

Ron and Kathie's Principles

Barry Camson is an organizational consultant and trainer. In 1995 he came to observe Kathie Dannemiller and Paul Tolchinsky facilitate a large group meeting for the Ford Motor Company. As the meeting progressed, he was struck by what was happening behaviorally with leaders, participants and consultants. Below is the document he sent to Kathie shortly after the event. It beautifully describes the values and principles that underlie the Whole-Scale Approach. While Barry titled this description Kathie's Principles, Kathie called them Ron and Kathie's Principles because they reflected what she had learned from her mentor Ron Lippitt.

March 9, 1995

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Dear Kathie,

I am enclosing a document entitled "Kathie's Principles." This arose out of my watching your work over several days with one of your clients, my conversations with you and others during and after that work, and my own interpretations and meaning making of what I saw and heard. It also reflects, of course, my own sense of what is important in the work that you and others of us do.

What helped both ground my reflections from these several days as well as put them in the context of an overall ideal was our visit to Peggy Lippitt, Ron's widow. That visit reminded me of how much I owe to Ron as a model of the ideal integration of humanity and consulting. It was plain to me that the work that you, Paul Tolchinsky and others were doing with your client and the work that I do with clients for me fall within the tradition that I saw Ron as embodying. I am thankful for those days when I am able to clearly see the linkage.

What was personally helpful for me during our time together was the revalidation of those basic ideals as those which are important to me as a person and as those which make work with clients meaningful. It is certainly true for me that with the constant onslaught of new organization development and change methodologies, it is often easy to get caught up in the techniques and the faddishness and to lose sight of what makes this work sublime for me and what makes the most lasting and powerful difference for clients. Watching you reflect the tradition of humanity, commitment to democratic process, and consulting was a heart-warming benefit of our time together. These are messages that I will continue to hold onto as I continue with my work in organization design.

Sincerely,
Barry Camson

This work is about moving people from passivity to activity – the activity of mind, of action, of faith, of trust, of engagement of people with each other and their work. e.g. Representative participants are engaged in the planning and logistics process so as to move them from passivity to activity.

Create a contactful environment. Contactfulness is built into the heart of the event. Enable people to make contact with each other. Facilitate points of contact among different views. Enable each person – leader, member, management, union to articulate what they believe. Support each person in listening to the other's truth and not arguing with it.

From the very beginning a different kind of listening is stressed. A neutral, non-judgmental kind of listening.

Support people in taking in and reflecting on what others have said.

- e.g. the open forum format of: 1) what did we hear others say?, 2) what is our reaction to it?, 3) what questions of understanding do we have?
- e.g. keep easels out of the way except when people are working on them so that nothing blocks contact, interaction.
- e.g. when asking questions of people up front in the open forum, put their name first.

A different kind of speaking is also supported as an alternative in which people take time to listen to themselves before speaking.

- e.g. Facilitator suggests, "take a minute and go inside to reflect on your answers."

Bringing the speaker's voice out into the room is also stressed.

- e.g. "telling your stories"

Focus on the details of empowerment. Help create an environment where people are willing to push-back and have comfort around that.

- e.g. Participants are asked if they got the answer they were looking for from the speaker. "Did he get it?" "Don't just say it was answered if it wasn't." e.g. "Don't let us beat you down" is an occasional reinforcing comment from the facilitator.
- This also fosters a willingness, skills and a feeling of safety to speak out.

Create mini moments of truth. Ask people to speak out if their questions were not answered.

Intervene to push leaders to answer tough questions.

- e.g. "Will you overrule the team's decision if you feel it was wrong?"

Intervene to facilitate people getting to and speaking out of their courageous parts.

- e.g. "Do you believe him?" (in response to a leader's answer)

Intervene to facilitate clean interactions.

Intervene to paraphrase to help make points clear where there may be some confusion or to show where people agree.

Create interaction based on a perspective of multiple realities. Help create an environment where each person realizes that they bring their own truth; that when dealing with each person's own truth, there is no right or wrong way.

Help people become aware of how each hears the message differently. This reinforces awareness of multiple realities. It also enables people to begin to become aware of how their own filters, perspectives or need to be defensive impacts the message.

Help people to attain some degree of neutrality regarding other peoples' truths. Help people to listen to see the world through each others' eyes.

- e.g. Leaders set out their truth, participants set out theirs.

Operate with a maximum mix of viewpoints. Utilize microcosms of the whole – a holographic approach in design team work, logistics team work and in some subgroupings used in the workshop.

Create in the workshop a community operating from one brain and one heart. The community builds a common, interactive picture of their future arising from a common data base which is composed of the

individual pictures of each member of the community. This leads to a common sense of caring amongst the members of the community.

Everything in the workshop, in the change work of the organization, as well as its future operation derives from the vision and values. This is the major value and core of this process. The organization and consultant always tune into that and keep going back to it as the core of all current and future work. Vision and values are powerful because they arise from full input of all members of the organization, the certainty of being heard, full opportunity for clarification, and consensus among everyone. The possibility of coercion is checked out.

Having a common picture in the organization of where the organization wants to be and uniting around some strategic direction becomes an important guide to the organization around choices.

Data is brought into the workshop forum from a variety of different sources and in a variety of different modes.

This work is about the assumption of responsibility by all. Participants operate in roles of facilitator, recorder, reporter. Everyone is asked to take responsibility for creative thinking.

Competencies are built along the way, e.g. in listening, speaking, scribing, recording and in more subtle skills such as identifying themes.

