

"We Lost Our Kingdom"

Bonnie Olson and Sebat Tenna

"We had a very successful future search," Alem Fanta told the Seattle group that had gathered to discuss future search experiences with Marv Weisbord: "we lost our kingdom." The half-dozen Ethiopians around the room chuckled. The rest of the 40+ people in the room looked puzzled. Mr. Fanta explained that before the conference, the board of directors of the Ethiopian Community Mutual Assistance Association (ECMA) consisted of old men. Now four of the nine newly elected board members are women, and more than half are under 35.

ECMA is a small nonprofit organization, established almost 20 years ago for Seattle-area Ethiopians to help fellow immigrants. The region now has an estimated 20,000 Ethiopians. The potential is great, yet the organization was barely holding itself together.

The ECMA is one of the two oldest local East African mutual support associations. It watched as new groups, including the Oromo, Tigrean, and Gondar Mutual Associations, sprang up to support ethnic groups from their country, instead of joining with them. Some of these groups surpassed them in establishing centers and getting funding. ECMA ran with a part-time director in a small rental house, with very little money and a small core of volunteers.

ECMA had received a long-term, capacity-building grant to strengthen the organization. Half the money had already been spent, and the members felt they had not made any progress. The process basically stalled, the consultant moved on, and at this point Sebat Tenna was asked to come in as a

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FUTURE SEARCH NETWORK'S FUTURESEARCHING

EXPLORING COMMON GROUND FOR COMMUNITY ACTION

Hope and Courage in East Congo

Aria Merkestein

Future Search Conference: Day 1, November 8, 2005, Makobola, East Congo

Singing and drumming is calling people to attend Mass. Very African and very Catholic. I will go sometime. There is a need growing in me to be close to God in God's building. But today I am going to Makobola. Excitement is setting in.

Yesterday the priests at the Centre told me that only a couple of weeks ago, six people in the Makobola area were gunned down. I try to stay clear of apprehension and anxiety and to trust God, the universe, my fellow humans, and my soul.

GRAFED (Groupe Africain d'Experts pour le Développement), a local NGO focused on capacity building, has managed to organize motorbike-taxis—*motos*. Jonas, my driver, is earlier than expected. I quickly eat a banana for breakfast and drink a glass of water, hoist my big blue bag with paper and markers on my back, and off we go to Makobola!

Makobola is 40 minutes away by *moto*. Jonas is very careful. I must be quite a sight for the hundreds of villagers—a middle-aged white woman with a big rucksack on a *moto*. "Jambo, Jambo, mzungu," they call ("Good day, white person"). Rocks are jutting out of the road, Lake Tanganyika is a couple of

metres away. The mountains on the other side are blue in the morning light. A haze hangs over the water.

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Hope and Courage in East Congo
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There are fishermen in small boats. Paradise.

And yet, amidst this natural paradise, Makobola is still mourning the victims of the massacre of six years ago.* Twenty-five hundred people were killed. Nic, the chair of the local committee of community-based organizations, told me yesterday that Makobola desperately wants the future search workshop. "We need to dream about a possible future," he said.

There is big banner hanging announcing the series of workshops around the task of creating sustainable development.

We arrive very early, and already people are waiting outside. The workshop is in an old church, built of mud with a zinc roof full of holes. Gaspard Safari, the acting chair of GRAFED; Mihigo, a Baptist preacher charged with administrative affairs and logistics in GRAFED; Nic, the coordinator of the planning committee in Makobola; and a whole lot of other people help to set up the workshop. Wildor Makonero, the Parliamentarian who started all this, has gone back to Bukavu to fetch the photocopier for the GRAFED office we had to leave behind on the way up.

Everyone is early — authorities, organizations, church groups, women, young people. We start before time with short speeches. Safari calls for a vision of the future and reminds people of the past.

*The massacre took place on New Year's Eve 1999 when the world was preparing to enter the new Millennium! Imagine what that does to squash hope! —A.M.

There is a minute of silence to remember those who died through violence in the massacre. The Congolese Anthem is sung. A prayer is said. And then the conference truly begins.

In future search methodology, the facilitator steps back all the time. I do that, too. But these people are looking for sparks of hope, bits of courage. Somehow they see me as a catalyst for that. So, it becomes a balancing act — I honor them by accepting their trust and by giving them the best facilitation I can. Safari is fantastic, a true co-facilitator. He translates into and from KiSwahili. People are so keen, so keen. There are women with newborn babies; children and goats are looking in. People have parked their bicycles in the church, too.

I am in awe. These people have nothing, yet they want to do everything. They share their ideas, they copy on little slips of paper everything they see, they hear, they say. They are so committed and so hungry for change. Their stories are of suffering and pain and hope and courage. I cannot begin to understand how they manage to go on living as fully as they do,

to have this kind of drive, compassion, caring.

People earnestly discuss their achievements. They are proud of having orphanages and organizing themselves; they are sorry they cannot mobilize everybody in Makobola. As a group, the participants look at what is happening at the moment, the trends. The group constructs a mind-map. Individually, the participants vote

for the trends that they think are most important for development.

Voting... people haven't voted for anything in the past 30 years! Every move in this workshop gets a deep meaning: tell your stories, discuss, decide on the destiny of your community, vote.

Safari leads the group discussion in French with much KiSwahili. He is getting the hang of it. The main trends are noted. They are:

- Protection of the environment (98 votes)
- Rehabilitation of the infrastructure (97 votes)
- Ending the war and promoting peace values (79 votes)
- The struggle against misery, poverty (75 votes)
- Mobilizing the youth (59 votes)
- The fight against the proliferation of small arms (54 votes)
- Protection of human rights (50 votes)

At 4:00, we close for the day. It is too dangerous to walk in the dark. "Are you really coming back tomorrow? If you want you can stay in Makobola." "I am coming back," I say. "I will stay with you for a few days when I come again."

Jonas takes me back to Uvira. The view of the lake is out of this world.



I feel tired, yet serene. We cross rivers, wave at children. *Jambo — Jambo, sana*. A very young soldier with a very big rifle stops us. Jonas gives him some money. Too many young people with guns that are too big.

The lake is beautiful, children are swimming and playing. The guard of the Center is happy to see me back. Jonas will pick me up early tomorrow morning. Wildor is not back yet.

Future Search Workshop: Day 2, November 9*

Pillow on my knees, candle next to me. It is evening. The light has gone out again, like yesterday and the night before. I am back in Uvira staying with my host, the Diocese Centre. Wildor wants to guarantee my safety and wants me to stay here, 30 km away from Makobola. Wildor and the photocopier are back in Uvira. The bus got stuck in the mud for three hours just outside Bukavu. Anachronism: a high-tech photocopier stuck in the mud in the capital of the Sud Kivu province.

Wildor tells me that the Makobola's planning committee has sent him messages of how fantastic the workshop was. New, I think, and different, with everybody taking part, with stories about the past, understanding the present, and planning for the future. It certainly was enthusiastic: 85 people grouping and regrouping, planning for the future!

When Jonas and I arrived on our *moto*, again they were there waiting for us. *Jambo, Docteur Aria!* Ready

*We had to do it over two days, rather than three. The situation in the DRC is very difficult in many ways: every day a householder is not at work means that there might not be food in the evening for the family. There are no "buffers." So, that is one of the reasons why we opted for a two-day workshop. —A.M.



Their stories are of pain and suffering, of hope and courage.

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and keen to engage with the future. The presentations provoke deep emotions. They talk about "no more burning of our harvest, no more stealing of our food, no more famines, help for raped women, a less hard and brutal existence, a way to transport goods and people."

After lunch—fish from the lake, manioc, brown beans, and a bottle of fanta as a special treat (opened by Mihigo with his teeth!) — the heavens open. The noise on the zinc roof is deafening. *Hakuna matata* (no problem): everybody just shouted louder. After all, planning action for the future is very important and rain cannot stop that. When it drips on you, you just shift a couple of centimeters without as much as a pause in your sentence.

I feel drained, used up. The workshop concludes by electing a supporting committee and a short speech by the local Chief exhorting people to work for peace and development and to start their chosen tasks. Safari gives a very moving speech. I am next. I can't bring out a word, tears burn behind my eyes. "I am a woman like many of you here, but I cannot begin to imagine what

you must have gone through. I have three sons and a husband, but they have never been enlisted or forced into an army or been in a war. We are lucky, and we realize it. My sympathy and empathy is with you."

And again, I do something un-future search like, but it feels right: I ask all participants to stand up, to hold each others' hands, and say: *Nous promettons de travailler à travers de la paix, le développement et notre avenir idéale* (we promise to work for peace, development, and our ideal future). The participants do so, loud and solemn, everybody in the church with its broken altar, its "holey" roof, the mud walls, and the children hanging in the door openings.

Safari and Mihigo want to do FS for workshops all over the province. They are hooked. The next two workshops with them as co-facilitators are in Sange, beginning tomorrow, and in Luvungi, two days later. This is so good.

