

Spirited Leading and Learning: Process Wisdom For a New Age

Peter B. Vaill

EADM 829 November 2018
Shari Williams

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Peter B. Vaill obtained a DBA degree in organizational behavior from the Harvard School of Business in 1964. He served as professor of human systems and dean at George Washington University's School of Business and Public Management. Other publications related to the managerial problems of leaders include *Managing as a Performing Art: New Ideas for a World of Chaotic Change (1989)* and *Learning as a Way of Being: strategies for Survival in a World of Permanent White Water (1996)*.

OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK

Peter Vaill offered insight into effective processes for organizational development in the modern era. The author emphasized the importance of incorporating processes that are based on relationality to the people, issues, and opportunities inherent in the organization. A critical aspect for leaders of the new age is to provide clarity of purpose for establishing high performance systems. Vaill stressed the need for leaders to combine purpose with vision to ensure that members of the organization view the leader as credible and commit to the vision for the long term. By implementing the processes outlined by Vaill, leaders preserve the wholeness, quality, feeling, initiative, and humanism of the leader-manager role.



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

About the Author.....	1
Overview	1
Process Wisdom for a New Age	2
Leading: The Purpose of High Performing Systems	3
Visionary Leadership	4
Running an Organization	5
Adult Education	6
Seven Process Fron- tiers.....	6
Spirituality	7
Guiding Questions	9
Implications	9



PROCESS WISDOM FOR A NEW AGE

The purpose of the book is to provide leaders with processes for managing changing systems. Learning how to lead people within the changing systems is critical for effective managerial leadership.

Vaill highlighted the following managerial aspects to consider:

1. Managerial leadership applies the human aspects of judgment and wisdom.
2. Managerial leadership is related to the surrounding environment of the organization.
3. Managerial leadership explores individual and group behaviors.
4. Managerial leadership involves problem-solving.
5. Managerial leadership is a life-long process.

“The enterprise is really about what it means to be in the world with responsibility” (p.13).

ORGANIZATIONAL TRANSFORMATION

Historical theorists believed organizational transformation was a disciplinary process that included complementary components. A reliance on facts and methods excluded the elements of morality and ethics.

Vaill theorized that the history of organizational dynamics, the quality of work life movement, the stress management movement, and the women’s movement would all result in unproductive organizational development.

ALTERNATIVE PROCESS

The author developed an alternative process that explained four main themes in the paradigm. Through a holistic perspective that includes relationality, leaders may move away from the mechanistic systems of the past.

Existence

Dynamic
Expressive

The existence of an organization is dynamic and always changing. The personal expressiveness of organizational members needs to be recognized in a holistic manner.

Openness/ Relationality

Unknown
Specialness

Vaill emphasized that the special qualities of organizational members contribute to unknown and unanticipated phenomena.

Consciousness

Awareness
Free from protocols

The author explained a need for leaders to assume that greater learning exists beyond what is known. Existing practices should not limit the new learning.

Spirituality

Intuition
Seeking

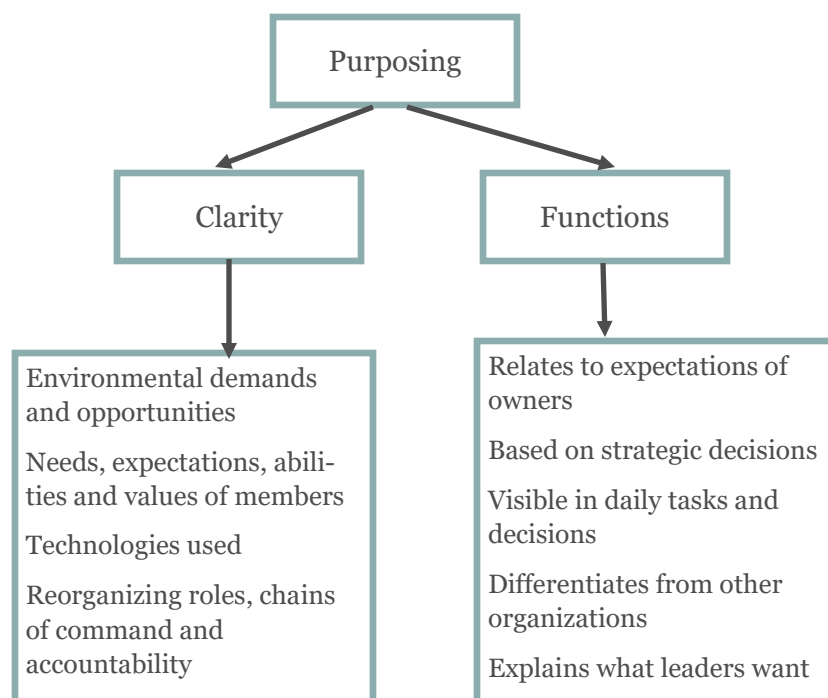
The process of spirituality is to demonstrate a constant search for what is missing.

