

# Fertilizing the Ground for a Metanoia: Business Education in the 21st Century

Joan F. Marques



**Joan Marques** is the co-editor of *The Workplace and Spirituality: New Perspectives in Research and Practice*, (SkyLight Paths) an anthology with contributions from 25 authors from all over the globe. She is also the author of 6 books. She facilitates courses in business and management at Woodbury University in

Burbank, California, presents a weekly radio column in the Netherlands, a weekly newspaper column in Suriname, South America, and co-organizes and presents workshops for business and non-profit entities in the Los Angeles area. Dr. Marques holds a Bachelors degree in Business Economics; a Master's degree in Business Administration; and a Doctorate in Organizational Leadership.

## Contact Information

Joan F. Marques, Ed.D.  
Woodbury University  
Day phone: (818) 288 6294  
Fax: (818) 845 3063  
Evening phone: (818)845-3063  
Email: jmarques01@earthlink.net

## Abstract

This article reviews the current global corporate climate, which has been dominated for centuries by an excessively individual mindset and short-term, bottom line based thinking. The paper identifies five key problem areas we are now facing, all instigated by legalistic corporate crimes: massive layoffs to beautify financial pictures, self-serving short-term decisions with long-term consequences, exploiting the globalization trend, exorbitant CEO salaries, and heightening affluence versus deepening poverty. As a possible response to this disturbing reality, the article subsequently presents a metanoia-focused, inside-out approach, as implemented in an MBA course on Organizational Behavior. Strategies utilized toward inducing this metanoia include conscious dialogue rounds, confrontation with human-focused companies, instilling the idea of humility, considering yourself as a brand, looking into social entrepreneurship, awakening passion, conducting self-reflection, and rethinking decision-making.



## Introduction

As we make our way deeper into the 21st century, the need for structural change in many areas becomes increasingly apparent. Due to the fact that our awareness about contemporary problems increases, everything gets questioned at its core, from production structures, to corporate strategies, even to the entire phenomenon of management (see Hamel & Breen, *"The Future of Management"*, 2007). The first decade of this new millennium has awakened us to the reality that humanity needs to reevaluate its thinking in

order to 1) restore the sustainability of our natural and living environments, and 2) correct the unhealthy thought processes we have created and instilled in the past generations of workforce members.

The change that is needed is not one that can happen from one moment to another, because it is not merely a change of actions or processes. It is the kind of change that has much in common with the process of becoming enlightened: it requires time, deep thinking, continuous dialogue, and critical self-evaluation. None of these factors are very popular in our current, hectic Western culture, where time is considered linear and thus a scarce commodity, thinking is considered time consuming, so an even more scarce commodity, dialogue is allotted for crisis solution and not for visionary transformations, and self-evaluation is usually limited to the physical part of our being or our short-term behavior.

Yet, without a complete reorganization of our thought processes, we will continue to witness corporate greed, victimization of lower ranked workers, excessive focus on the bottom-line, neglect of sustainable resources, lack of care about the magnitude of decisions, and a disappearing middle class due to increasing discrepancies between haves and have-nots.

What we need is a metanoia: a complete transformation the way we perceive things in our human society. Dictionary.com describes metanoia as “a profound, usually spiritual, transformation; conversion” (par. 1, 2010). Merriam-Webster online refers to this phenomenon as “a transformative change of heart; *especially* : a spiritual conversion” (par. 1, 2010). Many corporate workers get turned of by the term spiritual, as they associate it with

religion, but in this case we are not referring to religious thinking by any means. Rather, it is the level of thinking that acknowledges our connection to all that lives: our interdependence, derived from simple considerations such as how our breakfast came to the table and how many people were responsible for the delivery of every item that is now on our plate. Many business leaders, till this day, consider this type of thinking too soft and ethereal, and classify these thoughts as inapplicable to the business world. After all, these types of thoughts raise conscious questions, which many of us refuse to face: they confront us with our approaches to others, whom we have learned to perceive as less in status; thus not worthy of our concerns.

A metanoia, however, is the only strategy that exists, in the larger scheme of things, to improve our performance at the immediate, intermediate, and distant level from here onward. No longer can we consider laying off workers without considering the effects that these actions have on the welfare of our society. No longer can we make short-term decisions that will sort destructive effects in a future where our children and grandchildren are supposed to live and work. No longer can we outsource our production processes to other parts of the world without concerning ourselves about the treatment and well-being of the human beings there. No longer can we merely consider it a blessing when we are financially affluent without also wondering what we can do for those who are less fortunate. And no longer can we assume that certain groups of people (“us”) have the right to greater quality of life than others (“them”).