Jonas is waiting with his *moto*. Again we are stopped by a couple of young soldiers with guns. My stomach still goes into a knot at the sight of them. The roadblocks are illegal. They want a little money, 20 or 50 Congolese francs. I can understand their need to eat, but to make a living out of casting fear... it does not feel right. **FS**

We Lost Our Kingdom

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new consultant. Sebhat conferred with Bonnie Olson, and together we agreed that the small group currently working in isolation could not make any headway. The organization needed to bring in the larger community, “kick-start” a broader vision, and build stronger relationships within the diverse Ethiopian community: hence, a “future search” conference. Sebhat presented the future search principles and concepts to the board, and they agreed with the strategy.

Although it was built on the same principles and processes, this was by no means a classic future search. In fact, in the beginning, we did not refer to it as a future search at all. We had half the budget needed and less than half the time. Because of the long hours many immigrants work, we scheduled one full day and one half-day of conference meeting time. Within this limited time frame, we tried to squeeze in most components of the future search.

We had huge challenges to overcome and a couple of months to make it happen. The planning group had trouble recruiting the whole system they designed, because they didn’t have strong relationships with the wider community in the first place. Without a facilities budget, we ended up with the conference spread to two different locations and scheduled on two separate weekends. Planning meetings had sporadic attendance, and because of the small budget, volunteers spent time trying to get donated food and supplies in addition to recruiting participants.

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The planning group decided to conduct the conference in Amharic, the language understood by all participants. There was no need to translate it into English. Because Sebhat speaks the three major East African languages, he had the full responsibility for facilitating, and Bonnie played a supporting role. (Like dashing out at lunchtime to pick up food because, although the group said it was arranged, it wasn’t!)

We made a few interesting accommodations to the agenda to meet the cultural norms of the community. For example, we knew that we would start late, no matter how many times we said “we’ll start on time,” and that some community members would show up hours after we started. So after a brief opening, we had people up and writing in the timelines. As some people trickled in, we briefed them individually on the activity and gave them a marker. We had the report-outs of the timelines, and then went back to overview and other context-setting items. This way, most people heard the overview, and the feeling of group focus really set by mid-morning.

Although we had carefully arranged the stakeholder groups and eight names for each group, we ended up collapsing and rearranging groups to fit who showed up. On day one, our eight groups were collapsed to four. We were both a bit worried: there

were only two youth, four women, two Muslims. However, full participation of people present was great.

We had some difficult moments. As often happens, the youth made some serious challenges to the ECMA board, and we didn’t know if key leaders would be able to deal with this positively. A Christian religious leader came mid-day and stayed through lunch. One of the participants asked him to lead them in prayer before the meal, according to their custom. The two Muslim participants objected afterward, citing this as an example of ECMA being for Christians, not all Ethiopians. One individual left the conference early that day and we weren’t sure if it was because of this. Sebhat called him on the weekend and found out he had left for an appointment and would be attending the following weekend.

Day two: one week later and in a different location. We had fewer people attend, and some of those who came were not present for the first day. Participants realized they could use some more time and go a

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bit deeper into creating common ground and courses of action. Even though participation was splintered, there was plenty of passion for making the vision a reality. The core group decided to add a third evening, a four-hour session.

The extra action planning session had even fewer people. But those who came were the ones committed to action. They immediately got into the four action groups that had been organized the previous session and came up with concrete actions. These actions required affirmative action by the board members, most of whom

were not there, since the by-laws were restrictive on voting and standing committees. The ECMA board president made firm commitments to the group for affirmative changes.

Some Reflections

Working together as a bicultural team really helped make this a success. Sebhat knew the community culture and could facilitate and explain things appropriately and effectively. This full understanding of the culture was priceless in the planning stage, enabling us to be prepared for the differences in communication and to adjust the conference details. Because of his standing in the community, the group followed his guidance, even though much of what we were asking them to do was different from their usual way of operating. Bonnie was the future search process guide in this setting, helping Sebhat stick to the core process while adjusting to the flow of the group.

Bonnie: Because Sebhat himself is a local leader with widespread community respect, he was able to emphasize the future search values in respectful ways. He was already known as a community bridge-builder, and I think this increased the expectation of the group regarding what they were signing up to accomplish. I think it was much better running the conference in their language and not inserting English in the middle of it.

With the whole conference carried out in a language I couldn't understand, I had a great chance to practice other ways of "reading the room." It was fun becoming aware of how much I could perceive from energy changes, body language, and tone. It was also fun to see how

much of the gist I could get watching the future scenarios.

During group activities and breaks, Sebhat and I conferred on progress, and I helped make adjustments of time and steps to keep us on track. The real affirmation for me that my presence was valued by the group was when they insisted on finding a time for the half-day follow-up session when I could also attend.

Although I understood the future search principles, I was skeptical about asserting processes that conflicted with my culture's usual norms.

Sebhat: This was my first and, thus far, the only future search I have facilitated. It was comforting to know that I could turn to Bonnie, my colleague on several past projects, and receive consultation on some challenging questions with regard to process and content. I was not fully convinced that future search would work as well with diverse cultural groups, although I had heard testimonials and seen the Sudan video. Although I understood the future search principles, I was skeptical about asserting processes that conflicted with my culture's usual norms.

For example, the concept that every voice is valid. This value was new for my community. They are used to deferring to elders, and discussing with the goal in mind of having one opinion prevail. Several times I had to remind the group, politely, not to argue with a person's input, and that every opinion was valid. It wasn't easy, but they learned quickly. Adopting this value really made a difference in the decisions they were able to reach.

Despite challenges and difficulties, ECMA achieved the

transformative change cited in the beginning of this article. How can this be? We have come up with several key elements:

First, the group embraced the value that all voices needed to be included and heard. The board had already changed its expectation of what the group should look like and who needed to be involved. This value really solidified: all the future search scenarios included this vision, and one poked fun at the old ways. Laughter works wonders.

Community members both challenged the organization and agreed to work on making the changes happen. The core of new volunteers after the future search brought renewed energy and high expectations. This was especially true of the youth, who recruited very successfully, pushing the adults to keep up with them.

The board made public commitments to change their bylaws, which was a Common Ground item. The bylaws were amended, making it easier to become members and leaders, and facilitated the way for inclusiveness during the new board election.

Anteneh Belay, one of the ECMA future search participants, is now supporting the implementation as part of his graduate studies. His central question is how to strengthen community-based groups by building on their own strengths. Assisting ECMA with implementing its future search vision will be the testing ground for the theories he is learning at the Center for Creative Change at Antioch University, Seattle.

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Stay tuned. **FS**

Enhancing the Health and Safety of Children, Families, and Communities

Richard A. Aronson, MD, MPH

Future search represents a powerful tool for community-driven and culturally respectful statewide and national leadership efforts in maternal and child health (MCH). If we celebrate and honor cultural diversity within our organizations, the children and families that we serve are going to respond in a positive way.

This connects with MCH leadership in that our jobs strive to promote, protect, and support to whatever extent we can the health and safety of children and families. To do that, we first have to create and sustain healthy organizations for ourselves. We are challenged to create in our agencies an environment that affirms the future search principles.

In the Wisconsin Division of Public Health, specifically the Bureau of Family and Community Health, Millie Jones and I, as the Title V leaders for the state, worked intensively over an 11-year period (1991 to 2002) to create a healthy and safe environment, using future search principles. This means an environment where information is shared and not hidden, where communication is crystal clear, where problems are addressed constructively as soon as they emerge — an environment where people feel that their voices and actions matter and that they can be honest and open.

If you don't have that trust within an MCH or public health

agency, you'll end up with divisiveness and with people just trying to stake out their own territory, their own turf, rather than contributing creatively to the organization and to the fulfillment of the Title V mission. We made efforts in a wide

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variety of ways to clearly spell out the key principles that we want to apply to everything that we do in Family and Community Health in the State of Wisconsin.

We established Five Guiding Principles for MCH in Wisconsin. Those guiding principles are family-centered systems of care, community-wide leadership, resiliency, outreach, and cultural and linguistic competence. We tried not to have programs, services, and policies that just talk about these guiding principles but to make them come alive not only in the organizations with which we work but also within our bureau, within our own organization.

That's the key. You can't do it on the outside, if you don't do it on the inside. So we've done a

whole array of efforts over the past decade that try to make our employ-

ees feel that they matter: to include their voices, to defy rigid hierarchical boundaries, to honor and celebrate our people. The result was a staff that projected an enthusiasm, energy, and excitement — a special spirit that matches with the fundamental ideals of Title V. We're proud of that; the success that we've had in instilling the sense that becoming healthy is a never-ending journey. We're all flawed, perfectly imperfect, but that's part of the beauty of it. We encourage people to practice Maternal and Child Health Leadership and health-care delivery as a great learning, in the spirit of future search.

