

Lead with
Wisdom

Mark Strom

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EADM 826.3 Walker and Bayles

EXECUTIVE BOOK SUMMARY BY JAMIE PROKOPCHUK

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Meet the Author



Dr. Mark Strom

Mark Strom loves life-giving ideas. He has a rare gift for sparking and animating new conversations. Mark has been doing this for over twenty-five years with parents and communities, and with business, government and not-for-profit leaders.

A story-teller with a PhD in the history of ideas, Mark's ability to breathe new life

into ideas and conversations is grounded in his own story. After a childhood marked by chronic illness and little formal education, he moved on to a first career as a truck driver and labourer. After two periods of academic study, punctuated with truck-driving, a conversation with a friend launched career number two: two decades advising senior leaders in mining, infrastructure, science, finance, government, and education on strategy, innovation and engagement — punctuated by six years personally leading the turnaround of a public institution as its CEO.

These same clients convinced Mark he was actually addressing leadership, in a way few had ever encountered. These are the experiences — illness, PhD, leading a turnaround, consulting and speaking — that animate his unique and acclaimed presentations, retreats, and consulting.

Link: <http://markstrom.co>



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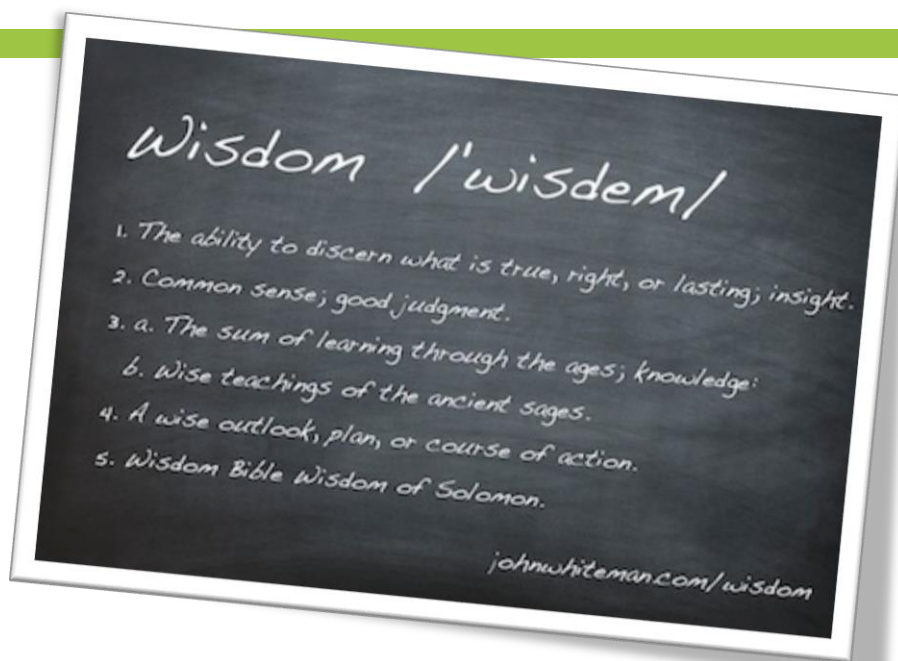
Wisdom

“Wisdom read life’s patterns with discernment, integrity and care so much depends on how attentive and present we are to life”

Strom (2014) stated that wisdom is very difficult to define. There are many ways you can recognize wisdom, we often think of those we admire, made the world a better place or touched our own lives in some way.

Wisdom is.....

- Observation and insight, not law, morality or formula (big picture thinking)

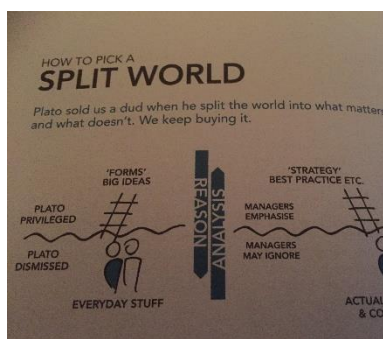


- Reads well the patterns of life (collecting memories, traditions, noticing similarities)
- Words change things, our lives are shaped by words (chatter, reckless words, fine words)



- Wisdom holds in tension the parts of a whole, we need a larger account of knowing than reason alone
- Great ideas need life
- Fill up your sheet with the tasks that are relevant and meaningful
- Wisdom is not always balanced

- Split the world into what matters and what does not



- Wisdom can sit with ambiguity
- Themes can help us find perspective
- Find the passion

- Look for key stories and translate these insights to our own contexts
- Wisdom is so big
- Think in terms of attentiveness and presence
- Pay attention to life, notice and wonder and consider
- Start with the” here “ not the “out there”

How does wisdom help you lead?

