Radio 1030’s Jordan Rich Show on Sunday evening, February 17th at 10:00pm -- Click [here](#) to listen and call in!!

About the editor...

Gisele M. Michel is the founder and President of Icatalyst, LLC, a coaching and consulting firm specializing in helping individuals and businesses optimize peak performance. Icatalyst helps businesses and organizations translate big ideas into concrete steps for action, by identifying shortcomings, and designing implementation strategies that improve leadership and organizational performance.

Icatalyst, LLC specializes in helping leaders create a framework for managing the people side of change. We offer leadership development through coaching and training, conflict resolution and organizational improvement strategies. Icatalyst, LLC offers cost-effective, user-friendly solutions to heighten individual and organizational performance. We help to troubleshoot complex problems and lay visionary plans for the success of our clients.

Gisele has an undergraduate degree in International Relations from George Washington University and a master's degree with a concentration on East European Studies and Political Economy from the University of Pittsburgh. She is a multilingual, multicultural professional with broad-based experience and training in organizational development, strategic planning, resource development, contract and budget management, negotiation, mediation, public relations, and public policy and administration. She has over 18 years of experience in most aspects of community and economic development with functions in outreach, policy development, capacity building, analysis, micro-finance management, technical assistance, program and organizational development.

Please direct questions or comments about the newsletter and/or Icatalyst, LLC to gisele@i-catalyst.us, or log on to our website at www.i-catalyst.us.