LEADING: THE PURPOSE OF HIGH PERFORMING SYSTEMS

Vaill outlined specific criteria and characteristics for demonstrating flow and purpose in high performing systems.

Criteria	Characteristics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Above a known standard • Excel against projection • In relation to earlier time • Better qualitatively • Fewer resources than assumed • Exemplars • Perceived to fulfill cultural ideals • Only organization to do what do 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear purpose • High motivation • Team focus • Consistent, reliable leadership • Conservative methods and inventions • Maintain environment boundaries • Environmental entities view as problem

“The very strength of feeling can sometimes blind leaders to what the system needs as the environment changes” (p.32).



PURPOSING OF HPS

Leaders of high performing systems demonstrate a combination of characteristics to support the “Time-feeling-focus” theory (p.32).

Variations exist that reveal problems with vision.

Time is apparent in the many hours a leader contributes in and out of the office, and a commitment to remaining in the role for an extended amount of time.

Feeling is portrayed through the communication of purposes and structures from the past and for the present.

Focus is dynamic and the leader communicates what is important for strategic planning.





PROBLEMS WITH VISION

The goal to integrate the visions of all members and stakeholders puts constraints on leaders.

The diversity of organizations causes problems because many ideas are culture-bound.

Loss of vision may result because of technological, economical, or social change.

The vision may need to be transformed due to new ways of doing business.

Cynicism of members may combat against the integrity of other members.

The spiritual development of leaders needs to be well developed and demonstrate humility and strong personal values to encourage others to commit to the vision.

VISIONARY LEADERSHIP

MISSION is why the organization exists and what it intends to do.



VISION is the human meaning and difference that a mission makes.

VISION EFFECTIVENESS

- Credibility with others
- Ability to attract others
- Likelihood of long-term commitment
- Members' readiness for vision
- Relevance to main mission

“Vision and purpose combine to give organization members clarity, consensus, and commitment” (p.78).

MAKING VISIONS REAL

The author stressed the importance of inspirational speeches and conversations held in group-centered situations to assist leaders with making the vision real for members of the organization. Utilizing retreats and workshops allow for greater success because there are fewer disruptions.

Group-centered retreats and workshops create:

1. Fruitful interaction
2. Team feeling
3. Perspective on organizational issues by analyzing needs of stakeholders
4. Accessible leaders who are available to openly share thoughts
5. Opportunities to expose and work through conflicts
6. Uncover and highlight feelings of enthusiasm, passion, commitment, and optimism.
7. Determine next steps
8. Institutionalize process for creating and recreating vision

RUNNING AN ORGANIZATION

Running an organization requires practical knowledge and a holistic, long-range focus. Vaill described five key principles:

Preserve the wholeness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loose education systems • 3 credit courses • Need sense of body
Preserve the time or process quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow-up important • Research cases of progress over time • Curricular themes
Preserve feeling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Causes of problems • Alternatives • Criteria for choosing • Implementation plan
Preserve initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desirable objectives • Lead mission
Preserve humanism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can only lead people • Moral agent

“Repeatedly and successfully exercising influence on others in a dignifying and empowering way on behalf of the variety of objectives, priorities, and constraints existing in the organization, using many different kinds of knowledge, common sense and skill” (p.98).

THE LEARNING CHALLENGES OF LEADERSHIP

Peter Vaill described challenges in leadership due to diversity. The internet has brought diverse trends to the forefront. Diversity in population creates challenges in meeting needs of the organization members. There is constant turbulence.

The learning premise of a beginning leader is one of reflection. Managerial leadership requires continuous learning to keep pace with constant change.

Challenges exist within the learning content. Changing content causes controversy among experts in regards to events in the present and past. A delay in feedback and lack of exemplars create further challenges.

Challenges in empowering others are based on changes in personnel, technology, and markets. Trust in leadership is earned through supportive and facilitative learning opportunities that allow others to contribute ideas. Learning with members of the organization allows leaders to share control and gain support of colleagues.