A metanoia is not easy to attain, but can be triggered when we get exposed to dialogues and

readings that stimulate our thinking and motivate us to question the status quo, and the perspectives we held thus far. Increasingly, higher educational institutions in business are grooming their education in directions that do just that.

This paper first reviews some current areas of concern we face today, and subsequently presents a series of strategies utilized in an MBA course on Organizational Behavior with the aim to stimulate a metanoia within students.

### **Some Instances of 20th Century Behaving**

When reviewing the business environment, it becomes clear that we generally practice a utilitarian-based ethical system in the U.S., where the greatest good for the largest number counts. In other words, sacrificing a few for the betterment of a large number is acceptable. But is it? Or is it only okay if the sacrificed few are “others” and not we? If such is the case – and most of the time it is – what does that say about us? Does that not indicate unabashed selfishness that will ultimately lead to dire consequences? The more one delves into organizational behavior, the more legalistic crimes surface, most of them committed by people in large corporations that have been around for multiple decades. In the section below, I present five key contemporary corporate tendencies. There are more, but these are highly interrelated and paint the picture of our contemporary dilemmas well.

#### ***The Problem of Corporate Layoffs***

While corporate lay offs were a rarity in the not-so gray past, they have come to the forefront forcefully in recent decades as performance cycles started accelerating. Today, the reasons for corporate layoffs are not limited to concerns about the

corporation’s existence. They have become a strategy, or, as Down (1995) presents it, “corporations use layoffs as a preemptive measure to ensure that profits continue to grow” (p. 57). In an interesting review of corporate layoff patterns, Surowiecki (2007) recalls the seven percent rule, which entails that companies announcing major layoffs, experience an immediate increase in their stock price of seven percent. Surowiecki posits that the seven percent rule is, in fact, a fable, and has been debunked. This has become apparent, according to Surowiecki, when Circuit City and City Group announced major job cuts and found no or negative effects on their stock prices.

Surowiecki (2007) subsequently reveals the findings from a meta-survey involving several countries and examining thousands of layoff announcements. He states that this large-scale study found that markets throughout the world usually displayed a significantly negative response to corporate layoffs. He continues that, while some companies may see their stock prices leap after layoff announcements, there is no confirmation that investors are really pleased by this measure. Surowiecki further clarifies that, while the financial world is still more bottom line than people focused, it also realizes that a smaller workforce may negatively affect production and, hence, profitability. He stresses, “Downsizing may make companies temporarily more productive, but the gains quickly erode, in part because of the predictably negative effect on morale. And numerous studies suggest that, despite the lower payroll costs, layoffs do not make firms more profitable” (Surowiecki, 2007). Skiba, Smith, and Marshall (2009) second Surowiecki’s conclusions as they critique the ambivalence of corporate layoffs. These authors assert that, while layoffs display immediate reductions in operating expenses, they lower the company’s profitability and inter-

nal and external stakeholders' morale in the long run. Similarly, Gayton (2008) underscores, "When businesses downsize, the remaining staff can do nothing but "muddle through." Knowledge is lost despite a company's best efforts to retain staff, but the market notices that lay-offs may indicate a deeper issue than merely cost cutting" (p. 176).

### *The Problem of Self-Serving Short Term Decisions with Long Term Consequences*

This problem mainly occurs in developing countries, where large corporations from industrialized nations dump their ever-increasing waste, often of a toxic nature, without any concern about the consequences, simply because these developing countries are crippled by poverty and an unregulated system. The problem is, however, mainly created by industrialized nations, who form an international hegemony, currently led by the United States (Baber & Bartlett, 2009).

According to Baber and Bartlett (2009) this hegemony "privileges commercial and private interests over the concerns of historically disenfranchised populations" (p. 479).

Considering the increasing use of computers, cell-phones and other e-products that become waste at a dazzlingly accelerating pace, Usha (2004) affirms, "Electronic wastes (e-wastes) are generated by electronic goods when they are discarded by consumers at the end of their useful life or are replaced by newer models, despite the fact that the older models still have useful lives" (p. 2).

