

Research article

# Critical Issues: Academia Trumped by Truth or Consequences

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## Abstract

Academic writers, consultants, teachers and thinkers represent an enormous source of knowledge, skills and intellect that must be better applied to solving persistent concerns of global consequence. Refereed publications in the field of business need to facilitate this shift.

The overriding intent here is to influence that shift in academic publications toward more useful recommendations. This objective is addressed in a somewhat unorthodox and provocative fashion to demonstrate parts of the needed change. This will be accomplished by bringing together: 1) normal cognitive biases-by thinking to learn we learn to think, 2) changes in the term “crazy” to indicate someone who refuses to speak about critical issues (even beheadings) not to designate someone using poor terminology (politically incorrect speech), 3) key questions to address about pressing issues, 4) guides to strategy and strategic thought, 5) principles of leadership for innovation, and, 6) recommendations. These five areas will be developed in part by using persistent issues as exemplars presented in a fashion that assumes political correctness is meaningless. Finally, though most of the examples cited here are from an American perspective, the current authors feel there is no better place to publish this call for a shift in academic publishing than the impressive and comprehensive European Union Research Publishing database.

**Keywords:** Cognitive biases, problem definition, clear thinking, innovative leadership, global issues

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## Introduction

Many in our non-academic network constantly ask what academia has to say about debt, deficits, legalization of drugs, bubbles the world continues to experience, minimum wage, major problems in China, Greece, Germany, health-care, wage gaps, terrorism and so on. When we report that most of our “Business” publications are much narrower and address less significant issues, they simply say; “what?”

Let us begin to regain relevance by leading more academic research away from espousing after-the-fact pronouncements toward instead proactively addressing alternatives for globally critical issues. The sustainable answer to most of the problems centers on coming up with some new innovative ideas that can be tested in the real world (Wind and Crook, 2005): academicians need to lead rather than follow. Academic researchers have a huge stake in improving environs within which we work and live (inspired by the refreshingly different work of Leighton and Lopez, 2013).

The avoidance of political and religious issues, need to be politically correct, and the necessity to be careful until one is promoted and tenured, must change (Broom and Service, 2014; and Service and Loudon, 2013). Experience informed by faculty meetings, classes, and articles on tenure support these suppositions. For example, “Our survey leads us to conclude that tenure is not living up to its original promise: It does not liberate professors to exercise the freedoms of speech, writing, and action (Williams and Ceci, 2007: p. B16).”

Extend this a bit and look at what is happening in the American journalistic media. They continually look for words versus real meaning. So what if someone says something a bit incorrectly or even uses a term many don't like? What is that person's message? Do they point to a significant issue or a possible solution? We will solve more pressing issues if we don't care where solutions come from or how inarticulately or politically incorrect the ideas may be presented.

Most of what we publish from schools of business and what the popular press reports, verifies that the common wisdom of the day is incomplete at best and false at worst. Academic publications all too often skip the tough issues and stress the harmless ones. Relatedly, we academicians must stop ignoring the need to develop people who can think and innovate if we are to move the world to higher levels of economic and political thinking.

The current authors believe that many false understandings are in need of discussion. Let us begin to model those needed conversations with students through our referred publications. We should start openly discussing all issues and responding to all ideas without regard to source, political correctness or level of proof. It is considerably better to discuss ideas and thoughts and not decide than to decide without discussing. Moreover, all too often we treat our frequently planned empirical evidence as truth and our descriptive theories as answers. In theory there is no difference between theory and practice, but in practice there is. All too often words and actions indicate that politicians and academics think if we mention an issue, consider it solved.

## **Explanations with Examples: Tax, Taxing, Income Inequity, Debt, Deficit and more**

Yang Zhiyong's article in *China Daily* addressing how to narrow the Chinese income gap articulated much about the difficulties of reducing income gaps (2 June 2015: p. 9). However, that article leaves its readers with an invalid perception about redistribution via taxes: “there is no better way of narrowing the income gap than the overall reform of the taxation system.” That fictitious conclusion begs to be discussed globally for that approach has been repeatedly tried and does not work. As opposed to what is reported, significant evidence from the World Bank and other sources show clearly that overall economies do better as income gaps widen: from 2011-2013 the five most unequal OECD countries grew almost five times faster than the others (do your own research!). In reality, the greater the improved productivity or met need, the greater the payoff to those that “sold” the innovation. Productive innovative advancing economies grow bigger gaps, as they lift the least within the economy. The rich get richer and so do the poor. In our current global economy no one will get rich without producing economy enhancing products and services. Those that profit purely from exploiting the poor are associated with governments not individuals or corporations within a market system. A better approach is to try to develop more productive people that can become super wealthy than to take from the productive and give to those that want and even need their fair share.

Another issue that needs to be addressed in this area is the minimum wage. The very fact that we have minimum wages ignores the truth that in the developed countries we need to incent people to move from the minimum wage and not incent them to stay at that wage. All American managers and executives will attest to the fact that no one in America stays at minimum wage if they are any good at all. And, since raising the minimum wage in America to \$15 would be so good for the economy; let's really improve the economy and raise that minimum to \$50.

Being poor in America is a function of many complex factors. But, as we shall discuss, few that have no developmental problems or self-imposed restrictions stay at minimum wage in America. Three factors would eliminate most of the poverty in America: 1) do not have children until you finish high-school and are married; 2) do not drop out of high-school without attending a trade school; and 3) stay away from drugs and criminals (Bennett and White, 2015).

To improve overall wages, do away with minimum wage and pay people what they are worth. Increasing a minimum wage is the opposite of the motivation needed and helps no one over the long run. Realize that all employers, other than governments, must pay less than someone's marginal contribution to stay in business (Walters, 2013). Additionally ask how good is it to makemore when prices reflect all of those costs? Start thinking here and realize that truths and facts are few and far between since the question quickly becomes, whose facts and whose truth! Minimum wage is a starting salary not a career. Most earning minimum wage in America know that; those that do not need to be informed not paid more. Few sources are given here, for the reader needs to really look into these issues: think and research, not just debunk!

### **Now the Truth: the Meaningful “Gap”**

The meaningful gaps worldwide in developed and free economies are in Attitudes, Abilities, Skills and Knowledge(A-ASK). Three of these gaps are within an individual's control and the other can always be better utilized. Enhancing incomes happens under the reality that for more rewards one must contribute to economic and societal enrichment. Large contributors gain by realizing more of their capabilities through determination, expanded thinking, training or education. Those gains enable contributors to obtain greater accountability-impact, solve pressing problems, advance distinctive skills and/or enhance knowhow. Further, sustainability of rewards requires rareness, value and the absence of substitutes or imitations: thus life-time innovative learning. Want to make a lot of money? Then develop something that will improve productivity (Diamandis and Kotler, 2015; Heilbroner and Thurow, 1998; and Landsburg, 1993).

Each successive “economic” revolution (hunter gathering-farming-industrial-information-IT/IS and the yet to be genetic-bio-tech artificial intelligence disruption) requires differing and most often higher levels of skill and knowledge. These “new” gaps need to be of primary concern: mind these gaps and the wage gap manages itself! Taxation for reducing wage gaps is harmful to all period; no ideology can change this actuality. Think; are governments more productive in areas of commerce, and can governments decide economic allocations fairly, effectively and efficiently? If we turn big oil over to the U.S. government petro would no doubt be cheaper, but could we get it? Recent reports shows that in Texas ICE spends some \$231 a night to house a detainee and in the same general location (yet a better area) a four start hotel room costs \$169: think and do some research.

