

ACCE Annual Conference February 22, 2007

**Leading in the Future Tense:  
Visioning from the  
Point of the Arrow**

A close-up photograph of an owl's face, focusing on its large, striking eyes. The eyes are a vibrant yellow-orange with a dark, almost black pupil. The owl's feathers are a mix of brown, tan, and black, with a prominent pattern of dark spots on its forehead. The word "Vision" is written in a white, serif font across the center of the owl's face, positioned between its eyes and its beak. The beak is dark and pointed downwards. The overall image has a high level of detail and contrast, emphasizing the owl's intense gaze.

Vision



# The Future

The future: time's excuse  
To frighten us; too vast  
A project, too large a morsel  
For the heart's mouth.

Future, who won't wait for you?  
Everyone is going there.  
If suffices you to deepen  
The absence that we are.

-- Rainer Maria Rilke





# Visioning

- Visioning is a leadership practice centered on what does not exist yet is:
  - Possible
  - Potential – and Potent
  - Probable

# My Questions

- What is the role of visioning in effective leadership in the rapidly evolving world?
- What are some conceptual tools we can play with to understand vision?
- What are ten things you can do now as a Next World Leader to build your visioning abilities?

**What's Your  
Question?**



# Core Leadership Skills I

- Build from organizational and individual strengths: create the Positive Organization
- Understand that everyone has the capacity to act as a leader
- Leaders think and act strategically
- Leaders develop effective relationships
- *Leading* is more important than leadership: effective leaders are verbs

# Core Leadership Skills II

- Leaders understand their strengths, skills and styles
- Leaders create extraordinary teams
- Leaders mentor and prepare the next generation of leaders
- Leaders build from strengths and encourage and recognize achievement

# Core Leadership Skills III

- Effective leaders create, innovate and transform themselves, their teams, their organizations and their communities
- Leaders create bold, motivating and direction-setting **visions** for themselves, their teams, their organizations and their communities

# Visioning

- Is a type of creativity
- Essential to modern leadership
- Which involves the construction of potential desired states and alternative futures
- And the commitment of yourself, others, teams and organizations
- To the enactment of those states and possible futures

# Why Now?

Incrementalism is not adequate: exponential and disruptive, not incremental, change is needed

Systems and processes and not just heroism

Lack of organizational agility is significant barrier

Verbs and not adjectives

It's all about liberation

# **Why is Visioning So Important Now?**

**We are about to enter into a New World Order in which visioning may be the single most critical leadership skill**

**OLD  
WORLD  
ORDER**



# Old World Order

- Competition was local, predictable and based on commonly identified opportunities
- Systems and organizations were distinct and siloed
- Worldview was parochial
- Change was gradual
- Improvement was incremental



**Organization was Mechanism**

# Mechanical Leadership

- Structured and hierarchical
- Leadership concentrated
- Best managers were often leaders
- Creativity and innovation segregated or randomized (with a few exceptions)
- Goals and objectives overshadowed visioning and futuring

A shark is shown swimming horizontally in the center of the frame. The background is a dark, deep blue ocean with a bright light source at the top, creating a shimmering surface. A large, vibrant rainbow is visible behind the shark, and a bright blue and white light flare is positioned to the left of the text. The text "Red Ocean Strategies" is overlaid in a bold, red, sans-serif font.

# Red Ocean Strategies

# Red Ocean Strategies

- Competition within an already defined market
- Industry boundaries defined and accepted
- Competition means outperformance of rivals
- Goal: compete on cost, quality and current needs

# Leadership in an Environment

## Leaders:

- “See reality— size up the current situation as it really is, not as it *used to be* or as they *would like* it to be, and
- Mobilize the appropriate responses...”
  - Noel Tichy, *The Leadership Engine*

A wide expanse of blue ocean under a cloudy sky, with the text "Blue Ocean Strategies" overlaid in a light blue font. The ocean is a deep blue with some whitecaps, and the sky is filled with white and grey clouds. The text is centered in the right half of the image.

# Blue Ocean Strategies

# Blue Ocean Strategies

- Find new markets without existing competitors by redefining your product or service
- Requires continuous attention to and promotion of disruptive change
- Constant challenging of your assumptions about the nature of the product or services you offer



# **Next World Order**

# Next World Order

- Competition is global, unpredictable and based on yet-to-be identified opportunities – Blue Ocean World
- Systems and organizations overlap and are codependent
- Worldview is expansive
- Improvement is disruptive

# Next World Order Characterized by...

- Cosmopolitanism
- Panarchy
- Hypercoherence
- Global Emerging Systems
- Surpetition

A photograph of a dense forest with many tall, thin trees and a thick canopy of green leaves. Sunlight is streaming through the trees, creating a bright, dappled light effect. The text "Organization is an Ecosystem" is overlaid in the center in a large, white, sans-serif font.

**Organization  
is an  
Ecosystem**

# Next World Leadership

- Characterized by systems thinking
- Leadership is diffuse
- Leadership is practiced at all levels
- Creativity is a serious business that everyone shares
- Visioning and futuring are necessary

# Why the Need for Vision Now: Hyper-Innovation

- Period of Hyper-Innovation characterized by:
  - Acceleration in the very processes of change
  - Overlap and integration of domains
  - Living and thinking in the interstitial
  - Part of the new hyper-economy
  - The rise of instant simulation
  - The networking of networks

**Hyper-Innovation Needs  
Hyper-adopters Also  
Known as Visionaries**

A photograph of a two-lane asphalt road with double yellow lines, receding into a thick, grey fog. The road is flanked by dark, silhouetted trees and bushes. The overall atmosphere is misty and ethereal.

Leadership is increasingly about the ability to create  
compelling visions through data smog  
and the  
fog of change and complexity.

Visioning is central to the practice  
of leading in the Next World.

# Assumptions

- There is a difference between leading and visionary leadership
- Visioning is a habit and a choice...
- That can be developed by any leader in an organization at any level
- And is increasingly necessary for any of us to lead effectively in the Next World

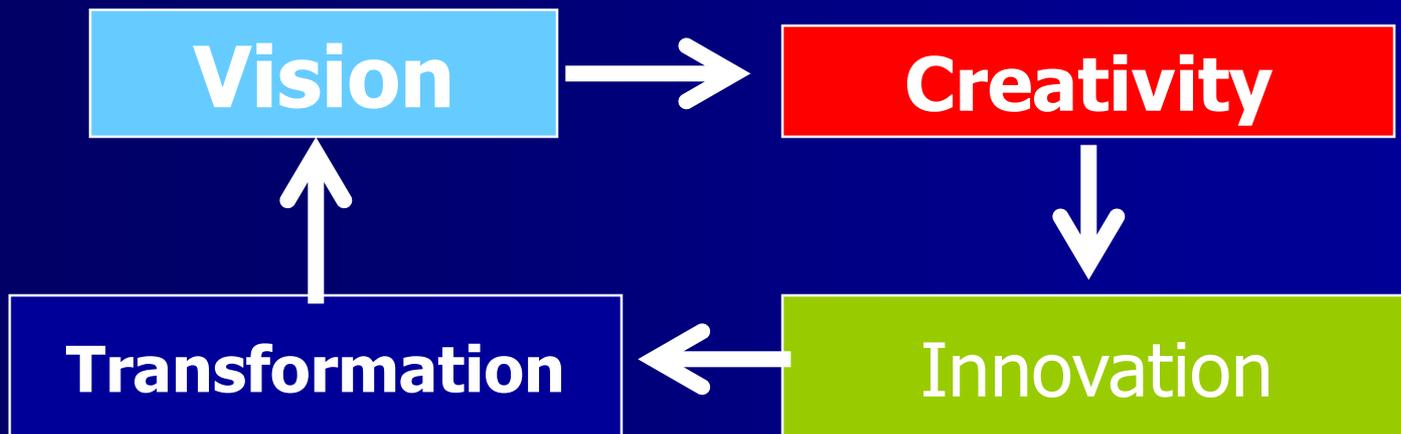
# Visioning as a Type of Creativity

- Creativity at the core of leadership
- Both the inception and the culmination of a creative leadership process

