

YOU HAVE THE POWER



5 STRATEGIES TO DISCOVER AND USE YOUR POWER
TO BUILD THE WORLD YOU WANT

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I have a dream. Do you?

In January 2015 there were 7.2 billion people living on our planet. Of these, around 3.6 billion are women. Can you imagine what the world would look like if all the seven billion contributed with all their different strengths in collaborating to the well-being of the population; the creation of wealth; the practice of strong principles and values; education; the development of science and technology; the creation of beauty, the free participation in building their own and their family lives, that of their communities and of the Earth at large?

This is my dream.

I know it can seem naïve when expressed bluntly, within a context of permanent war and violence, displacement of masses of people all over the world, burglaries, slavery, and all sorts of crimes happening everywhere today. Nevertheless, it has been historically proved that this violence is decreasing and life condition of masses of people is improving.

That is why I keep this dream and nurture it.

Larry Page, one of the founders of Google, was invited as the keynote speaker in a newly founded educational institution. He stepped into the podium, greeted everyone and immediately after that, he asked the audience: "Are you working on something that can change the world?" There was silence and some people looked around, probably feeling some discomfort.

Have you ever asked yourself this question? If you have not, I invite you to stop reading and ask yourself what you spend almost your whole waking hours on. My bet is that few people find a dream they are passionate about and devote their lives to it, turning it into their service to the world and their business. And I am sure that within these few, most of them are men.

If you are a woman, you have probably been covertly conditioned to think small, and not to dream about how you can serve the world. You have been taught to believe that you have the extremely important role of caring for your immediate environment: get

married; have children to care for, nurture, and protect; be a loving wife and a good companion for your husband. That is it, and you are probably extremely busy. If the family needs more money or if you are not willing to throw away your profession, you will still have the same obligations as before, plus your work. No wonder you will probably feel stressed and overwhelmed, and you will ask yourself, more than once, “whoever made me do this?”

Almost half a century ago, my father asked me if I wanted to continue studying after high school. When I told him I would become an engineer he frowned, lifted his index finger and said “Listen to me, daughter, that’s a very bad idea. You will probably find a nice young man during your second year at the University, you will marry him, leave your studies, and another nice boy will have missed an opportunity to really become an engineer”. I became an engineer, I got married, had two children, worked all the time, and life became quite overwhelming while raising the kids.

You might think that things have changed after so many years. I am also a coach since 1991, and this is what I continue practicing now. Last year (2014), one of my female clients discovered that she just could not say “I want to be a leader”. It was like revealing something that was forbidden to her. If she showed that she is developing her career and is becoming a leader at her job, it would be seen as a demonstration of arrogance, and she could not allow that to herself.

Actually, women might have some more leadership possibilities today than forty years ago. Nevertheless, I think we need to speed things up. Our organizations cannot continue to be managed the way they were more than 100 years ago, when F. Taylor multiplied productivity by a factor of thousands, and M. Weber developed the concept of bureaucracy which allowed this new way of production to be organized and managed. Several factors do not allow the world to continue this form of production. As an example, look at the acceleration of change, which demands very fast decision-making, with information which cannot be centralized at the required speed. This means that every person in an organization must become a decision maker. What a change that one issue will be able to produce! Remember: the female mind can see things the male cannot observe, and vice – versa. All human groups require leadership of men and women!

I invite you to share my dream and align our efforts to change the world by:

1. Using the differences between men and women's biology to enrich diversity of viewpoints and aspirations, and heighten our collective creativity and capacity for innovation
2. Using the advances in neuroscience to "reprogram" (learn) women's and men's "unconscious mind", which is thousands of times more effective than the "conscious mind" in producing results, many of them unwanted
3. Seeing and hearing women's presence and voice just as much as men's in the public world and reciprocating in the private world
4. Multiplying women's presence in leadership positions in boards, higher management and government
5. Training and coaching women and men to overcome their fears and to learn new skills that will enable them to share more of their respective worlds

Human Nature

I have asked myself and others, many times, what it is that prevents us from building a cozier, friendlier more flourishing and promising world. We are incredibly equipped to do that: we have our particular tools for reasoning; our capacity to communicate among ourselves with our bodies and our human language; and we possess biological equipment that allows us to learn and to develop unimaginable inventions and innovations. If you think about it, you could consider yourself a miraculous being.