### **Economic Improvement**

A simple reality is that too lift an economy for everyone, innovation and investment are requisite; and only those with funds beyond basic needs invest in new innovative ideas (Walters, 2013). One example would be that Bill Gates (Microsoft Billionaire) can do much better with a dollar than can a starving person (though we do not want people starving). In building a sustainably better economic future one of the worst uses for money is food and the best uses of money is to allow rich people to keep it and invest it. Gates made billions of dollars no doubt, but his products and services have increased and leveraged overall economic activity by trillions of dollars; and tax revenues from related activities are astronomical. In reality, the ultra-rich, beyond a few criminals or corrupt officials, realize an infinitesimally small fraction of the value they create for society. America's current super rich made their money with useful sellable products and services; creating and spreading affluence as they earn their thousands of millions and as they enable others to earn millions of millions. The unintended consequences of taxing the rich and giving to the poor must be understood and those consequences always include less investment and innovation, and more dependency along with reduced economic growth. Only by allowing opportunity and helping more people realize fully their abilities can any income gap improvement be sustained.

Think of all the brilliant minds that are not used to their full creative abilities; if that power were un-leased, the world's most pressing issues could be history.

### **College Degrees in America are too expensive for most**

In most U.S. states two year college educations are nearly if not free. In Alabama, our current state, anyone who makes about average on college entrance exams and can write a letter can get a full scholarship to a two-year college. And, that tuition in most states is below \$3,000 a year. Anyone in America who does well in the two-year college can go to a state supported school and work their way through the school if they can live at home and will

live modestly Any work in this area should be to make education more affordable, but not free, because we only need those in college who are qualified and who will sacrifice a bit. Look more closely at student loans in America and realize that many use the loans to live a more comfortable life while they get their education or for advanced degrees that payoff handsomely (Alexander, 2015 and Greenstein and Merisotis, 2015).

### **Taxing for What?**

Income tax and other nationwide taxing should be used for national income, not for providing subsidized organizational or individual incomes, nor should taxing be used to manipulate behavior or redistribute wealth. The attempts to use taxes for social engineering have continued to fail for simple psychological principles of accountability and responsibility. Income gained from taxing should be used to expand opportunity and unleash creativity with spending for long term effects not short term fixes: education versus subsidies, training versus minimum wages, allowing versus restricting, large infrastructure versus local pork, etc. Equal outcomes cannot be guaranteed. If we attempt equality of outcome we create a tangled web that never works as promised and incents no one to improve.

Yes, immense unintended consequences result with any form of redistribution or opportunity giveaways. The world's intellectuals and politicians must begin to honestly show people why wage gaps exist, not simply identify the gap and address with false wealth-destroying rearrangements.

An interesting study is to look closely at the 50 U.S. States and how each emerged from the last great recession which officially ended in 2009. The bottom line, according to Professor Edward Lazear of Stanford University, is that those states that were most business friendly and reduced taxation did the best (2015). Those that were more punitive in taxation and regulation did not do well at all. Do your own research here. However, don't look only for confirming evidence, look for facts. We humans are exceptional at making up our minds very quickly and then searching for evidence to prove we were right!

### **Employment Outcomes of All Types Differ, Why?**

Undoubtedly, in America as in such widely disparate places as China, Kenya and Germany the reasons for differences in all forms of employment outcomes (hiring, promoting, paying, firing, and so on) are complex matters as are the so-called facts that measure those differences (Lahart, 2015; and Service and Carson, 2010b). And, yes, the reasons are different in China and Kenya but we need to use facts when coming up with remedies. But, what are facts? One fact we can be sure of is that 2 things + 1 thing = 3 somethings. But, the question quickly becomes 3 what? Economies have thousands of "things" and the resulting combinations and permutations of "somethings" cannot be accurately predicted given the vastness of human differences.

### **So what is The Answer?**

Start by realizing that taxation needs to be simplified, certain, and used to generate income, not to influence. Let people keep the majority of what they earn and the resulting innovation will astound individuals and governments. Universal sustainable prosperity abounds when opportunities are expanded not so with mandated realignments. Someone else cannot determine what another individual does with opportunity: some will always use it effectively for the greater and self-good, and others will waste it and demand the next forced equalizer. In economics and human behavior incentives matter and we must "allow and even demand" incenting people to do better with their A-ASK and allow unpleasantness if people do not. If it is made easy to not live up to one's potential, human nature says many will take the easy route. We do no one a favor by allowing them to live their life and not realize some of the potential they were born with: maximizing self-actualization is rewarding. Taxes and related redistributions don't motivate people or grow economies. Giving keeps people in the slavery of dependence. We did away with the terrible plight of slavery in most of the world, but we have replaced it with another form of dehumanizing dependence. Much of human nature among all nations revolves around seeking an easy way (Simon, 1957)! Study and forward wealth creation solutions for the future over redistribution.

If it's overall improvement in wages we desire, then eliminating the minimum wage will work best. Some people are not worth the minimum and all workers need incentives to do better.

Later we will look at a tax proposal that could help with debts, deficits and the difficulties of calculating and collecting taxes. But, now we look at some related issues.

## **Choices are NOT simple and clear**

Most choices are not either-or but are more complicated continuums. Watch out for false dichotomies. To improve our economic circumstances, leadership, or management abilities, we must stop seeing the world with biased eyes missing the details, and start seeking the facts while not confusing facts with single stories. Traditional prescripts for how to better manage or lead cannot be repeated nor modeled in part because starting the improvement journey begins with self-knowledge. Even when one makes a 180-degree turn in any aspect of their lives, they end up in the same place they started. Progress from such a turn requires movement into the future and new direction. The present is a sum total of all the past and primarily shaped by each individual's interpretation, (perception) of where they have been and where they need to be going. Do not misrepresent where you have come from, where you currently find yourself, and where you need to be in order to succeed in the evolving globally hyper-competitive battleground.

## **By Thinking to Learn, we learn to think**

Recognize that your own thoughts are not your own independent thoughts. All thoughts are combinations of nature, nurture, environments, and choice. Moreover, the trouble with any system that attempts to control markets is who sets and changes the rules (Aredy, 2015; Baumohl, 2005; and Sharma, 2015). Markets are more like water, seeking their own natural level, than clay that awaits molding. Economic freedom requires personal responsibility (though we are not libertarians that view causes thought-see Palmer, 2013). Voting one's self an unearned share is not a sustainable responsibility. Growth for growth's sake is one of the worst strategies. Humans mostly use ideological fervor over analytical comprehension. Humans are more emotional than rational beings. Cause and effect often get hopelessly entangled. For cause and effect to be absolutely linked, there must be no alternative explanations. As skills required to compete in an economy increase, the least skilled will get hit the hardest. Knowledge and skills that are not constantly updated become useless. This article offers few pronouncements related to suggestions because readers need to do their own research. There are few if any facts that are not your facts! Let us now switch to an idea, presented as a straw-man proposal, about principles of reform for federal income tax in America that can be instructive worldwide.

## **So What Would a Good Tax Proposal Entail? An Example**

Presidential candidates, pundits and news sources all are describing U.S. federal income tax (FIT) plans that offer no real tax reform: making continued fools of U.S. taxpayers. Any useful reform of FIT must: 1-de-politicize code; 2-ease compliance and eliminate IRS powers; 3-be understandable and truthful; 4-eliminate FIT from financial choices; 5-disregard hired intermediaries-divert to creating versus shifting value; 6- stop guilty until proven innocence compliance; 7-make beneficiaries participators; 8-stop unintended consequences of manipulating behavior via taxing; 9-remove filing statuses and categories of income; 10-eliminate all deductions; 11-make FIT globally the most competitive; and 12-modestly increase individual and corporate FIT receipts.

