

COLLABORATIVE INNOVATION AND THE OVERVIEW EFFECT

Charles E. Smith and Richard H. Whitehurst

“We Only Do Energy”

WARNING

“Until one is committed, there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness. Concerning all acts of initiative (and creation), there is one elementary truth, the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then Providence moves too. All sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise have occurred. A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one's favor all manner of unforeseen incidents and meetings and material assistance, which no man could have dreamt would have come his way. I have learned a deep respect for one of Goethe's couplets:

Whatever you can do, or dream you can, begin it.

Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it!”

William Hutchison Murray

“A man or woman goes to knowledge as they go to war, wide awake, with fear, with respect, and with absolute assurance. Going to knowledge or going to war in any other manner is a mistake, and whoever makes it will live to regret their steps.”

Carlos Castenada

John Caswell, a brilliant British leadership consultant says that, “Untold billions of dollars are spent trying to solve the wrong problems.”

We say that the underlying root cause of many intractable business, community, government, political, healthcare, social, and conflict resolution problems is the lack of intentional Collaborative Innovation between people and between organizations.

In this Article we offer three powerful and intuitive practices that will revolutionize your life, your relationships, and your business. These are:

1. Practice of the Overview Effect.
2. Practice of Innovative Collaboration that emerges synergistically from a mutual intent informed by the Overview Effect.
3. Practice with an ancient indigenous people's tool called "The Talking Stick," that helps Collaborative Innovation to emerge and be sustained.

"The Overview Effect is a cognitive shift in awareness reported by some astronauts and cosmonauts during spaceflight ... It refers to the experience of seeing firsthand the reality that the Earth is in space, a tiny, fragile ball of life, 'hanging in the void,' shielded and nourished by a paper-thin atmosphere. The experience often transforms astronauts' perspective on the planet and humanity's place in the universe. Some common aspects of it are feeling of awe for the planet, a profound understanding of the interconnection of all life, and a renewed sense of responsibility for taking care of the environment." Frank White: [The Overview Effect: Space Exploration and Human Evolution](#) (1987/1998/2014

Speechless

Edgar Mitchell, sixth man on the moon said: *"You develop an instant global consciousness, a people orientation, an intense dissatisfaction with the state of the world, and a compulsion to do something about it. From out there on the moon, international politics looks so petty..., it's a feeling of reverential respect mixed with fear or wonder."*

On the 40th anniversary of the famous 'Blue Marble' photograph taken of Earth from space, "Planetary Collective" presents a short film, documenting astronauts' life-changing stories of

seeing the Earth from the outside – a perspective-altering experience often described as the Overview Effect.



<https://vimeo.com/55073825>

The Overview Effect is a moment almost too elusive to put into words in which, as with the term ‘love,’ the experience begins to disappear the more you talk about it. The more words, the less Wonder and Awe, the less resonant feeling energy is there. Significance and meaning evaporate in our attempts to define just what the Overview Effect is.

Still, to a degree, and with some regularity, even if not consciously acknowledged, we experience the Overview Effect in nature, in unthinkable collaboration, innovation, intimacy, in business moments of profound change, in kindred spirit relationships, and in cultural shifts not already possible. A friend of ours compared it to the birth of his first child, a consuming moment with no history, an unfathomable experience of mind and body. Another recalled meeting his first love, who came to him with a total positive sensation, as if from a universe he’d never felt before.

The Overview Effect, we suggest, is a way of understanding everyday reality as a ‘Holon’ - something that is simultaneously a whole and a part, an unfathomable context of Universe and a practical gateway to Collaborative Innovation at the same time. This Holon is an anatomy that

goes to the heart of human creative potential. It energizes the creative potential of a group of diverse participants to generate breakthrough solutions. In this sense,

The Overview Effect itself has no essence -- it's like spirit, being, or universe. (The word "Holon" was first used by Arthur Koestler in his book, The Ghost in the Machine.) (1967, p. 48) used the Greek word Holon (Greek: ὅλον, "whole") as something that is simultaneously a whole and a part. He concluded that, although it is easy to identify sub-wholes or parts, wholes and parts in an absolute sense do not exist anywhere. An example of a Holon in nature is 'trees & seeds'. Do seeds contain trees or do trees contain seeds? We could say both are true. Clearly they exist in a symbiotic or interdependent relationship. Likewise In fully conscious collaborative groups there is a simultaneous interdependence between the individuals consciousness and the group's consciousness that frees the group from the limitations of survival based and incoherent think

Consider, for a moment, that the Overview Effect is a profound abstraction, a distinction that lets us tell the difference between Wonder, Awe and the physical pragmatics of everyday relationships, work and life itself. The Overview Effect is an experience and words never fully capture experience. The Astronaut experience is an incredibly powerful reminder that this experience is possible. Poetry, and Shakespeare get close but many of us don't often get there.