Umesi and Onyia (2009) zoom in on the situation of e-waste in Nigeria, and stress,

"While some imported materials can either be directly re-used or repaired, there is a significant quantity of junk. At the end of its useful life, this second-hand electronic

equipment finds its way into unregulated disposal sites, where it is routinely burnt, releasing hazardous substances into the environment" (p. 565).

Goldstein (2009) discusses a different source of concern, yet with a similar impact: pollution in unregulated countries caused by multinational oil-corporations. He highlights concerns regarding oil firms raised in Africa, but also in Myanmar and Asian nations with weak governance. Along the same lines, Livesey (2001) discusses Shell's controversies in Ogoniland, a tribal community in the Niger Delta, while Olsen (2002) adds to the heap, cases of Texaco in Ecuador, Chevron in Nigeria, and Unocal in Burma. While many of these cases should be scrutinized in-depth, due to their complex nature, and while not all of these corporations engaged in deliberate harming of citizens and environments, it remains a fact that damage was done to a certain degree. This, of course, is hard to avoid when business ventures are undertaken. Oftentimes, the local partners eagerly welcome the Multinational Corporations (MNCs), only to start demonstrating, rebelling, and suing once progress has been made and increased insight in profits and procedures has set in. It is not easy, then, to determine which of the quarreling parties is right and which is wrong. Usually it ends up that both are carrying part of the responsibility. After all, it takes two to tango.

Fortunately, there are some bleak lights visible at the end of the tunnel. Golicic, Boerstler, and Ellram (2010) hypothesize that the fear for negative publicity and the threat of steep fines from local and international governments may gear a growing number of corporations into the sustainable mode and improve their efficiency on commodities such as water and energy. While this is

better than nothing, the attentive reader may detect that both of these reasons are highly reactive, which entails that we may expect the corporate efforts to be undertaken in that regard to be merely satisficing in many instances, thus barely meeting the minimum requirements posted.

### ***The Problem of Exploiting the Globalization Trend***

The trends described above are extended to the global arena through the activity of outsourcing. While many applaud globalization and its theoretical opportunities for all nations of the world, reality presents us a picture tainted by corporate greed and disassociation from human well-being. Weaver (2009) agrees, "For the world as a whole, the unintended consequences of globalization have been environmental degradation, inequality, and poverty among the working, lower, and middle classes" (p. 368). Weaver (2009) undertakes an effort to perceive globalization through the ecological lenses of inter-causality and interconnectivity and concludes that, in examination of social, political, cultural, economic, or material issues in a global context, issues arise in areas such as media, transportation, environment, poverty, racism, justice, labor, migration, class, and wealth distribution.

A perfect example of the above is Wal-Mart. Within the US, the term "Wal-Martization" has become an established and generally understood term. Conlin and Bernstein (2004) explain this term as "the downward pressure on wages" (p. 71). These authors claim that the retail giant gets away with extremely low hourly wages ("an average of \$9.64, about a third of the level of the union chains" (p. 71)), and that it covers significantly less of its employees' health insurance expenses compared to its rivals, "leaving 53% of its 1.2 mil-

lion employees uncovered by the company plan" (p. 71). Yet, there are many high-ranked Wal-Mart fans, who label the company as the proud example of unbridled capitalism. These proponents feel that Wal-Mart represents the way business should be conducted and see no problem in the employee abuse that has led to so many lawsuits against Wal-Mart. Focusing on attitudes of major corporations such as Wal-Mart toward workers in foreign countries, Dowling (2009) presents the perspective that "U.S. multinational employers usually view their social obligations as extending only to their own employees (and independent contractors) with whom they have contractual privity" (p. 1247). Dowling continues that there are a handful of American companies producing abroad, that have constructed external codes of conduct on their foreign suppliers in response to a series of highly publicized scandals in the 1990s. Wal-Mart remains one of the ongoingly criticized corporations in that regard, while others such as Nike and Kathy Lee Gifford have received less flack in recent years.

### ***The Problem of Exorbitant CEO Salaries***

In the disruptive economical climate of 2008 and 2009, the disturbing reality of excessive remunerations for strategic corporate leaders came to the forefront in full force. Friedrichs (2009) explored the status of exorbitant CEO compensation and found that the criminal character of this phenomenon has not been properly addressed to date. He commented that American CEO's have always been highly compensated, yet to an exceedingly ascending degree in recent years, which has resulted in an ever widening gap between regular employees and these corporate leaders. Friedrichs (2009) referred to the 2008 financial crisis in the U.S., which was partially due to this problem of excessive CEO and managerial compensation,

ultimately resulting in the average taxpayer's enlistment to save the system. Friedrichs (2009) classifies extreme CEO and management compensation as an extreme form of occupational crime. He stresses, "Corporate CEO's are high level "employees" of corporate owners (shareholders), and if at least some portion of exorbitant CEO compensation rightfully belongs to the corporation and its shareholders, then this is employee theft" (p. 47). Friedrichs extends his concerns about American CEO's increasing manifestations of greed to the areas of embezzlement, insider trading, and back dating of stock options, all of which have been –and still are – part of the regular practices of these insatiable corporate leaders.

