

# Insights

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Special Edition

## Introductory Article

by James Ritchie-Dunham, President of Strategic Clarity

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The tragedy of September 11<sup>th</sup> and the economic recession have made it particularly difficult for leaders to manage their organizations with clarity.

We asked some strategic thinkers to share the perspectives on clarity that are helping them through these difficult times. Two focus on thinking at the organizational level and four at the individual level. Claas Cordes, marketing director of a theater in Germany, shares a European philosophical perspective. Jay Forrest, a degreed futurist, explores the design of robust

systems in turbulent times and how terrorism is changing the boundaries for our thinking about the future.

Scott Spann, an executive coach and recent COO of a high-tech startup, talks about managing personal clarity. Conrado Garcia, senior consultant at Strategic Clarity, shares reflections from World Cafes with executives throughout Mexico. Frank Schneider, from the Society for Organizational Learning, suggests that social equity is a personal decision. Annabel

Membrillo, senior consultant at Strategic Clarity, provides a framework that shows why we need strategic clarity on a personal and professional level.

We thank these strategists for sharing their thoughts with us and hope that you find them useful. If you have any reflections on these or related issues that you would like to share with us, please send them to [jimrd@instituteforstrategicclarity.org](mailto:jimrd@instituteforstrategicclarity.org).

## A Pragmatic 21st Century from a German Perspective

by Claas Cordes, Marketing Director for the Schauspiel-Leipzig Theater in Leipzig, Germany

Within German culture as well as German society there have been diverse reactions to the terror attacks on the US. All have in common a deep feeling of shock, sadness and uncertainty. In my opinion in a situation of crisis like this there is a chance of personally reconsidering and broadly renegotiating old mental models with which we have approached 20th century politics:

1. The 20th century has passed. Already quite a time ago. We should start thinking 21st century.
2. "Civilization" is one of the

key words in almost all discussions following September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001. Everyone claims civilization as an argument for his view and position. From now on it seems necessary to stop using civilization as an argument. If we succeed in doing so we will cease damaging civilization.

3. Civilization is always the unfamiliar. War and terror, the logic of action and reaction, of right and false is the familiar. Originating from old European rational philosophy this mode of thinking has infiltrated pragmatism, one of the great inventions

of the "new" world. One of the key advantages of pragmatist thinking is the ability to see the chances in arguments which in dialectic discourse are considered as "false". Therefore I believe pragmatism is one of the most tolerant modes of understanding the world.

4. An easy European answer to September 11<sup>th</sup> is the pacifist view of the 80's which claims that American foreign policy since Vietnam has been wrong and has caused terrorism. For two reasons I do not agree with this argument:

First of all it is not pragmatic because it is searching for guilt, not solutions. But the main problem of this argument lies in its Anti-American impulse. The political aspect of this impulse seems wrong to me because it means isolationism. And the cultural Anti-Americanism is auto-aggressive. Its criticizes a form of culture which originates from Europe. Beginning in the 1950's European avant-garde returned to Europe in the form of popular culture. It is a problem of the Europeans that they called popular culture "American."

## Responding from Personal Clarity

by Scott Spann, Executive Coach and recent COO of a High-Tech Startup

*"The significant problems we have cannot be solved at the same level of thinking with which we created them."*

~ Albert Einstein ~

The perspective from which we approach truly complex, compelling issues determines our ability to successfully resolve them. This is especially relevant when approaching novel issues – issues such as the ones we are encountering today. Novel issues require novel levels of thoughtfulness and creativity – a creativity that emerges, as Mikhail describes it, from a place of

internal stillness, stillness brought about by the application of internal clarity to external "chaos" and challenge. Our ability to do this is primarily a function of the depth of our own personal clarity.

So, what is personal clarity? Quite simply, it is our sense of internal congruence – the alignment between our impulses, thoughts & actions and the outcomes we create in our world. One of the landmarks of personal clarity is the ability to remain internally (vs. externally) referenced, while, at the same time, responding (vs. reacting) to the events of the

world in a way that furthers the short and long term well-being of our community - whether it be our community of work, of place, or of family and friends.

