

Catalyst[©]

Catalyst is currently published 3 times a year, for alumni of DSI seminars and workshops to stay connected, and for coaching clients, prospective clients, and other interested parties to learn about who we are and what we do. Available electronically at www.DancingStar.com.

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How Stars Form: A Leadership Metaphor from the Sciences

Many thanks to Alejandro Levins for expanding my understanding of the metaphor and to Dr. Richard Huguenin for his explanation of how stars form.

Thinkers in the leadership arena take lessons from many disciplines – from acting to warfare to religion.

There's also a metaphor from the natural sciences that can help us understand how leaders emerge – the metaphor of star formation.

Stars form from pre-star clouds of gas, energy, and matter. Some stars become fully-formed spontaneously, others need external stimuli to do so.

The same is true of leaders. Some seem to have been born fully-formed leaders. Others become leaders when events land them in the right place at the right time, prepared or not.

And there are those who have all the elements but need a catalyst to coalesce. You've seen such people in school or at work – maybe you are one. You can feel the leadership potential, but there's a block which instead results in boredom, frustration, dissatisfaction, even explosiveness. Such people need help to move from swirling mass of energy and chaos to the fully coalesced leaders they are capable of being.

In a pre-star cloud, instability is good. Stars form from the randomness and nonconformity of the gases, in a part of the cloud that is spinning. Like a dancer bringing in her arms as she spins, speed increases and cen-

trifugal force results. Centrifugal force moves radially outward, gravitational force moves radially inward. If the two forces are equalized, the process of star formation stops. For the cloud to become a star, centrifugal force has to stop and allow gravitational force to increase.



NASA FORS Team photo of a spiral galaxy with arms (<http://apod.gsfc.nasa.gov/apod/ap030413.html>)

Back to our leaders-in-coalescence. If the internal forces driving them are equalized by external pressures (lack of time, insufficient or inappropriate support), they can become blocked and never fully reach their potential. However, working through internal forces that shed light on and impact external forces allows the process to continue to completion. As Dr. Huguenin observed, the applicability of the metaphor is that there are forces that need to be resolved and overcome before a cloud can form a star, or a person can become a leader.

Increased gravity causes the star's elements to collapse, generating heat high enough to start nuclear fusion, burn off excess gas, and form a star.

Leaders in the pressure cooker of competing demands, seemingly impossible challenges, and limited time can likely relate to what it feels like to go through a process of nuclear fusion. They have to harness chaos and manage unpredictability – it's the stuff of leadership. Advanced leaders also learn to harness their own inner chaos, knowing that navigating external chaos and "managing oneself" are both integral to successful leadership.

Back to science – sometimes external events catalyze star formation. Arms of a giant spiral in a pre-star cloud (*see photo*) are accessible to passing gravity waves. A wave that shocks interstellar gases in the arm creates an area of high density that speeds the star's formative process.

In the process of developing a leader, activities that "shock the system" can kick off a process that then allows the leader to take his most complete form. Such activities can be conscious and intentional or random – in my experience the most impactful are always experiential.

The process of becoming a leader is the stuff of myth and legend, and the external leader is shaped by what the "inner leader" experiences. No one has captured this more succinctly than German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, whom I paraphrase: *One must embrace the chaos within to give birth to a dancing star.*

– Deborah Huisken

ARE YOU UP FOR IT?

If you and your company are committed to having an impact in the world, and can use the services of a block-busting coach, consultant, or team facilitator to help you stay on target amid myriad demands, contact Dancing Star International, US landline: +1 617 275-5706; UK cell: +44 798 521-4520; e-mail: info@DancingStar.com, or find us on the web at www.DancingStar.com.

You can try to be the best in the world, or be your best for the world.

Make it a point to look for what's right with the world and you'll find it. – Dewitt Jones, National Geographic Photographer



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One must embrace the chaos within to give
birth to a dancing star – adapted from Nietzsche

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We reserve the right to edit articles for
length, clarity, and readability.

Advertising

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RESOURCES

Publication of this issue of Cata-
lyst coincides with the debut of my
new website www.dancingstar.com.

There’s a new look, a clearer artic-
ulation of how I work with clients,
plus new resources (including
longer versions of articles in this
issue) and links, with more to come.
Let me know what you think!

With deep gratitude to my web
team, Alejandro Levins (concept),
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implementation), Amoreena O’Bry-
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(wordsmithery), Wendy Hickock
(photography). It pays to work with
experts!

Deb’s Corner



One of my clients and I were recently trying to find words for what he does, for there is no known job title. An entrepreneur yes. But he’s more than that.

Then it hit me. “*You are a Business Artist.*” It’s relevant for a number of my clients, so a colleague and I are now developing this concept. Here’s how I define the term today.

A Business Artist™ is a talented leader who’s achieved success in business – the ones I’ve met have been entrepreneurs. They understand business to a degree that enables them to experiment, troubleshoot, innovate. They have the capacity, if they have not done so already, for mastering business. However, they do what they do for more than the money – it is a calling¹ for them.

They are often gifted², creative, and may be highly sensitive³, which attunes them to their environment and people around them, and heightens their ability to notice, process, imagine, and conceive.

They embody a number of current, well-defined and well-researched concepts, but are more than any one of them. For instance, unlike entrepreneurs, the Business Artists I’ve met are doing more than starting new companies. They have a vision for a new way of doing what’s been done before that makes life better for others, employees, customers, and community alike. They are much like Michelangelo, who commented that

he looked at stones and saw the statues within them. A Business Artist does not see the obstacles, but rather sees what needs to be done and how to do it; where the route to successful manifestation of the vision lies.

Their daily activities often include coaching, mentoring, or educating, because as they create something out of nothing, they get juiced by productively changing the way others see themselves and their reality.

Their passion moves people around them. Allen Schoer of TAIResources put it well in his ‘06 Innovators E-zine article, *Liberating Creativity*. To paraphrase, think of the most powerful acting performance you have seen – how it moved or inspired you. Imagine moving your team, your board, your clients that way. What moves people is touching them emotionally. This is what artists – specifically Business Artists – do.

Like any professional or master, their developing their talent requires practice. Plus, it can be a challenge to make what they do reproducible.

I’ll talk further about these issues, and the “care and feeding” of the Business Artist, in upcoming issues.

™Deborah Huisken, Dancing Star International, and Alejandro Levins

¹*Making Work Work for the Highly Sensitive Person* by Dr. Barrie Jaeger

²*The Gifted Adult*, by Dr. Mary Jacobsen

³*The Highly Sensitive Person*, by Dr. Elaine Aron.

COACHING IN CHINA

In June, I attended a training in China hosted by international company Top Human, with offices throughout China, Canada, and the US. Their coaching model incorporates Confucian, Taoist, and Buddhist principles, and is a top-down, performance-oriented approach drawing from a variety of strategic approaches from around the world.

A powerful learning I took away was of just how much change China has gone through, a level of change which will continue for the foreseeable future. It’s one thing to understand intellectually, another to get to know personally people who speak and think in a completely different language, and have a history and cultural background that is both ancient and achingly recent. The upheavals that the average Chinese has experienced in recent years boggle the imagination.

The challenges the Chinese face as they transition from their old system(s) of government to a capitalist-oriented system requires, in part, a highly entrepreneurial approach. Yet I guarantee entrepreneurship will look different in China than anywhere else – for starters because it will take into account centuries of relying on family connections, strong extra-familial relationships, and the ability to get things done based on who you know. Yet despite the magnitude of the challenges, the people we met were highly motivated while deeply engaged in transformation. Inspiring. – Deborah