To practice the Overview Effect is to practice generating the experience of Awe, Wonder, Possibility, Acceptance and Belonging for yourself and others, at home and at work, without losing attention to the job at hand.

Collaborative Innovation calls for the sustainable experience of both intention and flow, and the practice of appreciating the Overview Effect can be a life-long reminder that leads you and others to their highest potential and innovative solutions where they are most wanted.

The trick is to realize that ultimately you personally can be a true source of both the Overview Effect and Collaborative Innovation at the same time. We've heard from Astronauts that some of them did not have any deep, enduring, or remarkable experience of the Overview Effect. So much in this life seems to come from our openness to an experience, or our intent to have it.

This suggests that If we really mean to bring the Overview Effect to a situation or relationship, or truly mean to have Collaborative Innovation happen, our chances of getting it go way up.

This is testable. Consider the possibility that the Overview Effect is a ‘Bridge’ between the transformative experience of ‘Awe and Wonder’ and a project to be accomplished. The critical and counterintuitive challenge for most people is that this ‘Bridge’ in service to much of what human beings really want, is not physical. It is not concrete, yet it is totally real, and it exists as a dynamic, subjective system of energy within the human being that is as impactful as a wave crashing on the seashore.

BLOCKS TO THE OVERVIEW EFFECT AND COLLABORATIVE INNOVATION

There are Blocks to experiencing the Overview Effect and Collaborative Innovation. These blocks end up with misalignment and unspoken conflict, between individuals and groups, bureaucracies and hierarchical systems. The sum of these blocks creates what Daniel Shapiro, Founder and Director of the Harvard International Negotiation Program, calls ‘Relational Identity Theory’ that ‘fills the space between people and groups and confounds progress’.

He says that, *“Relational Identity Theory” moves beyond neat categorizations of “us” and “them” toward dynamic understanding of what’s actually happening in the space between interpersonal and intergroup relations. An individual’s or group’s relational identity is its perception of the nature and quality of its association with another individual or group.”*

(October 2010, American Psychologist © 2010 American Psychological Association, 0003-066X/10/\$12.00 Vol. 65, No. 7, 634–645 DOI: 10.1037/a0020004)

(n.b. The experience of relational identity for each of us is, “What it is like for me when I’m with you,” “What it is like for us when I am with you,” and “What’s it like for you when you are with me.” CES

“This perception of the relationship is not a static “thing” one “has” but is ever-changing. At any point, relations may feel close or distant, open or closed, comfortable or distressed. We constantly position ourselves in relation to others and define ourselves according to these

perceived relations.” (Buber,1970; Cooley,1902; Harre´, Moghaddam, Cairnie, Rothbart, & Sabat, 2009).

Major Blocks

- **ABSENCE OF CURIOSITY**

Curiosity is a strong desire to know or learn something. Curiosity is the blood brother of Collaborative Innovation.

- **ABSENCE OF ENERGY AWARENESS**

Being a steward of energy -- responsible for expanding energy and vitality in myself and others.

- **ABSENCE OF COACHABILITY**

Self-importance and fear become resistance to feedback and prevent willingness to be coached.

- **ABSENCE OF GENEROUS LISTENING**

Listening with deep appreciation for the feelings, thoughts, commitments, concerns, and reality of others; letting them feel understood.

- **ABSENCE OF COMMITTED SPEAKING**

Without making Requests, Promises, Declarations, and Statements that impact action and how others are being, I am more and more ineffective.

- **ABSENCE OF ATTENTION TO BOTH PHYSICAL AND RELATIONAL REALITY**

As soon as I’m not paying attention to the reality of people’s feelings and the physical reality of performance, and process, Collaborative Innovation breaks down or doesn’t happen.

In one sentence, bureaucracy or mental rigidity often turn human energy into sludge. Like it or not, this is personal. The magic comes from how you, yourself are being in a situation. Without the ability to ‘Connect and Move On’ from past beliefs, at least temporarily, ‘escape velocity’ and sustainable forward movement in Collaborative Innovation is unlikely.

“There is only energy and it is all you.”

THE OVERVIEW EFFECT AND COLLABORATIVE INNOVATION

In our own work, one client business example of practical application of these energy-based practices was in a large public utility that was losing money, had union-management conflict, and was facing the grim prospect of letting people go. Simultaneous with conversations about the Overview Effect and expanding energy, the CEO told every employee that if they performed to certain standards, none would lose their jobs. This expanded people's energy and enthusiasm such that they broke free from their historical culture of distrust and going in different directions, and generated a wildfire of performance, innovation, cooperation. During the worst of times the company had its best year ever and over the subsequent five years moved near the top of its industry in terms of every business quality and social measure.

