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The Wisdom Worker: The 21st Century Solution

Peter Drucker, the father of modern management, popularized the notion of the knowledge worker as the driving force in the workplace during the latter part of the 20th century. Knowledge workers primarily use their heads to make things happen. They acquire and apply theoretical and analytical knowledge to solve problems. Adding value with one's intellect is quite different from what industrial workers do to create value. They make things happen with their hands. We have seen our society change dramatically during the past century - due to both technology advancements and the influence of knowledge workers. Is another societal transformation in the workplace beginning to happen?

In his article, The Age of Social Transformation, Drucker asks, "How can knowledge workers improve their productivity?"

Indeed, no matter how fast technology helps us go, we never seem to graduate from the productivity issue: *how do we create more value in less time and with less cost?*

Futurists like Daniel Burrus believe that the pace of technological breakthroughs will accelerate; read his book Flash Foresight for an insightful look into what's coming. These breakthroughs can never be our complete answer, however, because unless we are moving towards our highest intentions, getting there with faster technology will not be all that helpful. We believe the ultimate answer to Drucker's question is that "wise leadership and knowledge worker productivity is an inside job." We believe knowledge workers must become wisdom workers. They will add value with their hearts first, and then with their minds and hands.

The human heart contains our spirit that longs for a better world economy, environmental sustainability, and global peace. It is easy to look at current reality and become discouraged when it comes to these concerns. Fortunately, however, there are spiritual principles at play in our universe that we are underutilizing. Scientists, such as those at the HeartMath Institute, are

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having breakthroughs of a very different kind. They are now discovering that our hearts have the capacity to bring more value into the world through these spiritual principles:

1. More information travels from our hearts to our brains than vice versa.
2. The information moving from our hearts to our brains can affect our performance.
3. Focused reflection on our hearts can alter our emotional state in a positive direction.
4. Meditation and quiet reflection reduces stress and improves our health and vitality.
5. The electromagnetic signals generated by the heart can impact people around us.
6. One person's heart signal can affect another person's brainwaves.
7. All of life is interconnected and interdependent.

This is exciting information! Scientific research is telling us that we are hardwired for heart to heart connections; and that our heart to heart connections affect how we use our brains and bring the best out of one another. Our longing for the experience of "genuine connection" is already built into humanity. Cooperation is fundamental to our happiness and survival. Sharing brings more joy than hoarding. Love can overcome fear and the limited thinking that is at the source of our struggles.

So, how could a society of wisdom workers transform our productivity?

There are three fundamental ways:

1. We can ask ourselves deeper questions, such as, "For the sake of what are we pursuing business success? And at what cost to our global community?" Heartfelt leaders are sincerely values driven people. They want to invest their lives in adding real value for everyone impacted by their business. It is apparent from our current societal difficulties, that this has not been our norm. In fact, we are in trouble when it comes to the unintended consequences of our recent business practices. It will no longer be possible to thrive unless our businesses enrich our overall experience of living. During this recent recession both consumers and business leaders have been forced to reexamine their spending choices and value propositions. We all need to come to terms with quality of life questions that revolve around this question, "How can business leaders ensure both stakeholder and shareholder value is being taken care of so that our quality life is optimized?" Chris Laszlo and Nadya Zhexembayeva make a very compelling case for this emerging business reality in Embedded Sustainability. Wisdom workers will be needed to lead the way.

2. There is a huge amount of waste in every workplace that goes largely unaddressed. It occurs in the human mind in the form of judgmental perceptions, limited thinking, and disempowering beliefs. It shows up in conversations as explanations or "stories" of why we are stuck with our difficult situations and worse yet, why we can't do much about them. People lose heart when they experience undiscussable conflicts and see a limited future rife with intractable compromises. It's not the actual difficulties that happen in business that are most counterproductive to our success. It is how we think in our moment of difficulty that is wasteful. Our perceived problems are often blown out of proportion, rendering us impotent. The financial cost of this type of waste is astronomical, but the wasted lives of people who feel constricted in unfulfilling and

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unproductive work environments is worse yet. Wisdom workers who are adept with the transformational problem solving tools in LionHeart's Mastering Effectiveness will be most influential at eradicating this waste.