The significance of future search within the context of maternal and child health includes the following:

- Represents a chance for people who receive health and related services, including those often stripped of their dignity over generations of marginalization, to be in dialogue with people in charge of large health-care systems and organizations.
- Provides a forum to launch innovative actions that address the underlying systemic factors that affect the health of people and communities.
- Fosters essential but previously unlikely partnerships to create more humane systems that promote holistic healing.
- Brings together stakeholders from medicine, managed care, foundations, insurance companies, education, faith, mental health, business, community, government, and families.
- Overcomes turf issues in health care that block people and organizations from taking steps

toward unity and respect. An example is the longstanding mistrust between academic medical centers and communities of color that prevents the two from collaborating to prevent youth violence.

- Enables deeply divisive issues such as institutional racism to be addressed in constructive ways.
- Intensifies the growing urgency to include citizens in all phases of health-care programs, policies, services, and systems.
- Clarifies the importance of viewing health within an interconnected ecological context that honors social connectedness and the quality of human relationships as one of the most important determinants of health status.
- Enables health care to rise above traditional models based on morbidity, mortality, risk, and deficits. Instead, it taps into the strengths, resources, resiliency, and capacity of people and organizations to become healthy in mind, body, and spirit.
- Because children and families represent our future, the extent to which we have systems and policies that honor and promote their health will, in effect, determine how successful we are at becoming a more just, more peaceful, and less violent society.
- Brings alive the biological reality that human beings are 99.9%

We made efforts in a wide variety of ways to clearly spell out the key principles that we want to apply to everything that we do in Family and Community Health in the State of Wisconsin.

genetically alike. When diverse people gather together to envision a community where children are healthy and thriving, and where families are loving and affirming, they realize how much they have in common.

- Brings to light the enormous implications of the Human Genome Project. For example, scientists have shown that the total number of genes in humans is somewhere between 30,000 and 40,000. It is estimated that about six of the 40,000 genes determine skin color. That makes a compelling point that the idea of dividing people according to the color of their skin is biologically meaningless. Rather, it shows that race is a social construct that we have used to divide people from each other.
- Paves the way for health care that is culturally and ethnically sensitive and proficient. Future search honors and respects the uniqueness of cultures and the potential for diversity to enrich a person's health. The rapidly changing demographic diversity of the United States is fertile ground for future searches.
- Opens the door to looking at and promoting health in a much broader context. For example, what constitutes a healthy organization? And how does that

concept affect the health-care services that such an organization provides? If we ignore entrenched problems such as institutional racism within health-care organizations, in which employees feel that they have been discriminated against, and this is not addressed, the wounds fester. This kind of unhealthy organization is bound to have ripple effects out into the world it serves. How can such an organization be of service to its customers in a health-promoting way? So organizations that provide health care have to take a long and future search-type look within themselves to address such deeply entrenched systemic issues.

- Illuminates the deeper meaning of access to health care. People are gifted with intuition. They intuitively know when they call a medical office to what extent they are honored and welcomed.

When you feel as though you are imposing on the very people you count on to help you, the motivation to engage with the systems disappears. Consumers of health can intuitively sense whether an organization has got its act together.

- Brings out the necessity of having healthy employees in order to strengthen the health care's productivity. Healthy employees depend on an organization that honors diversity and the unique creativity and gifts that each person brings to that organization. **FS**

Future search in the health sector brings alive the biological reality that human beings are 99.9% genetically alike.

A Roadmap for Management and Its Use in Creating the Australian SME Sustainability Network*

Joe Bowers

Australia faces challenges in its Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) sector to build businesses that can prosper in an international environment of competition that requires business to be creative and skillful on social, financial, and environmental fronts over the long haul. While major public and international corporations have resources to identify and tackle these challenges, the SME sector finds this more difficult due to limitations in resources and the competing issues requiring the attention of a small management team.

The enterprises that can get the sustainability program right for their businesses and continue to improve in this area will secure the best talent to their workforce, the pick of the emerging ethical investors, and the most discerning customers.

While many of our new generation of entrepreneurs and SME executives are concerned for social and environmental issues, they lack the “just-in-time” knowledge, skills, and support they require at a price they can afford.

Along with leading Australian businesses, business associations, universities, government agencies, and, of course, some SMEs, FSN member Joe Bowers is using the roadmap for management and future search to drive the creation of such a network.

WorkVentures and The Centre for Success, Health, & Happiness have decided to create such a network, as a sustainable venture in its own

right, as part of our contribution to securing a successful and sustainable future for our community.

The Importance of a Roadmap

“Everything should be made as simple as possible, but no simpler.”

—Albert Einstein

I love Einstein’s quote. I didn’t always love it. It used to frustrate me. I used to think, “What’s the difference between ‘simple’ and ‘simpler’?” I now think I understand. If you want to go on a journey that you have never been on before, it helps to have a map. And the more accurate the map, the quicker and easier the journey will be.

The most accurate map (or model) for management would be one that integrates or incorporates literally *all* known theories and concepts associated with management, while still remaining as simple as possible. Such a map would provide a grand integral theory of management, meet Einstein’s maxim, and certainly be worth knowing.

In the space of this article, it is not possible to present that map. What is possible is to:

1. Present a discrete but important part of the larger map (“the discrete roadmap”);
2. Show how that discrete part is currently being used to create the Australian SME Sustainability Network through a powerful methodology called future search;
3. Provide directions for how you can find out more about the larger map.

The Discrete Roadmap

While researching the great management theorists of the 20th Century, Marv Weisbord, co-director of Future Search Network, suddenly had an “aha” experience.** He realized that there was a simple pattern to the evolution of management:

Experts Solve Problems	Everybody Solves Problems	Experts Improve Whole Systems	Everybody Improves Whole Systems
1900	1950	1965	2000+

*From an article written for an Australian management publication. See also the box on page 11. —Ed.

**Weisbord writes, “Actually I wasn’t researching the great theorists. I was looking for the roots of my own practice by studying people back to whose work I could directly trace my own —Taylor, Lewin, McGregor, Emery, and Trist—with all of whom I had a visceral (and with the last two) personal connection. The Learning Curve came from my going over my own cases from 1969 to 1985 with Eric Trist, and realizing that my conceptual development had more or less followed this track.” —Ed.

Weisbord also surmised that if managers understood this map, they could more easily see whether they were using the most effective approach.

Take a moment to look at the pattern. In the first half of the century, the focus was on *problem-solving* (first “experts,” then “everybody”). In the second half, the focus shifted to a future opportunity-based focus of *improving whole systems* (first “experts,” then “everybody”).

The approach that emerged in 1965 of “experts improving whole systems” is reflected in things such as managers pushing their own agenda, consultants recommending action, expert presentations, top-down change initiatives, and “doing to” rather than “creating with” others.

The emerging approach of “everybody improving whole systems” recognizes that all internal and external stakeholders have knowledge, wisdom, and energy to bring to bear in improving the whole, and that maximum effectiveness is achieved by involving a representation of those stakeholders in a structured way beyond surveys, forums, and think tanks. When we can harness the power and creativity of the whole system, powerful and unpredictable things become common occurrences.

As Weisbord points out, employees and managers alike hunger for dignity, meaning, and a sense of belonging. This emerging approach provides all those things while simultaneously improving business performance.

In my experience, Australia is a step behind North America and possibly Europe in fully implementing and utilizing this emerging approach. With a little open-mindedness and a lot of courage, 2006 and beyond could see that change.

“Everybody Improving Whole Systems”

This approach is best applied as an ongoing method for managing an organization, project, or region, but can also be used as a one-time-only, large-scale change initiative. There are three simple steps to doing it (however, the implementation of the steps is not always simple).

What follows is an outline of the steps with discussion of how we are using them to create the SME Sustainability Network.

Responsibility for implementing the steps in any change initiative is best taken by a planning group that represents a microcosm of the whole system.

Our planning group for the SME Sustainability Network represents a good microcosm, including Professor Peter Newman (NSW Sustainability Commissioner), Professor Dexter Dunphy (Director, Sustainable Business Forum), WorkVentures, IAG, Westpac, Lane Cove Council, NSW Department of Environment and Conservation, Envoso, and Pidcock and Associates.

Step 1 — “Improving Whole Systems”

This step involves identifying a future-focused, opportunity-based purpose. A good purpose is one that generates excitement and passion.

The purpose of the SME Sustainability Network is “To create a network, as a sustainable enterprise in its own right, to enable the Australian SME sector to communicate, access, learn, and support each other toward a more successful and sustainable future.”

Step 2 — “Everybody”

In the emerging Knowledge Era, creativity is key. And the key to creativity is diversity.

The best way to maximize diversity is by involving a representation of the whole system including outsiders (e.g., customers and suppliers) and different functions, levels, genders, ages, and cultures. And despite modern technology, the most effective way of involving them is to get them in the room together.

Another thing that helps to identify the whole system is clarifying the identifiable parts of the system: what are known as “stakeholder groups.” There are techniques for identifying the stakeholders and getting them to attend.

The stakeholder groups that have been identified for the purpose of the SME Sustainability Network are SME Owners, SME Employees, SME Advisers, Corporations, Business Associations, NGOs, Government and Education.

Step 3 — Designing the Meeting

Having identified the purpose and stakeholders, the final consideration is “What meeting design will best achieve the purpose?” The best methodology I know of for this purpose is future search.