And yet, we do not always seem to be using this potential to actively build a better world. Although there are statistics that show a progressive improvement of a civilized way of life since our pre-history, the unrelenting political, racial, social, and economic conflicts and the massive domestic and personal violence at present makes me wonder: What is the matter?

I have received an answer to this question many times. I have been told that it is absolutely necessary to take into consideration the issue of *human nature*. Seemingly, human beings not only have the biological disposition for learning, but apparently we also have instinctive features like greed, violence, a lust for power, envy and resentment which are an essential part of our nature. My listening is that we are the way we are and we cannot change that. It's a fact of life. Then, another question bursts forth: Should we accept these traits as THE essential aspects of human nature, traits that are fixed and immutable, unable to change?

My answer is "no". Our potential of creativity, learning, sociability, collaboration, vision, knowledge and human language are also aspects of *human nature*. In fact, most of these are distinctly human traits, as opposed to instincts, which we share with the other animals. If we have this huge and creative potential it is our responsibility to use it fully in order to improve our world and our species. For this statement, I have been criticized as being naïve and a wishful thinker.

If you claim for acceptance of the *status quo* of our "unchanging nature", accepting only the comfort of that which is known, you run the risk of stagnation. If you are not willing to train your attention and discipline in order to wholly use your human potential, then you are not living within the paradigm of *human nature*, so rich in possibilities, but in the paradigm of *mammal nature*, to which we also belong. All mammals have bodies,

instincts, brains, sensations, and emotions, human beings included. And the Universe has provided us, humans, with the amazing tool of human language which allows us to learn, to create, and to learn from what we learn, constantly moving the boundary of what is possible.

Our human nature enables changes, growth, and development. Luckily, I am not alone in this way of understanding *human nature*, differentiating you and me from the rest of the animals. I invite you to open up to this way of looking at ourselves, and to invite many others to do so. One day we will live in a better environment and human nature will naturally be considered what it is: that which makes us human.

The Secret You Need to Know to Excel at Work

Have you ever thought about what is the one thing we do most of the time, every day of our lives? We have conversations, either with ourselves or with others.

Let's take a look at your workplace: Do you use the phone? Do you go to meetings? Do you delegate work? Do you negotiate with clients, allies, bosses and collaborators? Do you write and read e-mails and reports? Do you brainstorm with others? All these activities are different kinds of conversations in which you and others want to produce certain outcomes.

Conversations are not only descriptions of what people can see around them. Conversations produce outcomes in terms of business results and peoples' emotions. If you are negotiating a sale with a potential client and you listen to him saying, "Yes, we will go for it", you will probably feel an emotion of joy. After the sale you and others will hold many other conversations inside your company in order to produce and deliver what you sold. The final outcome of your sales conversation will be expressed in the money that your company will receive from the customer and his expression of satisfaction with the quality of the content and the opportunity of the delivery.

Keep in mind that one single successful sales conversation generates many other types of conversation. What if there were misunderstandings in one or more of those conversations? In other words, what if there were bad conversations held and not everyone understood the same in terms of what had to be done, who was responsible for doing what, and when? Most probably this miscommunication will have a negative effect on production and delivery time, and also on useless tracking time, complaints and mutual accusations. Moreover, the company's reputation might be damaged and the overall climate might be harmed.

Having the right conversation with the right people at the right time is a key element of productivity and time management. Just as you need to learn the physical principles and the dynamics of electricity in order to work as an electric engineer, you need to learn how to converse in order to be effective and efficient, whatever the position you hold in the organization.