3. Our hearts have an unlimited supply of inspiration and creativity available. Our hearts are where our virtues and values reside. These are the best qualities to foster our human propensity towards innovation. A truly inspired, collaborative, and passionate team that deeply trusts what they are working towards, and who they are working with, will produce more value. The work of David Cooperrider and Diana Whitney highlighted in Appreciative Inquiry: A Positive Revolution in Change comes to mind. They offer the best practices for tapping in to the heart's natural enthusiasm for what is going right that we have seen. They have demonstrated that people who allow their hearts to guide the work of their minds will certainly improve their overall productivity in a profound manner. Organizations that put the heart first and provide innovative solutions to our most difficult social and environmental problems will thrive and challenge others to do the same. Once this is occurring at a societal level, this revolutionary culture shift will naturally contribute to a better world for all.

Wisdom workers will certainly be able to improve our productivity, but here's the real vision: imagine a world economy with a foundation of spiritual wisdom and business leaders working hard to ensure their organizations are profitable for the sake of humanitarian purposes.

Shifting our consciousness in this way will require our transition to a business world where collaboration more equitably parallels competition. Remember, we are hard wired for collaboration, but we must learn to lead with our hearts first.

And here's the best part of this visionary opportunity: wisdom is an infinitely renewable resource. It comes from inside. It is not dependent on age, education, or experience. It comes from the ability to listen deeply to one's own heart and the values in our soul. It is the voice deep inside that is connected to our experience of inspiration, creativity, and contribution; it can give us everything we need to know when we need to know it. We have all had moments when we spontaneously became present to this experience of inner wisdom. To achieve peak performance we must cultivate this ability so that it becomes our predominant way of being.

Learning to listen to our inner wisdom requires quieting those other counterproductive thoughts of limitation that drown out our creativity and natural problem solving ability: the fear of failure, worry, resentment, self-doubt, self-importance, self-pity, the tendency to blame others or make excuses when things aren't going well. This is not our predominant personality, but these thoughts have a huge impact on what we accomplish and how we feel about ourselves. Since we are not proud of this part of our personality, we frequently pretend it does not exist or try to hide it.

To quiet these nasty thoughts, people in the world of business initially work harder and try to accomplish more. As successful knowledge workers get better and better at the game of accomplishment, they can seem to make these counterproductive thoughts go away for awhile. It is a temporary solution, however. Eventually, we encounter a crisis or hit the wall of our personal

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limitations. Our worst internal dialogue then finds a way to resurface and waste our precious time and energy - again. Ultimately, without a better approach, we lose heart.

Fortunately, there is an effective way to clear away our own negativity and transcend our limited thinking. It is often called mindfulness or being meditative. It involves reflection before action to prevent reaction. Wisdom workers invest themselves in opening their hearts to that deeper knowing inside that transmits our virtues and a powerful sense of possibility. The heart is a treasure chest of all that is good within humanity; and when we are present to this experience of possibility we are most productive. Synchronicity occurs and our human capital is optimized.

The knowledge worker must simply remember that our minds work best when they are fueled by the values and virtues in the heart that wash away our limited and counterproductive thinking.

Organizations seeking this type of productivity improvement will provide their people with the time and tools to cross examine their thought patterns so they can choose an internal narrative that is built upon their highest intentions. Some of your best people are likely already doing some form of mindfulness practice on their own time. While scientific research demonstrates the validity of this work, people must know from their own experience that their effectiveness depends on developing a peaceful mind and open heart. You can support this work by bringing these types of practices into the mainstream business culture and building it into your training and development programs. While these practices of reflection are thousands of years old, they are new to our business dialogue. Your competitive advantage will grow if you are among the early adopters.

There are many variations on the practices that lead to mindfulness and working from our hearts. We've found that each person must find their own way that works for them. Our approach at LionHeart honors the uniqueness of each person's path. We offer our methodology with that in mind. You can read more about this in our white paper called *The Remembrance: Investing Time in Reflection* or Chapter 3 Accessing Inner Wisdom in our self-study guide, Mastering Effectiveness.

If you sincerely invest yourself in a regular practice of remembrance you will be more than surprised by what it offers you. Why?

This work is not just about self-awareness, personal growth or reducing waste. It is about using the challenges of business to stimulate the emergence of our souls. It allows us to transcend our inner demons and discover our source of internal strength and wisdom. This work releases the feeling that we can never know enough or do enough. It provides us with the wisdom to focus on knowing and doing what really matters.

If we are to evolve towards an economy that works for all of humanity, we have a very different type of productivity to attend to. We must transform our society of knowledge workers into a society of wisdom workers. When we do this we will begin to reverse the growing gap between those who have abundance and those who languish in poverty. Learning to work in this more heartfelt way is the most exciting – and productive - work there is.

Do you have time for all of this? A wisdom worker who consulted his or her heart would arrive at a different question, "How can we succeed without putting what matters most, first?"

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