This was no accident, but the result of helping people shift their point of view from fear-driven to Overview Effect-driven, and from efficiency, will, power, effectiveness and compliance-driven to a new bottom line of safety-driven energy expansion. This is the essence of an Overview Effect-driven endeavor, a bridge over into a new order of creativity, innovation and collaboration. The magic is context-driven.

The authors aspire to making a dent in the world such that energy-based practices are applied by individuals and leaders who trust that this is a breakthrough idea and promising way to go. We believe that widespread uncharacteristic action in favor of Collaborative Innovation is necessary. Without this, the threat of extinction for much of the human race is inevitable from global warming, nuclear proliferation, uncontrolled immigration, the advance of immoral artificial intelligence, or uncontrolled global corporate interests.

Serge Kahili King, Ph.D. is the author of many works on Huna and Hawaiian shamanism, including *Urban Shaman* and *Instant Healing*. He has a doctorate in psychology. In his book, *Endless Energy* ^(Amazon.com) draws on the indigenous historical wisdom of the Hawaiian people in describing profound practices for energy expansion. These practices induce immediate mini-experiences of the Overview Effect and openness to Collaborative Innovation; Awe, Wonder, Possibility, Acceptance and Belonging for yourself and others.

Great advice comes from George Leonard in his life-altering book, Mastery Amazon.com

“The most successful path to mastering anything is to practice for the sake of the practice itself, not for the result. All significant learning is composed of brief spurts of progress followed by long periods of work where it feels as if you are stuck on a plateau. There are no experts—only learners.”

ENERGY PRACTICE ONE: Energy flows where attention goes ⁽¹⁾

“If we want to change something, the best to shift our attention. Attention to the wrong place is what creates the difficulty, and attention can turn the base metal of looking for answers in the wrong place into the gold of insight.”

ENERGY PRACTICE TWO: The world is what you think it is. ⁽²⁾

“Every moment, we filter the world through everything we have ever learned and experienced. *At no point in your life will you ever interact with the ‘real’ world.* Expectations, the world, and all else are filtered by internal experience. If you think work is going to be hell, it probably will be.” <https://headstrongnlp.com/7-rules-of-life-1-the-world-is-what-you-think-it-is/>”

ENERGY PRACTICE THREE: Now is the moment of power ⁽³⁾

“All energy exists now. The definition of ‘now’ of course, depends on the range of our current attention. According to this principle, what we call the ‘past’ is a collection of currently existing energetic patterns of memory, somewhat like the information stored on the hard drive of a computer. What we call the ‘future’ is a collection of currently existing energetic patterns of expectation, somewhat like the plans and projections stored on the hard drive of a computer.”

ENERGY PRACTICE FOUR: There are no limits ⁽⁴⁾

“Energy has no limits. Energy is endless, unlimited. This makes sense only if you believe that everything at its core is energy. This leads to the possibility that everything is connected energetically, and patterns influence other patterns through this connection.”

*“Concerning **matter**, we have been all wrong. What we have called **matter** is **energy**, whose vibration has been so lowered as to be perceptible to the senses. There is no **matter**.”*

Albert Einstein

ENERGY PRACTICE FIVE: All power comes from within. ⁽⁵⁾

“All power (energetic influence) comes from within, from the energetic source. Not simply from within you as an individual, but from your connections to the rest of the world. All of the power in your life comes through you. There is nothing outside of you that has any power over you. Everything, however, has power. The power of the tree comes from within the tree. The power of the clouds comes from within the clouds. We influence each other. It's like being able to influence someone by speaking to them.”

ENERGY PRACTICE SIX: Effectiveness is the Measure of Truth. ⁽⁶⁾

The practice is to assume that the effectiveness of energetic interaction is the measure of the truth about the interaction. A different way to put this is to say that expectations are only valid to the degree that they match results.

THE GLASS TALKING STICK: A POWERFUL TOOL FOR COLLABORATIVE INNOVATION

Traditionally, the Talking Stick is a wooden tool used by many indigenous people when they meet in council or a group. The person holding the stick speaks from what is deeply true for them right now, and what they are aware of in the present moment. Everyone else is asked to listen. When finished, the speaker passes the stick.

Most often, the practice of the ‘Talking Stick’ provides the missing link to go beyond where people are have stalled in Collaborative Innovation; in groups or business, in situations where

people feel stuck in seemingly unsolvable circumstances, in abrasive conflicts, or where life and its essence – relationships – feel flat and featureless.