It is future search that is being used to create a shared vision and strategic plan for the SME Sustainability Network.

Why Future Search?

The two main sources of inspiration for future search come from business Search Conferences (the brainchild of Eric Trist and Fred Emery) and community Future Conferences (the brainchild of Eva Schindler Rainman and Ronald Lippitt). Both share a common ancestor in Kurt Lewin’s field theory and action research.

What future search involves is getting 30 or more (no upper limit) people in the room together, prefer-

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Australian SME Sustainability Network
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ably over 16 hours (with two sleep-overs), to explore the:

- Past — Where We've Been
- Present — Where We Are
- Future — What We Want
- Common Ground — Getting Agreement on What We Want
- Action Planning — How We're Going to Get There

Some of the things that make future search so powerful are that it facilitates:

- Development of a shared view of the world we live in and the system in question;
- Each individual taking responsibility during and after the meeting;
- Engagement of the whole individual— body, heart, and mind;
- A future that everyone in the room agrees is desired;
- Development and sharing of action plans based on voluntary commitment.

Just a few of the thousands of users of future search have included:

Ikea used it to transform its product flow from drawing room to customer. Managing Director Josephine Rydberg said: *"It's a very inspiring and dignified way to explore complex issues and future decisions."*

Sydney's Area Consultative Committee used it with the staff, board, government, business, education, and community to increase funding for regional development from \$1.4M to \$5M per annum. CEO Paul Goodwin described it as *"inspirational."*

The U.S. Federal Aviation Authority used it to radically overhaul runway queuing and lengthy delays. They called it *"a miracle."*

Macquarie University (in Sydney) used it to create a new Business of Sport academic program with academics, administrators, and industry representatives. The CEO, Deidre Anderson, said: *"Fantastic. An enormous success."*

Berrett Kohler Publishers used it to establish a strategic plan. Gloria Valoris, GM, said: *"I've got more done in 2½ days than I could have achieved in five years of calls."*

Advanta Corporation used it to create a shared vision. Dennis Alter, CEO and chairman, said: *"This is the most useful, tangible, actionable output that I have ever seen... and I've seen some in my time."*

Follow-Up

Although implementation automatically results after a future search, it helps to have identified specific follow-up. (This is also consistent with the idea that getting

"Everybody Improving Whole Systems" is best utilized as an ongoing approach to managing anything.)

Weisbord and Janoff indicate that the best way they know to do this is through regular review meetings of 4-6 hours focusing on what people said they were going to do, what they have done, and what they're going to do next. Other good follow-up methods include newsletters and websites.

The Starting Point?

Many managers do not have the courage to adopt the emerging approach of "Everybody Improving Whole Systems" and the associated methodology of future search. To do so requires letting go of command and control to a significant degree. For this reason, the starting point for using this approach arguably lies in a manager's own individual development. And this hints at another important aspect of management that would form part of the larger map for management.

Summary

The discrete management roadmap outlined in this article illustrates a simple but powerful emerging approach: engage the whole system and focus on a future desired by all.

The best way that I know to do that is through future search. It is this methodology that we used to create the Australian SME Sustainability Network over 12 hours on February 3-4, 2006. For more information on that initiative, email joe@successandhappiness.com.au.

For more information on the larger map, see *A Theory of Everything: An Integral Vision for Business, Politics, Science and Spirituality* by Ken Wilber, or, for a summary, visit www.successandhappiness.com.au and click on "Integral Management." **FS**

The 10th Annual Learning Exchange: "EXPLORING & LEVERAGING INDIVIDUAL & COLLECTIVE IMPACT"

May 4-6, 2006, in the Philadelphia area

Register at www.futuresearch.net
or contact Sally at fsn@futuresearch.net
215-951-0328 • 1-800-951-6333.

Please register no later than April 21.

The New Australian SME Sustainability Network*

19 January 2006

Australian Business Limited member Joe Bowers is driving the creation of a Network to help small and medium enterprises toward greater success while simultaneously enhancing the well-being of its people (employees, customers, suppliers, etc.) and the quality of the environment. The initiative has the support and involvement of Australian Business Limited, Macquarie Uni, Eden Gardens, Lane Cove Council, UTS, Westpac, Insurance Australian Group, Dept. of Environment, and various small or medium businesses.

The starting point for creating the Network is a structured event over 12 hours on Friday (February 3) and Saturday (February 4) at Macquarie University, at which a cross-section of 50 stakeholders will develop a common understanding and strategic plan for the Network. The response to the idea has been excellent, and the planning group for the event is keen to involve SMEs from a range of industries, as well as larger organizations.

The benefits of attending include being part of the creation of something of importance; meeting with and learning from like-minded people; and enabling your business to contribute and influence the future success and sustainability of businesses in the Sydney area.

For more information, call Joe on 9858 1569 or 0403 395 488, or Australian Business Limited representative on the Network, Ross Maher on 13 26 96.

*From *Australian Business Limited*, whose stated vision is "To champion the development, capability, and prosperity of Australian businesses." —Ed.

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FROM THE LISTSERVE

Baldrige Award to Include Nonprofits

For those of you who work in the "nonprofit sector," President Bush just signed into law a bill that creates a category for the Baldrige National Quality Award process to be extended to the nonprofit sector. I am a quality examiner for our state association and have learned a great deal about systems, quality, and improvement from this process.

I just wanted to share this development with the listserv. Many of you probably already know about this, but if anybody has any questions, I would be happy to help if I can. Information on this program may be found at <http://www.quality.nist.gov/Nonprofit/index.html>.

Once the FS is over and the WHOLE system has spoken, this process can help you implement and keep the momentum going.

Paul Hedlund
paul@hcitools.com
December 16, 2005

Creating the Future We Want for Future Search Network

Bonnie Chandler, FSN Communications Coordinator

FSN members and friends — an important new capacity-building effort is under way in the Network, and we want you to be a part of it!

In the fall of 2005, FSN staff looked at a looming deficit in our 2005-2006 operating budget with deep concern and a feeling of aloneness.

Fund reserves from past project income were down; workshop income was lower, as the OD market has shifted; charitable giving declined, as there are more and more requests on people's dollars; and we had no staff time for grant pursuits. We saw that modes of income production that had worked for us for a decade were now outdated, with no new strategy to retool them for present needs.

FSN staff called out to the Network for partnership, and immediately a group of 12 creative members arose to form a support team for fund development (no more "aloneness!"). As distasteful as money-raising felt to many of us, all agreed that the future of our Network and our vital work together was at stake, and that as many of us as possible had to rise to action.

(At first we considered the task ahead a "job." Several meetings later, we were all enjoying the energy and action we were producing to change the future of the Network and the hundreds/thousands of people we impact! We also grew to enjoy the effect of our individual efforts leveraging together to form a whole bigger than the sum of our parts!)

Our goal would be to immediately raise \$60,000 from member contributions and income sources close to our inner circle, to fill the immediate gap in our current budget. With that accomplished, the team agreed that two steps were needed: develop a strategy for funding sustainability for the Network and, in future search style, involve

our stakeholders for group envisioning and collective energy for making our vision happen.

We'd make that happen by asking members to give as they've never given before, to get us on a new footing for the decade ahead; and by building widening layers of contacts and conversations about the future of FSN, starting with our committee volunteers and building our stakeholder buy-in and resources from there.

We began this effort with a December 2005 funding request letter to FSN members — and to our delight, \$30,000 in member donations came in, from about 30% of our membership. This covered half of our deficit right away.

We're delighted at this show of support, but our job is far from over, and we must continue to tap all members' connections, resources, ideas, and funding leads until we secure the second \$30,000 needed by June, the end of our fiscal year. But, of course, we realize as future searchers that our job is not just to raise money but to engage our

whole system in a conversation about our future, then work together to equip that vision.

So we've begun a conversation among our whole membership of 350, asking each of us to join this effort to make our Network the robust, equipped, resourced, and supported organization it needs to be to meet the needs and requests world communities are making of us.

This report encapsulates some of the conversation of FSN fund development meetings and our first two telephone envisioning conversations. If you have not yet joined in this conversation, would you please respond to the contacts at the end of this article? Our goal is 100% participation from our members, so please let your voice be heard.

The FSN Envisioning Teleconferences

Member Conversations, 1/24/06 and 1/25/06

Sponsored by your FSN Fund Development Committee (FDC): Dick Aronson, Lisa Beutler, Bonnie Chandler, Shem Cohen, Bob Devlin, Bill Elmore, Ruth Feldman, MaryBeth Fidler, Gary Peck, Bob Pogue, Shelley Sweet, Sally Theilacker, and Bob Woodruff.

Joining the conversation were 22 members: Bill Elmore, Bob Pogue, Sandra Janoff, Bonnie Chandler, Alice Liebowitz, Katharine Esty, Loretta Raider, Joe Bowers, Marilyn Sifford, Bill Hancy, Michael Schwartz, Shelley Sweet, Marybeth Fidler, Shem Cohen, Bob Woodruff, Orrin Judd, Claudia Chowanec, Jean Haskell, Claudia Cohen, Nancy Aronson, Marie McCormick, Susan Coleman.