Cornwell (2009) presents a grim conclusion to this lingering problem by confirming that it is a judgment call to be made by corporations. She avows, "The central question is not whether any amount that corporations offer their executives as a retention payment is too much, but whether these executives are worth what the corporation is pay-

ing them" (p. 517). She concludes that this question, unfortunately, may never be subject to any regulation, due to the fact that an employee's worth can only be assessed by the organization he or she works for.

***The Problem of Heightening Affluence versus Deepening Poverty***

One of the immediate effects of dishonest behavior in business is the increasing discrepancy between rich and poor. Globally respected individuals such as Mother Teresa and Nelson Mandela have stated it on many forums: poverty is a man made problem. We can see the creation of this problem very clearly in recent American corporate history. Cornwell (2009) combines several of the concerns raised above in one single statement:

"At the turn of the century, a number of business bankruptcy cases filled the media with stories of scandal, heated legal battles, and tension between wealthy executives and struggling employees. Cases such as



Figure 1: Five key contemporary corporate tendencies

Enron and WorldCom made headlines for the shocking dishonesty of corporate executives and the unfortunate repercussions that wage-level employees suffered from the effects of widespread corporate fraud” (pp. 485-486)

In her review of blatant privileging of corporate leaders, Cornwell also considers the case of United Airlines’ bankruptcy, where no fraud emerged, but where great disparities in the effects of the bankruptcy for executives and wage-level employees became obvious. Cornwell (2009) asserts, “While CEOs and CFOs filled their pockets with sizeable bonuses, former employees sold their houses and dropped healthcare coverage to try to make ends meet” (p. 486).

### ***Endnote on Corporate Blunders***

As a conclusion to this brief and incomplete overview of corporate moral and ethical blunders, Surowiecki (2007) presents a rationalization for this trend, which we cannot overlook: the pace of change that has also affected the tenure of contemporary CEO’s and their need to perform ever-faster than before, which translates in rigid measures that bring short-term advantages for the corporation’s numbers, but cause long-term disruptions and a spiral to the bottom.

### **Instigating a Metanoia: Educational Efforts Toward 21st Century Thinking**

MBA programs have traditionally caught strong criticism due to their focus on the bottom line and uninhibited capitalist thinking. Yet, these programs, like everything else, have evolved over the course of the past few decades in directions that consider more than just running organizations toward heavy profits and acquiring a fat wallet. In

a number of MBA programs throughout the US the trend toward awakening has been ripening for several years, leading to an interesting blend of stellar professional performance and proactive social responsibility. This 21st century blend should be stimulated at internal, intermediate and external levels. As an example, MBA students need to learn that any positive change starts within their thinking, and subsequently, their actions. If they are not convinced of the need toward long-term sustainability and are not aware of the transcending responsibility of business as the foremost global penetrator, old trends will never change, and all the problems listed above will remain intact. This, then, represents the internal awareness. Once the students are aware of the fact that change starts within, they should be alerted on the fact that they don’t need to be in upper-level management to ignite this change. They can communicate in formal and informal settings to individuals in- and outside their work environments. This way, they can put the communication and selling skills they acquire in the program to work. At the same time, they will need to walk their talk, because, as Tom Peters states in his verbal lectures, business today is still too much talking and too little doing. They need to become aware that no one is powerless toward change, other than in their mind. Thus, they realize the intermediate level of professional performance and social responsibility. Finally, at the external level, MBA students need to become aware of the interconnectedness of all countries of the globe. They need to snap out of the perspective-restraining national mindset, which creates room for business ethnocentrism, the root of all international corporate evil. They need to be encouraged to expose themselves to other cultures, inside their country (different cities, counties and states) and outside. Exposure to different cultures broadens

the view, as Peter Drucker stated in many of his lectures and books. Through this broadened view, students acquire a better understanding and greater compassion for other members of the global community, thus realizing the external level of professional performance and social responsibility.