ADULT EDUCATION AS PARADIGM LEADERSHIP

7 F'S OF ADULT LEADERSHIP

Fatigue

Flexibility

Fragmentation

Facilities

Fees

Feelings

Faculty

The author explained the paradigm leadership that exists in adult education. As more adults seek higher education in leadership classes, obstacles remain.

A majority of adult learners hold full-time jobs. A lack of evening classes limit learning options for adult students. When evening classes are offered, offices that provide student services are closed.

A further limitation is the availability of food services. Many vendors are closed during evening and weekend classes.

Unfortunately, the limitations are not reflected in tuition fees.

Renewal of organizational processes would benefit adult learners.

1. Avoid generalizations about who processes work. Change grading, course matter and accreditation processes.
2. Adapt new values.
3. Provide exemplars in regards to people, events and physical symbols.

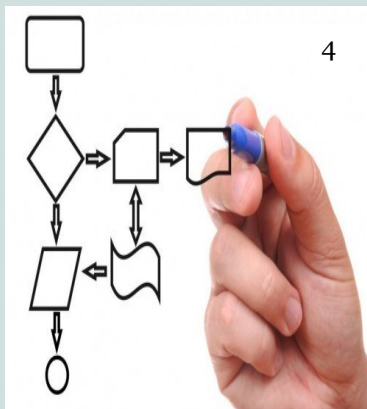
SEVEN PROCESS FRONTIERS FOR ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Organizational development involves improving processes through actions that promote continuous learning for change.

Effective organizational processes involve sharing power to enhance participation. Working relationships are strengthened through lateral communication, planning and development, and stress management.

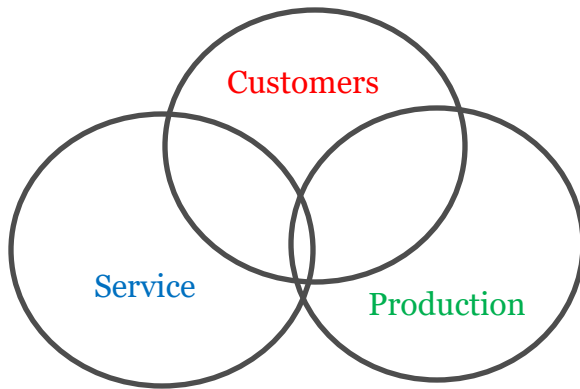
Vaill outlined processes that require change in the following areas:

1. *Top-Down Development.* Behavior needs to be organized.
2. *What Business Are We In?* Technology, economies, competition, and consumer tastes continue to change.
3. *Digesting New Technology.* Keeping pace with advances in engineering is difficult.
4. *Integrating New HR Ideas.* Incorporate processes that enhance human relationships through rewards and workshops.
5. *Sophisticated Diagnostic Processes.* Quantitative data is used to describe organizational culture.
6. *Permanent White Water Strategies.* Based on Lewin's 3-step process of unfreeze, change and refreeze requires flexibility.
7. *Moral Agent Managers.* Leaders need to do the right thing by their own standards.



“OD has been and continues to be existentially unable to say exactly what it is about. OD is basically a process of continual change.” (p. 150)

THE INHERENT SPIRITUALITY OF ORGANIZATIONS



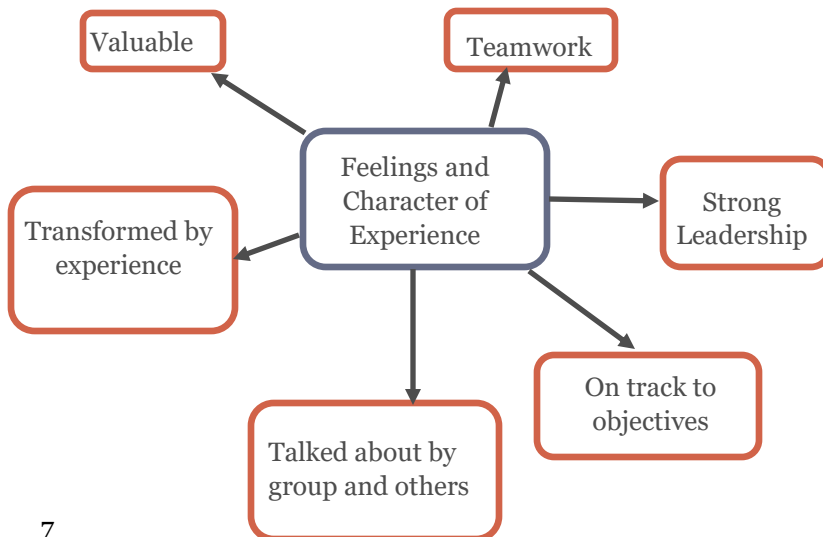
A network approach emphasizes the value of customers, service and production to provide credibility within organizations. Spirituality addresses the moral, legal, and biological needs of an organization.

