



## Seeing True to Break Through

Thoughts from Ron Chapman

February 2006

Hello to all,

Thank you to the many who sent me stories about openmindedness related to last month's newsletter on that subject. A consistent theme was the challenge of the closed mind, which of course, has no desire to be opened. And I must say, it was pleasing to see the good humor and humanity with which so many view themselves and their challenges.

Serendipitously, the subject was perfect groundwork for a new client organization that came to me. Their situation is not an uncommon one. The environment in which they operate has changed in recent years, and they are faced with a substantial need to re-mission themselves. Unfortunately, there are many on staff who have no desire to see the challenge they face. They are closedminded in response to the threat it presents to their careers and livelihoods.

The leader believes himself to be a change agent, but he is profoundly closed to the implications of the changes that confront them. It will be my task to tell him that in his current state he is unteachable, for that is the outcome of a closed mind. In his case, exceptional education and experience have convinced him he knows everything he needs to know. He is mistaken, but cannot see.

Regrettably, we can only see what we can see ... as much as our closedmindedness will permit. It is profoundly ironic that we can only be as openminded as our closed mind will permit.

What then are our options, whether personally or organizationally? First, we must understand blind spots are inevitable in humans. Then it is helpful to realize that there are really only two ways of gaining an open mind. The first is the "two by four" method. If we insist on our certainties, life and the environment have a terrible tendency to level us with a blow of some sort, a "two by four" to the psyche. Worse, if a psychological "two by four" doesn't produce new vision, the magnitude of future blows tends to increase very quickly as well as in increasingly physical forms. I have a friend who can attest to literally getting leveled by a four by twelve wooden mantle. It did get her attention!

The other method of gaining an open mind is much more boring, almost educational in nature. We begin with the acceptance of closedmindedness as a

given. Then we actively seek out the places in our organizations or lives that will show us where we need to grow in our understanding. Essentially, this is simply to cooperate. It's not really particularly virtuous, simply choosing a path of less resistance in order to avoid the "two by four." Then we construct methods, whether journaling or more formal inquiries, to identify our blind spots. Once seen, change will begin to take place almost magically.

I remember a young woman I coached in softball with my daughters. She was a very good ball player, but she insisted on pushing the limits everywhere in her life with all the predictable consequences for a teenager. She was to be chosen as an All Star, but the coach wanted assurances she would not be an endless challenge. I spoke with Jahnelle and explained her options. She chose to cooperate so she could avoid still more pain in her life, and play as an All Star. She was great.

The leader at this new organization to which I referred shows all the signs of not only a closed mind, but also unwillingness to find a way to become teachable. The signs are everywhere that he will probably soon be fired from a career he has spent a very long time cultivating. And to quote the friend leveled by the wooden mantle, "It's going to hurt really bad." I wish it could be otherwise.

Keep those stories flowing of your challenges and learnings. Your brilliance and insights are an inspiration to me. Above all, I wish you a generous and open mind in every arena of your life that matters!

All the best,

Ron

*Seeing True*™ is a registered trademark of Ronald Chapman and Magnetic North LLC  
Seeing True to Break Through E-Newsletter © Ronald Chapman 2006  
[www.magneticnorthllc.com](http://www.magneticnorthllc.com)