So, where does one go to find such clarity? We can find it at the balance point between two abilities. The first is the ability to contact our deep inner stillness, a place we have largely been taught to avoid in a culture as externally stimulating as ours – something we must relearn/remember. Once remembered, this awareness can, with gentle, persistent attention, become a nourishing, enriching prac-

tice. The other ability is that of being able, as Einstein implied, to shift your external perspective, not simply to a different point, but to a different level – a more inclusive, complete perspective (such as the one offered by thinking systemically). When these two are combined, one can "hold" the fertile, creative field from which insight, and the requisite skillful means to manifest it "spontaneously" emerges.

*Next issue, the practice of personal clarity.*

## Relevant conversations as a vehicle for reflection and sustainable change.

by Conrado Garcia Madrid, Senior Consultant at Strategic Clarity

We have used a methodology called World Cafés within the events organized by SoL-México to generate many interesting conversations about important issues. For example, during an event about *the image of success in the contemporary world*, a very prestigious radio and television presenter questioned the standards that for him and the people surrounding him clearly represented a very successful career. He also questioned whether or not the money was everything that mattered to him or even if he was doing something significant as he had planned originally. He concluded that, despite having a good time at work, he was neglecting certain activities that he had identified as very important

in his personal development. He shared his decision to refocus on these activities once again. While this refocus would not help to increase the image that he had generated in the eyes of the others, it would significantly improve his interior peace and happiness.

In another occasion, during an event titled *beyond the difference*, a senior executive of one of the most important organizations in Mexico talked about frequently adopting a confrontational position in conversations with his colleagues, without a clear reason why. He shared a specific case that involved the Director of Human Resources, who one morning did not return his salutation. After this he un-

consciously adopted a confrontation posture towards him, always defending the opposite point of view during weekly meetings and paying no attention to his needs, reaching a point where the Director of Human Resources often sent him less qualified people or did not send on relevant information about courses. Once he reflected on this and identified the necessity of having a serious conversation with him, he made the decision to call him the day after the session, to work on their issues. The issues were affecting, not only them as individuals, but the rest of the organization as well. After telling us about the situation he was facing, he commented that he was truly amazed at how powerful and

relieving was the exercise of reflection and sharing.

There are many examples of practices that prove the relevancy of dialogue to generate reflection and sustainable change. For this reason we would like to invite you to utilize this tool in your personal and professional life. It might help you realize how much you can learn from one of the most basic and natural activities of human interaction, the conversation.

For more information about World Cafés, visit <http://www.worldcafes.org/>

## Looking Longer Term

### Redundancy for Robust Systems

by Jay Forrest

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*Strategic Clarity proudly initiates this column with Jay Forrest. Jay is a Ph.D. student in Foresight and Studies of the Future and is the Associated Resident Futurist at the Institute for Strategic Clarity. Jay consults in the areas of vulnerability analysis and strategy assessment, among others.*

My first class in futures studies forced me to acknowledge and recognize the level of uncertainty around us; that life is not always a continuum of change; that events can shift the landscape of life instantaneously; that detailed long-range forecasts are always wrong. As a former financial analyst and business manager for major companies, this perspective was alien and disconcerting. It took time to become comfortable with uncertainty and to look at uncertainty as opportunity.

*It took time to become comfortable with uncertainty and to look at uncertainty as opportunity.*

As I looked back over my career I perceived a growing false confidence was driving

business strategy. Government, technology, and business practices were making the business world a more benign environment where it was safe to pursue efficiencies to the extreme – single sourcing of supplies, just-in-time inventory levels, and

*As I looked back over my career I perceived a growing false confidence was driving business strategy.*

concentrating manufacturing and operations to gain economies of scale. These practices seemed to me to invite problems in times of uncertainty and trauma; they did not seem robust. When I entered a PhD program in futures studies one of my key concerns was identifying characteristics of robust systems, that can better survive uncertainty, tumult, and turmoil.

Robust systems have independent multiple paths and sources – redundancies – at the cost of efficiency, but at a gain of decreased dependency and correlation to the fluctuations of a single source.

The terrorist attacks of September 11 highlight the im-

portance of those words. Whole companies were effectively wiped out because their robustness was tied to the viability of one building.

In an unpredictable world, distributed manufacturing and processing will be much more robust than concentrating activities at single sites. Ecological research suggests that having three independent sources generally offers the optimum balance between efficiency and robustness; implying that creating three independent centers for manufacturing, order processing, etc. would create a more robust business structure for a large organization.

