




Making the Choice to be **DIFFERENT**

BY TOM WENTZ



For two days the Chairman and his 14 Presidents were challenged to think about the difference between the Industrial Age business model and the new Energy Age business model — or whatever they wanted to call it. After two days of examining the structural differences and the potential for their own companies, they were absolutely certain that they did not want to return to the Industrial Age business model of *plan, organize and control*.

We had talked extensively about the muscle memory of their ‘old game’ and how they would continue to hear legitimate arguments for running a business, organization or their city by keeping the “elephants” in compliance until the economy returned to normal.

We talked about the leadership structure of *visualize, enroll and align* and how that orientation would break the bonds of compliance for their people. They finally realized that all the teambuilding retreats, motivational speeches, Six Sigma and reengineering projects were actually intended to push the compliant to commitment, but somehow all of those initiatives did not release the constraints of the Industrial Age business model.

They all had a rudimentary understanding of the word *commitment*. They could see the *magnitude of commitment* as it applied to individual activities. The Olympic athletes were stunning examples of commitment. Most had experienced commitment somewhere in a team sport during their high school and college days but the collective commitment examples always appeared to be within an adversarial context. The magnitude of commitment was a highly coveted prize called Super Bowl Champions.

Infusing an Energy Field

Universally, they were not sure how to infuse this highly coveted energy field into their own businesses. The simple question was asked many times: “Why is commitment so difficult to achieve?” The simple answer was, “Collective commitment is **not a requirement** within the Industrial Age business model.”

It finally became clear to them that most of the exhortations to achieve market share, industry leadership, teamwork and shareholder value were communicated with commitment — yet were interpreted by the followers as demands for higher and higher levels of compliance. The very subtle message was “*We must withstand the heat in order to get enough.*” *Getting* and *having enough* were purported to be the path to commitment.

It became clear to them that the road from compliance to commitment was not linear — that it was a bifurcated journey. Using the golf metaphor made sense to most of

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them and it was clear that working a faulty golf swing harder and with more determination and enabling it with new technology would only prove that their golf handicap was permanent. They acknowledged that they were way past the decision point of being a PGA Tour Professional — that they had missed the opportunity to make that conscious choice — yet it scared some to think that they had possibly missed the point in their business careers when they should have chosen to be a leader — not just a president — that not all presidents are leaders.

A bifurcation point is simply an opportunity to make a conscious choice to be different. Our inner voice often tells us that it’s time to do something different. We know we need to lose weight, get in shape and stop smoking — but we ignore the bifurcation signs that lead to commitment.

The road to commitment does not require that we quit our jobs and go on an extended retreat to figure out what we want to be when we grow up. Commitment can’t be achieved by fixing problems or buying solutions or learning the secrets of the ancient mystics. We simply need to activate the energy field of commitment that is intrinsic within all human beings. I suggested to them that they had not missed the opportunity to choose commitment — and the good news was that their businesses were already full of potentially committed people if they as leaders only knew how to *let go* and allow it to happen.

There are many books and magazine articles that describe how others have released this energy field of commitment within their companies, organizations and cities. Yet, we read the articles and get a false reading of what is really required to achieve commitment. Recall how some of the presidents at the meeting proclaimed, “We tried that *California garbage* and it didn’t work.”

The energy field of commitment is quiet. It is relaxed. It is that state you will feel when you master the process of driving ‘3’. It is based in a *truth* that will never change. If you have been following the saga of the chairman and the presidents, we have defined *commitment* as *waging*

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peace rather than *waging war*. It is not a heightened state of doing battle to achieve *enough* as the General Motors executives thought.

Controlled by Lines

We all work, live and operate our businesses within a system run and controlled by a president and a chairman. If you as a rep firm owner or associate have 14 lines, you are controlled or influenced by 14 presidents and 14 chairmen similar to the ones you have been reading about for the last six months. You are likely seen by many of these presidents as an “elephant” allowed to operate within your assigned territory and commanded to get your market share up. To Roger, his salespeople were only “numbers” and they were told that achieving a “number” builds character.

This is not a cynical view — rather the sophisticated application of the underlying structure of the Industrial Age business model. As a counselor and consultant, I have attended and facilitated many rep council meetings. Over time it became very apparent that there is something about strategic sales meetings that are designed to *get enough* that never changes. Everyone means well, but I hope you now understand that it is the Industrial Age business model that dictates the behavior of the system.

Yes, we will all argue from our polarized position on the “right” or the “left” hoping to persuade our boss that our opponent is the competition and that they are doing it to us. There is always *something* out there that dominates our inner voice.

Behind closed doors I’ve seen presidents actually cry wanting to be released from the trauma of being a compliance master. I’ve heard sales managers of all kinds in almost every industry defend their selling approach against change. The “pain” doctors and “solution” providers and “funnel fillers” are steeped with the success from the past and determined to work those not enough approaches with the compliance and exhaustion of all involved. “When you make enough calls, we’ll get our fair share.”

Yet, behind closed doors today almost every sales manager will admit that those approaches no longer work. It is hard to admit that we don’t know how to sell when we don’t know any other way.

