

## **Increased Awareness Has Two Sources**

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Over the past four weeks, my articles have dealt with the power that your choices have in determining your progress over time. Your freedom to choose, however, is severely limited if you are not aware of options that are available to you. Increasing your awareness is important!

This article offers you two sources that you can nurture to enhance your awareness. Neither occurs naturally. For your own growth and for nurturing the health of your organization, you'll want to seek ways of supporting "paradigm shifts" and "feedback" as robust and normal parts of your culture.

I just spent a day at the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum adjacent to Washington's Dulles airport (opened in 2003). Because "awareness" was on my mind, I kept thinking about how paradigm shifts and feedback have contributed to innovations relative to aircraft and space flight.

A paradigm shift is a change in perspective that comes from new and often unexpected information. Leaders are encouraged to look at routine aspects of their work from different angles. After only a little practice, the leader becomes enamored with the concept of paradigm shifts, finding them everywhere. I love when a leader is excitedly describing a new perspective to me and is interrupted in mid-thought, distracted by a totally new insight that has just been stimulated.

We've all probably observed a bird in flight and wondered, "Hey, if birds can fly, why not me?" Some individuals, of course, have acted on that thought!

Someone once observed, "When air passes over a convex surface, it tends to lift that surface. Hmm, I wonder if that effect could be increased such that it might overcome the force of gravity!" The Wright Brothers gave it a try in 1903, and as they say, "the rest is history!"

Achieving your leadership position has required a lot of experience and confidence. What's natural is to assume that you already know all that you need to continue to be successful. It's quite unnatural to start questioning the truths that have gotten you to where you are! Paradoxically, however, breakthrough thoughts (paradigm shifts) will often catapult you (and those under your authority) to significant gains!

I marveled at all the trial-and-error learning that has contributed to the advancement of flight. It's pretty natural for a leader to want to avoid failure. However, we sometimes learn much more from failure than from success. Often it's a failed effort that contributes significantly to a paradigm shift.

Feedback sometimes provides a special kind of paradigm shift. You might be complimented for something you are doing well by someone who sees how your behavior could contribute significantly if applied in a slightly different way.

Or the feedback might be quite surprising to you. Perhaps you were acting with good intent, yet your behavior relative to a given individual had a quite unintended effect. Exploring the unexpected information gained through feedback could easily lead you to new awareness about yourself and the situations you face.

Seeking feedback is not natural. Also, providing unsolicited feedback to a boss is pretty rare. If feedback is going to happen routinely in your organization, you'll have to be a leader in welcoming and encouraging it. Remember, no matter what feedback is provided to you, you still decide whether and how you will change your behaviors. The decision to change remains yours.

If you visit the Washington, DC area, I strongly suggest you visit the free (\$12 fee for parking) National Air and Space Museum near the Dulles Airport!

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*If you missed any of the previous four articles (dealing with the power of decision-making) and want to obtain a copy, contact Dennis Hooper at (478)-988-0237 or [dhooper2@juno.com](mailto:dhooper2@juno.com).*