

2019 Wish List - Harmony & Agility

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It seems that I have become almost labeled as a “harmonian” ... i.e. someone who seeks and promotes harmony in organizations, families and relationships. Probably guilty as charged. This rang true over the holidays as I got a nice coffee-mug Christmas gift from my sister-in-law Mary Beth that celebrated that noble ideal.



A few days later, our parish associate and great fellow musician, Dr. Fred Beck, was preaching a post-Christmas sermon message on the topic of ... you guessed it ... harmony. Fred is also an incredible jazz trumpeter with whom I have the occasional pleasure of playing music with even though Fred is far beyond my level ... one of my joys in life.



Fred’s message from the pulpit was about understanding the various elements that make up true harmony including the melody makers, rhythm blenders and, of course, the tempo creators like bass (my instrument in this mix) and percussion instruments. As Fred shared, each element has something unique to contribute and worthy of respect in its voice. Fred went on to describe how these elements blend best and truest when done inside a common, shared set of core values and beliefs. I like to describe them as operating principles ... guidelines for how we operate and work together.

Fred is talented in many styles of jazz. Although born and grown from Vermont, he developed a fondness for Dixieland Jazz at an early age in his own living room where both parents would jam regularly with a tight collection of highly accomplished jazz musicians. He speaks of the responsibility for each player to listen deeply to each other as the critical ingredient in the musical recipe as they add their own voice to create that special harmony.

All of the elements relating to creating harmony (e.g. unity, alignment, integration, accord, cooperation, etc.) play a strong role in the creation of organizational agility. Metaphors abound as you consider the organizational equivalents of these ingredients ... most especially the notion of building clear and explicit operating principles to guide and enrich behavior and satisfaction. From my thirty plus years of working with leaders, teams and organizations, the pursuit of organizational harmony has always been a parallel path to organizational agility. For me, as a musician as well as organizational behavior specialist, there is a great deal in common in attitude, mindset and focus.



My daughter Meaghan, who is the real musician in our household, has taught me many real lessons based from music theory that definitely support and augment my own knowledge base in organizational dynamics.

Harmony materializes through the focus and attention of musicians tuned into the polyphonic potential of their instruments and the collective effort. What we might consider musical “success” results from the multiple instruments (or functions) working together with an “ethic of cooperation”.

Harmony starts with the attitude, mindset and anticipation of cooperation.

I often say the difference between empty, transactional collaboration and true, magical, high octane collaboration ... is whether all the participants are bringing comparable ethic, mindset or belief system intent for cooperation. Some team members intrinsically believe and behave in congruent ways and some just give a tacit nod to the code and then operate in superficial cooperation mode that fractures at the first point of tension. This superficial mode is not sustainable and will not lead to creating organizational agility as a competitive advantage.

My wish list for 2019 is that ALL my clients and their teams will continue to build understanding and skill in shaping their future with harmony and agility. My BOLD wish for 2019 is that our government and our leaders begin to understand and adopt some of these same principles ... for all of our sakes.

I look forward to your feedback, comments and inputs as ever.

Have a joyous and harmonious 2019!



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