As I write this Morgan Stanley is almost totally shut down, having lost all of their equipment and many re-

*Ecological research suggests that having three independent sources generally offers the optimum balance between efficiency and robustness...*

cords in the collapse of the World Trade Center. Imaging the difference to Morgan Stanley, if they had had

three equivalent, independent centers working in parallel – say one in the World Trade Center, one in Philadelphia and one in Boston. The loss of any one would have left them with two-thirds of their functional capacity and activity. Is the inefficiency of three identical sites the best answer? It is hard to say. But having more than one is clearly advantageous – having two independent sites would have left them at 50% capacity – much better than being shut down! Distributed, independent systems have the ability to fluctuate less in periods of crisis and turmoil.

The benefits of redundancy clearly include virtual realms as well – intellectual capital, electronic records, and backups all offer benefits from being independently distributed.

Over the past few years I have been quietly talking to my clients about creating independent redundancy in their organizations to make themselves more robust. Improving technology of communications and manufacturing is reducing the efficiency penalty of redundancy in many industries. Robustness is a key to riding the waves of uncertainty.

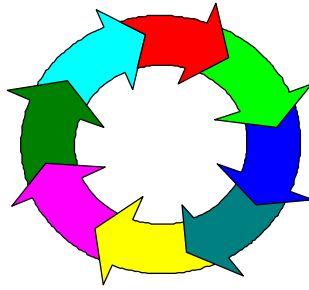
## Social Equity is in the "I" of the beholder

by Frank Schneider

To me, social equity is defined by understanding that every human being is not only part of a local, regional, or national society, but is first and foremost part of the one global society. And, that each of us has equal value and unique contributions to make without which the world would reveal only part of its beauty and richness. Bringing social equity to life means I need to take responsibility for it in my everyday thoughts and actions. Venkatesh, an Indian, shows us how.

It is Saturday, September 13, and the 911 event still dominates most of my social interactions. I just came back from a meeting with Venkatesh, who is still recovering from his experiences of leaving the WTC timely enough only to see it collapse right in front of him. During our conversation, he seemed very thoughtful and spoke like someone who has redefined his relationship with death. "All the way down from the 62<sup>nd</sup> floor, through three different and partly completely dark stairways, I was very calm", he said, "concentrated, and aware of myself. I felt the danger, but I had a clear mind that allowed me to sense what needs to be done". He told me how he was able to help others who were afraid, disoriented, and too shocked to move. He helped them with his gestures, his encouraging words, and by letting them pass by him on the stairs that meant hope in the moment of terror. Hope for life,

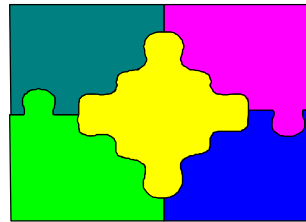
for seeing their families and friends again, for holding their children once more, for letting their dreams come true. Venkatesh was there for them, not thinking about their gender, race, religion, skin color, or political orientations. He helped because love, the acceptance of another person as equally legitimate, is one natural quality of the human race.



My exchange with Venkatesh has influenced my daily reflections. I know, he acted like a true leader even under circumstances when hesitation or help offered to others might have resulted in losing his own life! I start to understand that true leadership, in particular in times of crises, is about leading myself, staying connected to what I value, and helping create a world that cares more about who I really am than where I come from or what I have achieved. True leadership is not about the one who leads and the many who follow, but being able to follow myself. Social equity builds on true leadership that has its foundation in knowing myself and having an open mind and a strong commitment to cooperation. This foundation develops

through discipline, the ability to channel my energy to what is important and feels right to me in the moment.

Never have I embodied a clearer illustration of "being in the present" than Venkatesh's experience of choosing between life and death every second anew. I feel appreciated that he helped me, a human being from Germany, learn. I am honored to share my insights with the human beings reading this newsletter, no matter where in the world they are.



Since my conversation with Venkatesh, I have asked myself two questions every morning. On this day, whom will I show my ability to love in the moment (of crisis)? Whom will I help learn today by sharing my experiences? By answering these questions throughout the day, I hope to bring about social equity in the realm of my influence.

