



A Journey of Change

A year has passed since I last sent out the Leading Edge. Why the hiatus? Because I've been going through the process of transforming Northwood Consulting, Ltd. and myself.

And, it is a process! For me, change has emerged over time. I didn't wake up one day and decided I needed to change. First, I went through periods of continuing flux: frustration, doing more of what I've always done to get back on track, followed by stability.

My continuing challenge as a consultant is getting a steady stream of clients. Usually I found myself fluctuating between being too busy with work to market myself followed by periods of less business. When it got slower, I would just do more of what I always did: call clients for referrals, schedule speaking engagements, tweak my website and promotional material, etc. Then, I'd get busy again and stop my marketing efforts.

During one of my frustration periods as I was working on a marketing plan, I had a BIG AHA! My business model was wrong! I was marketing myself like a screwdriver (i.e., executive coaching is the tool), instead of promoting how I could help my clients build a better house (i.e. discover solutions to their challenges). To be successful as an executive coach, I needed a steady volume of clients since the coaching relationship usually lasts 6 to 18 months.

Awareness of the Need to Change

This was the first step in the change process: Awareness. Becoming conscious that I wanted to change and that by continuing to do the same things I'd always done, wasn't going to bring about the results that I wanted.

As Einstein said: "Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results."

Awareness was only the first step. I knew I needed to change things, but the question was: From What to What? I needed to learn more about myself and my business, which meant deepening my awareness of the situation and to begin discovering my future by observing how I got to where I was and what I wanted to become.

Usually, I get very enthusiastic about the possibilities of a new idea or vision and want to start taking action immediately. But this time I started by asking "why" instead of "how."

Why does Northwood Consulting, Ltd. really exist?

I decided to let the "why" or purpose of Northwood determine the "whats" (what business am I in, what is the best business model) and the "hows" (how to organize, how to market). It took time for the answer to emerge! Over a month I reflected on the question of Why, wrote my thoughts down and then came back to it in a few days. Even when I wasn't working on it (as in, sitting at my desk), my mind was working on it as I was driving in the car,

showering, or chopping onions. Each time I sat down with the question, I better understood the purpose of my business.

Here are some of the things I wrote as I explored the question:

- To help people discover solutions to challenges.
- To help individuals and organizations discover solutions to the challenges causing them pain
- To help individuals and organizations change themselves organizations to allow them to prosper

You can see that it evolved over time as I reread my answers and shared my responses with friends. And, the final conclusion:

To help executives and organizations survive and thrive in a changing world.

Then I reflected on: What got me here?

This meant a look back. (Counter-intuitive to someone eager to forge into the future.) I started by looking over six years of business. Why did I become a coach to begin with? What got me here? What was I doing that was successful? And, finally, what do I want to keep? This was a revelation to me: I didn't need to tear down everything to rebuild. I had a foundation of success that I could build on.

Now was the next phase: Discover by observing.

Over the next several months, I'll continue sharing my story about how I'm learning to survive and thrive in a changing world.