Spiritual dialogue is required to work towards the vision of the organization while demonstrating ethical and moral practices and processes.

SPIRITUALITY IN THE AGE OF THE LEVERAGED BUYOUT

Spirituality is critical in organizational life to overcome difficulties and obstacles. The organizational focus must work against the personal focus of organizational members.

Spirituality is displayed in organizations through the feelings and character of the experiences. Vaill suggested that positive organizational experiences relate to the following characteristics:



“We are asking organizations to structure themselves in networks rather than in hierarchies, and we are asking that they become vastly more flexible and agile in their conduct.” (p.173)



“When the same subjective experience begins to show up over and over in connection with a particular mode of life and performance of human grouping, I begin to suspect we are on to something that is more than personal and subjective, something that is existential in human experience and in human beings” (p.197).

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

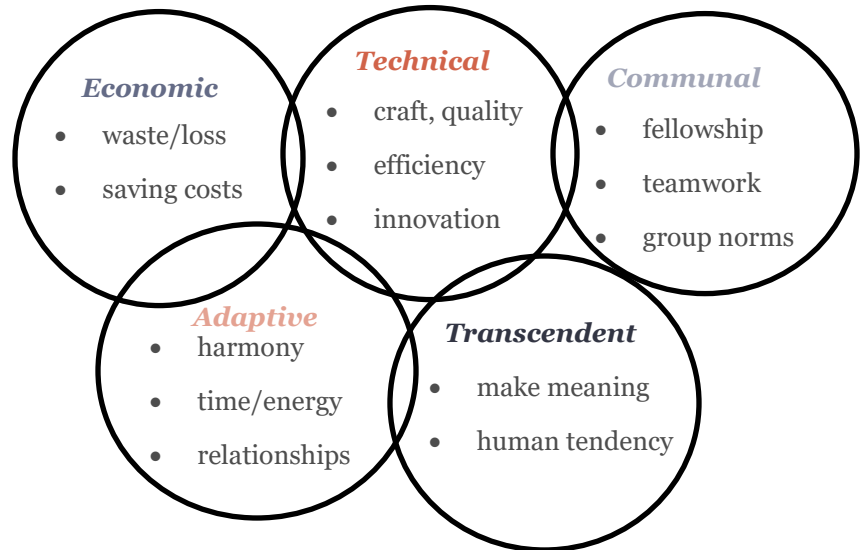
The key aspects for spiritual practice in a multi-valuing system include:

- Emphasis on human processes
- No limit to spiritual growth



“If we can agree that expressions of human spirit are constantly running through the thoughts, feelings, and actions of human beings, then wherever the leader is, and whatever the leader is doing, the present moment is full of spirit.” (p.237)

A FIVE-WAY BOTTOM LINE OF VALUING STREAMS



The author presented five intertwined valuing streams that continuously receive energy from the individual and joint actions of members of the organization.

EXECUTIVE DEVELOPMENT AS SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

Organizational values must have some correlation with the leader’s vision and values. A spiritual leader is watched by others and demonstrates a desire to act responsibly.

Contexts	
Toward embracing new values and possibilities they imply and the relativity of values to each	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Win-win • Hear all sides
Toward a passionate reason	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creativity in new and different aspects
Toward the development of an open value system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationships between values and action • Open into others’ value systems • Cross-cultural
Toward a system that is shared with others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fellowship • Interdependence
Toward new vocabulary and grammar of spirit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hesitancy to speak spiritual or pray
Toward appreciation of the spirit in larger wholes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holistic • Commonalities • meaning
Toward centering in the present	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thoughts and feelings affect events

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. What are the implications of implementing organizational development processes that incorporate the dynamic qualities of individual members in the search for effective processes?
2. What are the characteristics necessary for establishing clear purposing in organizations?
3. How does purposing assist leaders with establishing a shared vision within an organization?
4. What are the implications of demonstrating spirituality in leadership?



IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE



A benefit to implementing spirited leading and learning is the inclusion of humanistic practices. Relying too heavily on processes may lead to mechanistic systems within organizations. Recognizing that individuals possess specific knowledge and abilities allow organizations to develop practices that meet the needs of the dynamic nature of the organization.