Leaders know that relationships matter. Wisdom brings attentiveness, listen for words and actions. Communicate by stories and not by meaningless definitions



“Positions are contexts for leading; they don’t make anyone a leader. Since we were children we have led and we have followed others. The wise still do” (Strom, 2014 p. 26).



Leading is bringing wisdom to life

When people work in a group they all do not usually see the same views at the same time. A leader sees a way forward that others may not see. They seek challenges that may not have easy answers. To lead well brings wisdom to life in two ways:

1. Leaders bring needed wisdom to a context
2. Leaders bring life the wisdom that is already there

FAST FACTS

Leadership is a walk with others

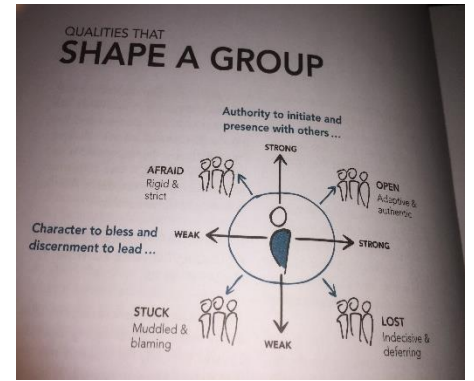
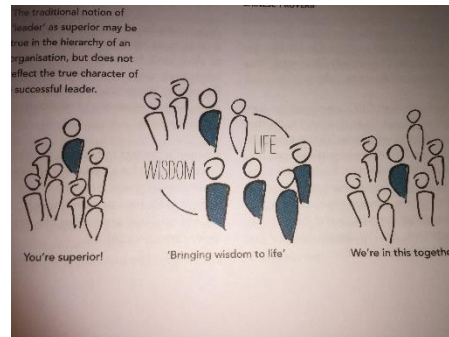
Going slowly doesn’t stop one from arriving

AUTHORITY

Power need not be power over!

Formal Authority vs. Informal Authority...

Formal Authority is the lists we make, informal authority involves our hearts and minds.



Presence – human link, stand for or against it

Character – our hearts and will

Discernment – how well we separate the people and context

Blaming – group feels stuck

Indecisive – group will feel lost, lacks good judgement, group is lost

Rigid – law-like authority, harsh and rude, group is afraid

Adaptive – character honours others, group feels open

The “what” of leadership depends on wisdom, character, presence and relationship.

Patterns

“New words may not change anything but nothing changes without words”

Strom (2014)

Naming

Leaders need to use language well

Knowledge is the thing that we have in a bucket

Language is what we label the bucket with

Change is swapping things in and out of the bucket

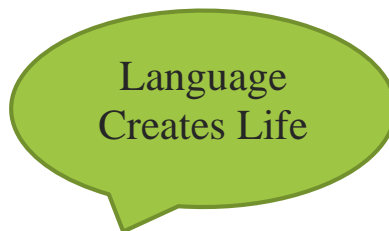
Relationships is putting things into the bucket



Naming finds clarity by staying open to outlying meanings and finalizing conversations.

Don't get stuck with poor naming but rather look for better naming...instead of being called a grade 3 teacher who must follow lesson plans be called a teacher who paints with children.

Naming is critical to finding voice and agency.



- *We live in relationship*
- *We live in stories*

- *We live by interpreting*
- *We live in language*

Naming is important to leading

- words shape our lives
- language conveys commitment
- we never name with conclusiveness
- we do not master language
- language becomes a community
- naming helps us see
- do not make language abstract
- naming is infused with love
- naming creates knowledge
- naming is hope
- a wise leader helps others create strong lasting names
- use plain words

CHAPTER 4

Conversation

“Conversations may not yield new meaning but new meaning will not take hold without conversation”

Strom (2014)