In recent times, we have been using glass art versions of the talking stick that combine the power, rich symbolism and ancient wisdom of indigenous people with the color, beauty, mystery, the strength and fragility of blown glass, and magical flow.



HERE ARE THREE STORIES ABOUT USING THE PRACTICE OF THE GLASS TALKING STICK IN HIGH LEVEL INTERNATIONAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION, LEADERSHIP TRANSFORMATION, CONFLICT IN A GLOBAL INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY COMPANY, AND IN CRITICAL PERSONAL COUNSELING.

I. THE DAYTON PEACE PROCESS

Dr. Robert Barthelemy is the Founding Director of the Wright Brothers Institute and the Wright Brothers Institute's IDEA Lab. He has been a consultant to a variety of aerospace industry companies and federal government organizations, including Lockheed-Martin, Boeing, Ball, GRC, UTC, various Department of Defense organizations and the Air Force Research Laboratory. He says,

“Picture this:

- The leaders of five European nations that are in the process of destroying each other must begin a conversation that might lead to a workable peace process;
- The CEOs of ten of the biggest corporations in America agree to an approach that could merge these ten independent companies into three mega-companies;
- A Four-Star General and a politically appointed Service Secretary must construct a process that will define the future readiness of the United States Air Force.

The common element in each of these pictures was my own Talking Stick created from a variety of chosen unique colors, symbols and figures into it. One of them, a Silver Eagle, represented my truest beliefs as well as my Destiny. While it is simply an attractive piece of art and substance, its use has been magical. I began using it in my work and it always led to meaningful conversations that quickly got to the heart of the matter. At first, my friends and colleagues were surprised that a nuclear rocket scientist who spent his life trying to make a difference in a giant military bureaucracy would believe in such a thing. But Talking Sticks have been used for thousands of years when conscious, meaningful conversations were required.

The rules seem simple, need some skill to introduce, and are usually more than worth it. And yes, with assistance from my Talking Stick, the leaders did find a way to start the Dayton Peace Process, the CEOs did create the three biggest aerospace companies on the globe, and the United States Air Force remains the most powerful military deterrent in the world. ”

II. CORPORATE BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION

Dr. Charles E. Smith is a Futurist, Author, and Executive Coach. For fifty years, he has been a personal and leadership coach and organizational behavior consultant stimulating breakthrough thinking, culture change and seemingly impossible results. He says,

“I was invited into a leadership group for a division of the largest information technology company in the world, which wanted to turn products made in five different countries into one product accessible on one screen. Leaders were not getting along. Some wouldn’t speak to others unless pressed. Many products were unprofitable, and some didn’t sell at all. They were incoherent in a company famed for coherence.

To begin, each person was introduced to the Talking Stick and then one person at a time would hold it, speak from their heart and say what was really true for them in the moment. When done, they were to pass the stick to someone else.

Before the meeting, I was scared. I'd never done this in big business and feared the experience would be refused and haunt me. This was a corporation with a conservative culture. I kept thinking that this would be too weird for them.

I was as surprised as they were. From the first speaker, the experience of conflict disappeared and was replaced with awareness that they were in this together. Judgments, opinions, arguments about right and wrong, and competition disappeared. Over time, this became a new way of doing business; new ideas and possibilities began to happen naturally. No one could explain just what happened as the organization and products were simplified and the place came to make both business and human sense. In one year, access to 1500 products had been reduced to one computer screen, whether eliminated or integrated, and substantial manufacturing was saved in each country.”

III. Intense Identity Expansion

Dr. Mark Goulston - According to Warren Bennis, former Chairman of The Leadership Institute at USC, Mark is an articulate intuitive. He knows that what people at every level of relationship, company, organization don't say often determines their behavior more than what they do say. He shares this, amongst numerous interpersonal experiences:

“In my own experience, the Glass Talking Stick enables someone to fully come from their true present awareness. By sharing without interruption or unsolicited advice and in a psychologically non-judgmental space, it's as if one gets to give an 'oral report' on their 'true' self without mental or past-based constraints. If you're like most people, you will remember that whenever you have been called upon to speak - all the way back to an oral report on something in grade school - such an experience really helps you to be aware when you are being real, candid, honest and authentic (versus when you are being inauthentic and faking the audience *and* yourself). The

Glass Talking stick is a vehicle for helping amplify that experience of true self-expression and self-experience.

My first usage of it happened when I met with a man named John in his mid-forties, who I'd been mentoring for five years – along with his girlfriend, Jessica. Both had been through many personal and professional ups and downs and both had finally arrived at the beginning of a sound, solid and successful future promising to be bright for them both. On this occasion, I told John about the talking stick and how to use it and that I would go first.