Start by junking the notion that reducing the number of tax brackets reforms. A thousand brackets can be put into a \$2 calculator. Real reform eliminates filing statuses, categories of income and deductions for individuals and companies; no exceptions, favoritism or unintended consequences. FIT should raise money, not direct behavior for we have proven it will not work as intended. A personal pet peeve is the asinine call for the rich to pay their "fair share" in America where the top one percent pay over 29% of the FIT on about half that percent of income and the bottom 40% actually get money back. Those making over one million dollars a year represented .17% of the 140,500,000 returns and paid 20.5% of all FIT on 9.5% of total reported income as calculated from actual IRS data (run your own spreadsheets). America's FIT is the most progressive among developed nations. It leaves one to ask, what does a fair FIT mean? Below is a suggestion as to how we could accomplish these objectives and related improvements.



**Corporate/business FIT:** Generate more revenue and eliminate abuse by replacing **corporate FIT** with an **all organizations FIT** of 1.25% on all revenue, foreign or otherwise (include businesses, corporations, nonprofits/not-for-profits, and otherwise). Non-taxable entities get all the benefits that for-profits do and someone has to assign the exempt status. Organizations operating in America are all protected and benefit from being in America, so all should pay for those benefits and protections. Loop holes, so-called corporate welfare, deductions, classification, exemptions, exceptions for non-profits/religious classifications and so on, do not work as advertised nor do they separate church and state (currently 1.49% of revenue of all taxpaying entities in America today would increase receipts from business taxes).

**Individual FIT:** Put all taxes and benefits on pay checks: i.e. SS and Medicare taxes, health insurance and other “so-called” employee paid benefits. This is truth versus the “trick us” current approach. This is the real cost of employees that organizations “cost out.” Treat all incomes and filing statuses the same with no deductions: eliminate choice and assignment. Each Social Security Number would file a return. Start tax rates for everyone on all types of income at (-20)% on first \$15K; (-10)% on next \$10K (\$15-25K); 0% on next \$10k (\$25-\$35K); 12% on \$>35-60K; graduated percentages on \$25K income increments until 16% on \$>160K continuing through \$50K @+1% brackets ending at 25% (make individual FIT near revenue neutral-these proposals are close to neutral). The negative rates replace earned income credit and the fact that the other half of Social Security and employee-paid insurance is being added into salaries. This adds honesty as well as equalizing the playing field between self-employed and others; and it treats all incomes the same for everyone. Deductions and differentiation of incomes are tricks not viable policy (actual data by income category is available from the IRS at <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-soi/09in12ms.xls>).

One could easily come up with other proposals, examples and explanations, but hopefully the reader gets some of the points this paper is setting up as exemplars. Let us now go on to more general ways to improve solutions and strategies for addressing major issues.

## Thinking More Clearly

We all have cognitive biases that frame our thinking. These human thinking predispositions form “our” opinions and guide all decisions, especially on long standing complex issues. That is, when we are faced with difficult issues with many possible solutions we go back to our thinking frameworks. Additionally, worldwide media provides humanly biased information that also shapes opinions. The ability to understand cognitive biases of yourself and others is a prerequisite to improved thinking.

As professors, we use experiences about our work and those we have witnessed in action, as well as information we have read or heard, to tell students, stories, that even when backed by hard facts, are our perspective and emphasize what we wish. After all, as humans we are incapable of seeing total objective reality. Media and academic pronouncements merit objective analysis and tempering from diverse sources. Human inclinations are to think within established frameworks of our well gained biases framed by the truth that there are few facts in the most pressing global issues. These major issues can be skewed by statistics supporting dichotomous views. For example, in America we view accountability on the dichotomous margins of victimhood versus total personal responsibility for all things that happen to or with us. In reality most interpretations are not totally right or wrong, but on a scale of “different.” The core of human thinking always includes some facts, but we are incapable of defining what the facts are when the issues involve personal gain or loss and our emotions. Remember always that we cannot guarantee results when individual efforts and choices are required to reach desired outcomes. No one can motivate someone else; motivations come from within (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

Next, we define the more common biases in order to recognize their effects. Realizing self-imposed limits and limits of others helps us clarify reality.

## Clearer Thinking-Understand Ourselves

Thinking guidelines and related common biases are not altogether good or bad; they simply are. However, they are there forming the base for all frames of reference and mental models. We need to realize that our cognitive biases are all too often unknown to us (or at least not overtly). These thought approaches guide all views of others and cultures; thus they direct judgments and actions as we justify our place in the world (Dobelli, 2013; Service, 2012; and Service and Kariuki, 2012). When our frames are unconsidered or not known to us, our cognitive biases

keep us in a limited known and unknown ignorant unawareness (Bate and Child, 1987; and Service and Carson, 2010b). Intellectual preferences, miss-guided interpretations, or mathematical weaknesses keep us from defining issues correctly (Isaacson, 2007 and 2014).

Chopra and Mlodinow (2011), Dobelli (2013), Dorner (1993), Drucker (1985 a and b), Grudem and Asmus (2013), Guilford (1986), Landsburg (1993) and Sternberg (2003) provide a good start to defining normal overriding cognitive biases. The following section groups and categorizes the more common thinking inaccuracies using labels, but as stressed throughout this article “understanding beats labeling.” If you don’t fully understand a category of bias, stop and ponder anew why those words can change thinking. As you review this discussion remember that most things are not good or bad, but our thinking determines that man-made dichotomy.

Our lives are ruled by confirmation and attribution biases combined with self-justification, even though everyone realizes that correlation is not causation. Avoid thinking about justifying or IDing a pattern and you can find new avenues for innovative and expanded thought. We assess a lot of information in a manner that supports our prior conclusions. Look instead for contradictions and disconfirming or contradictory evidence. These attributional tendencies lead the successful among us to the “how I did it” arrogance (see Gladwell, 2008- real story of success). Avoid using narrative fallacies, 20-20 hind-sights and superficial knowledge, liking prejudices, self-actualization, fulfillment and expertise biases. Under and over confidence along with superficial knowledge are hallmarks of our biased thinking. The works of Brooks, Gladwell, Levitt and Dubner, Service and White, and Sternberg (see all dates) show that after-the-fact descriptions of how individuals became billionaires, professional athletes or otherwise rich and famous, mean little to the rest of us.

Avoid expert biases by remembering that most often experts know little outside of their expertise and favor what they know; ask what the advice giver has to gain? Normal biases give us a false sense of the probability of success, which is often due to purported common wisdom, close-at-hand biases, and/or the illusion of control over random events. Abundance of choices leads us to favorite solutions, and misunderstanding actual probabilities. Assess options on price performance benefits and real probabilities, not wishful thinking or strictly a comfortable decision. Coincidences are rare. What worked for “them” may or may not help “you.” Surround questions, answers, opportunities, strengths, weaknesses and threats with as near to a realistic framework as possible (Broom and Service, 2014; and Service and Carson, 2010a).

We live in a world where it has become acceptable to claim mathematical ignorance and we see more misuse of stats than proper use (Kerlinger, 1986). For example, look at the reported wage gap in the United States that is being cited in order to justify more transfer payments in the form of minimum wage, higher taxes, and welfare policies. Now realize that the “transfer” side of the argument uses statistics that do not include existing transfer payments in the gap calculations. Include the current transfers and you get a completely different picture!