Use of the dynamic huddle. "Stand, pull-up a few chairs." People end up standing, talking, huddling around their work. This results in keeping the room in motion, in ongoing momentum, activity. Instead of having groups sitting and working around tables all the time, a flow in the room is maintained by having people stay active.

Enable the organization to diagnose itself and make meaning out of it.

- e.g. Sads, Mads and Glads look at what has worked, not worked in the organization.

Hearing from competitors and best practices from site visits enables participants to diagnose what their own organization needs and could apply in moving to a desired future state.

This work helps to build the organizational field. Input is continually provided from different sources. The group field continues to be enhanced through discussions in different groups. Out of each of these groups emerges key questions which have the virtue of having the support or awareness of that group behind them.

These questions are asked of people up front and perhaps of each other. The answers as well as the questions then move into the organization field from which new key questions, ideas, awareness arise on a large organizational level.

- e.g. Input is brought in from a variety of outside sources using a variety of modes, e.g. customers, views of competitors, benchmarking ideas from other redesign sites through the research team. e.g. Creating a larger and collective group field is facilitated through the "Open Forum" which expressly looks at what people heard, what reactions and what questions of understanding they have.

Create contact with outside information – from customers, from competitors, from benchmarked organizations. Activities in the workshop help facilitate this contact.

- e.g. Presentations by customers followed by an open forum. Role play presentations of competitors followed by an open forum. Presentation by design team after site visits followed by an open forum. Panel of Possibilities setting out what has worked, been problematic in other sites.

The implicit question is continually asked: "what is the most important thing that has stood out for us that the organization could learn from?"

Create the design team/research team as a facilitating and catalyzing force for larger organizational involvement. Bring new people into this configuration from the organization and enable it to be used in different ways and in different configurations.

Imagine a constantly changing, self-organizing entity moving through the heart of the larger organization, responding to different situations with different modes of self-organization as a model of the future and as a way of bringing light to and releasing energy in all different parts of the organization.

The importance of bringing yourself fully into the process as:

- Management leader - e.g. leader shares a very personal vision. "I walk in and I see..." e.g. leader shares personal anecdotes of how she got where she was at the start of the work and how she moved to new places during the work.
- Union leader - e.g. union leader sets out his high level of commitment and what the union is willing to do in the context of personal stories about himself. "My daddy once told me..."
- Members - e.g. members are asked to tell their stories at an early part of the workshop. e.g. volunteerism to the extent used, asks the members to take an affirmative action to bring themselves more fully into the process – their volition married with their actions.
- Consultants - e.g. the consultants constantly demonstrate and model that they are willing to be themselves and help the community gain some insight about this way of being.

Value of transformational leadership. This is the process of speaking out, of allowing others the space for taking in what was said, the process of each enriching what the other has contributed. The act of taking in and enriching in return transforms the listener.

- e.g. the leader sets out his/her vision for the organization, the members take that in and enhance it with their own.

End the work with specific, realistic and supported action plans with commitments made to take action on them. This enables moving from the desired future and supporting values – to intentionality and volition – and then to concrete behaviors. This is crucial in order to dispel the memories of past failures, to build credibility and to enable this work to have full operational value.

As the consultant, be open to live your commitment to your client. Be open to that commitment engaging your heart, gut, intellect, and spirit and your values, personal vision, and enthusiasm. Be willing to be expressive about that commitment.

At the same time recognize that the client must decide to take responsibility for their individual change and for leading the organizational change. Consultant commitment to the client does not mean doing for the client. Be prepared to live out of that commitment.

- e.g. "We'll come in that day for free if it will make the difference in bringing about the changes needed."

The commitment of consultant to the client at its ideal is based on unilateral love by the consultant for the client in which the consultant affirms the client for who he/she is. This results in pulling forth the essence of the client and a working relationship based on trust.

Create a large group, total system dialogue.

Create conversations among small groups

Create conversations with sources bringing information into the room.

Create conversations among teams, sub-groups.

Create conversations between consultants and the client.

Create conversations among and within the large group.

Have groups speak their commitment.

Build teams at different levels of the organization.

- e.g. design team/research team, logistics team, individual, max-mix working groups, the overall organization

There is an undeniable power in having the whole organization in the room. It enables the organization to change in real time, both incrementally and in major paradigm shifts. It creates a common shared experience that the organization and all of its components can reference and operate out of in the future which will in time as it is enhanced take precedence over the old ways.

The workshop becomes a river in which the many strands of the organization are immersed, risking a complex flow of chaotic elements until the threads of the new organization begin to emerge.

This work is about a sincere, deep, abiding, unwavering, and non-faddish view of empowerment that runs to the core of one's being and is reflected in behaviors with other consultants, with the client and in how one works with the client. It is totally encompassing and pervasive.

This work is about the personal commitment to contactfulness in any personal interaction, of expressing feelings and expectations, and a willingness to do so in as close to real time as the realities of the work allows. This results in an ability and willingness to facilitate and support the client in being similarly contactful with each other. Not doing the work as a consultant can result in blind spots with the client around the same issues.

This work is about tradition – a knowing, deep and abiding commitment to the roots of organization development as a democratic practice, which support the empowerment of people to achieve their full potential as individuals and as groups and to live in a humane way.

This work is about using the different technologies to carry out the intentionalities of democratic and empowering values rather than using the technologies in a detached or value-independent mode. It is about using the technologies in ways that continually track and respect where the organization is at any given moment in their path toward their desired future.

This work is about freeing up the flow of valid information within a client group and supporting that flow and helping people to develop and fully use the skills that will enable them to fully make use of the information.

This work is about living out of your heart.

This work is about sharing the wealth with the abiding faith that those who receive will do the same thus creating an ongoing, positive force for change.