I pulled the stick out of its sheath, grabbed the cool and smooth glass with both hands and rested it on top of my seated thighs. I then took a couple breaths and began to tear up. I became emotional, looked John squarely in the eye and said, *“What I’m aware of is how much I love both you and Jessica and how many ups and downs and very difficult times you have both been through, and how that you’ve now landed in the beginning of a very good place, and how filled with joy that makes me. I’m also aware of my commitment to helping you both in any way I can for the rest of my life.”*

I then handed the stick to John and said, *“Your turn.”* John is not as in touch with his feelings as I am, in that his analytic and problem-solving skills far eclipse his emotions. That's not to say that he didn't feel things deeply, which is why I love mentoring him, but that like most left-brain men, he was not very skilled or comfortable in expressing them.

He took the Glass Talking Stick, and like me before him, took a couple deep breaths, became emotional and said: *“What I’m aware of is how you, Mark, have been consistently unflinching and steadfast in your support of both Jessica and me for five years without asking for anything and our never paying you. I don’t think I or Jessica have ever known anyone like that in our lives, anyone who has ever done that. And what I’m aware of is that for years I’ve wanted to thank you and tell you how much that has meant to her and me, but I never did, and I never thought I would get the chance to do it, because I’m emotionally kind of shy. But I’m getting to do it now and it feels so good.”* Then John began to cry with a wide appreciative grin on his face.

That was the beginning of my talking stick journey. And then along the way, something happened. The Glass Talking stick has become fully a 'listening stick' as well, such that when I

am holding it and someone is talking to me, I listen to and hear what they are saying. Between and under their words, that cries out to me to be heard.

About the Artist:

Michael Smith is a glass artist, philosopher, and student of the human condition. His body of work integrates inspiration, intention and flow in Glass Talking Sticks, Wings, Swords, and Glass Art inspired by mythic legends and stories in the human and scientific adventure. Michael is a practitioner of uncommon sense, guided by rich and diverse experiences from travels around the world. Adventuring throughout the United States, Western Europe, and Canada has grown his understanding of Consciousness and being mindful, and his awareness that one's world truly expands when standing in a new experience. In his art, Michael inspires himself and others with the structures of beauty found in the surrounding world. 'Creativity Unleashed' is his vision for transformational results in art, technology and relationships, by learning from what nature has already figured out. Michael has the soul of an artist, the mind of an engineer, and the aspiration of an Astronaut.'

'The Master Does Not Talk, She Acts' Lao Tze

- Dan Shapiro - (Relational Identity)
https://inp.harvard.edu/files/internationalnegotiation/files/relational_identity_theory.american_psychologist.pdf and his book.

Banner Credit: NASA/USA Government

CHARLES E. SMITH Ph.D

Charlie is Executive Editor of the Journal of Collaborative Innovation in the Library of Professional Coaching. A highly-experienced Futurist, Author, and Executive Coach, current interests are in deep dives into the nature of Collaborative Innovation, conscious conversations,

and engaging large numbers of kindred spirits and businesses. For fifty years, he has been a personal and leadership coach and organizational behavior consultant stimulating breakthrough thinking, culture change and seemingly impossible results. A graduate of the Boston Public Latin School, Charlie holds a Bachelor's Degree in Social Relations from Harvard College, an MBA from the Harvard Business School, a Ph.D. in Organizational Behavior from Case Western Reserve University, and a Certificate in Gestalt Methods from the Gestalt Institute of Cleveland. He was Visiting Associate Professor of Organizational Behavior at Sir George Williams University in Montreal, former President of the Harvard-Radcliffe Club of New Mexico, and Editor of Transformation Magazine published by the Library of Professional Coaching. Dr. Smith has written three books, "The Merlin Factor, Leadership and Strategic Intent" "Navigating from the Future," "Don't be a Noddle in Someone Else's Soup" and many articles located in the Library of Professional Coaching and Eruditio, a Journal of the World Academy of Art and Science. He is Executive Editor of this Journal of Collaborative Innovation.

RICHARD WHITEHURST

Richard is Founder and Director of The Overview Institute of Australia

<https://www.overviewinstituteaustralia.org> along with its sister organization - Planetary Human:

<https://www.planetaryhuman.com>

He has appeared on radio and TV, and has lectured extensively in colleges, universities, workshops and conferences in America, En author, poet, 'possibillian' and 'planetary contextualist' – Richard has been involved in facilitating shifts in consciousness and human transformation for over four decades. A former president of the Ericksonian Hypnotherapist Association of Australia, Richard is a practicing psychotherapist and hypnotherapist.

