

# THE TRANSFORMATION TIMES

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William Diedrich and Rob Curtner, editors

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## What is *The Transformation Times*?

The Transformation Times is a monthly publication from [Transformative Leadership Systems](#) and **Robert Curtner - Consultants**. Our purpose is to provide insightful information about issues and opportunities for leaders, and to engage in dialogue with thoughtful readers. We welcome your comments. [www.transformativepress.com](http://www.transformativepress.com)



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Personal Responsibility. Call Bill about Executive Coaching services. Bill is the author of *The Road Home: The Journey Beyond The Spiritual Quick Fix*, available through the above website. E-mail Bill at [Theroadhome@voyager.net](mailto:Theroadhome@voyager.net)



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## Leaders Who Move Mountains By William Frank Diedrich

Leaders who move mountains, whether those mountains be problems, financial trouble, organizational conflict, or an impossible dream to achieve, are always visionaries. The visionary leader sees what can be, then takes action to build it. He enrolls others in the vision by communicating it and by helping others to see its benefits. The vision, therefore, is not just something that will benefit the leader. It is a dream that will add value to every person it touches.

In order to achieve any vision of greatness we must assist the people we work with to see their own greatness. People are not just a means to an end. They are the main reason for the vision. They are the implementers and the beneficiaries. We, as leaders, must develop the ability to spot talent and create an environment where talent can flourish. Many of us can remember a coach, teacher, or leader who was able to see our own ability better than we were. In my life these teachers inspired me to go beyond what I thought was possible. They helped me to see myself in a new light, to become a possibility thinker.

The leader who envisions a world class organization must act like a world class leader. He will need to treat the staff as a world class staff and all workers as world class workers. How do you treat a world class worker? Words like respect, dignity, and admiration come to mind.

This is a whole new role for leaders who are used to nagging, pushing, and coercing. Yet, in order to inspire talent, we need to get to know people. This requires a live encounter with each and every person.

A live encounter with another human being is both frightening and rewarding. It is frightening in that we expose ourselves to a part of ourselves which can be unpredictable and untamed. If I get to know you I may have to change my ideas about you, about myself, about the world. When I maintain my distance I get to hang on to my ideas of the world. I get to keep my belief system, my assumptions, and my ideas. This provides an imaginary safety net for me. When I allow myself to have a live encounter, to see you as a living, breathing, thinking, feeling human being, I am rewarded

with the treasures that lie within you. We connect, and by connecting, though we will have our differences, we can move forward together.

It is an effective leader's priority to get to know people. If you are the manager of a facility that employs 1000 people, go out and shake 1000 hands and say hello. Learn their names, their family situations, their talents, and their limitations. Thank them for good work. Appreciate their creativity and their efforts. Some leaders may say: "I don't have the time. I have too much work to do!" As a leader, people are your work. Spending time getting to know the people you work with, helping them, and appreciating them, will be the best investment you can make. Once they know that you care, that you serve their best interests, they will offer you their best service. Indifferent leaders often get indifferent performance.

You can be a visionary, and caring, and fall short of greatness if you don't have integrity. Integrity is the glue that holds you and your organization together. Integrity builds trust and consistency. Leaders sabotage themselves by saying one thing and doing another, by making promises they don't keep, and by not being totally honest with others. If you have a vision, I don't care how great it is; I'm not going there with you if I don't trust you. Integrity means admitting and correcting mistakes; telling the truth, even when it hurts; and being who you say you are.

Leadership in many organizations espouses high values, but sets them aside when financial and political pressures get tough. The results include anger, depression, and often, rebellion. It is always risky for leaders to show integrity. There is always pressure to expedite matters through lying, pressuring, intimidating, and a variety of other tactics. This is why it is essential that leaders have a clear set of values by which they live. The leader who knows herself, and refuses to be anything but herself, will move mountains. Gandhi moved mountains. Martin Luther King Jr. moved mountains. These leaders had integrity. They changed the world. Their actions were driven by their convictions, not by their fears. Make a promise to yourself to never allow fear to be the driving force in your decision making, and you will avoid the pitfalls of being out of integrity.