How We Know Shapes How We Talk

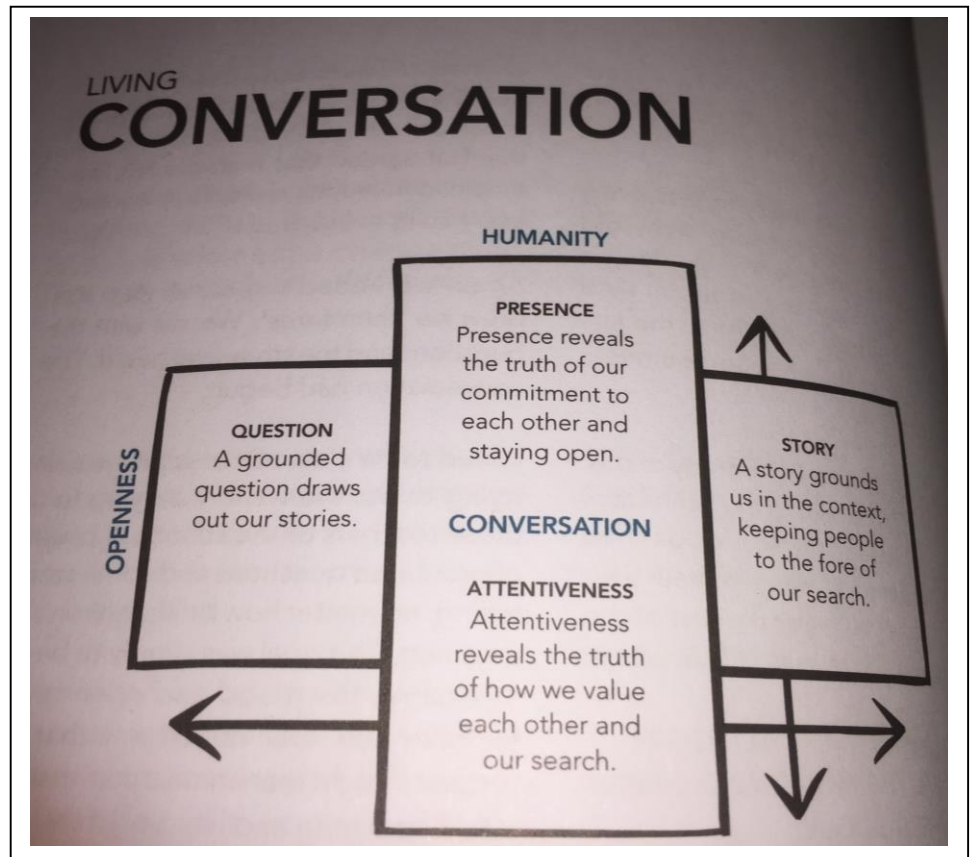
Ways of Knowing	Ways of Conversation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowing is about thinking • Knowledge is like clues • Meaning happens when something is focused • “Ah I see It” moments • Knowing anyone and anything transforms us • A sense of meaningfulness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement helps us know others and ourselves • We talk in order to think • Dialogue gives shape, texture and colour • Respect and find insight in meaningful dialogue

Questions in Conversations

Grounded Questions

Open – begins with what, why, how, when, or where. This type of question leads to storytelling

Closed – begins with have, do, did, are, is, has, have, can or will. Have I understood you?



Influence

Building relationship may not increase influence not no-one increases influence without building relationship.

In this section on influence, Strom (2014) suggested that there are two modes in influence. The first is character and the second is character-in-relationship. Relationship is a common theme and seems to be at the center of all leadership qualities. He stated that leaders must further commitment to gain influence. The next important part of influence is hearing each other. The influence of listening to others and doing a good job at it opens up respect and possibilities. Strom talked about “big doors on little hinges” (p. 106). This makes me think and reflect about all the little things a person does in a day to impact the lives of the people around us.



Character

Strom's suggestions on character:

1. Protect your integrity and your heart
2. Getting corrected by people you trust can be helpful
3. Learn from characters you look up to
4. Be curious about others stories
5. Find out what makes you flourish
6. Face your challenges
7. Let things go, don't hold on to the negative
8. Apologize but let people decide and make the call to forgive
9. Admit when you do something wrong
10. Don't say anything to anybody unless you can say it to their face
11. Kill them with kindness. Be generous
12. Give credit where it is deserved
13. Be involved in small and big things
14. Let others give you compliments, don't give them to yourself



Choose



grow

STORY

“Drawing out old stories and imagining new ones may not change a culture but a culture won’t change until old stories are honoured and new stories are made”

Strom 2014

Story is connected to...

Identity – to know me is to know my story

Relationships – the power of story grows rich, lasting relationships

Culture – as leaders we are trusted to hold the stories of the people we lead

History – know where people are coming from

Value – imagine and showing passion

As leaders we need to choose stories that are close to the heart. Be present in the story.