Another example of distortions is the sad police killing of unarmed people of color in the United States. Seventy-six (76) of these tragic killings occurred from 1999 through 2014 (“NAACP LDF”, 2015). Yet, roughly 7,000 murders of blacks by blacks happen each year in America (FBI, crime statistic, 2012). That is 8-10 times the rate of murder in the rest of the American population. Put another way, America was involved in some 36 and a half years of war in Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq all combined. During those 36+ years at war America lost some 101,000 people in both combat and non-combat deaths. Over the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries 15 years to date there have been about the same number of blacks killed by other blacks in America: “the term epidemic is not a metaphor (Conlon, 2015: p. C1). As another example, look at the U.S. unemployment rate’s significant decline from the end of the recession in mid-2009 to late 2014 and see if that is supported when you determine that fewer prime-working-age Americans are working now than when the recession ended (Murray, 2013). Examples of this have no end. Europe has its Greek problems, a displaced persons crisis, and more, China has its stock market and ethical issue, among others; and across the world we see issues of terror, immigration, employment, hunger and more. Every country on earth is in need of solutions, but we’ll stop here and pick some of this back up later.

Readers need to think and research our assertions. But they need to do so using information that is free of third-party interpretation. Look into reports that have statistics as proof. These examples are not intended to be political, only observational to show how/why stats are often misused. We economists, social-scientist and statisticians can “prove” about what we want too and avoid giving clear views from multiple angles. Raw data is hard to come by but it is the most useful (prefer .gov, irs, fbi and so on stats).

Please note that we prefer the word “black” to race because to us there is only one race, the human race; and yes we just happen to have a few different paint jobs. In this article I refer to black as a category of a current American culture that has since the passing of the 1964 civil right act spiraled downward in areas of family, education, drug usage, gangs and violent crime. It is also worthy of note that the term race, has been considered a

meaningless term since the 1970s when it was determined there were more differences within races than between races (Ridley, 2003). The words “race” and “black” are being better understood as culture as we gain more information and do solid research. Lastly, the culture that leads to the noted spiraling downward is quickly moving away from a black and white issue to issues of economics (Bratton, 2015; Caperhart, 2015; and Murray, 2013-read this one on the coming apart of “white” America). Lastly, “lives matter” needs no prefix.

Things tend to return to the average over time and there is no balancing effect to independent events. Exponential growth is confounding and hard to understand. False comparisons using biased numbers and stats rule. And remember that single examples or small numbers might not indicate anything useful. The overall point is inadequate math skills too often provide an excuse to defining the right issue wrongly. Our overly informed, media-genic-connected world hazes thinking with information about outliers among us, those non-standard individuals or events that make spectacular headlines but do not capture the majority.

Academic research in management, leadership, strategy and even economics is NOT nearly as usefully productive as it should be in solving today’s complex issues (Mintzberg, 2004 and 2009; and Sternberg, 1996). We each should always ask “so what?” when we review any research, and question whether it can ultimately be applied. Yes, basic research is needed, but that is not the most pressing issue at this point we seem to have enough research for research’s sake and we need research that can be applied. So much of what we think we know is wrong and all of it is based on our slant on reality. Are you different from us? We all select facts we want and use them as we see fit to prove ourselves correct (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). We know one fact for sure: we might be wrong. Do you know this?

We prefer answers that suit us best and suffer from the illusion that we are good forecasters leading us to select alternatives with less conditions or circumstances that fit our preconceived notions. Other issues are distorted views of history, groupthink, perceived associations, preferring status quo and preferring the new over the old. Beginner’s luck or other randomness distorts our interpretations of causality. Association biases abound. Even experience can damage or improve judgment (Rumsfeld, 2013). We can only reinterpret what happened retrospectively (Blair, 2010; Bush, 2010; Obama, 2004 and 2006; and Reagan, 1990). Remember, tomorrow has the existence of yesterday, and we simply must live in our series of “nows.”

Sociology, psychology, economic theory and human nature say that people respond to the incentives and avoid pain or trouble (Landsburg, 1993; and Pinker all dates). Seldom do people respond to the intentions behind the incentives. All of us use false-logic anchors, assuming that if it has always worked it will work again. We believe our own soul-searching and discount that in others. And, sadly most of us use drivel (or hear it) to disguise ignorance.

Watch for unfounded fear, regret, procrastination and envy. Do not simply cherry pick the easiest solutions. Admit ignorance and avoid the illusions of knowledge, skills and abilities, and excuses for bad luck. Do not under or over think issues and answers (Gladwell, 2005; and Hall, 2011). Realize that everyone tries to see a single cause behind a complex issue when in reality there are few easy “one size fits all” answers or questions. Significant, main and prominent suppositions are the most noticeable and they may or may not be the most relevant.

Select “compassion others” carefully and realize that the simple and the complex must be analyzed as “guiding exemplars.” Do not only accept that which corresponds to your beliefs and self-image. We humans like to create dichotomies, simplifying to black and white those things that are nearly always gray. All of us love primacy and recent developments; and that old standby that it is “not our idea.” Book smarts don’t transfer to street smarts very well, and the opposite is no less true. Ask about everything you read or hear: “how can I use this or that insight or theory.” We can learn much from total nonsense: for one, a few people will believe anything.

Start to ID your preferences and preconceived biases with the clear understanding that understanding beats categorization, and all generalizations are wrong, including this one (Rumsfeld, 2013). Brooks says clearly that we all lie to ourselves more than anybody else (2011). Note also that if you change your default settings you can change “your” behavior (Service, 2005b). Clearer and more complete thinking leads to better results in life and innovations that can move a society forward (Broom and Service, 2014).

We all have all of these biases: don’t be fooled by yourself or others. Use the knowledge of biases to better utilize more of your innate abilities, and improve your learned competencies. Admit normal biases and then you can address them, ignore them and you’ll never know “things” more completely. To date there are no magic bullets or pills, no single or even simple secret answers to life’s complex issues (Aczel, 1999; Tyson, 2007; and Von Bertalanffy, 1968). Only disciplined hard balanced effort and rethinking works (Service and Arnott, 2006).



## Questions are More Important than Answers

The chief question for any proposed rule, regulation, law, policy, action, change, addition or deletion (innovative or otherwise) related to the key issues of the day for you, your organizations, your country or the world becomes: are we identifying and addressing the actual core issue not the presenting complaints? Proceeding to other questions can cause real damage if this first reality step is not addressed correctly. What are the questions after admitting biases and clarifying our issues?

1. Who are the stakeholders and how does the proposed solution affect each?
2. Will this make the “new” or “different” more truthful and easier to understand?
3. Does this benefit the individual, company, county or world? Will this make it easier to establish or expand business, hire more people, improve profits, draw more customers, improve financial gains, enhance company-organizational-personal-governmental condition, and so on? That is, productivity improvement is the only way to improve the overall good of an economy.
4. Does this make it easier to follow the new or different policy/law/rule: strategy?
5. Will this reduce the national/local, personal/organizational deficit and debt?
6. How will this help move people and organizations to independence; or create opportunities (expand the economic pie)?
7. Will this increase stability personally, organizationally, locally . . . worldwide?
8. Will the change make me more innovative and/or help others be more innovative?
9. Will this help me or others reach or expand our potential?
10. What is the risk/reward relationship: Cost Benefit Analysis?
11. Will it provide superior value, be rare, have few substitutes; i.e. better than status quo?
12. How feared is the chosen alternative?
13. How deeply embedded is the current method?
14. Will the solution build or replace relationships?
15. How easy is it to back out of the solution? Do you have a plan B, C, and so on?
16. Is the information you are following solid or made-up? Are your sources reliable?
17. Were all choices IDed and addressed (include equal assessment of the status quo)?
18. Will more time or resources allow for more or better information, or just waste time?
19. What are alternative motivations for stakeholders to behave differently than anticipated?
20. What are likely/unlikely unintended consequences (modified from Service and McEwen, 2015)?  
A long list indeed, but can we afford to overlook any of them?