Figure 2 below presents an overview of the inside-out approach, needed to induce a metanoia toward achieving stellar professional performance in combination with proactive social responsibility.

*Some Approaches to Induce a Metanoia in an MBA Course*

It is not possible to capture in one single paper the various strategies applicable to commence a metanoia within MBA students, but I will set out an effort to briefly review eight actions I undertake in a course on Organizational Behavior. The educational concepts are not new. They have proven themselves over decades. However, in combination with the content and main focus of these activities, the seed for a metanoia might very well be planted within a receptive student.

1. Conscious class dialogue rounds:

The classes at our institution are kept small (15-20 students per workshop series), in order to ensure an optimal facilitator-student ratio. For each class, students are assigned critical readings from a

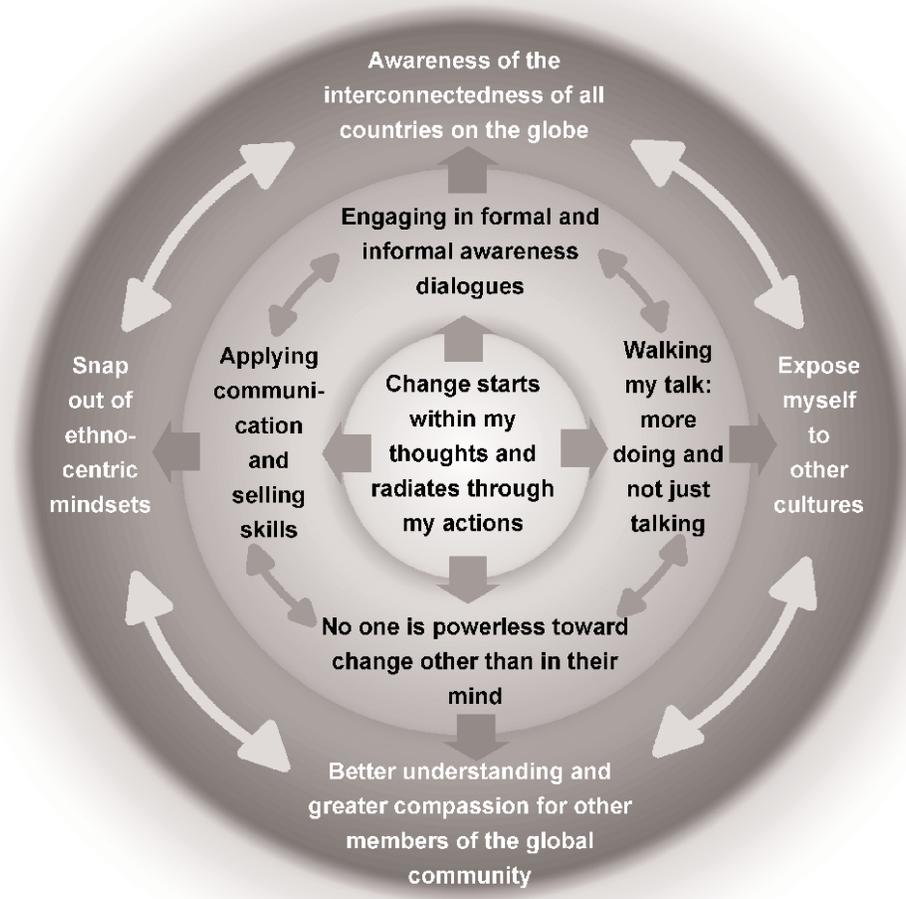


Figure 2: Foundational steps to provoke a metanoia

selection of books, such as Hamel and Breen's earlier mentioned *"The Future of Management,"* Kouzes and Posner's *"The Leadership Challenge,"* and Marques' *"The Awakened Leader."* For each week's readings, students need to submit their reflections, not merely consisting of the summaries of the chapters read, but also including the lessons they personally learned from these readings and the way they consider applying these lessons in their own lives. During each subsequent session, the reflections to these assigned readings are presented. Students first discuss their reflections in team settings. Each team selects the 5 most outstanding reflective points from the chapter(s) they discuss, and then share these with the rest of the class. This process of reporting to one another strengthens team spirit, but also spurs dialogue and increased awareness amongst the team members and within the class as a whole.