As distasteful as money-raising felt to many of us, all agreed that the future of our Network and our vital work together was at stake, and that as many of us as possible had to rise to action.

Agenda: an envisioning conversation about what FSN has meant to us; what we believe its potential is; ideas we have for FSN's growth and member opportunities; and suggested resources for our sustainability. The meeting had five parts: introduction of those joining us; sharing by all on why FSN is important; update from Sandra Janoff on FSN news, projects, and opportunities; Nancy Polend's report on the "Prosperous Communities Project"; and thoughts on the future of our Network.

Some pre-teleconference conversation points of the Fund Development Committee:

- The Committee agreed to a concentric circle fundraising and dialogue strategy for the campaign, beginning with "challenge donations" from our committee. Group members said they would feel more comfortable fundraising to the membership once this "stretching commitment" had been modeled, which was done when several thousand dollars from our committee members started this campaign.
- It was reported from the Boston regional FSN group that local members there are excited and invested in our fund development campaign. They offered the suggestion that we should be inspired by the first premise of the original hypocratic oath, which reads, "first take care of those who have taught you."
- "Sometimes we FSN members forget some of the great things we've accomplished."
- "We need a salaried fundraising person to be constantly 'looking out for the financial welfare of the institution.' Most organizations have this."
- "We're shifting from reliance on the largess of our co-directors, and growing up into long-term

sustainability. We've been taking FSN for granted."

- "This is a special work we do, and we can't just survive, we need to thrive. I get more and more committed to this work. FSN represents a movement for social justice in the world. The great movements in the world have started like this."
- "We're talking about more work for members, as part of the sustainability/big project capacity building and acquisition piece."
- A go-round was held on FDC members' feelings on the multi-community Poverty Project under development: Comments included: "It's the future of the Network!" ... "This gets to the root, it's a very positive focus." ... "It's extremely important as a capital investment for us, but we must keep the Network going in the meantime." ... "The possibilities for change here are enormous." ... "This project will do something magnificent on a lot of levels." ... "I can only begin to imagine the impact."

The teleconference opened with the question, "What does the FSN mean to you?"

Here are some "headlines" of responses to this question:

- "Future Search Network connects me to big thinkers."
- "I use the listserv but feel the Network could be much more to me."
- "What is of value to me is fellowship, learning, inspiration."
- "My Boston regional FSN group helps our members gain vision, change, momentum, and leverage from each other."

We're delighted at this show of support, but our job is far from over, and we must continue to tap all members' connections, resources, ideas, and funding leads until we secure the second \$30,000 needed by June.

- "The framework of future search is congruent with my beliefs and values and the way I want to practice organizational change."
- "We have to equip our infrastructure to support big opportunities that come up quickly."
 - "The way we do the work, with the principles and methodology, is one of the most powerful ways to make a difference in organizations and communities."
 - "FSN is of practical value, using what's happened in the past to be able to show the work that's been done by many in various industry sectors."
 - "I find it very inspiring to be part of the learning exchange and a family like this."
 - "The Network means a way out of the depression I feel when I don't have my eye on the Network goal."
- "In a personal way when I feel alone, I turn to the Network and know that we are looking together to make a difference in the world."
- "I joined FSN two weeks after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. It was my lifeline, and I rely on the listserv as a place of hope."
- "One of the most exciting things was being in our Ireland and Stockholm meetings and being overwhelmed by the number of nations there who are involved with FSN."
- "FSN is a touchstone. Future search was my first large group methodology, and you always have a place in your heart for your first love."

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Next, Sandra Janoff reported on current FSN issues and activities:

"Finances are a struggle right now: paying for the infrastructure that currently exists. I think of what we could grow to — building in a component of research, enhancing marketing and visibility, and building our website's strength.

"On the other side of the FSN ledger, we see great opportunities coming to us. The poverty initiative is burgeoning. A UN Disaster Risk Reduction global conference is being held in February, using future search, and having the potential to cascade into regions and nations in world. The potential is here for us to build FSN on large projects. So we've decided to do what we have to do to keep growing. There's a lot more we can do in the world. This is good news!"

The bad news is how to get the funds we need. The Whirlpool project money we operated off of for a period of time is gone. Now we have to explore other funding sources.

If we can get in the *growth* mode financially, it would be great to have someone in charge of research—the learnings, success stories. Also someone to make us more visible in more parts of the market, like the work that Bonnie Chandler has begun.

Good news—there are different kinds of FSN sparks around the world—such as staff projects on systemic issues in many places. Those opportunities are starting to present themselves. Our Poverty Project, titled "Prosperous

Communities, Prosperous Nation," focuses on one systemic issue; it leverages change using future search; it involves state and local policymakers with communities in 8-10 model cities around the country, using future searches; and it identifies what can be done to create prosperous communities. We're hopeful that Nancy Polend's efforts right now in developing, funding, connecting, and marketing this project will materialize funding for our various projects and efforts.

The potential is here for us to build FSN on large projects. So we've decided to do what we have to do to keep growing. There's a lot more we can do in the world. This is good news!

Nancy Polend's report on the "Prosperous Communities Project" (formerly, "The Poverty Project")

"This project is under development right now and starting to connect with partners and resource people. It's about leveraging and applying future search and FSN resources to a systemic issue across the United States. I managed a large-scale project that I want to roll up to something even

bigger: local, state, and federal policy makers in communities across the country addressing poverty in the U.S. and rolling up these local projects into something national. We're in the 'naming & framing' stage of this effort; we've got the approach documented; we're putting out proposals; and we have some promising interest so far. If this is a package, so to speak, FSN will be the 'Fed X' vehicle to deliver this package to communities and the U.S."

(Nancy asked for suggestions re: potential sponsors. She said she's doing state presentations to see which might want to be the "first state out of the gate" running future

searches to address poverty in their communities.) Nancy has materials available that describe this project. Please contact her (nancy@futuresearch.net) if you have connections/ideas/resources/questions/input/etc.

Envisioning: What are the wishes and hopes we members have for the Network?

- "I suggest finding new ways to network the Network."
- "I'd like to have more folks in the Network conducting our two public training workshops, so that as we inevitably grow, we can get more folks trained."
- "We talk about having a collegial community in FSN. I'd like to have that feel more personal to more people."
- The question was asked, "Has FSN done a future search on itself?" ... Sandra replied that this is often asked, and FSN has not done it to date for several financial and logistical reasons. "A future search on the Network would be excellent. A small group of people (Claude Whitmayer, Gail Terry Grimes, Ellen Raboin, and Tom Schwarz) are currently developing an *online* future search. We are trying to

learn if we can replicate our process online. We hope this happens within a year. Our Network will be the guinea pig example of this."

- "So many people are committed to future search and FSN with their heads and heart, all ready to go, but with no opportunity to do future searches. The focus of our Network should be on channeling this desire and skill, coordinating and leveraging energies, and using our talent pool. Rather than focusing on learning more, our focus should

If this is a package, so to speak, FSN will be the "Fed X" vehicle to deliver this package to communities and the U.S.

be channeling this network of people who are already there, into work opportunities!" (Sandra Janoff responded, "If our Poverty project gets funded and this income builds the capacity of the Network, we'll fund a research person on staff, so we can publish what we've done. We'll go up a notch in our communications, with a staff person who can go into the communities physically and present who we are — increasing our visibility this way.")

- "I want to be sure we don't become the McIntosh computer of the world — 'a better product but not as well known.' We have to educate 'the market' that we do have the better product!"
- "This is a very, very exciting conversation. The poverty project and the United Nations projects are the kind of work I have in mind for future search and my future! I hope I and others in Network can be involved."
- "If future searches could be done in a large U.S. city or state, if we can ever break into that, every city across the country would want to know how to do it. We need a MODEL CITY! Then future search application re: poverty, etc., is validated on a large scale, and we'll have plenty of work to do. In cities, this is the biggest budget item (social service/social problems) they wrestle with, other than road repair. If a city could show a substantial improvement in its budget, future search application would spread like wildfire."


Part 4: What is the future of the Network that will be most meaningful to you? What might your contribution be?

- "I would like to see us partner with the large agencies that have money and infrastructure, on an international basis. This would help us financially, too. Such as: United Nations, where they want reform but don't know how to do it."
- "I want to see future search used more as a peace-building initiative, like the hook we have in the UN work. I am interested in ecological projects as well. Investing in staff, like what Bonnie is doing (communications and networking work), has a big payoff for organizations."
- "I confess to being a 'UN-aholic.' I like idea of building large-scale initiatives, vs. the popcorn approach of just taking what comes along."
- "I want to build the capacity of the communities we work with as a means of building leadership broadly and expanding the breadth of the future search values."
- "An emerging group in Seattle is interested in coalescing 3-4 groups in OD there to make community impact on an issue. I would like to use future search processes with that group."
- "My vision for the Network is a healthy, sustainable Network — whether that means bringing in money from foundations, corporations, or other ways. I see a large-scale strategic focus of staying well."