### News and Events

#### Strategic Clarity

Join us in Vail, Colorado for skiing and our public course on *Managing from Clarity*, January 7-11, 2002! For more information, contact us at 1 (512) 291-0657 or [info@strategic-clarity.com](mailto:info@strategic-clarity.com) or visit the course website at [www.instituteforstrategicclarity.org/lpclass.htm](http://www.instituteforstrategicclarity.org/lpclass.htm)

Our book *Managing from Clarity: Identifying, Aligning and Leveraging Strategic Resources*, published by John Wiley & Sons, came out September 12, 2001. It is available at any on-line bookstore and in many larger bookstores worldwide. For more information on our book and the people that have endorsed it, please visit [www.managingfromclarity.com](http://www.managingfromclarity.com).

### News and Events

#### Institute for Strategic Clarity

Jim Ritchie-Dunham, Executive Director of the Institute for Strategic Clarity, taught a two-day course on "Organizational Learning and Managing from Clarity" at the ITAM in Mexico City on November 30 and December 1, 2001..

## Strategic Clarity for What

by Annabel Membrillo, Senior Consultant for Strategic Clarity

Pressures like short-term decisions, economic downturn and uncertainty from tragedies like the one that happened September 11 affect us profoundly on a personal and professional level (see the figure below). The increasing complexity of what is happening in the world distracts us from making thoughtful decisions and forces us to satisfy immediate requests. However, having strategic clarity regarding what we want for our organization, department or life can help us to make better decisions and keep our focus on what matters.

Strategic clarity is required first at the individual level. Leaders need to have strategic clarity. It helps them de-

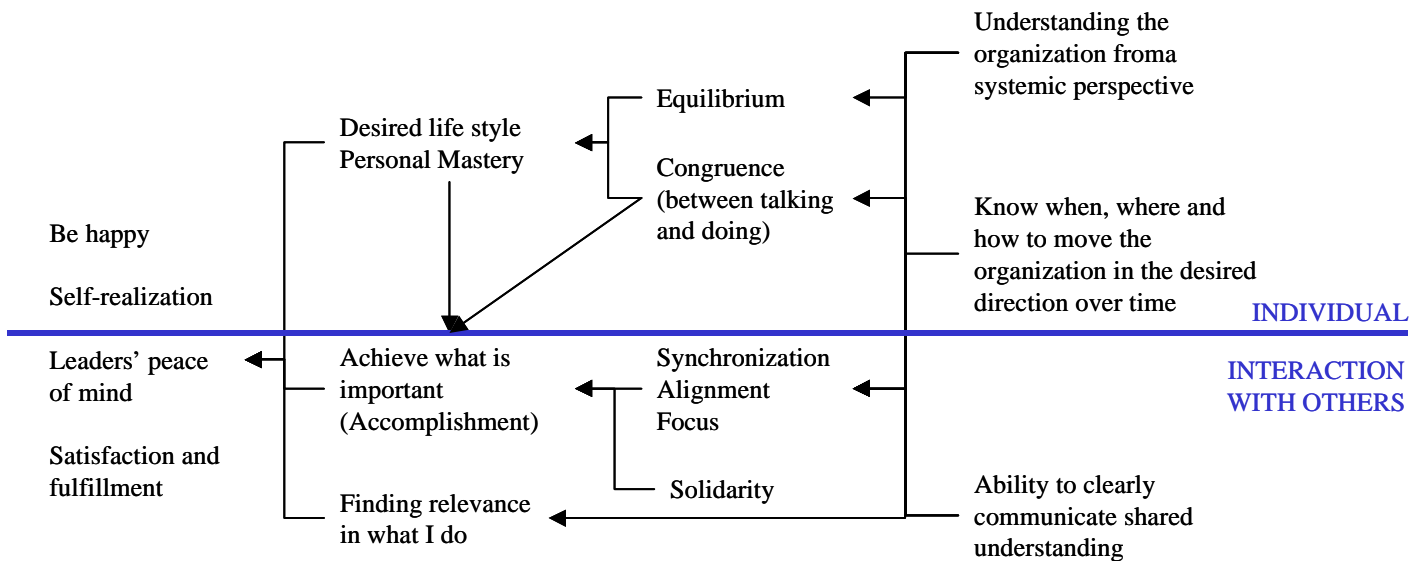
termine what actions and behavior will let them achieve something bigger, through interaction with others in the organization. Let's explore these two levels.