Brilliance

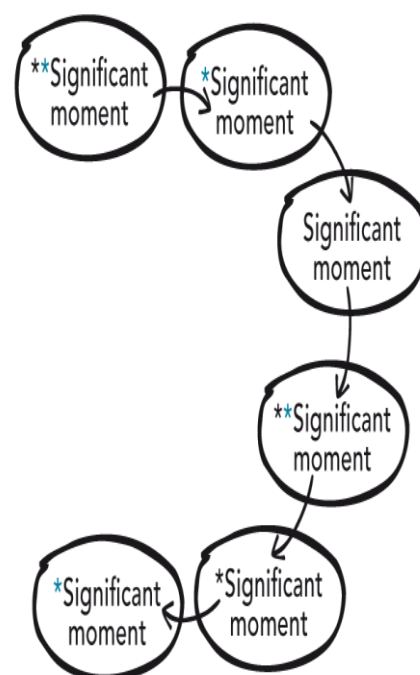
“Everyone has brilliance but few know well what it is. Our stories hold the clues”

Strom 2014

Examples of Leadership Brilliance:

- ✚ Listening
- ✚ Daring to dream
- ✚ Paying attention
- ✚ Putting people at ease
- ✚ Honouring culture
- ✚ Creating safe spaces
- ✚ Making things happen

MAP YOUR BRILLIANCE



1. Map your significant moment
2. Look for connections
3. Walk and share what you saw
4. Talk over your experience
5. Journal the experience and insights

Promise

“Speaking truly and strongly may not subvert self-defeating words and perspectives but they never subverted until someone speaks truly and strongly”

Strom 2014

❖ What stops learning?

1. Dishonesty
2. No big picture
3. Lack of rigor
4. Immaturity

❖ Transformation

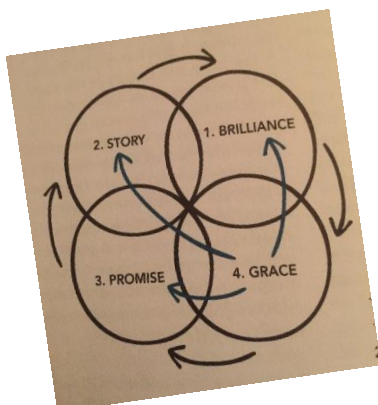
1. Change is common and happens all the time
2. Progress is less common
3. Transformation does not happen that often
4. Hope if the motivation for change

Grace

Grace fosters heart and community.



As leaders we must take on misunderstandings and blame, and keep kindness in the center during the difficult and challenging situations.



1. Brilliance is often the focus
2. Story shows what's true
3. Promise is ready to speak
4. Grace is why we do it

Leader's Journey



“Leaders help people create a new social reality: a new story. But to lead others into a new story, you must first know your own story.”

Strom 2014

Strom (2014) suggested that leaders need to have self-knowledge and they need to help others find their stories. In chapter 11, The author tell Mark's story and then provides an example of how to make sense of our stories using the main themes in the book: Wisdom, Leadership, Naming, Conversation, Influence, Character, Story, Brilliance, Promise and Grace.

Leading One

We need to make sense of our stories:

- ❖ Cherish the people you lead
- ❖ Face the future
- ❖ Face your own need to change
- ❖ Identify the “school”, name strategies getting in the way
- ❖ Find the “bike”, value what others value
- ❖ Enter their world, be a part of their stories
- ❖ Translate, look for connections
- ❖ Ask, don't tell
- ❖ Share the journey

Lead Many

No-one can plan, manage or deliver transformation. It is a by-product of relating and leading with wisdom. What we can do is care, be present, be attentive, and engage



- ✓ Shape and reshape the story
- ✓ Maintain the conversation

- ✓ Craft new meaning
- ✓ Embody the story
- ✓ Include grace
- ✓ Aim for similarity
- ✓ Challenge unhelpful abstractions
- ✓ Aim at maturity

Implications for Education System

The examples of story provided by Strom in the back of the book provided the opportunity to reflect on the idea of wisdom and the process of looking for patterns in stories. Considering the why (wisdom and leadership), the what (naming, conversation, influence, character), the arts (story, brilliance, promise, grace) and the where (Leader's journey, leading one, leading many) we can look into our own leadership stories and begin defining who we are and what we believe. Relationship is at the center of the work we do in schools. Having a better understanding of story enhances our ability to pay attention, listen and learn from the people around us. Our stories define us as learners and knowers. The experiences, culture, traditions and conversations shape the view of the world around us. Leaders must lead from the heart.

Strom, M. (2014). *Lead with Wisdom: How wisdom transforms good leaders into great leaders*. St. Milton Qld: John Wiley & Sons Australia Ltd..