## Examples-questions and real choice clarity

Here we take an unusual tack for an academic paper in order to demonstrate thinking anew from “another” perspective. We do this by presenting real choices over rhetoric where the evidence is clear. First, minimum wage issues and choices are clear. You can either 1) increase discrimination (mostly against disadvantaged youths in America), reduce jobs, slow training and development, increase low end prices or 2) work to improve attitudes, knowledge and skills (Miller, Benjamin and North, 2012). Second, on income gaps you can either 1) accept them as progress or 2) reduce the well-being of an entire economy. On increasing free trade you can either 1) reduce the living standard of all or 2) increase the living standard of all (Walters, 2013). Third, on markets you can either 1) leave them alone taking losses with gains or 2) or intervene and control and cause greater swings (China in July of 2015 is a great study of control). Fourth, on taxes you can either 1) tax the wealthy more and reduce the efficiency and effectiveness of an economy and collect less taxes or 2) reduce taxes on the wealthy and generate more income for all including the government (Miller, Benjamin and North, 2012). Fifth, you can 1) restrict company profits or scope (i.e. think about Wall-Mart) and increase prices and unemployment for all or 2) allow companies to keep prices low and employment high. Sixth, accept that 1) the wage gaps between women and men, and blacks and whites in America are very small for the “exact same work and results” or 2) keep playing the divisive race and gender cards. Seventh, understand the impacts of issues from 1) your own personal facts or 2) understand the underlying facts: remain ignorant or learn some things. Eight, either; 1) control outcomes and disadvantage the most

productive among us or 2) control opportunities and leave some of the disadvantaged behind (includes laggards and those with issues of birth). Ninth, in America focus on 1) the 5 unarmed people of color killed by police a year (see “NAACP LDF” report,” 2015 for one of the only sources you can trust here) or 2) the 7,500 blacks killed by blacks a year (53% of murders are committed by one category that represents 13% of the population in America—see FBI, crime statistics). Lastly, one we have not talked about is to 1) pay all professors the exact same amount in Universities and lose talent in law, medical, and business schools or 2) keep paying professors what the market demands and keep qualified brain surgeons for teaching other brain surgeons—and you get the drift (Augrist and Pischke, 2009; Heilbroner and Thurow, 1998; Miller, Benjamin and North, 2012; Walters, et al, 2013; and others too numerous to list).

The choices may seem oddly presented, but they are no less true. The intent is not to hurt feelings, but we would rather risk being called a “you know what” than continue to witness the false narratives being forwarded in the current press. Similarly, the time and talent wasted in so many academic articles begs for a change in honest significance. Let us commit to stopping the arbitrary categorizing of people. We call upon you to do your own research and realize that our limitations, lamentations and possibilities are mostly bounded by our own thinking and actions (Augrist and Pischke, 2009; and Collins, all dates). Yes, the economic rule of rules is that if “it” is spent here “it” can’t be spent there and “it” came from somewhere. “It” is all categories of resources from talents to money.

## Strategy

To this point we have continued in this article that all too often “I’ve IDed it and it’s solved” is the approach we academicians prefer. Let us change that at this point. The answer in part is further developing and using the creativity of more of us toward innovative solutions under clear thinking about real issues that answer critical questions. Innovation has been and will continue to be the path to advancing personally, to enhancing organizational performance and survivability, improving economic prosperity, and keeping and expanding freedoms (Peters, all dates; Porter, all dates; and Potoker, 2011, among many others). Growing economies are the only sustainable strategy for improving the lot of all. Yet, failed approaches continue to be popular: historical ignorance abounds. Rational ignorance and the fact that we do what we are incited to do is clear. All alternatives have costs trade-offs that can’t be ignored. To achieve overall good we must accomplish needed innovation in governments, commerce and all areas of life (Ashton, 1969 and Banerjee and Duflo, 2011). More innovation occurs when more of us open our minds and re-think anew in a creatively competent fashion. How many Husain Bolts would be out there if the world was open with good nutrition and opportunity for all? How many value creators like Buffet, Gates, Jobs and so on are we missing? That said, the strategy for sustainable competitive advantage is rapid incremental innovation (Broom, Loudon, Service and Sonius, 2014). The more that obtain and sustain competitive advantage, the more advantaged are all.

Innovation involves getting ideas to market or use where the change is new to the implementing entity. Innovation reforms, changes, deletes or add incrementally or revolutionally methods, products, services, governments and views. Innovation produces something new, improves something old, increase efficiency/productivity, etc., but ultimately it must be realized in application to be labeled an innovation (Olsen, 2012). All management gurus proclaim that innovation can and must be pursued with dynamism, presented as a discipline to be taught, learned, practiced; and, most importantly, kept in the forefront of all that an organization does (see Drucker, writings about Drucker; and Burns and Stalker, 1961).

If we want more successes we must tolerate more failures. Innovation is only positive in retrospect (Isaacson, 2014 and Landsburg, 1993). The difference between a “flop and a viable “innovation” is determined by the end results, but often short term failures or success have long term results that are the opposite. Contrary to popular and common wisdom, innovators capture only a minuscule fraction of the value created by their innovation. Think again about Jobs, Buffett, Gates, Oprah, American football great Tom Brady or the Jordon effect in basketball and many, many others that have added to economies as they receive their appealingly astronomical rewards: they all are worth it or would not receive “it” (Colino, Benito-Osorio and Armengot, 2014; Conard, 2012; Gates, all dates; Grudem and Asmus, 2013; Hubbard and Kane, 2013; Kennedy, 1987; and Landsburg, 1993). Religious organizations seem to have a problem with profits even though they gladly take excess profits which otherwise would enhance the general welfare as someone makes money deploying their talents. Finally, most businesses understand that one-time profit at all costs is not a sustainable existence; giving more for the money increases value and seeking win-win solutions insures their longevity (Barney, all dates, and Charan, 2007). Long-term businesses

and politicians exemplify the right things beyond profits or reelection. Any and all improvements must start with opening of our minds about self-knowledge followed by improvement in attitudes, skills and knowledge that are more appropriately utilized (Arbinger Institute, 2000; Lindblom, 1959; Neck and Manz, 2013; Pinker, 2002; and Yukl, 2009).

Always keep in mind the biases, frameworks and mindsets that surround our thinking about what we experience or want to accomplish as you work to become and remain innovative (Mintzberg, all dates). Our perception is our reality and yours is yours; maybe the two are equal, but they probably are not. Our choices are between taking mindsets and biases that are unknown and unconsidered, versus ones that are known and subject to the challenge and expansion (Service and Reburn, 2014).

Mintzberg in *Managers not MBAs* (2004) supports this call for reality over academic theories. Practical, applicable knowledge will be far more valuable to the enterprising young professional than isolated theories and ideals. Not to say that we don't need theories or basic research, they have a place, but subsisting in a vacuum robs the mind of functionality. The problem in higher level academically referred publishing is not the need for more theory or pontificating, but the need for more solutions.

It took academics 300 years to realize what common people already knew — rocks fall from the sky as meteorites. Academics did not realize the impact of Japanese cars on the American auto industry as it was occurring. Academic experts did not think anyone needed computers in their homes. Early academic theoretical experts knew that in theory heavier-than-air flying machines were impossible (Williams, 2010)! Recently, academia and almost everyone else, was out-to-lunch when it came to predicting the 21<sup>st</sup> century's first economic bubble burst (Allison, 2013). Expand academic horizons and realize that good ideas and accurate foresight can come from any source: diversify your knowledge base. When we feel we can't learn from a source, we're right and we won't. Don't confuse cannot and will not (Wooden and Jamison, 2005).