In a conversation there is always someone who speaks and someone who listens. Many people consider that speaking is more important than listening. Nevertheless, here comes the secret: the most important thing we do in a conversation is listening and not speaking. Actually, what do we speak for? We speak in order to be listened to. We would not speak if we did not expect someone to listen.

Listening validates speaking. That is why it has become one of the key skills of leadership. A leader who is a keen listener will be able to anticipate breakdowns, to sense emotions, to enhance talents and to help align the purposes of the company with the expectations of its employees, optimizing the use of time and increasing its productivity, while creating an environment of well-being in the workplace.

A very important difference between listening and speaking is that listening happens. You do not decide to do it. Nevertheless there are ways in which you can become a good and active listener:

1. Do not take for granted that the person to whom you are speaking will effectively listen to what you are saying. What is said will be heard by her ears, but the listening includes perceptions and interpretations which can be different between the speaker and the listener
2. When you give an instruction always check what the person listened to
3. Pay full attention while listening
4. When what you listen is not clear for you, ask until there is no doubt for you, especially if you are going to make a promise regarding what you listened

In contrast to listening, you decide what you will say. There are six different speech actions, involving different responsibilities for each of them.

By now you have probably assessed that conversations matter. There is much to learn in order to have good conversations. SBCoaching offers you the possibility of learning to converse with all your stakeholders, either by one on one coaching or through coaching the members of your team. Visit www.sallybcoach.com and:

1. Ask for an Exploratory Session if you want to improve your life and leadership position in your organization or if you want to become or are in the process of becoming an entrepreneur. This session aims at:

- a) Discovering your conversational skills and detect areas of improvement
 - b) Creating a crystal clear vision of your leadership strengths and challenges, or of the type of business you want, the income level you desire, and what it will take to make it happen – FAST
 - c) Uncovering hidden challenges that may be sabotaging your decision to become the owner of your own life
 - d) Leaving this session renewed, re-energized and inspired to start right away designing a plan to reach what you desire
2. Ask for group coaching to create your best team possible
 3. Join my group-coaching program “The Intentional Leader”, which will turn you into a leader with gender sensitivity and will allow you to double your productivity and triple your well-being at work and at home
 4. Ask for one-on one coaching

Eternal Recurrence

The last days of the year are strange days. We are full of special obligations and hectic working, family, social and personal activity. And yet, the world keeps moving as usual, with the same intensity as always.

Nevertheless, so many of us feel an urge to stop. What for? To think about what has happened to us and what we have accomplished during the year that is leaving us. To imagine the coming year, give it meaning and purpose, and dream with improvements and new goals.

There is a lot going on in our lives during these last days of the year. Our emotions come and go. We feel more sensitive. Laughter and tears burst forth at any time, without warning, as if they had a life of their own.

Suddenly, I find myself reviewing my whole life and not just what happened this year. I realize that sometimes facts get confused in my mind and I cannot be sure that things happened when and how I remember them. Nevertheless, the feeling is there, stubborn, ageless. It pops up suddenly, at no one's call. Sometimes, I feel that I need to invent a fact in order to justify my emotion. But no, my emotion is not a consequence of choice. I do not need to explain or justify it. It just is.

So, what is the point in turning towards the facts of our life? Can we do something about them? What for?

This question strongly brings forth Nietzsche's expression, *amor fati*. This philosopher invited us to love the facts of our life. What happened just happened and nothing can change that. Not even the absence of memory. If we accept the facts, even when we can no longer distinguish precisely what exactly they were, and knowing that we can do nothing to change them, we will be able to open up to our feelings, especially to those that sting, and look at them from a different place.

Accepting the facts of our life opens up the possibility of forgiveness. We can forgive ourselves or those who, according to our feelings, might have hurt us. We can choose to accept and then to forgive. We can design actions for that. This means that it is up to us

to improve our life. We will be rewarded with liberation from suffering and, at the same time, a whole new world of possibilities will arise.

