

The Creating WE Institute Newsletter



A Letter from the Editor

Over the past four years, members of the Creating WE Institute have been working on self-initiated projects with clients and communities that have required intense collaboration, innovation and co-creation. Each project has its own unique story, and each project is dear to the hearts of the co-creator. Each project has birthed new insights, not only for our clients, for colleagues, but also for ourselves.

Some projects are large and call for collaboration with new partners. Others have called upon us to capitalize on

resources we didn't know or think to access before; yet each project has an evolution – an unfolding and a coming together – and each is now underway and beginning to break through to incredible and unexpected outcomes.

This CWI Newsletter was created to highlight these amazing testimonies of collaboration and co-creation.

Each issue will feature different and groundbreaking Creating WE Institute members,

SPRING 2011

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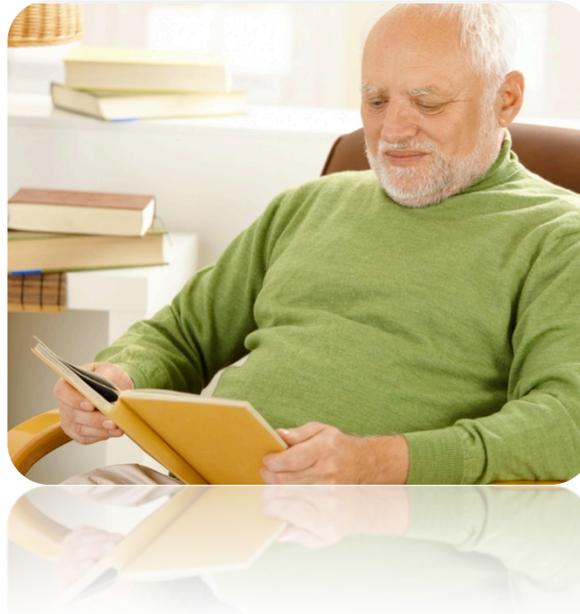
projects, and exciting outcomes.

So please enjoy this first edition. It is my hope that you find these projects interesting, educational, and inspiring.

-Judith E. Glaser

New Research on an Age-“Older” Issue

Taking care of people who are injured at work for many years, I noticed that it takes much longer for overweight and obese patients to recover from their injuries and return to work. They also get injured much more frequently. A literature search revealed that this phenomenon had never been documented although it was known to be true anecdotally. So I'm applying for a grant from NIOSH (National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health), a division of the CDC to conduct a study using the 5,000 patients we see each



year at the clinic in which I work. I'm collaborating with the Public Health Division of the University of Connecticut who will supply the biostatistical analysis. The ultimate goal of this study is to publish a paper that will help us convince the employers of obese and overweight workers to support efforts to help their employees with their weight issues. I expect to conduct followup studies to determine which types of interventions are most effective in helping these people lose weight.

Suzanne Atkins

SOMO Leadership (*Social-Emotional+*)



Imagine a Cleveland that is vibrant and bustling with life, with a grass roots effort activating city-wide change-agents (ie. You!) helping people open their minds and hearts, thereby increasing individual and collective well-being, happiness, and success.

And what if we said there is a science behind this?

SOMO Leadership is an emergent, socially-constructed positive intervention combining positive psychology, the science of success and happiness with social construction theory, the idea that reality is what we create. SOMO Leadership is prosocial, proactive, and profitable. Everyone wins.

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The Power of Storytelling

For the last year, we have had the privilege of building and delivering a development program on storytelling that is reshaping the way sales leaders, their teams, and senior managers connect with one another. The program was conceived from the desire to tap the wisdom already existent in the firm. We used storytelling as vehicle for that communication and within it, built a best practices model. Today, the firm is seeing increased productivity, a deeper sense of commitment to the business and a powerful connectivity between colleagues and clients.

In this project, we have led over 600 executives through the storytelling training experience. We provided the model, the setting and opportunity to practice constructing and telling stories. As an outgrowth, we have heard reports of a real increase to the bottom line, new strategic partnerships and a re-focus on direction. So what is it about an organization-wide storytelling project that has the power to shape individual and collective thinking?