If we want to solve the most pressing issues that have exemplified themselves in Greece, China, the American market computer meltdown of July 8, 2015, and so on, then we all must be more innovative (Angelo, 2015; Stephens, 2015; and Walters, 2013). The world is headed toward more man-made disasters without some innovative ideas. The most predictable of all coming problems is reflected by Greece in 2015. Why don't academicians pounce all over this? Let us turn academic conventional wisdom on its head, junk the damned political correctness, and innovate in big and small ways to assure at least the possibility for a better future. Search for and develop insights that lead us towards improving the future. Improve your creative confidence to become and remain innovative (Kelley and Kelly, 2013).

Consider whether you prefer a totally vulgar politically incorrect truthful statement or a lie? Who had you rather have covering your back in a brawl or on the battle field; a smart academic liberal or a hobnailed gun toting redneck? We are criticizing academicians because we are them. Though we academics certainly have no corner on the market when it comes to cloudy restrictive thinking and innovation, we also could learn a lot from the gross undereducated and ill-informed.

## Leading for Innovation toward Effecting Change

Leaders should be viewed as conduits that link people to desired futures, realizing that no identified trends lead to envisioned improved futures. That leap requires faith and hard work. Being a truly innovative leader requires one to be curious and daring. Study, travel, interactions with people, work, play, reflection, and mistakes all become sources of knowledge and understanding used as a base for innovation (Bennis, all dates; and Mendenhall, et al, 2008-great academic review). Failures are the ultimate feedback; and yes, failure sucks, but it instructs.

Leadership in the past has emphasized stability and control. This must shift with our technologies on steroids, more educated workers and globalization (Friedman, all dates). The shift is toward rapidity, shared empowerments, flexibility, and organizational learning directed at more innovativeness. Globalization, the information revolution and its related communications technology and more widespread education make it necessary to evolve rapidly, and to involve everyone in innovative change. Better and more completely exploiting change opportunities for innovativeness is THE key. Businesses, universities, churches, labor unions, doctors, hospitals, governments, individuals and all organizations decline if they fail to innovate (Drucker, 1985 and Porter, 18990). Improve it or lose it. The failure to innovate is the largest reason for organizational and personal failure or decline (Colino, et. al., 2014 and Evanschizky, et al, 2012).

A leader's effectiveness is measured by their ability to communicate with clarity and conviction (Covey, all dates and Michelli, 2008). Clarity allows leaders to continue to interpret the context of the situation in which they

lead toward fostering innovation. Effective leaders understand the process and context of leadership situations, and they must be innovative in their approaches to guiding others in reaching envisioned futures (Service, 2005a). Being an innovative leader is largely a matter of desire and focus (Albrecht, 2003; Imai, 1986; and Michelli, 2008). Often the desire is big and the effort is small.

### **“The” Sustainable Strategy - Rapid Incremental Innovation**

Closing the so-called income gaps, eliminating huge national debts, developing and using all the enormous talent that is available in the world requires new thinking and actions (“CBO” and “Who Owns U. S. Debt,” 2015)! The solutions of old have been neither efficient nor effective (Banerjee and Duflo, 2011; Butler, 2007; Conard, 2012; Dorner, 1996; Gladwell, 2013; Grudem and Asmus, 2013; Leighton and Lopez, 2013; Ridley, 2014 and; Thornton, 2012).

Many more of us must incessantly ID and implement innovations for sustainable improvements and profitability in today’s complex and competitive global market. The only strategy for doing this as a sustainable competitive advantage is rapid incremental innovation. Maintain a questioning mindset; can you see a different picture of the situation, can you see different alternatives for addressing issues (Gaynor, 2002)? Curiosity surrounds behavior of people who succeed in innovatively leading change (Saba, 2011 and Service and Boockholdt, 1998). A key choice is between 1) admitting and addressing your unknowns and un-considereds, or 2) self-imposed ignorance (Chopra and Mlodinow, 2011).

Drucker said that all the successful entrepreneurs he had met have a:  
commitment to the systematic practice of innovation. . . innovation: the effort to create purposeful, focused change in an enterprise’s economic or social potential (p. 143) . . . There are, of course, innovations that spring from a flash of genius. Most innovations, however, especially the successful ones, result from a conscious, purposeful search for innovation opportunities, which are found only in a few situations. Four such areas of opportunity exist within a company or industry: unexpected occurrences, incongruities, process needs, and new knowledge (p. 144). . . . The unexpected failure may be an equally important source of innovation opportunity (p. 145). . . . Purposeful, systematic innovation begins with the analysis of the sources of new opportunities (p. 154). . . . Above all, innovation is work rather than genius. It requires knowledge. It often requires ingenuity. And it requires focus. . . . Innovation is both conceptual and perceptual (155). . . . In innovation, as in any other endeavor, there is talent, there is ingenuity, and there is knowledge. . . . when all is said and done, what innovation requires is hard, focused, purposeful work. If diligence, persistence, and commitment are lacking, talent, ingenuity, and knowledge are of no avail (Drucker [1985b] in *HBR’s 10 Must Reads on Innovation*, 2013:p. 156).

### **What Strategy Is and Is Not**

Strategy begins and ends with world-views. That is, where “your” world is and where you need it to be within your area of concern. Then it becomes managing the gap between where you are now to where you might be, can be, want to be, and ought to be, and most importantly where you need to be. Strategy indicates what the leader’s interpretation of the situation is (their reality) and the how, what, where, when, who and why of accomplishing the leader’s vision. Effective strategic thinking must be a circular, never-ending process and does not follow the normal path of studying, planning, executing, evaluating and adjusting (Service, 2006). Moreover, Barney (all dates) calls for products and services to be 1) rare, 2) of value, 3) have no substitutes, and 4) no imitations for the possibility of sustainable advantage. Michael Porter (all dates) adds to Barney’s extensive work when he calls for products and services that are 1) differentiated, 2) low-cost, and/or 3) focused. Together these points lead to continuous innovation.

Since only change is sustainable, in order for a strategy to be sustainable it must revolve around rapid incremental innovation. Other strategies run their course and eventually lead to failure because of ever-changing circumstances. There are plenty of descriptions of the strategic cycle, therefore we go directly to specifics as to how to achieve rapid incremental innovation (Broom, et al, 2014; Mintzberg, et al, 2005; and Service and McEwen, 2015).

### **Innovative Strategy in Today’s World**

Sustainable innovations in commerce come through new products (R & D), best quality (TQM), best procurement (JIT), more features (functionality), lower costs, or the best service. In reality, competitive advantage comes through a combination of several of the prior components. Regardless, advantage will only come through value as the customer (client, student, employer, citizen, etc.) defines it. Most of us would agree that the world has the means to solve our pressing issues. However, we lack the will to even openly discuss them, yet alone solve them. If we are not talking freely about our most difficult issues, can we in any way expect to solve them? Starting now let us commit to forgetting political correctness and go for open honesty.

Key success factors of strategies for innovative solutions involve attention, focus, fit, and balance (Service and Arnott, 2006 and Stalk and Hout, 1990). Visualizing and reinterpreting on-going actions are foundational to strategy. Clarifying the future requires judgment and good decision-making followed by action (Cortada and Hargraves, 1999; and Zenger, Folkman and Edinger, 2009). Move outside normal patterns of thinking and disciplines to think and reflect in new and innovative ways. Difficult is not impossible (Gladwell, 2013; Service, Loudon and Kariuki, 2014; and Zander, and Zander, 2000). The more time we devote to learning and relationship building, and the less time on maneuvering for power, the more successful we become (Bradberry and Greaves, 2009). Too many are immobilized when strategizing how to handle the unknowns (Rumsfeld, 2013; Safire and Safire, 2000; and Sandys and Littman, 2003). Even for things to stay the same, things are going to have to change!