- "I am interested in problems like poverty, violence, and sustainable environments — and want to see future search tackle those."
- "My current interest is to create a neutral container, perhaps within the Network or just inspired by it, for fields (e.g., alternative medicine, ecology) or domains to come together to aggregate intelligence and identify common ground, which will also build collaborative circles."

Next steps were discussed:

- Continuing ongoing conversations about this, one-on-one and via the listserv.
- Minutes will be posted on the FSN listserv and also sent to participants.
- The Fund Development Committee will use this information to guide its work.
- A Virtual Future Search is being explored with the help of people who are experts in creating virtual community.
- Everyone is encouraged to attend the Learning Exchange in Philadelphia, May 4-6, 2006, to continue this conversation.
- Plan to attend in South Africa in 2007!

Thanks to all who participated in the first round of this "whole-FSN" conversation. If you missed it and want to participate, there are more and varied opportunities to join this dialogue: contact Shelley Sweet (shelleysweet@sbcglobal.net) or Sally Theilacker (fsn@futuresearch.net, 215-951-0313). 

Watch for updates on **The 10th Annual Learning Exchange: "Exploring & Leveraging Individual & Collective Impact"** on www.futuresearch.net and the FSN listserv. Register today! Or no later than April 21.

LA County High School for the Arts Plans for 2010

Jean Katz and Vera Jashni

Los Angeles County High School for the Arts (LACHSA) is a success story at a time when much news about American public high schools is gloomy. LACHSA was founded 20 years ago by The Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) to provide outstanding academic and artistic education to artistically talented students from the 82 school districts of Los Angeles County.

They compete for admission by auditioning in music, drama, and dance or by presenting a portfolio in the visual arts. Some freshmen enter with low-average academic grades, but 95% of graduating seniors are admitted to the most prestigious universities or conservatories in the U.S. and abroad. Alumni of LACHSA include the singer Josh Groban; actors Jenna Elfman, Leonard Howze, and McKenzie Westmore; dancer Matthew Rushing; playwright Josefina Lopez; and technical director Joseph Gerges.

When Dr. Robert Barner, Assistant Superintendent of LACOE, invited Jean Katz to facilitate planning for the next five years of the school, Jean was excited to continue a process that she helped initiate. She worked part-time at the school when it opened in 1985-1986, assisting with the operational planning as part of her role as an organization development consultant at LACOE.

LACHSA began as collaboration between the Los Angeles County Music Center, the Los Angeles County Supervisors, California State University at Los Angeles, and the

Los Angeles County Office of Education. Additional money beyond the usual ADA (average daily attendance) was available from the California State Legislature for specialty high schools. A

Foundation, formed soon after the school opened, provided additional money needed to support a strong program in the performing and visual arts.

Jean and Vera Jashni co-facilitated a future search planning conference for the school in 1990. Some of the goals set then were met. Others fell between the cracks of daily operations and leadership transitions. (LACHSA has had four principals since 1990.) David Flores, Director of Alternative Education at LACOE, provided leadership during the transitions. A new principal, Paul Gothold, began his tenure in the fall of 2004. He and the LACOE administrators agreed that he would stay at least three to five years.

When preparation for the 2005 strategic planning conference began, leaders were concerned about the financial future of the school. ADA funding was not enough to cover

program costs. There was a possibility that funding for specialty high schools would be cut in California. Foundation funds weren't enough to make up for the deficit. But by the time the strategic planning conference took place in March 2005, a \$250,000 grant was received by the Foundation from Warner Brothers Studio. They also promised guest lecturers, summer internships at the studio for students, and a \$10,000 scholarship to attend a film school for a graduate of LACHSA. It was the first major grant from the entertainment industry in the 20-year history of the school.

Planning to Plan

In the fall of 2004, a steering committee of 18 was formed to plan for the strategic planning conference. Representative administrators from LACOE, LACHSA, arts and academic teachers, counselors, parents, students, and representatives from the Foundation were included. Their task was to recommend the theme of the conference, designate stakeholder groups and individuals who should be invited, and determine when and where it should be held. Steering committee members hoped that increased financial resources and greater integration of the arts and academics would be outcomes of the conference. They recommended that the theme be "LACHSA: Partnering to Be the Best in Arts and Academics."

Several decisions made by this group shaped the conference. The standard design of a future search was modified. Steering committee members wanted all the students, parents, teachers, administrators, etc. to give input into the plan before the conference. Therefore, a simple Appreciative Inquiry (AI) interview was designed. Partners

When preparation for the 2005 strategic planning conference began, leaders were concerned about the financial future of the school. ADA funding was not enough to cover program costs. There was a possibility that funding for specialty high schools would be cut in California.

interviewed each other about their most exceptional experience at LACHSA and about their hopes for future development of productive partnerships. The paired AI interview was demonstrated with the steering committee members, who, in turn, used it with students, teachers, and LACOE board members. Recommendations from these interviews were typed up and put in the participant manual for the conference. Parents sent the interviews out by e-mail and collected responses online.

Another decision that shaped the conference was to allow part-time participants to attend. When the facilitators recommended that all participants must attend full time, the Foundation representatives objected. They said that they could not get their wealthy contributors to attend for 16 hours over three days, but they would attend for the time they had available. The steering committee decided to allow this.

Parents on the committee were concerned that more parents would want to attend than could be accommodated with just eight representatives from each stakeholder group. They decided to have an observer table at the conference where parents and others could watch the planning, but not offer comments.

Steering committee members invited all the participants to the conference by telephone or face-to-face, before sending a confirmation letter. About 60 people agreed to attend, representing the arts and entertainment industries, alumni, CSULA and USC from higher education, the LA County Arts Commission, as well as students, parents, teachers, counselors, and LACOE and LACHSA administrators.

Highlights of the FS

Alamnsor Court in Alhambra, a conference center on a golf course, was the setting for the two-and-a-half day conference, March 10-12, funded by LACOE. It was scheduled to start Thursday after school at 3:30 p.m. and end on Saturday at

1:00 p.m. This enabled working parents to miss just one day of work, and students and teachers to miss only one day of class time, in 16 hours of conference time. Plentiful and delicious food was served. A few parents sat at the observer table. They were later integrated into the participant tables.

After participants filled timeline sheets on the wall with rich data on the history of society, LACHSA, and their personal history, Dr. Stuart Gothold made a

brief presentation. He was Superintendent of LACOE when LACHSA was founded. He spoke of "friends in high places," the early collaboration between county and state government leaders that gave birth to the school. Dr. Gothold said that staff and parents were very surprised when they saw academic and artistic achievement soar by the end of the second year. He praised the parents for their high level and sustained participation from the beginning of LACHSA.

The mind-map activity drew out so much information about external and internal forces affecting LACHSA that there was no room to connect trends. Core trends were identified by asking participants to call out the primary trends they saw on the mind-map, note them on a separate chart, and then use colored dots to prioritize

their significance. Trends were often mixed with wishes and solutions. Students participated in this activity with great enthusiasm, becoming the truth-tellers about what is working well and not so well at LACHSA. The main issues identified on the mind-map were: fragmentation, funding, publicity and public relations, and alumni connection.

On Friday morning (day 2), facilitators asked participants to sit in role-alike stakeholder groups. They developed lists on T charts of what we are doing now and what we want to do in the future about "partnering to be the best in Arts and Academics." We ended this activity with asking for their proudest prouds and "sorriest" sorries. At this point, a vision was already forming of what participants wanted for the future.

The vision skits in the afternoon were filled with the high drama and humor you would expect from a group of actors, musicians, dancers, and artists. Participants then returned to their mixed stakeholder groups to recommend areas of common ground that would become the vision for the future of LACHSA. Returning to the large

group, they found the common ground areas to be: funding, facilities, managing stakeholder resources, integrating the Arts and Academics, high standards for the Arts and Academics, collaborations, public relations, and student support services. Specialty departments for TV, film, and musical theater was a "unique and wonderful" item that the group wanted maintained.

At this point, 3:30 p.m., participants were drooping in their chairs. When the facilitators suggested that they go home and start again in the morn-

By the time the strategic planning conference took place in March 2005, a \$250,000 grant was received by the Foundation from Warner Brothers Studio.

The mind-map activity drew out so much information about external and internal forces affecting LACHSA that there was no room to connect trends.

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ing, several parents objected. "We have only 16 hours to get this done. Let's go on."

Instead of proceeding with a large group Reality Dialogue, the facilitators initiated a quick Open Space process. We asked for volunteer discussion leaders for each area of Common Ground. As soon as a leader stood up, we sent him or her to a different point in the room with the topic name and a flipchart. Then we asked the rest of the participants to group themselves around the topic of their highest passion. When the groups had formed, we instructed each group: "Come up with a couple of sentences that describe what we will see in five years when your vision for that topic has been met. Write your statements on your chart."

By 4:30, each group was ready to read its statements to the group, and by 5:00 we adjourned until Saturday morning. The goal statements have been refined as follows:

Collaboration: To increase corporate/entertainment industry partnerships, employment/internships for students, performing with professional arts groups.

