



Societal Improvement

By Mark D. Sauter, author, *Bringing Meaning into Monday™*

“It is not the strongest or most intelligent species that survive; it is those most responsive to change.”

- Charles Darwin

The workplace is well positioned to influence positive societal change, due to necessity not choice.

In today's networked era, isolation is a prescription for obsolescence, personally and institutionally. Success, therefore, will be found in shared relationships rather than autonomy, inclusion versus exclusion, and by achieving balance between collective and individual interests. By welcoming relationships with people who share dissimilar, even opposing worldviews and beliefs.

When the market frontier was virtually untapped, rugged individualism prevailed; in many respects it was the most effective way to exploit economic possibilities. However, in today's interconnected era, sustainable success will be due to the ability to cooperate and co-create – sharing dreams, risks and resources.

In order to fully exploit future economic opportunities, institutions must establish cooperative networks in order to deal with the realities of today's high-risk, high-speed society. Successful companies, therefore, have to continually transform themselves – shifting provincial thinking toward more integrative and co-creative thinking. They have to reduce internal silos and turf wars, establish strategic and market focus, harmonize work practices and increase creativity and collaboration.

While changes such as these could be mandated, in order to make them engaging and sustainable, successful organizations emphasize the value they ultimately create for others – customers, coworkers, communities and shareholders. In this way, they position the need for change on societal good versus simply financial good. This will build commitment versus compliance by showing how individual efforts collectively serve the needs of others. This, in turn, creates a unifying sense of purpose, which allows people to reconcile differences, find common ground, and co-create the future.

Organizations are examples of “living” communities; therefore, energy positively produced at work will not stay there. It carries over into society, influencing social harmony and integration.

Ilya Prigogine, a Belgian scientist who received the 1977 Noble Prize for his *Theory of Dissipative Structures*, believed all living things maintain their structure by the continuous flow of energy through them.

Significant change or fluctuations, he concluded, either collapses the system or will reorganize it into a higher order of integration.

For purposes here, Mr. Prigogine's theories can shed light on today's organizational and societal challenges. Advances of communication technologies, coupled with today's increasingly diverse resource pool and interconnected economy, are forms of energy. When taken together, these sources of energy or *changes* are collapsing many of today's hierarchical practices and institutional systems. Therefore, in order to avoid further collapse, deeply ingrained beliefs, work practices and cultural ideals must be constructively and proactively reorganized. Successful institutions have to proactively temper local and/or individualistic tendencies, showing how self-interests, materially and emotively, will be better advanced collectively versus independently, cooperatively versus combatively. *Bringing Meaning into Monday™* offers a process that can help institutions achieve it.

Mark D. Sauter is the founder and president of GTP Associates, Inc. With over 25 years of business leadership experience, Mark's work, while with Dow Corning Corporation, was profiled in, *Value Based Marketing for Bottom-Line Success* – McGraw-Hill, 2003. In 2009, Mark released his book entitled *Bringing Meaning Into Monday™: A Sustainable Approach to Bottom Line Success*. Additional information is available at www.gtpassociates.com.