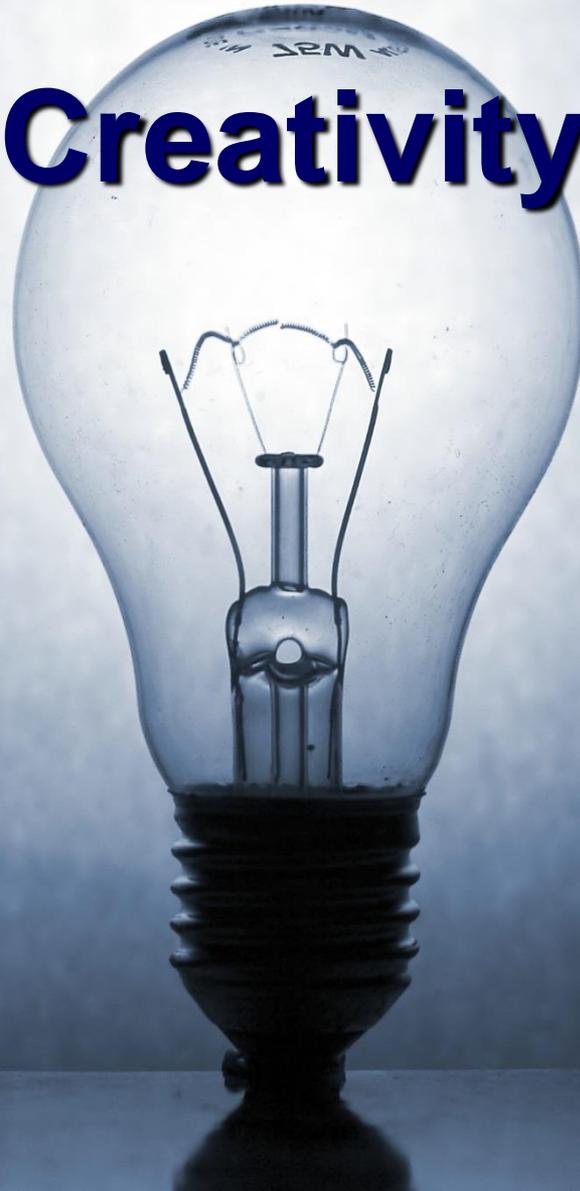
# **Creatology 101**

## **Vision in the Creative Process**

# Visioning and the Creative Leadership Process



**Creativity**



# Creating “Defined”

Creating is the generation – or discovery -- of what is perceived as new concepts, ideas, notions or plans.

It is the development of alternatives for decision-making.

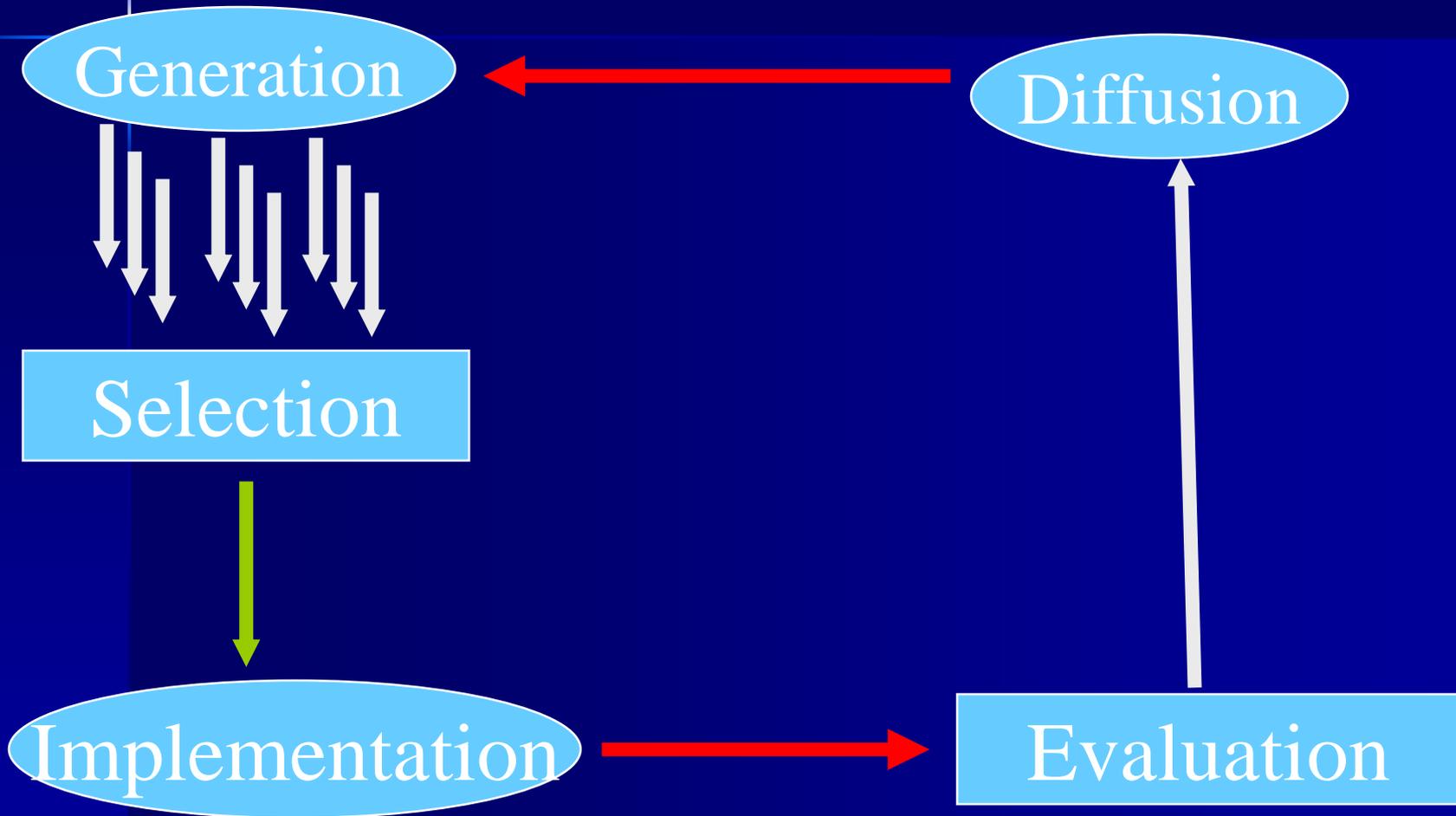


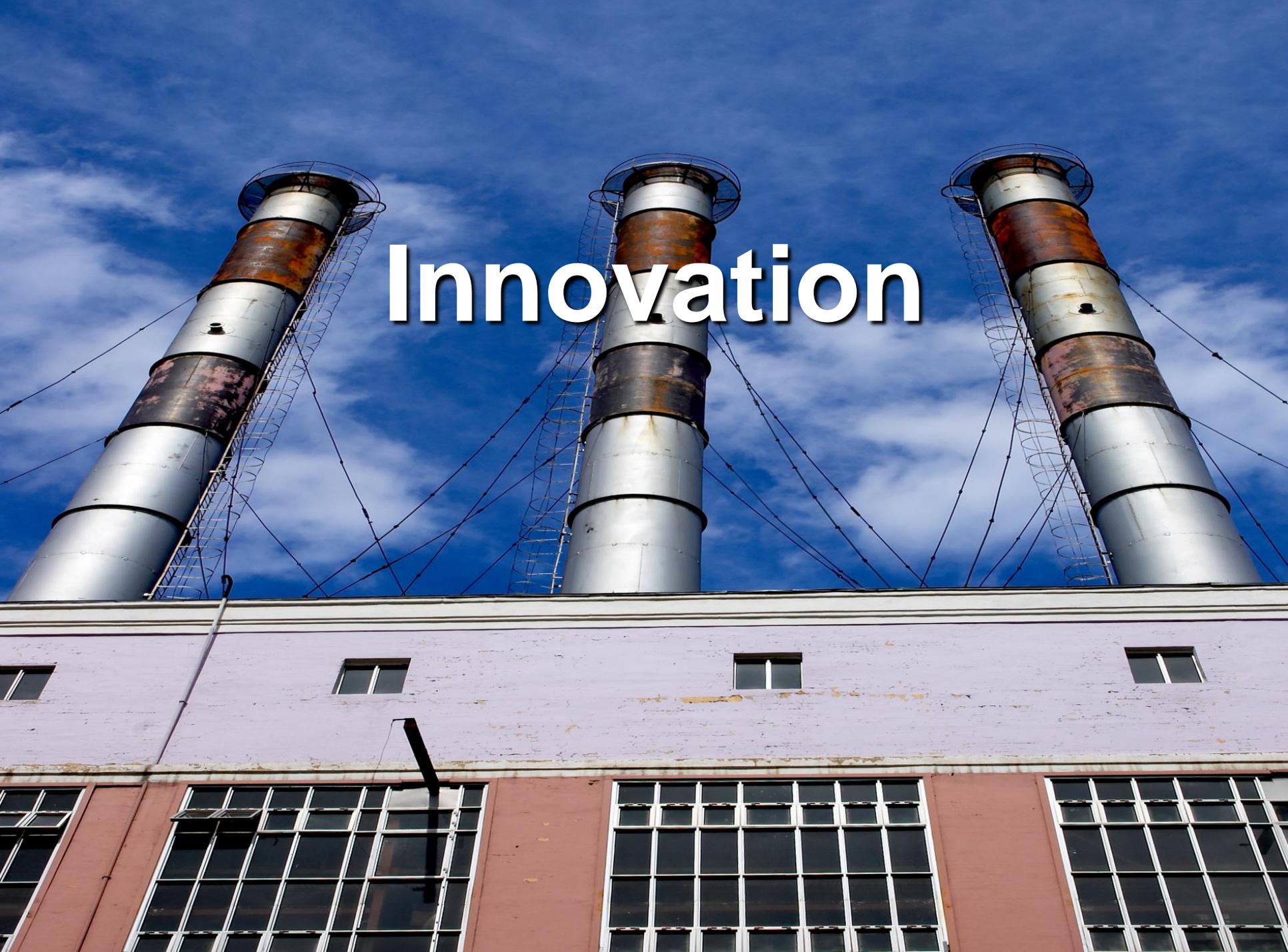
Creativity is a fundamental property of all adaptive systems – the underlying generative process which is responsible for the production of variation. “We” – meaning people, plants, animals, planets, teams, tribes, organizations, you – are all different engines producing potential futures. The inherent sloppiness of the universe and the built-in chaos of growth over time make creativity not an option but an unavoidable result of the processes which permeate systems. Given this, the “creativity” comes from recognizing – selecting – supporting and communicating the unexpected which is surround us. Creativity is the value lying around us; to create is ultimately to find.