### Accomplishing Rapid Incremental Innovation

Actions and concepts are:

- Do it **shave the fuzzy front end**; you have something to adjust (Service and Arnott, 2006).
- Quick, fitting and simple **incrementalism**; do not exclude block-busters but don't count on them (Broom, et al, 2014; and Service and Boockholdt, 1998).
- Use teams only when they are necessary **teams end-to-end**, not exactly? Always **use involvement, modularity, parallelism and soft** controls and avoid group happy talk (Alexander and Knippenberg, 2014; and Lencioni, 2002; and Sunstein and Hastie's 2014).
- **Manage situations and people or they manage you** (Drucker, 1995; Maas, 1998; Robbins, 2002; and Sun Tzu, 1963).
- **Innovation mindsets must be held by all**—strategies for long run survival and improved standards of living come from novel interpretations of existing knowledge (Broom, et al, 2014; and Service and Reburn, 2014).
- **Frame bending**—things do not have to be the way they have been (McIntosh, 2011).
- **Mold organizations**—organizations are arenas where coalitions vie for dominance, often requiring a crisis to trigger significant action (Kilmann, Kilmann, and Associates, 1991; and Yukl, 2013).

Continually re-re and-reassess **the importance of process, purpose, and payoff**. Gather as much information as reality allows in order to analyze, anticipate, act, adapt and readapt. Assess context as well as content. All true change champions realize:

1. Leadership cannot be delegated when change is the mantra.
2. Managers are required to convert visions of change into reality.
3. Techniques and technologies of today will be obsolete tomorrow.
4. People all make mistakes, but experimenting is learning.
5. Showing replaces telling: active engagement beats other forms of innovative learning (Pink, 2009).
6. Reward behaviors and results you need and you'll get them; adjust rewards often.
7. The norm is resistance to change.
8. Seek, get, save, and use feedback.
9. Eliminate change barriers—people, processes, products, services, etc. often.

From firsthand accounts of those present when disaster occurred, through our eyes, and from many of the listed references, the following are offered as “insights” on the roots of executive failure. Those that failed at higher levels:

1. Did not figure out and address the politics associated with handling key constituents.



2. Failed to clearly ID why someone chose to do business with their organization.
3. Misread their competition and the benefits competitors provided.
4. Fulfilled wrong or incomplete visions and wasted resources.
5. Addressed symptoms instead of the real underlying issues.
6. Used favorite, often worn out, solutions instead of innovative resolutions.
7. Simply did not have a strategy: slogans are not strategies!
8. Held inaccurate, incomplete, or hindsight reality views.
9. Ignored vital information sticking to what they wanted to know.
10. IDed too closely with an individual, group, company, or industry.
11. Became frozen by the “menace” of change.
12. Were **NOT** generally greedy, inept, or careless.

Most who failed chose not to cope with the clear thinking necessary to address reality in new or innovative ways. They chose instead to stay with the comfortably familiar disregarding proof that old solutions have failed (Dotlich and Cairo, 2003; Douglas, 2004; and Drucker 1967 and 1973).

### Using the Principles

Start viewing life as a short experiment which is meaningfully enhanced by forwarding innovative ideas that are appropriate, balanced and fit within leadership wisdom. All progress and learning starts by admitting how little we know of what there is to know. Progress continues only as we broaden knowledge by being in the moment where we are connected at times, and disconnected at others. Improvement in economic circumstances, leadership, or management requires that we stop seeing the world with unknown biased eyes thus missing most details.

Real “decider in chiefs” are out there doing “it” now: innovating and leading. Once “we” become the “describers” through our research, the resulting stories of success or failure (unconsciously or purposefully) change. With our own actions we justify; and we describe the worst about those with whom we disagree and the best about our advocates. Neither deciders nor researchers are necessarily wrong, we are simply humans with humanistic explanations. Rationalizations are keys to healthy survival and they show that we are simply incapable of defining “the” reality. We only describe “our” reality, and our reality often says more about us than it does what we are describing (Service and Lockamy, 2008). Observing changes descriptions (Fullan, 2001 and Isaacson, 2007). We too often see beginners luck taken for talent, regression to the mean as a causal link, correlation as causation, and all of the other biases we have described in this manuscript. Major decisions are relatively unique to the time, place, and people involved with a complexity that will not be duplicated.

In summary, it is difficult to model or anticipate, and even tougher to describe the reality of the past. All descriptions are colored by relational roles of the describer, deciders, protagonist, researcher, friend, enemy, or you name it.

Every one of us chooses “rational ignorance” where we purposefully stay ignorant to a degree instead of investing time and energy on understanding. After all, it would be next to impossible to be up on every issue of the day. Even experts can’t know it all. However, when we have “known” rational ignorance that is one thing, but when we have “unknown” rational or irrational ignorance, that is quite another. All categories of ignorance are often characterized by people saying, “I don’t know a damn thing about that but . . . here is my uninformed dumb opinion about it.” Or at least that is what they should say!

Knowledge applied in an appropriate balanced fitting way that suits the situations and people at hand, can denote wisdom (Hall, 2011). Purposefully expanding knowledge is a justifiable academic means to making better judgments. These expansions of knowledge through wisdom are keys to acting and measuring as we continually adjust to make situations, things, and people better. Never forget biases and always evaluate unintended circumstances and likely responses to any change. Change policies and rules often because people will “play the game” to benefit themselves. Most of us do not try to improve

the underlying intent of a reward; we try to get the reward. Change these inclination and become a doer that leads a lasting strategy of rapid incremental innovation: just do it!

To become more innovative, act that way. Innovation includes creativity and is not necessarily limited to or by originality (Kelley and Kelley, 2013).

### **What can we infer at this point? A lot and not too much!**

Based on our research and experience it appears that leadership for innovation is a shared worldwide requisite. Problems and solutions will differ to agree, but effective analysis and innovative strategies are universal. Moreover, desired lasting leadership effectiveness requires a commitment to a life-long journey of purpose and learning.

We often stop thinking when we count the mission as completed. Few if any major issues remain solved. The more effective managers and leaders always give you more questions or point you to a source of information rather than a direct answer. This pointing encourages growth by requiring us to continually seek new and “improved” knowledge rather than a transitory answer. Continuously study with these thoughts: 1) avoid developing or following lists, instead of learning to think, reflect and generalize, rethink, repurpose and so on; 2) leaders mean little, only leadership counts; 3) stop trying to predict the future and shape it; 4) effective leadership encompasses appropriateness, balance and fit among a) the leader, b) the followers and c) the situations/environments; 5) genuine education starts and ends with admission of ignorance, avoiding false dichotomies, seeking truth, stressing clarity, accepting ownership and growing versus redistributing; 6) changeless principles direct the fundamentals of success and apply equally under varying circumstances; 7) we all are constantly evaluated and judged and we must consider the perspectives of those judging; and lastly, 8) act or nothing happens.

Over the years while managing, leading, teaching, consulting and researching we have come to the conclusion that mindsets of leaders are key. The mindsets that make for effective leaders for innovation encompass: 1) truth/truthfulness and trust/trustworthiness, 2) personal and group development, 3) curious flexibility, 4) incremental and revolutionary knowledge expansion, 5) personal and organizational innovativeness, 6) cross-cultural appropriateness, 7) balanced creative and practical problem solving for fitting solutions, 8) accountability and collaboration, 9) leveraging and applying knowledge, skills, and abilities, and 10) seeking excellence through realization, reception, reflection, and reproduction. Self-improving effective, innovation leaders never arrive, they continuously strive to improve personal effectiveness in all they do while guiding others in their journeys of development. In aggregate, cultivating, re-cultivating, re-re-cultivating and on and on, sense of accountability centered on unceasing learning and unlearning, addressing critical problems, and creating better futures through improved performance, growing economies and solving critical issues under ethical excellence is LEADERSHIP (Maxwell, all dates; and Service, 2009a and b). Academia needs to lead the shift, moving our publications toward creating a better future.