At the personal level, building strategic clarity is valuable because it helps me to achieve equilibrium in the attention and time that I give to the groups that are important to me. Clearly defining what I want and how to achieve it focuses me on being congruent in the way I think, talk and act, even when people close to me disagree with my decisions or when pressures deviate my attention from what I want. This is what motivates me to have high strategic clarity: to be faithful to what

I want. It helps to build and achieve my vision. In the end, all these help to achieve happiness and self-realization. This also applies to business leaders, as human beings they also look for congruence, equilibrium and clearness about their aspirations at the personal and professional level.

Once I have clarity at the individual level, I try to communicate my vision to others, to be able to work together to achieve that vision. In the case of my significant other, this alignment of what we want from life is crucial. In the same manner, as leaders in organizations we need to be able to communicate the vision as clear as possible to let others know:

(1) where they fit, (2) what they can do to help to achieve the vision, and (3) to see the relevance of achieving alignment and synchronization with others. Understanding why this equilibrium is essential helps us to focus our efforts, making it possible for us to achieve what is important at the personal and the professional level. This allows us to attain harmony and the satisfaction of knowing that we are closer to achieving our vision every day.



## Contacting Strategic Clarity

For general information, call or write to:

James Ritchie-Dunham  
Strategic Clarity  
3615 Aspen Creek Parkway  
Austin, TX 78749-6909  
(512) 291-0657 (voice)  
(512) 291-0658 (fax)  
info@strategic-clarity.com  
<http://www.strategic-clarity.com>

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## Terrorism and the Boundaries of the Future

by Jay Forrest, Associated Resident Futurist at the Institute for Strategic Clarity

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The events of September 11, shocking as they are, were foreseen. In 1970 Marvin Cetron warned the government of the danger of an attack on the Pentagon using an airliner. Six years ago, several graduate futures studies students at the University of Houston – Clear Lake, including the author, casually explored the possible paths of terrorism and concluded that using airplanes as weapons of terrorism was likely to be highly effective. Finding the implications rather unpleasant we did not flesh out alternative scenarios for airplane terrorism, but went on to other forms of terrorism. Given a reason to explore the topic in more detail, I am confident we could have easily arrived at the general scenario of September 11, particularly given Bin Laden's failed attempt at the World Trade Center only two years earlier.

Futurists strive to identify the boundaries of the future. Reality is usually not at the bounds of the future, but closer to a continuum. The boundaries of the future often seems frightening and

strange to those unfamiliar with futures studies. On September 11 it appears a terrorism wild card event moved our globe to the boundary of the possible future.

Public and government dialogue indicate that the world will never be the same – the events of September 11 put the world on a new path; I encourage you to examine the assumptions you that underlie that suggestion. Are ALL of your assumptions changed after September 11, or only a few? Which assumptions changed? Which stayed the same? I suspect that many of you may find that the unchanged assumptions would suggest that there is a significant probability that the longer-range future may not be all that changed by recent events.

I envision two primary bounds to the future with respect to terrorism in the West. On the optimistic side, breaking the economic network that finances terrorist cells combined with moving carefully militarily and not inflaming greater extremist zeal could potentially neutralize the potency of the terror-

ist networks in several months. On the other extreme, inflaming militant Muslims through callous action could create a jihad mentality with the threat of ongoing and escalating terrorism.

As a futurist and system scientist I strive for the highest perspective available when analyzing problems. I am troubled that "our" definition of terrorism seems to "attacking US civilians and institutions." Our government has couched their dialogue in attacking terrorism in general, but the actions to date our strictly against Bin Laden. Anti-terrorist actions are available on other fronts that would give us much greater credibility to our actions against Bin Laden. Why are we harboring Fetullah Hoca in the United States? Why is Germany harboring Kaplans? Both are Turkish fundamentalists wanted for terrorism in Turkey. Are we ready to step into Israel and act against both Jewish and Palestinian groups involved in terrorism? Are we ready to go into Africa? And finally, why should we expect an Afghan or Iraqi citizen to per-

ceive us as anything other than terrorists when an errant missile demolishes his apartment building, killing his wife and children.

Reductionism definitions of terrorism and reductionism actions can only exacerbate the perceptual gap that feeds what we are defining as terrorism. The world has a big opportunity; the actions necessary to stop terrorism could do much to make the world a better place to live – in both the West and in developing countries. We need to elevate our dialogue above hostile acts and look at the bigger picture. This is a convoluted, complex issue. No singular fix is available. We need a cohesive, coherent, and balanced perspective; we need to be fair; and we, the global population, need to win – not just the United States.

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