Walter Di Mantova, Director, Center for Creativity and Innovation, Eastern Michigan University

Definition 31 in Aleinikov, Andrei G., Kackmeister, Sharon, and Koenig, Ron, eds., *Creating Creativity: 101 Definitions*, Midland, Michigan, The Alden B. Dow Creativity Center Press, 2000

# Creative Darwinism





**Innovation**

# Innovating “Defined”

Innovating is the  
realization  
of creating through the  
accumulation of creative decisions

▪

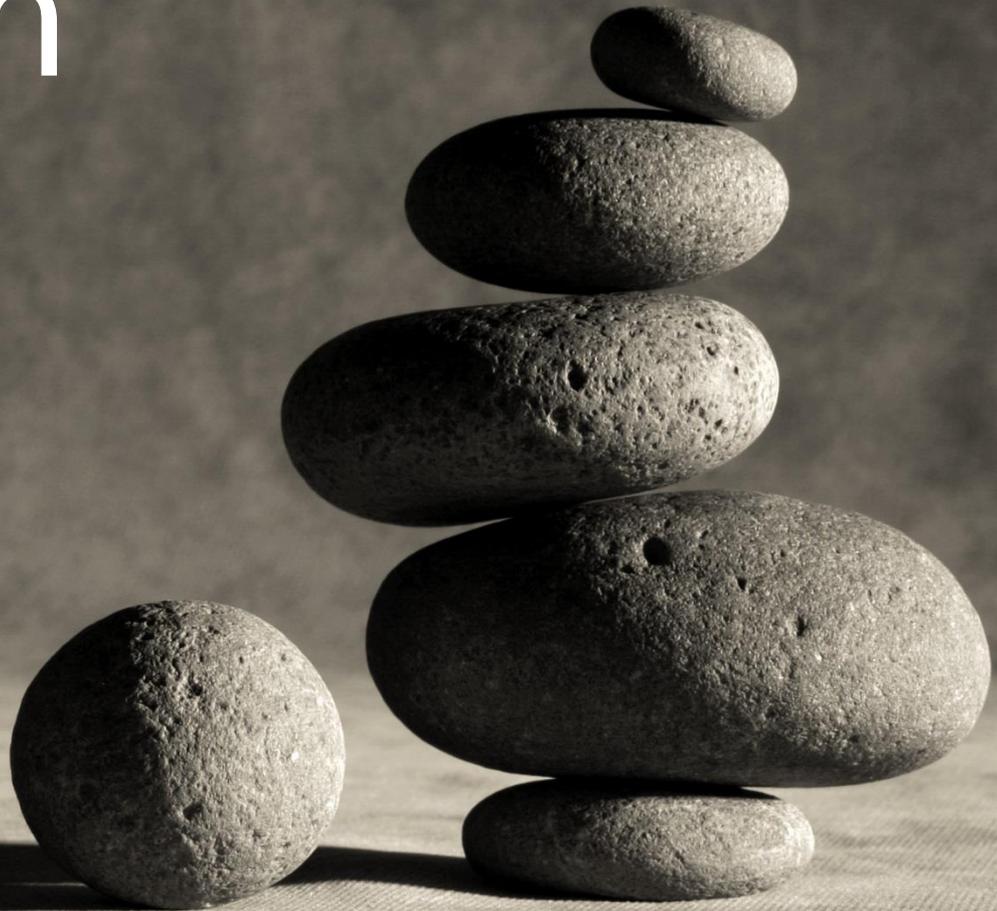
Or

Innovation is Creativity  
in Action.

**Innovation is an Infinite  
Game in the Next World**



# Kaizen



# Kaizen

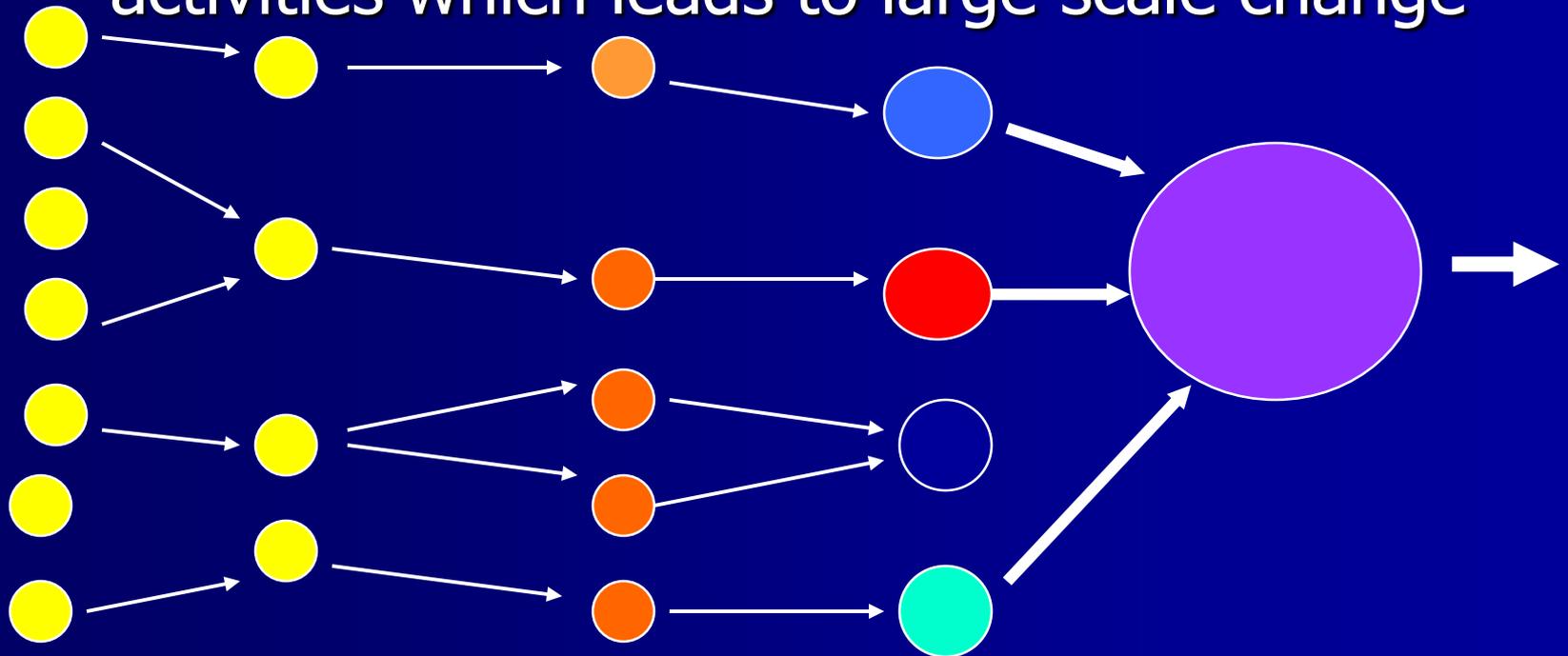
- The way of continuous improvement
- Incremental improvements which result in accrued changes: create to innovate to improvement
- Individual and team contributions matter
- A structure for creating and capturing productive ideas on short-term
- Provides the tools for organizational excellence