### **Prepare for the future, as you live in the present with the past close at hand**

In the current complicated and convoluted globally connected world of commerce and politics, effortless useful explanations rarely if ever exist. Even when we find that golden nugget of an answer it does not stay right long. Events are the result of many compounding factors interacting in unpredictably complex ways (Corbin, and Strauss, 2008). Shaping a better future never ends. Perspectives must capture and recapture much of the “real” complexity by encapsulating multiple ranges of views and solutions. Make everything as simple as possible; not simpler (Albert Einstein).

A strategy with quantifiable measures that can track success or identify problem areas is a must (Hunger and Wheelen, 2011). Strategy formulation rule one: have a strategy; and rule two: Measure “it” and “it” will improve (Mintzberg, Ahlstrand, and Lampel, 2005; Porter, all dates; and Service, 2006). What we choose to do and measure counts more than what we have. When something is important to someone they find a way and when it is not we find an excuse. Action is a prerequisite for accomplishment. Give more to get more. Stay alert and put forth effort. “Ideas usually cannot be imported without modification. The cultures and other aspects of leadership and management are different; therefore, that they fail without some modification shouldn’t be surprising (Cohen, 2010: p. 14).”

## Management and Leadership Wisdom

The principles defined and outlined here are primarily from American and western European perspectives. Other cultures require differing examples or ways of seeing or arranging principles. The “what” is usually not different, but the “how” often is very different culture to culture. Below are universal realities within and between cultures (Elmer, 2002; Mendenhall, et al, 2008; Sarros, Cooper and Santora, 2008; and Service and McEwen, 2015).

1. Grow and remain above board.
2. Help others grow professionally, relationally, educationally, intellectually, physically, etc.
3. Be a life-long student, teacher, mentor, mentee.
4. No answer is an answer of inaction; no decision is a decision and not that great of a choice.
5. There are at least two views of all things: most things are good at one time and bad at another.
6. In all things the main causes of failure are inaction and staleness (Doltish and Cairo, 2003).
7. Education starts by admitting ignorance.
8. Learning makes for a full life.
9. Everyone is entitled to their opinions, but not to their own facts.
10. For every complex problem, we find simple, easy explanations or solutions that are wrong.
11. Know what is important and what is urgent: don't confuse the two.
12. If you don't know, you won't grow – mind gaps. Stay informed when enacting the future.
13. Be the example.
14. Inspire, enable, act and challenge.

At this point one needs to ask the famously important question: so what? It should be clear that leadership is influence that moves followers into new and differing areas. To become and remain innovative, mind the many gaps you can identify, such as what the market is versus what it could be, what something does versus what it could do, is versus should be, right to do versus what should not be done, etc. Define where you are in many areas related to the being and doing lists shown here; and then identify where you need to be in each of those areas as you continue to mind those gaps!

Humans most often gain wisdom by properly reflecting on their own mistakes and triumphs, and not treating those two results as the same: know failures that are disguised successes and the opposite (Hall, 2011; and Sternberg all dates). Differentiate wisdom and results from intentions and actions. Realize that leadership is in a large part management done well. The “non-leadership” parts of management are programmable and easily followed for the sake of efficiency. Management is indeed doing things right and leadership is doing more of the right things; management is keeping people in the known and leadership moves people into the unknown. To continue to expand influence and ideas, develop people capable of exhibiting leadership as human influences through management, discerning selection, meaningful relationships, and creditability on appropriately balanced scales.

All of the research depicts the circularity of leadership wisdom. Good lasting (in part because it is effective) leadership requires understanding of equifinality and multiplicity. Equifinality, a principle observed in open systems, shows effective leadership is nothing if not an open system (Andrews and Johnson, 2002; and Von Bertalanffy, 1968). **Equifinality** indicates that there exist many means to desired ends. Equifinality implies that individuals and organizations can obtain advantages and success in even radically different ways; and principles of equifinality show that what worked or works for one may or may not work for or apply to another in another time or place. **Multiplicity** means that “things” (which humans work with and for) become increasingly more complex, ambiguous, multitudinous, and uncertain in breadth and depth over time. Conversely, leadership wisdom is often useless when we select the wrong issues to address (Cantrell, 2009; Drucker all dates; and Peters all dates). An individual's most valuable asset is not their time, but their focused attention: select wrong and you will be less effective. The “worst” failed “innovation” leadership and management habits are normally unrelated to effort or purposeful ethical lapses; they are instead caused by, 1) distrust – justified or not, 2) failing to act – no decision, and 3) selecting the wrong issues to address (Buford, 2014).

## Conclusions

We start this final section with words from an account of Dutch Holland (a young business man) in 1946 as he dined at Cambridge with noted historian and The Master of Trinity, G. M. Trevelyan. Holland wrote, the other quests seemed involved in equally earnest conversions . . . It would have been impossible not to be impressed with the learning and intelligence. . . . I was enjoying the experience, the situation, and the

kind of talk, seemed so disconnected from my world and life. . . I turned to Professor Trevelyan and said that I could easily see the great brain-power seated around this table but what I didn't understand was why it wasn't being used for more practical effect, being harnessed for building up industry in the country . . . We'll it may have been the view of the business world from the master's lodge at Trinity College but it wasn't mine (Holland, 2009: p. 218-220).

We do not see much change from 70 years ago. Maybe it is time the academy tried some differing approaches?

Let us be clear, although there may be many issues with this article that need to be expanded, reworked, do not let that deter you from getting the overall message and thinking anew about some of the most difficult issues we face. If the reader just walks away because of differences of opinion, a politically incorrect statement, errors of commission or omission, and whatever, then this article has failed and we all will suffer. The point is to take what one gets and use it to the best possible advantage toward solving often unspeakable concerns or seemingly unsolvable problems. Think of this as many feel their situation is hopeless for when they think that to it is hopeless "to" them it becomes true; but it is not hopeless "for" them for where there is life there is hope (Frankl, 1992-read this classic). If you don't agree with parts of the paper or the straw-man proposals made as examples, then publish a response that clearly addresses the noted shortcomings and suggest an alternative. Direct more of academia toward real problem definitions and solution suggestions in open, feedback-rich conferences and publications. This will result in effective innovation leadership that can be held up to the light of day and modified or tested.

Always keep in mind that there are several kinds of leaders: miss, winner, me, get, know, do and be. "Be" beats them all for lasting leadership effectiveness. Think about the implications of these refined distinctions as you attempt to lead in your work and life!

Submit and publish more academic papers that show contributors are thinking more clearly, addressing major problems and important questions, suggesting innovative solutions and leading the charge to chunk the constrictive academic bounds of the past.

Nothing occurs until someone does something. Let all academics begin to focus more on real issues and less on avoiding and not saying anything that might be taken wrongly. Condone academic articles that do that; don't condemn them! When someone fails to mention something it should not exclude any usefulness from what is said. And, finally, the research behind innovation directing and strategic leadership is not complete (DuBrin, 2004 and Service, et al, 2014). Only realization of short-comings and the uncommon, hard, innovative work of a leader and his/her committed followers can move us from the darkness of the unknown into the light of knowledge, grasping a glimpse of what the future can become (Tracy, 2010-how the lead best).

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