



ESSAY - Roberta Bondar

Wobblers are for the Birds: Reality Check

That little ridge of sand, well hidden below the shallow waters of the great lake, seemed innocent enough, but running full pelt into the waves, my mother tripped on it and fell in anguish. We quickly gathered around her to help pull her to her feet, or at least to keep her head above the water. Crying out in pain from her twisted ankle, she managed to get up and wobble onto shore with assistance. From that moment forward, my mother was prone to further injury of that same ankle.

Not until I had reached medical school and my rotation in Neurology, did I appreciate why she had suffered recurrent ankle sprains. It was a matter of being able to sense where the joints are in the process of moving a limb and the lack of it in my mother's injured ankle. What she had needed to do was to retrain her ankle and her brain to restabilize her injured ankle. If she had done so, she would have been spared many a twist, pain, and eventual arthritis. Similarly, when we become destabilized in our workaday business world, we have to retrain ourselves just to keep our balance. If we do not, we end up in recurrent painful situations in which we will become increasingly unstable.

The position sense resides in joints as small as the fingers, to large joints like our knees and hips. In business, we must appreciate that our stability resides at many levels of an organization and the key to keeping it running smoothly is efficient and optimal coordination. Are there chronic sprains and strains? Are there mechanisms in place to detect these weaknesses? Does one level's malfunction or loss of its sense of position affect another level? How are these issues repaired? Even the smallest disruption will lead to repetition and recurrent disorder if it is not located, isolated and resolved.

Without a doubt, we personally are not aware of all the components of our own bodies, let alone those of the organization in which we work. Even CEO's, CFO's, and other heads are not aware of the smallest coordinating points that bring the sense of position and therefore stability to its organizational structure. What is worse is not to realize that recurrent insults will render even the smallest level vulnerable to smaller and smaller challenges with greater and greater effects because of a faulty activity.

In addition, there is a ripple effect. Taking the example of the ankle injury a bit further, the next joint to be affected is the knee which needs to compensate for the unstable joint below. In time, when the knee is also unstable, the hip will undergo change. Imagine an organizational structure that works in the same way, with compensation increasing at different levels, from the initial lower level loss of sense of position and stability to subsequent higher and more critical levels becoming involved.

In making the jump to HyperThink™, we must ask if we are fit for the journey as part of our reality check. A positive dynamic environment does not include movement without purpose or feedback. Taking action means knowing there is an action to be taken. Following through with appropriate interventions for repairing and retraining will reduce the unnerving feeling of instability. No one wants to wobble about and no one wants to do business with a wobbler.

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