

Panel Discussion: A Model for Initiative Development: Discussion and Ideas of Individual Spirit Harmonics

Panel Discussants:

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Introduction

At the 2000 ABSEL Conference, Douglas L. Micklich and Gretchen Vik presented a paper on an exercise to develop initiative. They used as a basis an example from Barry Heerman's "Building Team Spirit", an exercise that focused on sharing, building, and clarifying individual goals. The exercise that was chosen considered the use of consonant and dissonant values or factors as ones that contributed to satisfying unmet goals and needs serving as the basis for initiative. Consonant values are those that bring harmony and foster initiative and dissonant values are those that bring disharmony and cause us to become discouraged from developing initiative.

The main purpose of the panel discussion is to elicit ideas and discuss strategies used to help students develop initiative for solving problems and how to provide feedback to both students and instructors to improve their performance in developing and sustaining initiative. The main question that will be addressed by the panel is; What are some of the things that we do in designing activities that either encourage (reinforce consonance) or discourage (reinforce dissonance) one from taking initiative of some sort?

Discussion Format

In this panel discussion we will, discuss experiences in designing exercises that develop initiative in accordance with maintaining a balance between Individual Spirit Harmonic (Hermann) (Exhibit 1) consonances and dissonances. If consonance values are predominant, then the existence of initiative is possible and can be developed. If dissonance values are prevalent, then the existence of initiative is not possible and cannot begin to develop.

In general, there are three factors that can be considered as preconditions to successful development of initiative. These are: ability, motivation, and opportunity. The relationship that exists between the three is multiplicative. The absence of one factor will negate the entire relationship. Individual success, the development of initiative, will depend on a balanced combination of these three things. (Krietner) "Initiative, to begin to develop, requires imagining, and then creating, what is not. It requires the ability to think creatively, to listen effectively, to change cultures, and to build commitment to the vision. It requires the courage to take risks, to accept responsibility, and to let go and trust others." (Daft)

Adopting from a model of learning about leadership (Daft) (Figure 1). The development of initiative can be seen as going through four stages. The first stage is in Unconscious Incompetence where the individual does not see himself or herself as having any initiative (a vast majority of values are dissonant) or they are unaware they lack initiative. The second stage, Conscious Incompetence, is where the person begins to become aware of what is required to do well, those values that bring consonance, but are personally incompetent to develop them.

In the third stage, Conscious Competence, the person receives positive feedback from their skill and is aware of how well they are doing. Values are moving from dissonance to consonance. They are able to visualize a desired future, influence others to engage in that future and have the courage to take on real change. Beginning to use your initiative means that a change process is occurring and that the person is willing to accept risks. In the last stage, Unconscious Competence, using initiative has become such a part of the person that it occurs naturally. The person will no longer need to consciously think about creating a vision, what to do or to wait for another, it emerges naturally.

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The discussion will center around this model, Individual Spirit Harmonics and what we can do as instructors, professors and facilitators to develop initiative and guide people through the process. In facilitating

discussion, the Model of Initiative Development, and Individual Spirit Harmonics will be presented to elicit responses from the audience.

FIGURE 1

Stages of Initiative Development

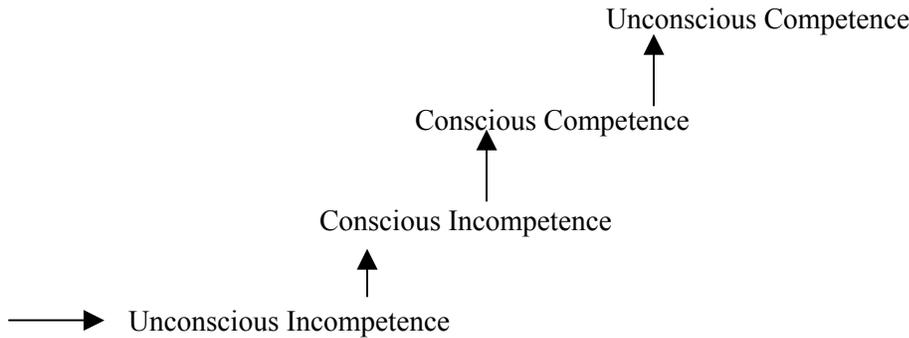


EXHIBIT 1

Individual Spirit Harmonics Consonant and Dissonant Values

	<u>Consonance</u>	<u>Dissonance</u>
Service	contribution aligned execution mutual support	depletion uncoordinated action unsupportiveness
Initiating	orientation belonging trust	disorientation alienation mistrust
Visioning	shared vision/values compassion presence	ambiguous vision/values callousness aridness
Claiming	goal/role alignment organization support competence	nonalignment nonsupport deficiency
Celebrating	appreciation energy wonder	non-appreciation burnout disenchantment
Letting Go	disclosure constructive feedback completion	withheld communications criticism incompletion

REFERENCES

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- Krietner, Robert, *Management, Eighth Ed.*, Houghton Mifflin Company, 2001, p 22-23
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