Social science has long understood that powerful persuasion occurs when our message weaves together an emotional, ethical and logical appeal. A good story contains all three.

Emotional: Conflict & Vulnerability

We are already storytellers even though we may not think of ourselves as one. Most of us appreciate a good story and can tell when we've heard one. This is likely because of the story's conflict, critical in storytelling because it drives a narrative and the search for resolution. It also reveals a more vulnerable, human dimension to the storyteller, fostering likability and a sense of emotional connection. When people connect emotionally they listen with greater attention, and are more likely to integrate and remember what they have heard. With this connection with others, the listener engenders a state of "WE."

Ethical: Relationships & Cultural Wisdom

People who feel a sense of connection and purpose



tend to be happier and more productive. Our business environment provides us with numerous relationships all inside a specific cultural framework. Sharing stories within that culture deepens our emotional connection to others, to the business and to the brand. Aligning cultural values with communication that supports those values, the story becomes an engine for the business.

Intellectual: Learning & Best Practices

By including a learning opportunity in the story model, we leverage existing best practices and create a forum to cascade knowledge through the organization. Leaders value the chance to discuss specialized strategies and approaches to thorny business issues. New thinking and behaviors emerge. When the boundaries of "I-ness" and competition subside, new horizons of collaboration and learning begin.

By sharing our stories, we are transforming experience into meaning. The stories we tell others are shaped by our awareness. In turn they shape opinion, frame thinking, and forge many precious opportunities to see beyond ourselves. Every workforce is an untapped bank of talent, knowledge, and good will for colleagues and clients.

Imagine the possibilities.

Catherine Mullally & Whit Raymond



"The word ritual comes from the indo-European root which means

To fit together...Ritual is the conscious act of recognizing a life change

And doing something to honor and support the change through the presence of such elements as witnesses, gift giving, ceremony, and sacred intention. In this way human beings support the changes they are experiencing and create a way to fit things together again."

*-Angeles Arrien,
The Four- fold Way*

The Technology of Ritual

As we engage in sacred ritual we create a path that gives us new resources that we did not have before. It works as a map, since symbols are even more powerful than words and can create new synapses in the brain. You are then able to increase your capacity to overcome adversity and your ability to see beauty, compassion and joy where there may seem to be none.

Sometimes when we are creating new beliefs and structures there is a feeling of chaos and confusion. The old is over and the new has not yet materialized.

Rituals give structure and order to our lives.

The creativity, drama and perceptual shift connected with the ritual enable us to dis-identify with the isolation, confusion, or fear that may be associated with the passage and to know instead the power of creativity, action and understanding...

Rituals put the period at the end of a sentence and allow for completion so we can move on; otherwise we are constantly being pulled backward.

In my Vision Workshop we start by taking time to access the past year: our challenges, highlights, and major 'ah has.' Then we see what beliefs and habits we are willing to let go of in order to make room for a new energy to enter. Just like clearing out a

closet or finishing a glass of wine: we need space to allow in the new. I find that creating a ritual of release actually tells the brain that we are open to the new. The brain doesn't know the difference between a ritual and an actual event: *Therein lies its power.* Harvard Business Review even supports the power of ritual and recently suggested in their Management Tip of the Day that you should "Start your workday with a ritual."

Then it comes time to create our Vision Boards in order to hold our dreams and desires for the year's unfolding. This allows us to invite a consultation with the deepest part of the creative brain, which Jean Houston says holds the earliest memories of our soul's journey in this lifetime. This part of our body/mind also gives us access to our deepest wisdom about the appropriate path for enjoying rich and fruitful lives.

I always end with a group ritual to foster community and sharing. This, not only deepens the process, but also gives tangible support to the participants.

