

The Purpose of Purpose

"Until one is committed there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness. Concerning all acts of initiative (and creation), there is one elementary truth - the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then Providence moves, too. All sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise have occurred. A whole stream of events issues from the decision raising in one's favor all manner of unforeseen incidents and meetings and material assistance which no man could have dreamed would have come his way. Whatever you can do, or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it. Begin it now."

- Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Purpose is the power that drives us. Whether spoken or unspoken, when I look at my actions at their source is my purpose. The closer I live my life in alignment with my purpose, the more I live with ease. Not necessarily easy, but ease. I feel in integrity with myself. And serendipity steps in to help.

So how does individual purpose relate to group purpose?

I find that when people begin to speak and act from purpose, something extraordinary happens. What is most personal starts showing up as most universal. We begin to notice the ways in which each of us in our glorious diversity connects with others.

Purpose is to social systems like breath is to life. It is in the inspiration – the breathing in, noticing our individual purpose, the calling in our soul and the aspiration – the breathing out of our hopes and dreams, the pictures of what's possible that common vision emerges.

If you study successful people, projects, organizations, communities, at their root you will always hear expressed the role of purpose. It may be called mission or vision (they are intimately related – mission is the inspiration, vision the aspiration), it may be called goals. However it is named, if it has the passion behind it, it will fly.

Notes from a talk given at the November 14, 2001 meeting of the Pacific Northwest Organization Development Network meeting. Kathie Dannemiller, Sylvia Janes and I teamed up for an interactive evening on "Unleashing the Magic Within."

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