



Conclusion

So what did we set out to do, and what did we achieve here? We wanted to write a book that allowed leaders of all persuasions to dip into the rich casket of theory on change, and to come out with their own jewels of learning. We most of all wanted to help to create the time and space for people to reflect on the changes facing them in the past, now and in the future by making the theory accessible, asking the right questions and providing practical glimpses of our experiences. We hope all of this will stimulate new thoughts and new connections.

Two significant messages emerge from writing this book. These are explained below. We also want two-way communication with our readers, and want to make that possible through this section.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PERIPHERAL VISION

The first message we want to convey is about the importance for leaders of being awake and being aware. The notion of peripheral vision is a key one to keep in mind. Leaders need to wake up to what is going on around them. This means noticing more than the obvious, the loud or the directly visible. It means having an awareness of what is going on at the edges, and being observant about motion and change. Whichever assumptions

a leader employs about the nature of change (machine, political system, organism or flux and transformation) there is a need to be extremely observant about what is going on in and around the organization.

We see theories and models as helpful in the process of gaining clearer peripheral vision. If leaders have a language and a framework for noticing things, they begin to notice more. As a young student of music, I can remember studying sonata form, which seemed only mildly interesting as a piece of theory. However, it led to increased enjoyment of musical shapes and I began to notice more, and listen with a sharper ear.

How do leaders achieve peripheral vision? Well, it does take time. But it means talking and listening to a wide cross-section of people. It means asking good questions and maintaining open relationships. It means making sure that enough time is given to leadership as well as management. And, most painfully for some, it means spending more time gathering information and spending less time making decisions.

FINDING THE SPACE TO REFLECT

The second message is about the importance of reflection time. Leaders benefit greatly from taking regular, focused time to reflect on what is going on around them (the fruits of their peripheral vision), what is happening right now, what the options are and where they are personally in all this. Their organizations benefit too because leadership action is considered, rather than knee-jerk.

Can this reflection be done alone in the car, or in the bath? Well, to some extent. However, it is easy to avoid anxieties by making quick decisions when you are alone. It is only when we are with other people we respect and trust that we really begin to consider other options and look difficulties in the eye.

We recommend coaching or action learning if you are serious about developing yourself as a leader. This can range from a regular meeting with a close colleague to a longer-term commitment to working with a group of leaders, or it can involve a series of one-to-one sessions with a professional leadership coach. Happily, this is becoming more acceptable in many organizations and seen less as a sign of weakness.