## 2. Confrontation with human-focused companies:

Through the book readings, but also through clips from YouTube, Educational material providers, and Ted.com (Technology, Entertainment, Design), we focus on a number of intrinsic issues for our students, geared toward their future leadership positions. We apply a trans-disciplinary approach, including issues pertaining to sustainability, health, social awareness, and spiritual thinking, in order to whet these students' awareness on the interconnectedness of all things, and the important role they are- or will be fulfilling as current or future members of the workplace. We discuss companies that stand out, not due to their bottom line focus, but due to their emphasis on the human aspect, which ultimately endorses corporate performance.

Discussing companies such as Atlassian and Google, for instance, helps students understand the emphasis on human creativity. Atlassian, an Australian software company specializing in collaboration and development tools, "embraces transparency wherever at all practical, and sometimes where impractical" (Atlassian, 2010, par. 3). The company stresses care for employees and customers: "Building with heart means really caring about what we're making and doing — it's a mission, not just a job" (Atlassian, 2010, par. 3). Ensuring its reputation is important, not just from the perspective of future consequences, but more importantly from a sense of responsibility: "When we make internal decisions we ask ourselves 'how will this affect our customers?' If the answer is that it would 'screw' them, or make life more difficult, then we need to find a better way. We want the customer to respect us in the morning" (Atlassian, 2010, par. 5). Google has a similar approach of connection, openness, mutual respect, and creativity. Some of the first few lines of the company's culture, as described on their website, are:

"At lunchtime, almost everyone eats in the office café, sitting at whatever table has an opening and enjoying conversations with Googlers from different teams. Our commitment to innovation depends on everyone being comfortable sharing ideas and opinions. Every employee is a hands-on contributor, and everyone wears several hats" (Google, 2010, par. 1).

Both of these companies have in common the fact that they ensure room for employees to create, knowing that this enhances the employee's esteem and sense of importance, and ultimately benefits the corporation. Some examples of other compa-

nies frequently discussed are, Whole Foods, for their self-managing team culture; Starbucks, for their partnership culture and the health care incentives available, even to part timers; Southwest Airlines, for their approach of “employees first,” because happy employees guarantee happy customers; IKEA, for their approach of making decisions on the spot and not dwelling on mistakes but simply learning from them; and the SAS Institute, for their flexibility in work schedules and their massive focus on workers’ satisfaction. The one thing that all these companies have in common is that they do good business, they keep growing and outperforming competitors, and have done so for quite some time.

### 3. Instilling the idea of humility:

This almost seems paradoxical, because MBA students are there to elevate themselves to the forefront in leadership. However, leadership is best practiced when the leader practices authenticity, emotional intelligence and wakefulness. It is mainly for this reason that the books of Kouzes and Posner and Marques were selected for this course. Additional illustrative material to help sharpen this particular awareness comes from YouTube clips entailing statements by Tom Peters, Ken Blanchard, and Peter Drucker; speeches from Ted.com on various leadership-related topics; video’s about great leaders such as Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., Nelson Mandela and the Dalai Lama; and additional book discussions, such as Jim Collins’ “*Good to Great*,” Alex Pattakos’ “*Prisoners of Our Thoughts*,” and Daniel Quinn’s “*Ishmael*.” What all these books have in common is the emphasis that we should critically examine our current mindsets, which were constructed through years of ego-thinking (*Good to Great*), break through self-imposed barriers (*Prisoners of Our Thoughts*), and adopt a mentality

of acceptance and respect for all living beings (*Ishmael*).

### 4. Considering yourself as a brand; honing personal and professional excellence:

With assistance of tips provided in Tom Peter’s “*The Brand You 50*,” students are invited to cease thinking of themselves as mere employees, and start adopting the stance of service suppliers. Within this perspective, they learn to see themselves as a marketable brand, and learn to adopt the free agent frame of mind. Many of the advices provided by Peters in this book can help in stimulating creativity, boosting morale, and expanding the internal locus of control. In addition, students are working on a professional portfolio throughout the course entailing, among other things, acknowledgement to a few fellow students whose contributions were considered particularly helpful in understanding and enjoying the course (attitude of gratitude), their mission and vision statements (focus on immediate and intermediate goals), their personal SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats), their vita (brief, in a 1-page format), their Myers-Briggs Type (including a brief explanation of the main characteristics of this type), a compilation of their course submissions, the most important lessons they learned, and their 100-day post-course implementation plan.