Barbra Biziou

SOMO LEADERSHIP (Continued)

SOMO Leadership leads to positive growth and evolution, where everyone is learning, and:

- Clevelanders are competing in the 21st century global economy
- High quality organizations (schools, businesses) are increasing success in every neighborhood so that all Clevelanders have choices and opportunities,
- The city is recruiting, supporting, and retaining high-quality, participatory citizens and industries, and
- There is a shared accountability for collective well-being, success, and happiness.

In the wake of complex challenges in Cleveland, this picture may be hard to imagine, especially for those in the community who are complacent and stagnant, not realizing change is even possible because it's been "this way" for so long.

But there are some who believe that positive change is possible. These people imagine a more positive future for themselves, their networks, and for our city. They realize we are dynamic beings, changing every second of every day. These are Cleveland's SOMO Leaders.

SOMO Leaders exist all over Cleveland, even in our most challenged neighborhoods. They are all ages, ethnicities, shapes and sizes. They share a vision for a more positive future – an abundant one, for all.

The time is NOW-- to find them and call them to action, teaching them evidenced-based tools coming from positive psychology and related disciplines, which will help them increase self-awareness, create new neural circuitry, get more of what they want, and inspire others to do the same.

When we are successful, the spirit in the city will be as if the Browns were headed to the Superbowl, or better yet, just won. Can you feel it?

This social change initiative is comprised of:

- Inviting Cleveland Social-Emotional Leaders to experiential learning laboratory (SOMOs)¹.
- Facilitating empowerment education in the form of a personal development program grounded in positive psychology, the science of success and well-being (and related disciplines) in an experiential learning laboratory.
- Employing a common, strengths-based language which will help SOMOs refine the habits of mind and emotional regulation that build resilience and enable upward spirals of individual & systemic success.
- Coaching SOMOs in the application of concepts through *their* visions, intentions, and desires.
- Calling SOMOs to action in discovering ways to best bring these tools back into their networks in the spirit of positively influencing and coaching others.
- Setting up systems of accountability that will continue to foster SOMOs' volitional development.
- Collecting baseline data that will show success of this intervention.
- Evaluating & refining program for subsequent SOMOs who will also be offered similar transformative learning experiences in learning labs (micro and macro) around the city.
- Securing additional sources of funding from grant programs and Corporate Social Responsibility funds to sustain effort.
- Leveraging local business, faith communities, schools, and organizations to provide stakeholders with training, consulting, and coaching services in line with macro intervention.
- Engaging 1.6 million.
- Co-creating sustainable, positive social and cultural change for the region.

Louis Alloro

Meet the Featured CWI Members

Barbara Biziou

A best-selling author, transformational speaker, and a global ritual expert.

Her work is a unique convergence of diverse accomplishments: Spiritual counselor, author of two books on global rituals, mediation instructor, and corporate communications. Barbara inspires her clients to create goals that reflect their values and dreams, and gives them tools to turn those dreams into realities.

Susanne Atkins

A member of the Board of Advisors for Creating WE Institute and entrepreneur combining her background in medicine and marketing.

With a deep understanding of physical, psychological and occupational issues from years of clinical research, she consults with patients who have serious medical problems, helping them explore treatment options.

Catherine Mullally

The President and CEO of CMC Group, LLC, a strategy, coaching, and communication consultancy based in Los Angeles and New York.

As a business advisor to senior executives, she focuses on fostering congruence in people and organizations. Her clients represent numerous industries including finance, insurance, media, health, technology and hospitality.

Whitaker Raymond

A Principal at LodeStar Leadership serving as a consultant to senior leaders and teams.

Whitaker is a master facilitator for executive teams and for strategic projects where consensus, collaboration, shared focus and collective commitment are necessary to enable organizations to reach higher levels of productivity.



Louis Alloro

A change-agent whose background and training places him at the intersection of Education and Positive Psychology.

Today, Louis works with individuals and organizations of all kinds in facilitating positive growth. He often speaks at organizational, community, academic or trade events on topics pertaining to Positive Psychology, wellness, success, happiness, and leadership.

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