



## Seeing True to Break Through

Thoughts from Ron Chapman

June 2010

Hello again!

“What happens to apparent risk when we step into it and find it is nothing but appearance?”

That was the closing question from last month’s newsletter. It generated a number of responses, all of which acknowledged that most of our feelings of exposure are unfounded, though many likewise acknowledged they remained reluctant to deliberately step into those exposed moments and feelings.

A few days after that newsletter was sent, the subject of risk taking was a focal point in a workshop that I led for professional facilitators. We examined Patrick Lencioni’s exploration of vulnerability as the foundation for trust, as well as the ability to be candid and tackle difficult issues. Lencioni proposes that until we can take those steps into vulnerability, our effectiveness as individuals, groups and organizations cannot be well realized. His latest book, *Getting Naked*, is geared to consultants and other service providers, but it tells the tale of our risk aversion exceptionally well no matter our profession.

As we examined risk taking and vulnerability in the workshop, there was widespread desire for tips and techniques, but a simultaneous hesitancy as expressed in many questions ... Won’t I lose business? What if I fail? How do you deal with looking bad? ... All these arising from the issue of becoming more vulnerable and transparent.

The simple answer is: Somehow or another, we must step into these places of vulnerability. We cannot learn without taking the risk. And we will never discover those feelings are groundless until we place ourselves in the situations that produce those feelings.

Just a few hours after that workshop I found myself in an enthralling coaching conversation with a young man named Michael. Just a few months ago he used an image from the movie *Avatar* to describe his situation. The hero of that tale is faced with losing everything that has come to matter to him. The only path left is to take a huge risk in subduing a giant flying dragon. And the only way to do that is to cast himself onto the back of the dragon in midair. The scene Michael so related to is the one where the hero takes a seemingly high stakes leap into the air to land upon the dragon’s back in order to tame it.

Michael has recently taken a professional leap, which feels to him just like the one portrayed in the movie. The good news is that his call was one of elation. "I knew I could do this," he exclaimed. "I just knew it!"

That's the funny part about exposure and vulnerability. Somehow we know we know how, though it is only proven by taking the risk.

I flashed back to a conversation with a mentor in 1987. I was grappling with a major change, which I described in detail to him. At the end, all he said was, "Sound to me like you know what to do, and that all you need is permission. Permission granted."

As Michael described his success, my heart soared with him. He had granted himself permission to fly. By taking the leap he learned his fears were unfounded.

It is a beautiful thing to see fear vanquished. It's more beautiful still to see the potential that emerges. And the only thing more beautiful than that is when we experience it for ourselves.

Wishing you great work!

Ron

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