### 5. Looking into social entrepreneurship:

The 21st Century business trend is repeatedly laid out in the course through dialogues about the increasing number of non-profit entities and subsequent instillment of the understanding that creating or working for a non-profit entity does not mean being poor. Rather, the incorporation of right livelihood (working in an environment that is focused on improving the quality of life for

everyone) is more prominent in non-profits, which breeds a larger sense of gratification about one's achievements at the end of the day. As an example, Muhammad Yunus is presented, through his own statements and short video clips of his micro-financing projects that started in Bangladesh, ultimately leading up to him becoming the first businessperson ever to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2006.

#### 6. Awakening passion:

Through dialogues, a guest presentation, and a speech from Sir Ken Robinson (available on Ted.com) students are encouraged to turn inward and contemplate on what they really want in life as opposed to what everyone else advises them to do. They are encouraged to regain their creative thinking ability, and start focusing on ways to incentivize and monetize their passion.

#### 7. Conducting self-reflection:

In this era of rapid changes, nothing remains the same for very long. Not even ourselves. Many people think that everyone and everything else changes, but that they don't. In this course, students are confronted with the reality that they, too, are subject to change due to the many people, readings, and lessons they get exposed to. They are therefore invited to partake in a self-reflection exercise, presented in *"The Awakened Leader"* (Marques, 2007), so that they can focus their attention on specific areas of their lives, and can establish whether they are still satisfied in these areas, or whether they need to start considering a change of direction.

#### 8. Rethinking decision-making:

By reviewing the earlier mentioned contemporary corporate blunders, and discussing some of the main players in these disturbing trends, students

are confronted with the unfortunate status quo of self-serving, short-term focus on decision making with catastrophic long-term outcomes. They are presented with a case to assess their leadership thinking, and invited to participate in dialogues about the concerning trends of today. Through this series of course embedded activities, students learn to consider not only immediate, but also intermediate and distant consequences of their decisions.

Figure 3, on following page, depicts the 8 above-discussed course approaches utilized to help elicit a metanoia.

## Conclusion

As mentioned at the beginning of this paper, a metanoia is not an overnight change of mind. It is not even a paradigm shift. It is much larger than that! It entails a process that can only be ignited through in-depth dialogues, examinations, and experiences, and can only be successfully implemented if the recipient of these reflective activities continues to nourish them in his or her life. There is no immediate proof that a person has truly experienced a metanoia. It is only demonstrated in this person's actions during the years after the exposure. Therefore, evidence can only be measured over a long period of time. Nevertheless, the exposure to more collectivist cultures has awakened many members of the younger working generation to the fact that individualist thinking may have its place and merit, but should be avoided in extreme form. The problems we are currently facing on a global scale were created by human beings, who, in their leadership of major entities, only considered their immediate interests, and neglected the consequences for the rest of the world, including their own progeny.



Figure 3: Course approaches to help induce a metanoia

This article provided a brief overview of some of today's main problems and a simple way to create a metanoia amongst those who will have to solve these problems: the current business student population. As Aseltine and Alletson (2006) put it:

*Just as the nineteen-sixties saw a new focus on marketing and advertising, the 'seventies saw the rise of the corporate strategist. The 'eighties saw the birth of sophisticated financial re-engineering, followed by a decade-long focus on technology starting in the mid-nineties. We believe that the next cycle is already beginning, focusing on work force effectiveness, managing talent, and reinventing the core employment value proposition. The companies poised to win in this era are those that deploy people in new*

*ways to accomplish their business objectives and deliver both personal and organizational growth (p. 7, emphasis added).*

It should never be assumed that every person who is exposed to the practices presented in this paper will, indeed, experience a metanoia. However, if only a few members of each student population are reached, the mission can be declared successful. I would like to end with two notes: one affirmation, confronting us with the way we should look at our existence, and one short story, underscoring to us that anyone of us, regardless of how minuscule, can make a difference.