# Transformation: The 10 X Rule

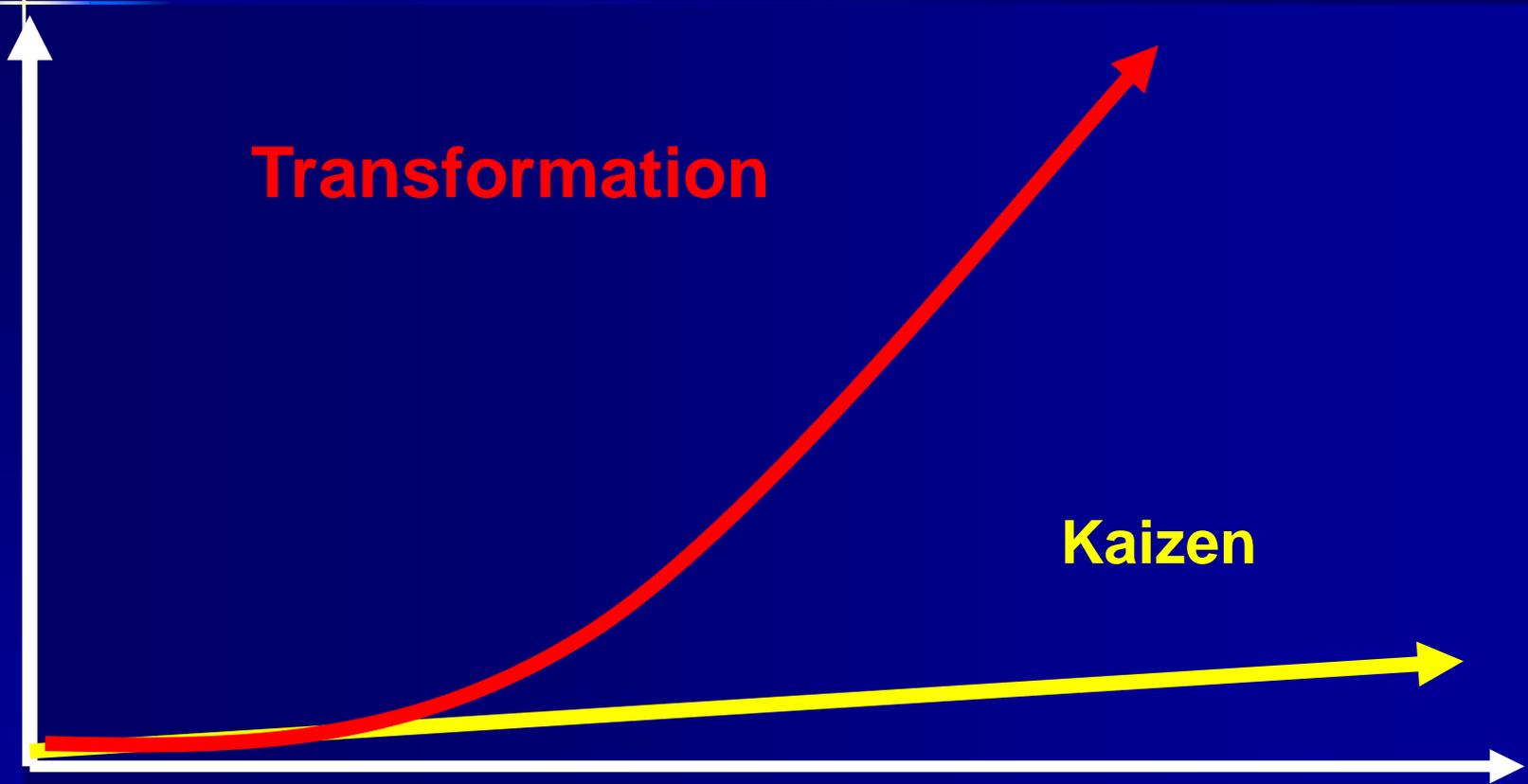


# Transformation Defined

Transformation is the result of the accumulation planned creative events and activities which leads to large scale change



# Kaizen vs. Transformation



# Creativity: An Example



# Innovation: An Example

Rose Planetarium , American Museum of Natural History (2000)



# Transformation: An Example

Jorn Utzon, Sydney Opera House



# **Vision: One Definition**

An image of a future we would like to create and a guiding image of success formed in terms of a contribution to society



**Visioning is**

- **Seeing the Possible**

- **Describing the Direction of Transformation**



The Vision Metaphor:  
The Clock of the Long Now

# Visioning and Leading

- In many ways pulls together the other leadership skills by emphasizing the

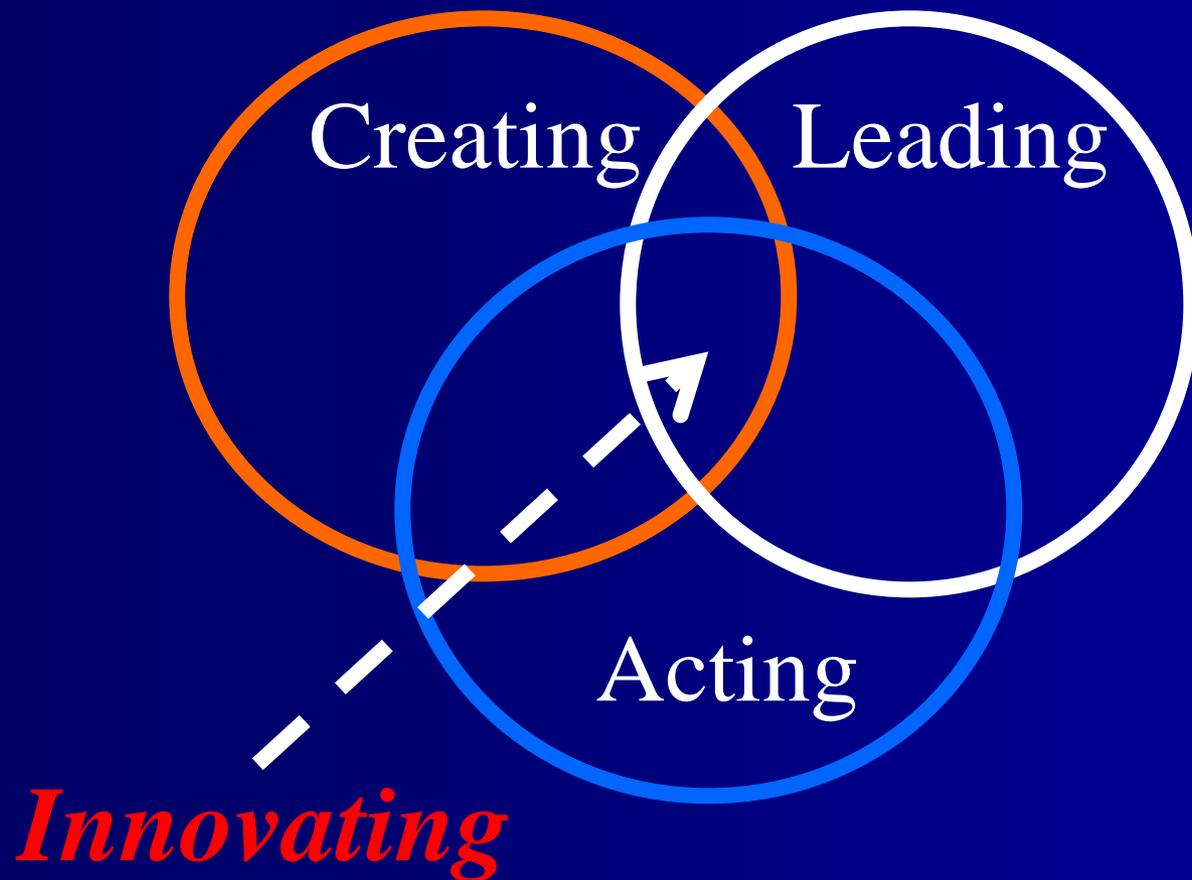
**Ideas *and* Activities**

needed to create new futures.