Now I feel better and I am rushing to start my 2012 to-do list with a reflection on the facts of my life, their acceptance and forgiving. My first task will be forgiving myself.

The Learning Organization

1994

“The more we learn, the more we understand our ignorance”

There is a reason or purpose for the birth of every organization. State institutions are created to satisfy citizens' interests. Companies are born to provide for an existing demand for products or services and to generate wealth. When an organization approaches excellence, it will also approach the fulfillment of its purpose.

What does an excellent organization do?

An excellent organization responds to the expectations of all its stakeholders: it understands and complies with the demands of all those whom it serves. Sometimes, they jointly invent new market needs. These, in turn, generate demand for innovation in processes and products. An organization of excellence also delivers high quality services. For this it must rely on competent, creative and enthusiastic collaborators.

An excellent organization realizes the importance of people, moods and conversations. An organization will exist only if one or more enthusiastic people declare its foundation, consistent with a vision and a general purpose. This will lead to many conversations with people who will be attracted to participate as partners, collaborators, providers, users or consultants.

The importance of this declaration is particularly critical in public service organizations. The demands and needs that they address are so wide in scope that it becomes mandatory to declare missions and set goals precisely and carefully of the viability of each organization. Peter Drucker, considered father of modern Administration has said that it is better to state something like: *“we will soothe famine”* rather than *“we shall eradicate hunger”*. Drucker tells us that if it is not possible to attain a goal, most probably it was not well formulated and needs to be changed.

An excellent organization is oriented towards the future by establishing a connection between the past, present and future. The links in this time chain are provided by a particular phenomenon: **Change**. Change is experienced in many areas of our lives and also in organizations.

In remote times, Heraclitus had already observed that everything flows, that the world changes continuously, that change is a permanent phenomenon. In spite of this, Humanity was able to live during centuries without being affected by these statements because the low speed of flow made it possible to predict, plan and control change. For

example, a future market could be predicted on the grounds of extrapolating present conditions.

This is no longer the case. Speed of change has grown at such a rate that today it is no longer possible to predict its direction and magnitude. Adults in 1994 are starting to experience a change in the way we observe organizations, which had not varied during more than a century. Adults of the future, of the near future, will observe the permanence of change as a natural phenomenon. **Invention** will take the place of extrapolation and will be the key for the survival and development of organizations.

Consequently, we can no longer look towards the past and reproduce solutions. If we are certain about one thing it is that *“the answers of the past will not work in the future”*. Furthermore, many of today’s problems derive precisely from yesterday’s solutions. For example, the great number of unemployed professionals in various parts of the world could be related to a social policy of massive entrance to University studies intended to promote equal opportunities to all citizens.

What should we look at the past for?

Every moment of our existence as people or organizations can be seen as conditioned by beliefs and habits rooted in our environment and learning derived from our culture, society, family and personal or organizational history. What we do today is based on interpretations and traditions that we inherited from the past. Whatever we will be able to do in the future is highly dependent on what we do today.

“Our opportunities in the future depend upon decisions we make today”.

This is how past, present and future are joined together. This does not mean that we should persist in all our practices in the course of time. On the contrary, reviewing the past might give us indications of what is needed to improve it. It will let us know which competencies we require, and have not yet acquired, in order to address the future that is to come.

Acceleration of change does not allow us to design stable formal practices. We can no longer design massive and standard procedures for the whole organization. Doing so would be the expression of knowing what is necessary to know and to do in the organization today and tomorrow. And this is not the case. We have already said that the future will be collective invention. We do not know now what it is that we will need to know or to do in the future.

The future is every day closer to the present, so our concern for tomorrow starts today.

Tomorrow is invention. If we become attached to standard procedures, we run the risk of inhibiting individual creativity, which is essential for constant innovation. We witnessed the following experience this year: A company managed to be successful in the learning of English of its collaborators for the first time. The teacher did not have a fixed schedule or a fixed set of contents for her lessons, which were given on a one to one basis. She was a virtuous performer as a teacher, although if asked, she might not have been able to give a clear explanation concerning her methodology. The pupils themselves acclaimed her as a spectacular teacher who helped to provide incredible results. They all agreed that the contents dealt with particular interests of each pupil. With a formal, standard procedure, it is doubtful that these results could have been reached.