LACHSA Facility: To work with the State Department of Education and facilitate the planning process for LACHSA's new building.

Funding: To achieve sustainable funding at \$5.25 million through state, federal, and private funding per year.

High Standards in Arts and Academics: To re-visit goals/outcomes for all departments, establish baseline criteria and high expectations for each course.

Integration of Arts and Academics: To research highly innovative programs, re-writing and implementing challenging, meaningful curricula that integrate the arts with academics, providing more opportunities for students to take classes outside their discipline. In short, provide the best educational experience possible for all students.

Public Relations: To increase visibility and awareness of the school by means of local/national coverage in print, radio, and TV.

Student Support Services: To increase awareness of services available to families and develop individual educational plans for all students.

Managing Stakeholder Resources: To work with all stakeholder groups (School, Foundation, Parents, Students, University, Community Partners) to help them function more efficiently, increase communication, and utilize strengths to best support our students.

Saturday morning (day 3), the same topic-based groups worked together very informally. They developed the details of what they could accomplish in the first six months. Some participants moved between groups. Some groups combined as they saw their topics overlapped. They ended with a commitment to continue meeting

A t this point, 3:30 p.m., participants were drooping in their chairs. When the facilitators suggested that they go home and start again in the morning, several parents objected. "We have only 16 hours to get this done."

in committees. First meetings were scheduled from one to five weeks after the strategic planning conference. The principal has since reported that these meetings have begun, and he has been invited to attend all of them.

Lessons Learned and Relearned

- Student participation enhanced every aspect of the process. Students often served as reporters for their groups.
- Part-time participants contributed ideas and leadership and did not slow down the process.
- An observer table was helpful. It allowed inclusion of those who wanted to attend but were not one of the designated eight stakeholders in a group.
- Energy and productivity of participants improved when we eliminated the Reality Dialogue and instead asked participants to form groups around the common themes. In the new groups, participants created descriptive vision statements.
- Body language spoke louder than words in telling the facilitators when to stay with an activity and when to move forward.
- A skilled documenter with a laptop computer can create an almost immediate and complete record of the conference.
- A written history of the organization in the participant manual helped when factual information was challenged.
- Interviews before the conference gave all students, faculty, and parents a sense of inclusion. Interview data did not appear to influence the outcome of the conference. **FS**

A Successful FS Because...

Drusilla Copeland*

Recently, Bengt Lindstrom and I completed a totally awesome future search with a client system where the primary clients had experience with a future search from having participated in a previous conference and with us as facilitating consultants.

During the weekend 80 people gathered at 10:00 a.m. Friday morning and worked until 4:00 p.m. Sunday afternoon on a most emotional, intense and polarizing issue. The issue was internal to the organization and it affects approximately two-thirds of the workforce and the entire management system.

The group moved through the Four Rooms of Change as individuals and as a collective several times. (When they seemed to get stuck was when they did not self-manage or lost sight of the task before them.) It was truly inspiring to see the Common Ground Wall and to watch the enthusiastic Action Planning.

Why this conference was successful: (1) Many of the participants were very savvy users of the Four Rooms of Change Theory (they had participated in team activities where the Four Rooms of Change Tools were used). (2) The deep and active involvement of the General Manager and the Union President in managing the Common Ground and Action Planning phase together with us. (3) The intense work of the Planning Committee before the conference, their participation in the conference, and their commitment to implementing the action planning outcomes. (4) The conscious choice Bengt and I made to involve the problem/future owners (the General Manager and the Union President) in the process of building the Common Ground Agenda and the Action Planning steps. We have tried this several times, and it works. It works because it is a good place during the conference to give the problem and the future back to the conference participants, the proper owners/stakeholders in the event (it no longer belongs to the consultant team).

Note to consultants/facilitators: We really have to focus on the need(s) of the client and to offer them the appropriate choice(s) to help them get their need(s) met.

The closing comment of the General Manager was, "How can we get this experience for all 2,000 employees in the next year?"

Conditions for Success

Tag names, dot minds,
map the ground we all walk on
in the Paleolithic village of the one heart,
but don't you do this, just water.

Get markers charting flips,
silent yields through the rooms
whose walls you see through,
my landlords of the circle.

Have fun, mix groups, stake holders,
net works, work books, foam boards,
strip tapes, line time, everything is moving.
Everything is still moving.

If you want to know a thing,
Walk in the center quietly.
Stand there, do not unfurl.
Does anyone know it differently?

Render proud sorry-dialogue, new
mirrored dreams, seven minutes
to fortune tell fresh reality for hills, shores,
sands, four walls, shared skies, deep ground.

Ralph Copleman
September 2005

Perhaps what we perceive as resistance or the need to build dissatisfaction is really about helping clients to get their unmet need met. One step on that road for us has been to stop regarding them as sponsors and start acting in a consultative way, all the way from contracting through understanding the system and building the planning team to help the client system respond in an efficient way to the outcomes of action planning.

The closing comment of the General Manager was, "How can we get this experience for all 2,000 employees in the next year?" **FS**

*This article contained errors when it appeared in *FutureSearching* #31. It is reprinted here with corrections and an apology. —Ed.

Book Review

By
Larry Porter

Future Search in School District Change: Connection, Community, and Results

Rita Schweitz and Kim Martens, with Nancy Aronson

Scarecrow Education, Lanham, Maryland, 2005, Leading Systemic School Improvement Series, No. 4

ODP readers who are particularly interested in effective change methodologies for schools may well decide, after reading this review, that this book belongs in their professional library. But, as I will try to make clear toward the end of the review, this is a book that has implications for almost any change practitioner.

At its heart lies the use of a strategic planning methodology—“future search”—that in hundreds of instances has been used to bring about change in ways that make it likely that all, or at least most, members of organizations will buy into it. A state Commissioner of Education is quoted as saying, “*The goals gave us certainty and clarity. Because the goals were created with a broad mix of stakeholders, they resonated with others. When we shared them with people who had not been at the future search conference, they said, ‘Yes, these are right on target.’*”

I found the book fascinating because the authors bring to life the difficulties organizations can get into, the resistances they can encounter and create, the intelligence and good will of the many people mentioned, the intricacies of working with people in new ways, the pleasure of achieving success and making a significant difference in the lives of many people, and the evident pleasure the authors find in writing about something that means a great deal to them. There are frequent glimpses of real humanity in this book.

There are 16 case studies, divided into five categories (“Parts”) in this work. The authors—most of them consultants, a few of them school administrators—describe the effectiveness of using the future search process in effecting school district change.

The Five Parts

The two chapters in Part 1, *Demographic Variety*, describe future searches in Lawrence, Kansas (10,000 students in 22 schools) and Toronto (300,000 students in 558 schools), supporting the premise that the methodology can be useful with organizations of all sizes.

In Part 2, *Leadership Perspectives and Tools*, there are three chapters on whole-district transformation, as seen from the point of view of the school leaders who were instrumental in having future searches done in their districts, and who write or co-author these chapters. (One of them wrote, “*Engaging stakeholders and having them truly shape the future of education in the district was a precedent in motion and has since become our way of working.*”)

The four chapters in Part 3, *Growing Community Partnerships*, focus on how the future search process can produce strong community partnerships and coalitions— for example, increased collaboration between schools, local government, health-care professionals, and local hospitals. (Following a future search, a man who had been a leading opponent of a school construction bond said, “*If this kind of consensus-building had been used before the bond campaign, the bond likely would have passed.*”)

I found Part 4, *Including Student Voices*, to be of special interest, because it has for many years seemed to me only logical that students should have a voice in what happens to them during a large part of their lives from age five to 18. The three chapters in this Part make clear how effective and influential students can be when allowed and encouraged to participate. (One high school student wrote, “*The students participating here were well accepted. I think one of the biggest concerns from the students is that we kind of realized some of the problems are our own, and we have to find solutions to them.*”)

In Part 5, *Beyond the District*, four chapters describe future searches that impacted on a technical career center that was about to close its doors, on educational policies being written into law in the state of Ohio, on the transformation of the academic program of one of the USC schools, and significant re-envisioning of the role of the Kansas State Department of Education.

In the Epilogue, *Engaging the System by Changing Conversations in School Districts*, the editors point out that the future search process models require such important educational aspects as “a real-time experience of working in groups, engaging in dialogue, discovering common ground, and crafting a vision for the future.”

Each of the studies uses a similar structure: introduction, contexting, background, beginnings; planning; outcomes or results; and learnings or reflections, of both the consultants and the clients. The “future search conference” that so effectively generates the desired

*This review was written for the *OD Practitioner* and appeared in that journal's October 2005 issue. It is reprinted with the kind permission of Marilyn Blair, managing editor of the *ODP*. —LP.

outcomes is alluded to briefly in some chapters, merely acknowledged in most. The intent was not to write a "how-to-do-a-future-search-conference," but to describe the complex prework including planning, selection of participants, and multiple other tasks that must be done sensitively and carefully preparing for the conference, which is critical to its success; to spell out, with great specificity, the conference outcomes, which are sometimes startling in their scope and depth; and finally to discuss their learnings and insights.