# Visionary Leadership is Focused on

- Action
- Politics
- Resources
- Generating creativity
- Practical Change
- Promoting the dynamics of innovation
- Releasing the potential of transformation

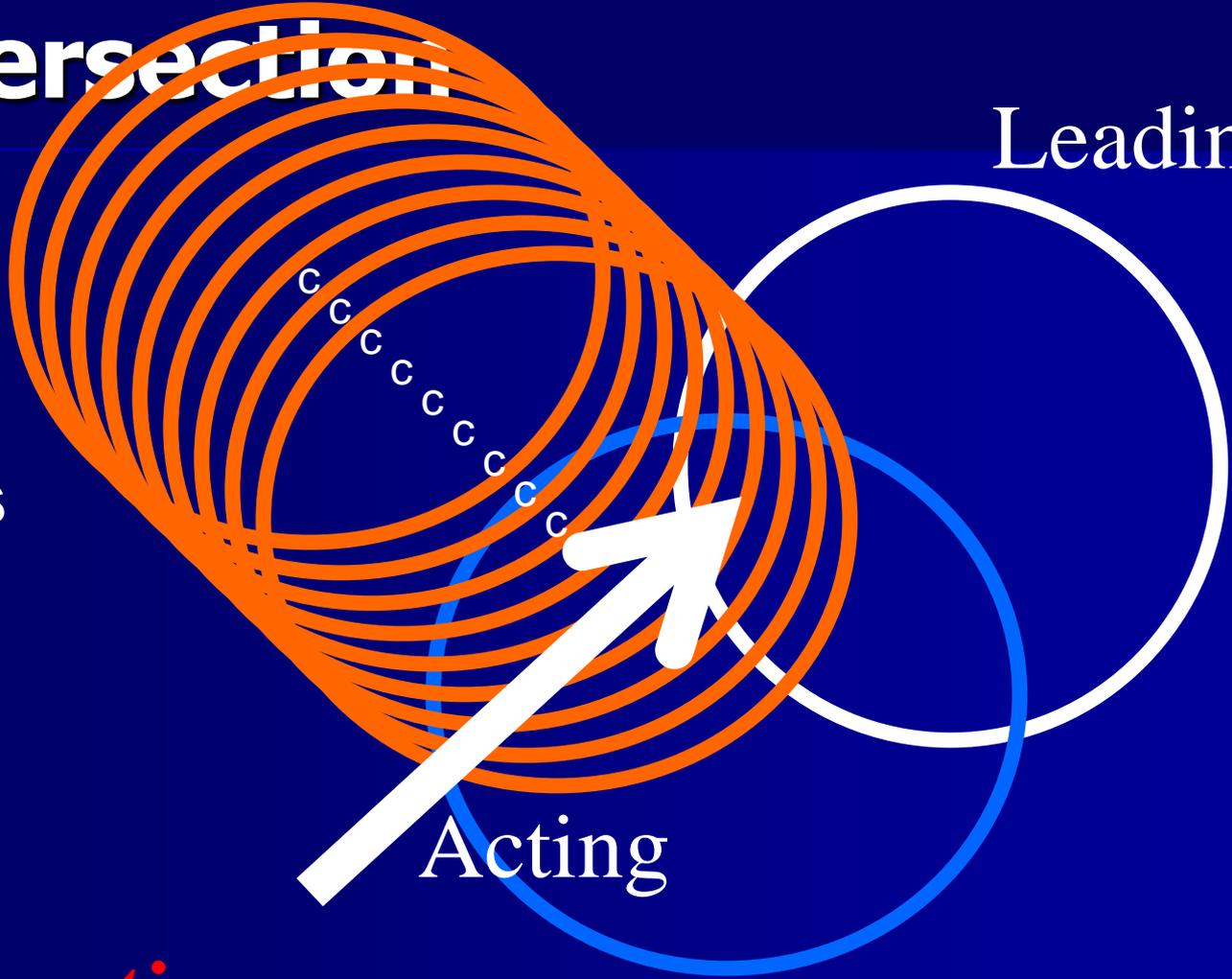
# The Innovation Intersection



# The Transformation Intersection

Leading

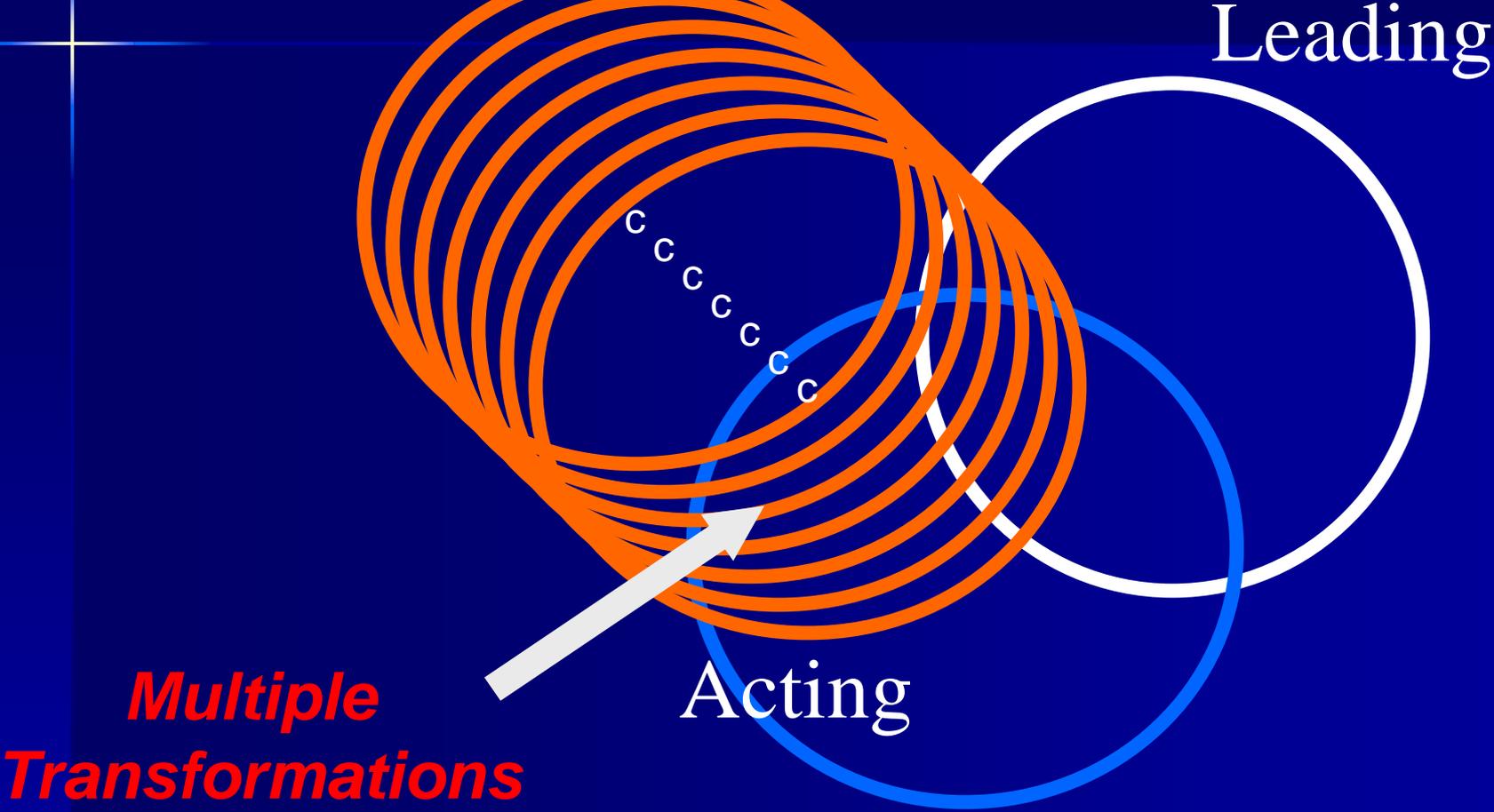
Multiple Innovations



Acting

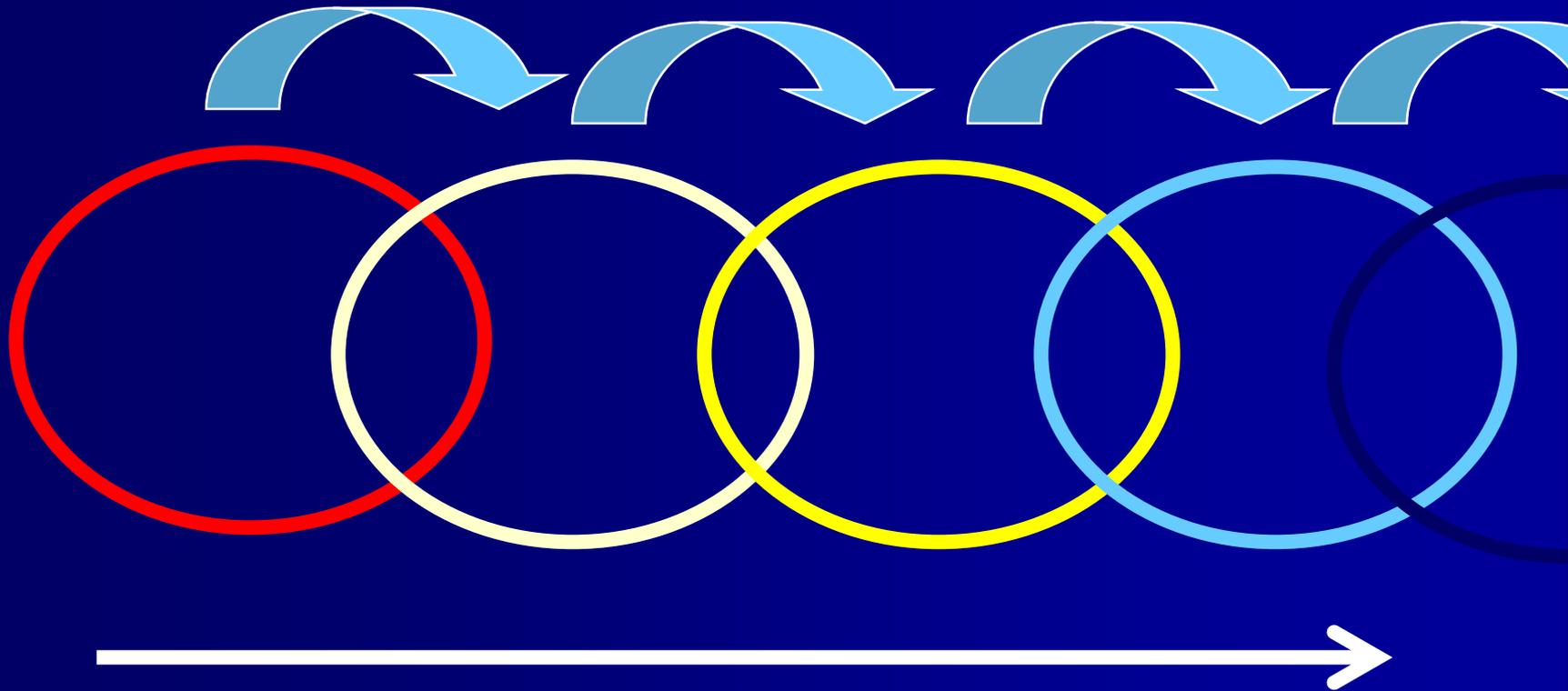
*Transformation*

# The Next World Transformation Intersection



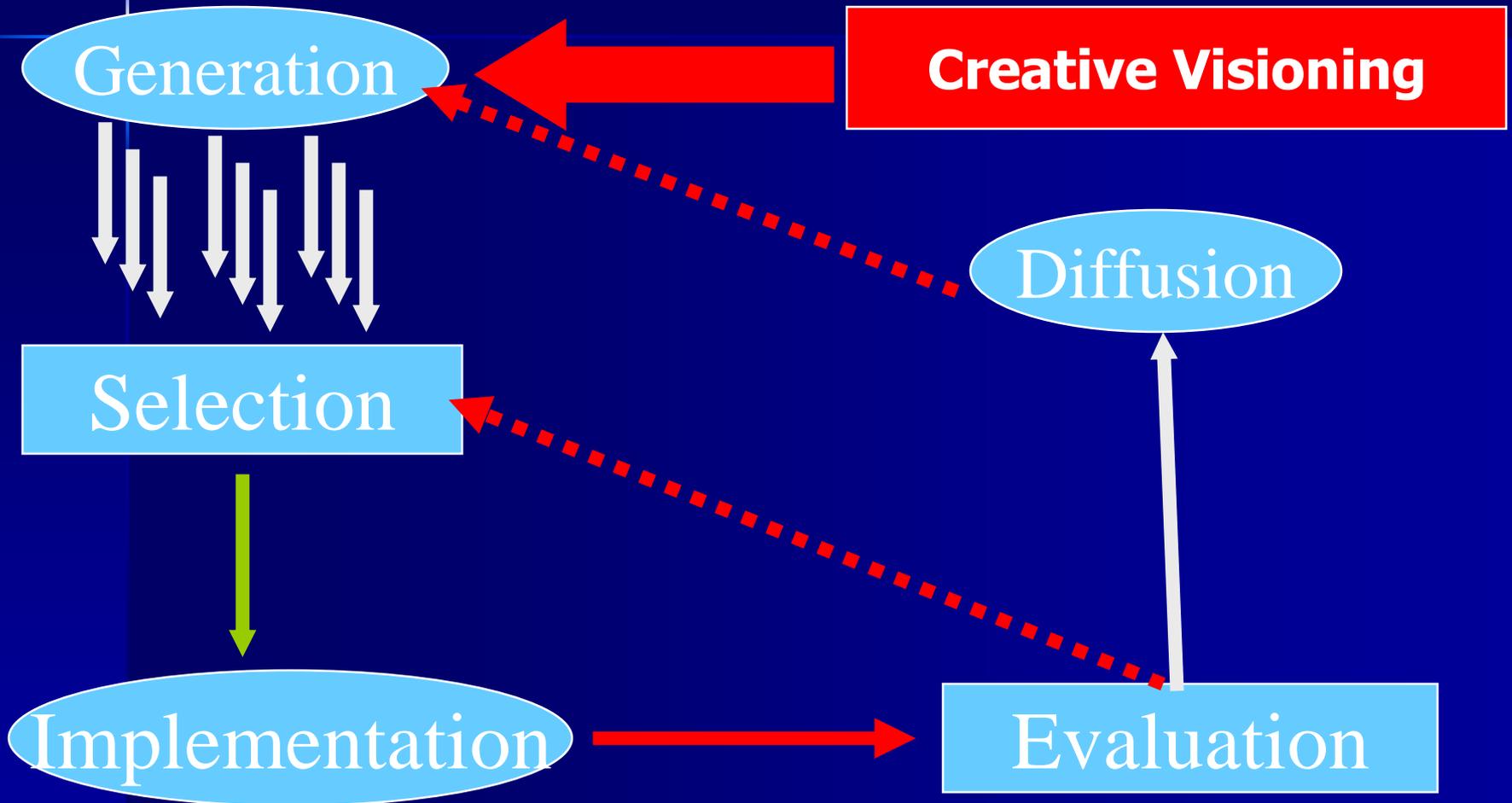
# The Visioning Engine

**Vision**



Multiple Transformations

# Creative Visioning





**Vision Provides the Energy  
for Creativity**

# **Mission and Vision**

# Mission

- Essential to your performance and future
- Becomes the measure against which you make decisions – the “back of your mind” truth
- Relatively unchangeable: change the mission and you change the organization
- Powerful tool for aligning efforts
- Gives you the focus to pursue the vision