An impact of incorporating purposing in organizations is the ability of members to clearly identify the various roles and functions that are inherent within the organization. Understanding the purpose assists leaders with establishing a clear mission for the organization.

The impact of creating a shared vision with members of the organization is the inclusion of human processes that value individual expression and specific abilities. Creating a shared vision reinforces the worth of organizational members and their contributions.

A benefit of spirited leading and learning is the inclusion of morality and ethics in decision-making. A leader should be able to defend decisions that impact the organization based on ethical standards. Leaders need to be able to address ethical paradigms in dealing with complex issues on a daily basis (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016).

A limitation with the aspect of spirituality is the recommendation of prayer and inclusion of worship. Promoting multiple perspectives is critical to enhancing cultural responsiveness.



APPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The action of implementing humanistic processes within school systems has been adopted within Saskatoon Public Schools. Effective leaders include organizational members in the processes. As a vice principal, I meet with individual teachers to discuss professional learning goals that they have identified as targets for the year. If extra support is requested, I work with the teacher to find applicable print or online resources.

An additional practice that has been effective to support teachers is to provide coaching sessions during short sprints that target specific areas of need for struggling students. In collaboration with the classroom teacher, we identify a short-term goal for a small group of students that I work with for one to four weeks. Following the sprint intervention, teachers continue with the strategies that were practiced with the students to continue targeting achievement growth.

As leaders within the school division, the principal and I work with teachers to establish purpose. By reviewing student achievement data, we identify learning targets at the school level that align with Ministry targets in the Strategic Plan and division initiatives. Clarity of purpose is created by aligning learning initiatives.

Working with my staff to establish purpose helps to clarify and create a shared vision. Following the analysis of student achievement data in September, we analyze the results to help establish appropriate plans of action toward the learning targets. Creating fruitful action as a team helps to ensure commitment of action towards the shared vision.

Spirituality is critical in leading organizations. As a rule consequentialist, I believe that decisions need to be based on following rules for the good of stakeholders in balance with my own moral convictions. Consequentialism promotes objectives by emphasizing the sharing of knowledge, and personal achievement through meeting autonomous learning targets (Hooker, 2013). As an ethical leader, I communicate areas of learning that I am passionate about. I communicate reasons for administrative decisions to demonstrate accountability, morality and consistency.

ENDNOTES

¹[Image of Peter Vaill from interview on “permanent white water”]. (2012). [Digital Image]. Retrieved from <https://bobmorris.biz/peter-b-vaill-on-coping-with-permanent-white-water-within-a-competitive-environment>.

²[International Academy for Building Capacity]. (n.d.). [Digital Image]. Retrieved from <http://ia-bc.com/upload/195180.jpg>.

³[Why “leaders” are not the church’s greatest need]. (n.d.). [Digital Image]. Retrieved from <http://www.internetmonk.com/wp-content/uploads/leadership.jpg>. Creative Commons CCO.

⁴[Using Functions – Knowledge 7]. (n.d.). [Digital Image]. Retrieved from <https://www.knowledge7.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/20120629-procedure.jpg>.

⁵[#11gvSIG: Code sprint]. (n.d.). [Digital Image]. Retrieved from https://gvsig.files.wordpress.com/2015/11/network_communication.jpg. Creative Commons CCO.

⁶[Vinod Bidwalk. What are your values?]. (n.d.). [Digital Image]. Retrieved from <http://3.bp.blogspot.com/-aXPsvnd0L-k/U9zL-A6W4rI/AAAAAAAAABjo/uCchPxKXuRo/s1600/Yin-Yang-of-Personal-and-Organizational-Values-OLD-582x601.jpg>. Creative Commons CCO.

⁷[Life of an educator: Top 10 questions to ask yourself in 2012]. (n.d.). [Digital Image]. Retrieved from http://3.bp.blogspot.com/-IL_EfygRH5E/TvN8hOZxZGI/AAAAAAAAAm8/fyZJaGkqCis/s1600/question+1.jpg. Creative Commons CCO.

REFERENCES

- Hooker, B. (2013). Rule consequentialism. In R. Shafer-Landau (Eds.) *Ethical theory: An anthology*. (pp. 428-440). Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Shapiro, J. & Stefkovich, J. (2016). Viewing ethical dilemmas through multiple paradigms (Eds.) *Ethical leadership and decision making in education: Applying theoretical perspectives to complex dilemmas*. (pp. 10-27). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Vaill, P. (1998). *Spirited leading and learning: Process wisdom for a new age*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Inc.