There is an epilogue, an extensive bibliography, an index, and a list of contributors, including full contact information for each of them.

Of General Interest

This methodology, in the form used by these author consultants, has been around for fewer than 15 years, but in that time it has become a world-wide phenomenon, utilized by an increasing multitude of future search practitioners all over the United States and Canada, as well as internationally in such places as Eastern Europe, Northern Ireland, Sweden, Thailand, South Africa, Germany, Siberia, Nepal, and the list goes on and on.

And the methodology has been used with many client groups other than schools. The website of Future Search Network, to which most of the authors belong, lists, as categories, Business, Congregations,

Environment, General Education, Government, Healthcare, Higher Education, and Human Services. There is no space here to list the many, many organizations, among them Fortune 500 companies, major cities, overseas government ministries, various UNICEF agencies, federal government agencies, and on and on.

But of most importance with respect to this review is the fact that *Future Search in School District Change: Connection, Community, and Results* provides clear and specific documentation of how and why the future search methodology has been used so successfully in a wide range of educational institutions and communities. **FS**

2003 Unitarian Church Future Search: Follow-Up Report*

In the fall of 2003, the leadership at the Unitarian Church in Summit, New Jersey, embarked on a planning process to develop a 10-year vision of the church's future in order to guide staffing and other decisions.

Sixty church members participated in a weekend future search, "Voices, Visions, Choices: Charting Our Future Together," facilitated by Marie McCormick and Ray Wells. It was a high-energy, positive event from which seven areas of common ground emerged. The planning team worked with the church leadership to identify projects and

programs and to make funding and staffing decisions that were then brought back to the congregation for endorsement.

In the first year following the future search, church budgeting decisions included hiring both an intern to support pastoral care and a volunteer coordinator to increase membership engagement, and the upgrading of administrative technical support. Grassroots activities spurred by the future search included alternative religious services and greater use of church facilities for social outreach.

Now, in the second year, the task force is working with the church leadership to support other FS initiatives: upgrading currently unusable space in the church building, hiring a youth director and increasing program support for social action and leadership development. The FS recommendation of a Stewardship Committee for oversight of all fundraising and investment decisions is in the process of implementation. Although there have been obstacles along the way, slowing down the perception of progress, 18 months after the FS, many positive changes are under way.

*See "My Time as a Client: Bringing Future Search to My Congregation," *FutureSearching*, No. 28, Spring 2004. —Ed.

— Claudia Cohen

At Least a Dozen Good Reasons for Attending the 10th Annual Learning Exchange

Gale Wood and Marie McCormick

1 “It would be great to exchange ideas about different ways to handle the FS tasks so that I could be more nimble and flexible when things can’t be ‘ideal.’ I want to explore those sticky situations that always seem to come up.”

2 “I want to have conversations about future search in general and how we can use this methodology to make significant differences where it really matters in the world.”

3 “I would like to talk with people who’ve conducted future searches in the corporate setting.”

4 “I yearn for the opportunity to spend some time with ‘newbies’ such as myself who have not yet done a FS and want the courage and confidence, as well as people who have only done a few and are still learning the ropes.”

5 “I just want to get together with other future search practitioners and talk shop. I am especially eager to see and be with old friends and learn about what they’ve done and learned in their future search journeys.”

6 “It would be really valuable if I could connect with people who’ve conducted future searches in similar arenas or industries as I, so we can share the nuances and possibilities.”

7 “I simply want to learn more about how to sell and facilitate effective future searches.”

8 “I want to learn better how to be mindful about what I do and who I am when I am facilitating a future search. Being with other practitioners will help me expand personally.”

9 “I’d like to hear some practitioners make presentations on their work and be able to discuss the ideas afterward.”

10 “I want time to have really meaningful conversations about the work we do and the difference we make. It would be energizing to see the collective impact that future search is having all over the world.”

11 “It would be very helpful to me to listen to clients who’ve used future search—why they did it, what they were able to accomplish, how they sustained momentum and progress.”

12 “I want to know what’s happening with this great Network of ours. What’s on the horizon?”

Sound familiar? These are a just a dozen statements of what facilitators—new, mid-level, and experienced—have said would be very helpful in their future search practices.

Accordingly, since October, a small but feisty and hard-working group of FSN volunteers has been meeting to plan the 10th Annual Learning Exchange: “Exploring & Leveraging Individual & Collective Impact.” Marie McCormick (PA) has been facilitating the efforts and creativity of Nancy Aronson (PA), Carole Cohn (PA), Barbara Dickinson (NJ), Orrin Judd (NJ), Rick Lent (PA), Marie Stenman (Sweden), and Gale Wood (PA) to plan and design the May 4-6 event.

The committee reviewed prior Learning Exchanges to glean the best of the groundwork that has been laid over the years, most recently in Northern Ireland and Stockholm. They sought to develop a program that would meet the varied needs and desires of the diverse network of future search practitioners from all over the world, regardless of the level of experience they have with the methodology and regardless of the focus and scope of their future searches.

Imagine Yourself There

The Learning Exchange begins at 10 a.m. on Thursday, May 4. Imagine yourself as one of 100 future search attendees from all over the world....

- As you enter the room at the Gregg Center, you’ll connect with colleagues at “gathering posts” to meet other practitioners with similar levels of experience, some you know, many you don’t.
- Look around the room: there’s a big map that captures all of the future searches the Network has

conducted over the years, color-coded with pins for types of clients. There are lists around the map with the names of LE participants by client type.

Over the course of the next three days:

- You'll participate in several rounds of "conversation cafes" for small-group discussions about future search in your work
- You'll meet in pairs to share on a deeper level what's been happening with you.
- You'll engage in some Open Space discussions, organized around questions you bring to the room.
- You'll select sessions to attend that are led by people who have

volunteered to share a particular success, technique, or approach.

- You'll hear from Marvin and Sandra on the state of FSN and about the exciting new poverty project the Network is pursuing.
- You'll have time to journal and reflect on what you are learning.
- You'll share ideas with practitioners who've conducted or are seeking to conduct future searches with similar clients, be they corporate or nonprofit; local or global in focus, with companies, communities, organizations.

After all this, the formal Learning Exchange will adjourn at 1:00 p.m. on Saturday, May 6, but you can stay for lunch, meet with other practitioners, or explore the historic Philadelphia region.

You'll leave Bryn Mawr having connected with old friends and gotten to know new ones. You'll leave having been able to "talk shop" with practitioners of your experience level, as well in mixed groups. You'll leave having had the opportunity to learn and explore other methods. You'll have explored and expanded yourself as an individual practitioner, while at the same time with a sense of the possibility of what we, collectively, as a network of future search practitioners, might do to make our world a better place. And, of course, you'll leave having had a lot of fun! **FS**

*You can register now ...
or no later than April 21!*

The 10th Annual Learning Exchange: "Exploring & Leveraging Individual & Collective Impact"

When: 10 a.m. Thursday, May 4, through 1:00 p.m. Saturday, May 6

Where: The Gregg Center, Bryn Mawr, 20 minutes from Philadelphia, PA

Registration:* \$250, including lunch, morning and afternoon breaks;
\$20 for Wine, Cheese, and Dinner at Marvin's

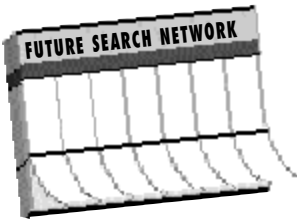
Lodging:** Lodging at the Gregg Center includes breakfast, parking, Internet access,
and on-site recreation.

Single room: \$278 plus tax; Double room: \$180 per person plus tax.

Register online at www.futuresearch.net or request a registration form from Sally at fsn@futuresearch.net, 215-951-0328 • 1-800-951-6333. Please register no later than April 21.

*Contact Sally if you need tuition assistance.

** Contact Sally if you would like to stay with a local FSN member or if you are a local FSN member who would be willing to host a member. Available rooms will be offered on a first-come, first-served basis.



FUTURE SEARCH NETWORK'S FUTURESEARCHING

EXPLORING COMMON GROUND FOR COMMUNITY ACTION

FSN Calendar

There is no formal deadline for submissions to *FutureSearching*. It will be published periodically after enough submissions have been received. Please e-mail all submissions to Larry Porter, Srchnews@san.rr.com.

2006 Public Workshops

Managing a Future Search: A Learning Workshop

May 31-June 3, 2006
Bryn Mawr, PA
Contact Sally Theilacker

October 15-18, 2006
Bryn Mawr, PA
Contact Sally Theilacker

Facilitating the Whole System in the Room

May 1-3, 2006
Bryn Mawr, PA
Contact Sally Theilacker

December 3-5, 2006
Bryn Mawr, PA
Contact Sally Theilacker

10th Annual Learning Exchange

May 4-6, 2006
Bryn Mawr, PA
Contact Sally Theilacker

March 2006

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