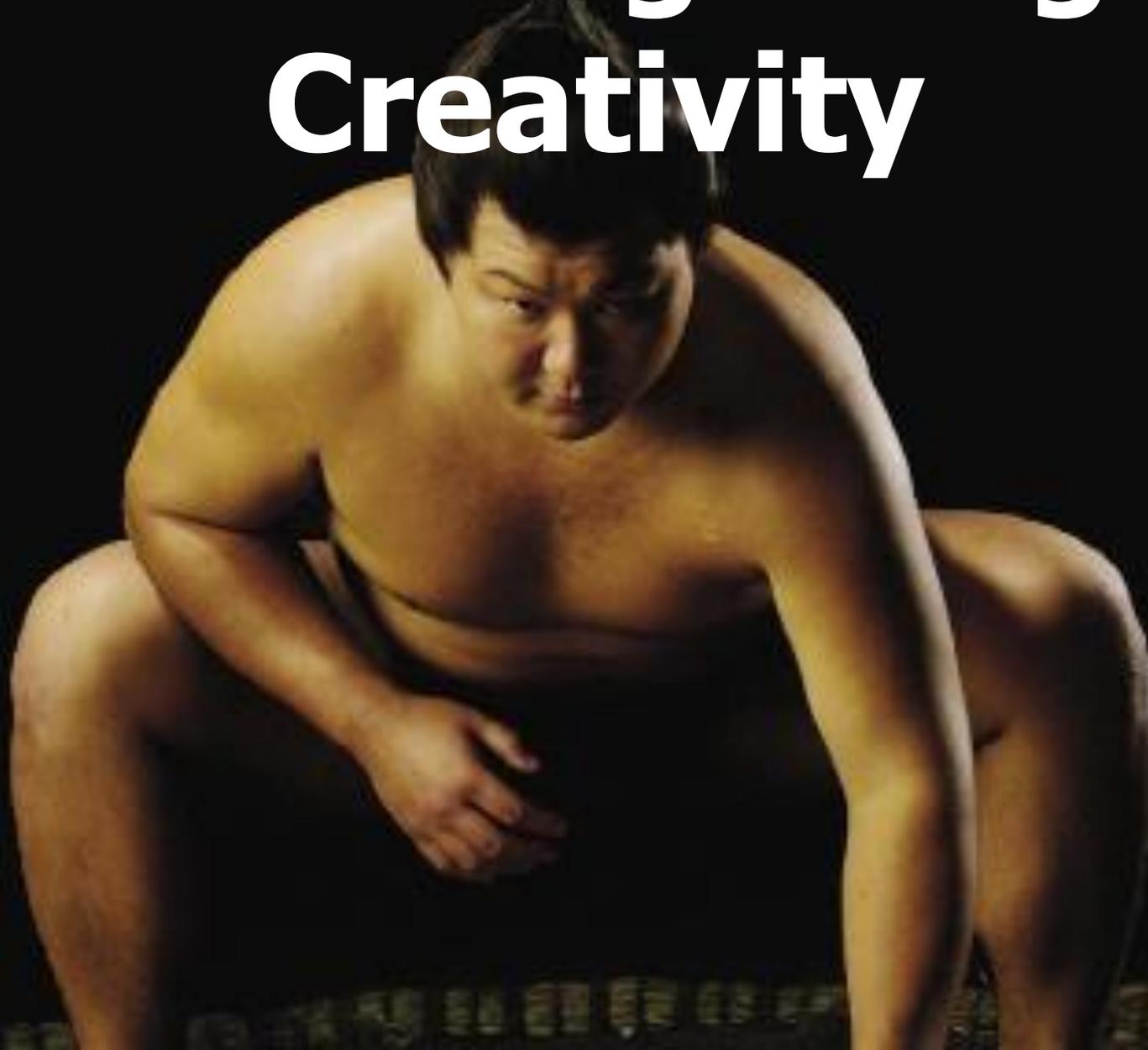
# Missions

- Define
- Focus
- Align
- Limit
- Decide
- Motivate
- Direct

# Successful Visions I

- Create compelling options for the future
- Can and should change and evolve over time
- Makes the mission into a reality
- Determines goals, objectives and measures
- Are possible, realistic and as concrete as you can make them

# Visioning is Big Creativity



# Successful Visions II

- Clear, concrete and vivid
- Describe a bright future (hope)
- Memorable and engaging expression
- Achievable
- Align with organizational values and culture, and are therefore “rational”
- Time bound if it talks of achieving any goal or objective

# Successful Visions III

- Realistic
- Well articulated
- Ambitious
- Responsive to change
- Orients group's energy
- Guide to action
- Inspirational

– Alliance for Non-Profit Management (2006)

# Vision

- Is not just a destination but a field of imagination that evolves, changes and responds – and is inherently changeable as we perceive and recognize and absorb current circumstances and future trends

# Vision and Results

“The true test of the greatness of a dream is that it has the energy to lift people out of their moribund ways to a level of being and relating from which the future can be faced with more hope than most of us can summon today.”

– Robert Greenleaf, *Leadership Crisis*

# Sample Vision

I will build a motor car for the great multitude...It will be so low in price that no man making a good salary will be unable to own one – and enjoy it with his family the blessing of hours of pleasure in God's open spaces...When I'm through everybody will be able to afford one, and everyone will have one. The horse will have disappeared from our highways, the automobile will be taken for granted...[and we will] give a large number of men employment for good wages.

-- Henry Ford's Vision

# Danger

- Vision statements that do not evolve become limiting statements
- They ossify into yesterday's ideas
- Prevent tomorrow's successes
- Become barriers to change and success

# Choices in Our Perceptions Determine Our Visions



Paranoia





**STOP**

**BEING  
AFRAID**



Pronoia

# Balance

- An energetic balance between Paranoia and Pronoia is...

# Metanoia



# Iterative Capital: Your Vision Investment

- Serious dedication of resources that allow for the production of variants to be tried over and over at low cost and at great speed
- What is your individual and organizational “Iterative Capital” ?
- Your investment in iterative capital is your investment in serious creativity

# Visioning as a Leadership Talent

Talent hits a target no one else can hit.

Genius hits a target no one else can see.

Arthur Schopenhauer

# Visionaries

- Imagine a future
- Envision a future
- Construct possibilities
- Identify trends

# Visionaries

- Jules Verne
- H.G. Wells
- Buckminster Fuller
- Albert Einstein

A bronze statue of a woman's head in profile, looking up, with a hand reaching down from above against a blue sky with clouds.

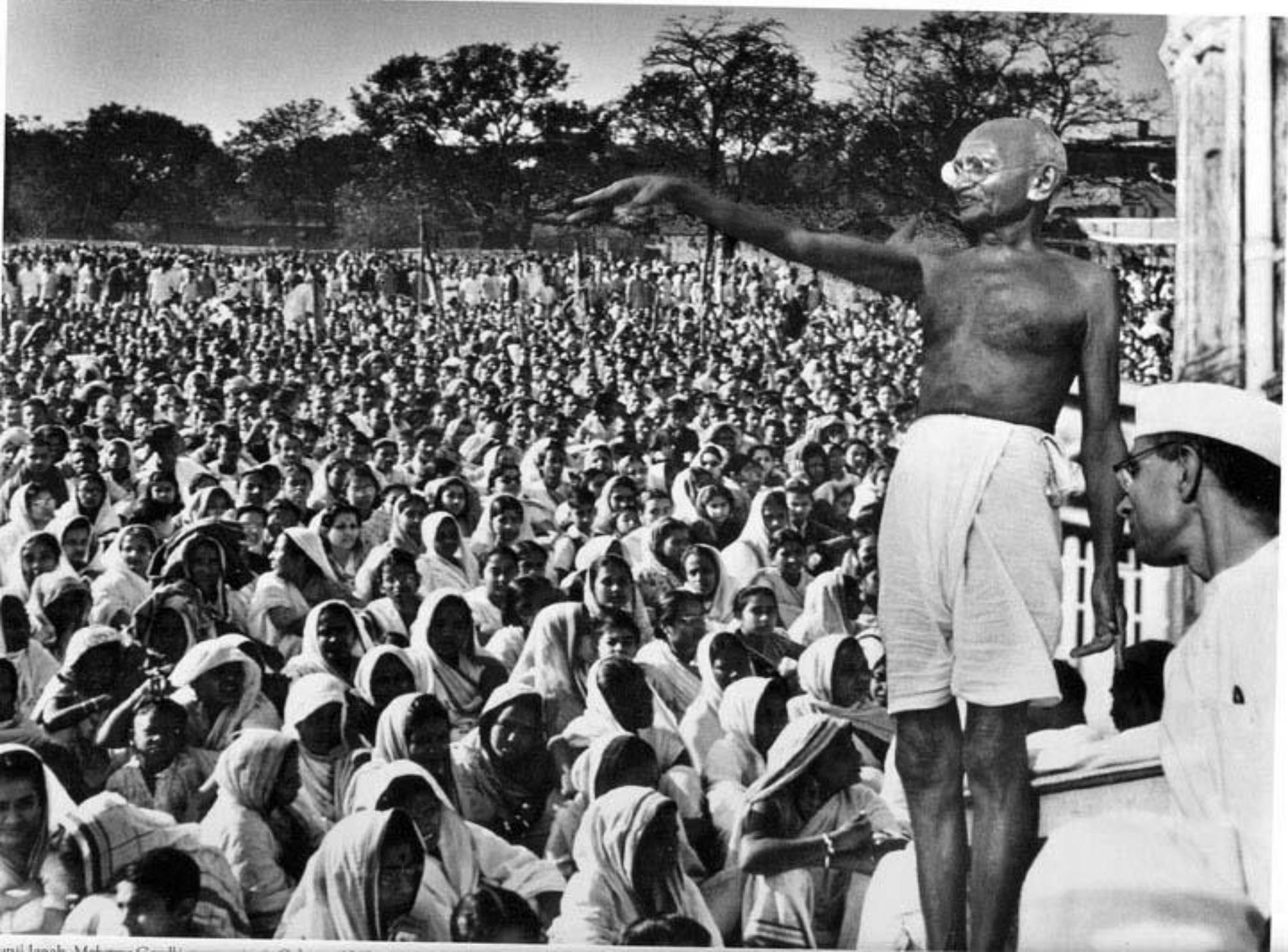
**What Makes a  
Leader a Visionary  
or a Visionary a  
Leader?**

# Visionary Leaders

- Creates futures in other's minds
- Enacts a future – take necessary actions
- Creates realities
- Lead trends – they both recognize and create the future

# **Visionary Leadership**









Vision isn't a template in  
PowerPoint.