*"Treat the earth well: it was not given to you by your parents, it was loaned to you by your children. We do not inherit the Earth from our Ancestors, we borrow it from our Children."*

## Ancient Indian Proverb

### *The Star Thrower*

One day a man was walking along the beach  
when he noticed  
a boy picking something up and gently throwing  
it into the ocean.  
Approaching the boy, he asked, "What are you  
doing?"  
The youth replied, "Throwing starfish back into  
the ocean.  
The surf is up and the tide is going out. If I don't  
throw them back, they'll die."  
"Son," the man said, "don't you realize there are  
miles and miles of beach and hundreds of  
starfish? You can't make a difference!"  
After listening politely, the boy bent down, picked  
up another starfish,  
and threw it back into the surf. Then, smiling at  
the man, he said  
"I made a difference for that one."  
(Eiseley, 1969)

## References

- Aselstine, K., & Alletson, K. (2006). A new deal for the 21st century workplace. *Ivey Business Journal Online*, 1-7.
- Atlassian (2010). *Our Company*. Retrieved on February 12, 2010 from <http://www.atlassian.com/about/>
- Baber, W., & Bartlett, R. (2009). Race, poverty and the environment: Toward a global perspective. *Public Administration Quarterly*, 33(4), 457-480.
- Collins, J. (2006). *Good to great: Why some companies Make the Leap. ..and Others Don 't*. London: Random House Business Books
- Conlin, M., & Bernstein, A. (May 31, 2004). Working...and Poor. *BusinessWeek*, 3885, 58-68.
- Cornwell, D. (2009). To catch a kerp: Devising a more effective regulation than § 503(C). *Emory Bankruptcy Developments Journal*, 25(2), 485-519.
- Dowling, D. (2009). U.S.-based multinational employers and the "Social Contract" outside the United States\*. *The International Lawyer*, 43(3), 1237-1256.
- Downs, A. (1995). The truth about layoffs. *Management Review*, 84(10), 57.
- Eiseley, L. (1969). *The Starfish Story*, adopted from its original version in *The Unexpected Universe*, Harcourt, Brace and World, Orlando, FL. Retrieved on February 12, 2010 from <http://www.starrbrite.com/starfish.html>
- Friedrichs, D. (2009). Exorbitant CEO compensation: Just reward or grand theft? *Crime, Law and Social Change*, 51(1), 45-72.
- Gayton, C. (2008). Business ethics, restrictions on employment and knowledge management. *VINE*, 38(2), 174-183.
- Goldstein, A. (2009). New multinationals from emerging Asia: The case of National Oil Companies. *Asian Development Review*, 26(2), 26-56.
- Golicic, S., Boerstler, C., & Ellram, L. (2010). 'Greening' the transportation in your supply chain. *MIT Sloan Management Review*, 51(2), 47-55.
- Google (2010). *The Google culture*. Retrieved on February 12, 2010 from <http://www.google.com/corporate/culture.html>
- Hamel, G., & Breen, B. (2007). *The future of management*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.
- Kouzes, J., & Posner, B. (2007). *The leadership challenge*. San Francisco, CA.: Jossey-Bass.

- Livesey, S. (2001). Eco-Identity as discursive struggle: Royal Dutch/Shell, Brent Spar, and Nigeria. *Journal of Business Communication*, 38(1), 58-91.
- Marques, J. (2007). *The awakened leader: One simple leadership style that works every time, everywhere*. Fawnskin, CA.: Personhood Press.
- Metanoia (2010). Retrieved on Wednesday, February 10, 2010 from <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/metanoia>
- Metanoia (2010). Retrieved on Wednesday, February 10, 2010 from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/metanoia>
- Olsen, J. (2002). Global ethics and the Alien Tort Claims Act: A summary of three cases within the oil and gas industry. *Management Decision*, 40(7/8), 720-724.
- Pattakos, A. (2008). *Prisoners of our thoughts: Viktor Frankl's Principles for Discovering Meaning in Life and Work*. San Francisco, CA.: Berrett-Koehler.
- Peters, T. (1999). *The brand you 50 : Or : Fifty ways to transform yourself from an 'employee' into a brand that shouts distinction, commitment, and passion!* New York, NY.: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Quinn, D. (1992). *Ishmael: An adventure of the mind and spirit*. New York, NY: Bantam Books, Incorporated.
- Skiba, M., Smith, D., & Marshall, K. (2009). Applying Merton's theory of anomie to career disruptions. *Management Research News*, 32(4), 392-404.
- Surowiecki, J. (April 30, 2007), It's the workforce, Stupid! *New Yorker, The Financial Page*, 0028792X, 83(10).
- Umesi, N., & Onyia, S. (2008). Disposal of e-wastes in Nigeria: An appraisal of regulations and current practices. *International Journal of Sustainable Development and World Ecology*, 15(6), 565-573.
- Usha, D. (2004). Challenges of e-waste. *Hariyali*, 6(2):2-4.
- Weaver, T. (2009). The ecology of globalization: The wolf at the global door. *Human Organization*, 68(4), 363-373.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.