If you are a visionary with a dream that benefits the world in some way; if you care deeply about people and desire for them to succeed; and if you have the courage to show integrity, people will want to be on your team. Yet, there is one more essential ingredient to this powerful kind of leadership. It is the foundation for the three ideas that have been presented. This is your deep connection to a Higher Power. No person can lead alone. Contemplative prayer and meditation will bring you to a place of peace--and in this place of peace you will receive the wisdom and support you need. I cannot tell you which spiritual path to take, but I will encourage you to find one that works for you. I do not know of any great world leader who ever said: "I did it myself." Without a spiritual connection you have only your ego on which to depend. There is a Biblical verse that says that if you command a mountain to be thrown into the sea, and believe it, it will be done. As a visionary, caring, and integrated leader, spiritually connected, with faith in yourself and in your Higher Power, you can move mountains.

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### **Listening To Listening, by Rob Curtner**

*"The most basic of all human needs is the need to understand and be understood. The best way to understand people is to listen to them."*  
Ralph Nichols

According to research conducted by HighGain, Inc. over 35 studies had noted that listening is a top skill needed for success in business. They also claim that while we listen at a rate between 125 to 300 words per minute, we can think at a rate between 1000 to 3000 words per minute. Of course, if a picture is worth ten thousand words, how many pictures can my head make in a minute? Whatever the numbers are, we listen slower than we can think, so while we are trying to listen, other thoughts get in the way.

My history with listening as a skill to be developed has been both rewarding and challenging. On the one hand, listening well has helped to make friends, solve problems, create business opportunities and even open the door into my first career. On the other hand I have often been challenged to listen to those closest to me - family and friends. Beyond making me human, this feature of my

communication history points out how difficult it is to consistently use good listening skills.

When I was a college junior, I became a volunteer for a local crisis center. Part of the training was a class in empathic listening skills. I learned how to identify the feelings and the sources in the speaker's message. We were shown how to respond to the emotional content as a way to help the person gain some measure of awareness of how their emotions may be influencing their behavior. This aspect of listening was and remains the single most powerful communication strategy/skill I know.

After graduation from college, I led weekend training events providing skill development in Empathic Listening Skills (ELS). This experience allowed me to develop my own skills further and to understand how difficult it is for people to acknowledge the emotional component of living. What we call rational thinking is in many ways a myth. There is a wonderful discussion about this idea in a book called *Philosophy in the Flesh*, by Lakoff and Johnson the authors of *Metaphors We Live By*. Dan Goleman's books about "Emotional Intelligence" also explain how emotions, cognition, speech and behavior are related.

At this point in time, I have been gifted with revisiting listen skills through teaching the well designed training modules from Development Dimensions International ([www.DDIworld.com](http://www.DDIworld.com)). Their Interaction Skills series has reminded me how well people can recognize other's emotions and how difficult it is to respond to the emotions being expressed. This begs the question, **"Why is it that responding to feelings is so difficult?"** Here are some of the answers I have found to this question:

- We are too involved with thinking about what we are going to say next to listen.
- We don't want to get involved at the emotional level.
- We don't value the connection with others that comes from responding to feelings.
- Like other skills, responding to feelings requires practice, feedback and the rewards that come from this closer form of communication.
- We are discounting all that the person is saying. "Who cares about feelings?"
- We have convinced ourselves that we are too busy to pay attention to others.

**"If we are speaking, we are not listening or learning anything to add to our sum of knowledge. This is why the first step to effective listening is to stop talking!"** Ken Fracaro

When we are not heard, our trust suffers, as well as our motivation. Listening is important, and is often poorly practiced. We are all preoccupied with our own needs. **So, what can be done to improve our listening and include recognition of other's feelings as a part of our interactions?**

Here are a few ideas:

- Ask; "How does this person feel concerning what they are talking about?"
- Take the risk to state our own feelings.
- Ask; "How would I feel in that situation?"
- Use the formula, "It sounds like you're feeling \_\_\_\_ about \_\_\_\_."
- Paraphrase the other person's message and include the feelings.
- Ask questions to get more information, so you can listen further.
- Show interest during listening by maintaining eye contact and nodding your head.

I have written this piece about "listening to listening" in order to remind all of us just how hard this "easy" task can be. Listening is the mother of two-way streets. Being a good listener is more important than being a good talker. You can't learn anything when you're doing all the talking.

## **The Road Home: The Journey Beyond**

**The Spiritual Quick Fix** is a true life and unique story about personal and spiritual growth. Most books of this genre offer formulas and teachings. The Road Home is written in a dialogue format in order to consider all of the doubts and fears that come up as we learn. Insightful conversations regarding relationships, work, money, physical health, religion, and spiritual seeking lead the reader into his/her own mind and heart--where the road home begins.

"I loved this book's courageous honesty and shimmering passion." Dr. Wayne W. Dyer, Highly Acclaimed Speaker and Author.  
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