Tomorrow is uncertain. We do not know if our present skills are suitable to cope with it. Our present knowledge and experience might be necessary, but *will they be enough?*

This is a question without an answer. We can only say, facing uncertainty, that what it is that rapid change will demand from us,

We do not know...

This statement could open surprising possibilities in the organization. Nevertheless, our tradition and our habits push us towards making and demanding from others the opposite: We are not allowed to show our doubts or confusion and we are compelled to demand certainty from our collaborators. *We must all know.*

What is our understanding of knowing?

Knowing is different from having information. Technology takes care of the latter. On the other hand, we can say that a person or an organization **knows** when she or it is capable of performing effective action in a certain field, repeatedly and autonomously by assessment of those who are affected by those actions and according to certain shared standards.

Naturally, it is necessary for each member of an organization to know all what is necessary to fulfill her daily obligations. The training programs in specific skills are meant to keep collaborators updated and assure the required skills. Training allows members of the organization to **learn**, that is, to acquire knowledge and skills that will allow them to perform effectively in their fields of competence.

But in the organization of today and tomorrow, this is not enough.

Acceleration of change generates obsolescence.

Obsolescence permeates innumerable areas in the organization, such as: our knowledge; daily routines; working styles; organizational structures; strategies; available technology; the way we relate to our peers, bosses and collaborators, etc.

If we accept that change is a continuous process, then we must also accept that **learning** in the organization must also be a continuous process. It is not enough to create learning in specific knowledge and skills. Sooner or later they will become obsolete. It is also necessary, for each member of the organization, to learn to detect new areas of learning for effective action and to search for her own training paths.

It is no longer enough to determine **what** to learn. It is necessary to learn **how** to learn.

The organization must learn how to learn.

Without diminishing the importance of continuous learning of specific skills, organizations are now facing the need to acquire capabilities that go beyond those skills. When we acknowledge that each person in an organization has a world of her own, emotions included; that people interact among organization members and others around it, we can understand the need to learn skills that deal with people and their interactions.

The organization will learn how to learn by acknowledging those aspects which it does not know, making questions, learning how to identify moods and how to communicate effectively. It will recognize the need and will demand responsibility for the personal development of each member and that of the organization as a whole, allowing the unfolding of the creative potential of each and every individual that belongs to it.

This means that a new observer of the organization will take form, and it will develop through a process of continuous learning. Learning processes are not necessarily spontaneous and, less so, instantaneous. They require a sustained personal and collective effort, targeting the future of the organization and the interests it serves.

Ultimately, there will be two different types of permanent learning processes: the organization requires learning of specific skills and, at the same time, it also requires learning how to learn as people and as an organization. The organization that learns shall become an example worthy of imitation in the times that are coming soon.

Sally Bendersky has transformed hundreds of managers and SME owners, including women, into successful leaders who create high-performance teams through sharing responsibilities and developing trust. She accompanies them in uncovering their dream and passion, helping them to generate vision and develop mindset. She also contributes in developing conversational skills, and in planning and executing the necessary actions that will create excellence teams. Sally has a natural tendency for systems thinking besides her training as a Systems Analyst, Chemical Engineer and Executive Coach. She has been on both sides of the fence, as a coach and also a leader in higher education, diplomacy and technological innovation, allowing her to receive national and international awards in innovation and professional performance. Sally is a co-author of the #1 International bestseller "Pebbles in the Pond", wave four, and the author of the forthcoming book, "The Novel Entrepreneur: A Heart-Centered Path for Fulfillment". Visit www.SallyBCoach.com and join her in the effort to build strong leadership, high-performing teams, and multiply the presence of women in top decision-making positions