-- Roger McNamee, Founder of Silver  
Lake Partners and Integral Capital  
Partners

# Vision is...

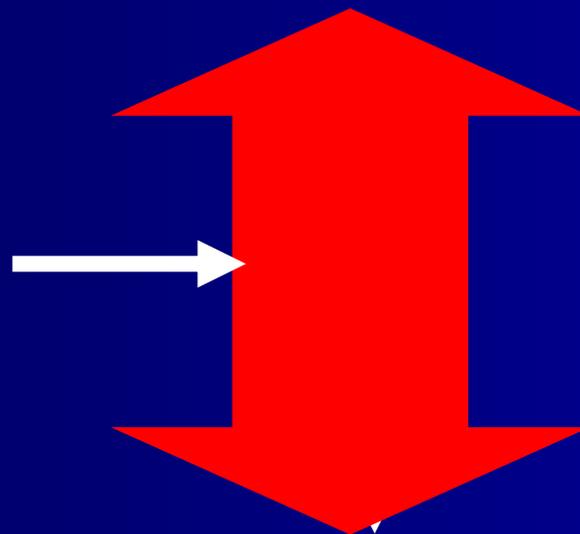
“It is about creating  
change before it creates  
you.”

-- Michael Eisner

- To be a leader is to be awake and alert, to be dissatisfied at all times.
- -- Peter Koestenbaum, Philosopher and Business Consultant

# Tension

**Desired State**



**Actual State**

**This tension  
supplies the  
energy behind  
organizational  
change.**

# How to Build a Vision



# Elements of Visioning

- Perception: understand the now
- Projection: see the future
- Participation: involve others in the vision
- Practice: take the steps to make it into a reality
- Persistence: don't stop doing it

# Building a Vision I

- Create a statement of organization's definition of excellence
- Begin with a "vivid" description of what the organization currently does
- Ask the organization about method – what is your culturally specific way you build consensus?

# Range of Approaches

Highly analytical (begin with metrics  
and your strategic plan)

to

Highly divergent (begin with  
daydreams)

# Begin with Metaphors

- Our organization is like...
- Our organization could be like this...
- Our organization could be doing this...

# Building a Vision II

- Memory: what were our cycles and successes and failures?
- Mission: Who are we, what do we do and who benefits from this?
- Measures: How do we know we are reaching our vision

# How to Build a Visionary Leader



# Practice I: Authenticity

- The beginning of successful visioning skills is authenticity about your own future
- Your authenticity about the future makes it possible for others to sign-on to your vision

# Practice I: Authenticity

- Understand the patterns of your own – and your organization's – past
- Ask yourself:
  - What obsesses me?
  - What are my strengths and when do they appear?
  - What are the most important obstacles between me and the future I want?

# Practice II: Addiction to the Future

- Make thinking about the future into a conscious choice
- Write down your assumptions about what you think the future might be like now
- Assault those assumptions

# Wisdom

“Making predictions is very  
difficult,  
especially about the future”

-- Yogi Berra

# Practice III: Perception

- Advanced pattern recognition
- Commonalities in a world characterized by data smog
- Develop a personal and organizational idea management system – how do you capture, evaluate and share ideas and intuition?





# Practice IV: Intellectual Promiscuity

- Look to multiple sources of information
- Other disciplines, arenas, models and organizations
- For new perspectives, processes and goals
- Scan always for innovation opportunities

# Practice V: Think with Others

- Create an informal visioning team
- Share your vision well and often
- Visioning is ultimately a political act involving the mobilization of resources and allies...
- And the overcoming of obstacles and resistance

# Practice VI: Make Yourself a Hyphenated Thought Leader

- Think of yourself as a **hybrid**
- Look to **inspiration** from related fields
- Think like a **designer**: build with an almost aesthetic sense of what a functional and desirable future might be
- Become a student of **excellence**, whatever the source

**“My mission is to build an object of beauty and importance that will delight and surprise my customers.”**



# Practice VII: Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway

- Set challenging goals for yourself and others
- Should have vision with 50% to 70% potential for success
- Overcome the obstacles to successful visioning
- Look for the “gulp” (Jim Collins)

# In the Way of Vision

- Fear of failure
- Fear of success
- Fear of complexity and ambiguity
- Foggy focus on the present
- Accelerating change faster than ability to respond
- Managerial over-responsibility

# Practice VIII: Plan Visually

- Draw a mind map of the desirable future
- Write it down as well – use the writing as a method to sharpen your thoughts
- Make it widely available

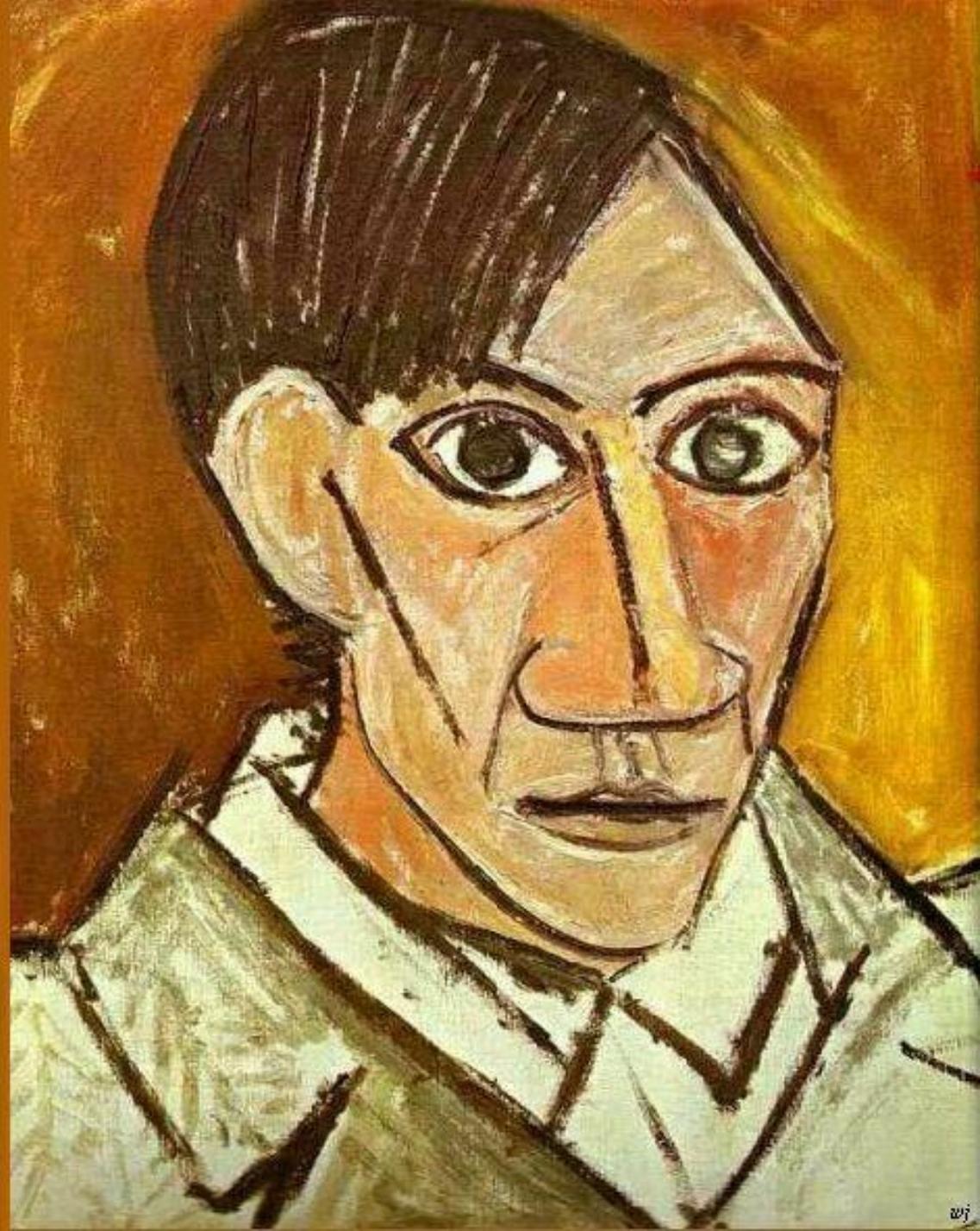
# Practice IX: Steal Carefully and Widely

- Do not be afraid of the sources of information
- Look to unexpected sources and be willing to adopt them as your own

**Talent  
creates  
but genius  
steals.**

**-- Picasso**

Pablo Picasso  
Self-Portrait - 1907



**Practice X:**

**Run**

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