As we conclude our series of articles, we all must ask ourselves the very simple question: “Are we prepared to do something ‘different’ within our businesses, sales careers or lives?” This was the challenge I was confronted with by a very quiet, visionary leader named Carlos. His company was not broken. His company was profitable. Yet, he knew that the old game within his business was not going to work much longer and to exhort his people



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to do more and “er” in order to get enough would not take his company to different.

To help Carlos we conducted six *Transformational Change Simulations* and two *Counselor Selling* workshops. The simulations were not represented as “team building” rather as a new and different way to be committed with customers.

Before the chairman and the presidents left our two-day leadership session, I showed them the many pictures from various simulations that reflect customer commitment (shown previous page).

I showed them the following quotes from Carlos:

- *“It is amazing how people are willing and able to soar if we as presidents and general managers merely see them as people.”*
- *“Our sales team is now willing to bring customers in for a plant tour and allow the employees in the plants to tell the customers the meaning of their work. Our story today is totally different.”*
- *“The simulations allowed our people to experience a future that could be different. Our customers needed us to be committed to a very different way of doing business. We could not wait for things to return to normal. There is a new normal in our business — helping customers buy — rather than forcing them to buy the way we want to do business. It was an easy new beginning once our people could visualize the future.”*
- *“The simulations helped them experience the new behavior that they needed in order to achieve their own potential. Their fears about compliance back at work were gone and the creative ideas as to how to do things differently began to flow.”*
- *“When Corporate saw the symbols of commitment go up in the plants, there emerged a new energy field for everyone to get involved. We created the structural framework to fulfill the integrity of our story — our new promise. Our measures of success today are very different.”*
- *“Our toughest challenge was not with our plant employees, rather our sales leaders who only knew their ‘old game’ of selling. The counselor selling technology taught them how to do ‘care reviews’ and start listening to customers and really believe that the way business was going to be done in the future had very little to do with how our plants wanted to do it. The old Industrial Age business model was ‘burned out.’”*

Hello from the Future

As we wrapped up the two-day leadership workshop, I asked the chairman and presidents to turn to the last page of their handout. The title of that page was “**Hello from the Future.**” This is the title of the next to the last

chapter in Stanley Davis's famous book entitled *Future Perfect*, first published in 1987. The opening paragraph contains the following statement:

"Man struggles using inappropriate models simply because they are available. The alternatives I have offered are not theoretical suggestions for a hypothetical and distant future. Today, holistic logic and transformations of time, space, and mass are affecting businesses, organizations, cities and the people in them.

"The economic shift that is occurring today (in 1987) is producing an economy of ambiguity and paradox, called, variously, a postindustrial economy, a service economy and an information economy, yet none of these descriptive terms does justice to the full complexity of what is happening. The advent of this new economy — however postindustrial — certainly does not mean the end of industry, any more than the Industrial Revolution meant the end of agriculture. Rather the shift that must occur now is to stop using mechanistic, industrial models to run today's complex agriculture-industrial-service economy."

I concluded by saying, "This was written in 1987 and many industrial giants tried to embrace this reality, yet the compliance orientation of *plan, organize and control* was still deeply imbedded in the muscle memory of executives at all levels. When the 'roaring 1990s' emerged and up until the crash of 2008, this muscle memory was a dominating energy field.

"Now, in 2012 we know for sure that Mr. Davis was right. We are confronted with a conscious choice — one we have taken two days to discuss and hopefully — we can now actually feel. As I told Carlos, the new economy cannot be declared to exist — it must be lived into existence. Leaders cannot demand compliance to achieve this new reality. A totally new and different energy field must

be released. As with Carlos, it is within your people. That is your leadership assignment."

The New Beginning

You don't need to hear the rest of my closing remarks. Suffice it to say, the participants were exhausted as this level of thinking is a shift in *context* — not merely *content*. Contextual conflict will keep your inner voice awake all night.

It was one week after our meeting when the chairman called and said, "You can't believe what's happening!" He paused as if waiting for me to ask for more.

After a prolonged silence, I said, "And?"

With significant emotion in his voice he said, "*Different has finally arrived* and the new beginning has begun. Bob's going to go first. He'll be calling you later today to conduct that simulation for his people. He wants those symbols of commitment hanging in his plants."

The Challenge for MANA Members

I want to thank MANA for publishing this strategic realization that *Different Has Arrived* for every member company. For every one of you as a MANA member, there are at least 10 presidents of companies who are struggling with their inner voice left over from the Industrial Age. It is the only way many of them still know how to think.

As it was with Carlos, the game can be changed. What if every company you represent had a symbol of commitment hanging in their plant, warehouse or office? What if every employee knew the real meaning of their work? What if every employee had a symbol of commitment in their cubicle alongside the pictures of their children? What if your sales team had a *story* of commitment that had integrity? What if your relationship with MANA was not a membership, rather was a *committed partnership*? What if?

The magnitude of commitment is enormous. Enjoy your journey into the New Energy Age. 