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Dear Associate,

I hope this letter finds you happy and healthy, busy, and thinking about hiring us. I like to keep in touch with you, because if you have received this, we like working with you and hope the feeling is mutual.

This newsletter is specially designed to be read on an airplane during takeoff and landing when you must turn off your electronic devices. So print it, if you have not received a hard copy, and pack it away, or read it now and think about it then. Let us know if you prefer a hard copy.

The word "organic" wins the HFS award for Most Overused Word, and is in the top ten for Most Inappropriately Used Word of this decade.

In this issue of FYI, I am not calling for us to grow organic organizations to boost those ratings or because the idea sounds positively quirky, but because it amazes me to see how nature - specifically atoms - gives us a terrific model for working together successfully.

I adore the concept of scale, how an enormous building can be depicted on a 36- by 42-inch piece of paper. Similarly, Meg Wheatley's book, reviewed here, shows how a design team behaves like atoms.

To me, knowledge is a form of light, which makes Wheatley's book as bright as an August day at the beach. For this issue of FYI, I took a 200+ page book and distilled it into this very short article with the hope that the information will help us to see our work together as part of a great universal design for life. Get out the sunglasses and read on!

Yours with more food for thought,

Lynn

What Nature Knows

The Organic Organization

*A Synopsis and Excerpts from
Leadership and the New Science,
Margaret J. Wheatley, 2006 Third Edition*

Physics probably contributes most to our quest for all things natural. The shift from the industrial age to the organic age echoes the shift from Newton's physics to quantum physics. Our emphasis on nature is not another style or trend. It is transformational and significant. The sooner we appropriate lessons from nature, the sooner we will become consistently happy, peaceful, and most successful. Awareness matters.

Newtonian and Quantum World Views

In the 17th century, Sir Isaac Newton gave us the machine imagery that led to the belief that studying parts is the key to understanding the whole. The assumption is that the more we know about the workings of each piece, the more we will learn about the whole.

As we study atomic particles, we see flaws in Newton's world view. Quantum physicists observe whole systems that comprise a myriad of relationships within networks. They perceive a landscape of connections that cannot be reduced to simple cause and effect or explained by studying parts as isolated contributors.

Relationship Is Key

In the quantum world, relationship is the key determinant of everything. Subatomic particles come into form and are observed only as they are in relationship to something else. They do not exist as independent things.

Fields of Influence

In the quantum world, there is no lonely void. Instead, space between matter comprises fields, invisible, nonmaterial (spiritual?) influences that form the basic substance of the universe.

Organizational vision and team values act like fields. They are unseen but real forces that influence people's behavior.

Life: An Open System

Autopoiesis (Greek for self-making) is life's fundamental process for creating and renewing itself, for growth and change (e.g., the body's ability to heal itself.) A living system is a network of processes in which every process contributes to all other processes. (Over)

F.Y.I.

Consultants to the Best in Foodservice Planning and Engineering
Winter 2012



**SNOWING
OPPORTUNITIES**

EDUCATION

BeyerBlinderBelle:
MIT Bldg E-52
Harvard Business:
Executive Education
SOM:
NYSCA-PS315Q
William Rawn:
Harvard -Tata Hall

HEALTHCARE

HDR:
Fort Bliss Hospital

JUSTICE

PSI Heery Walsh:
SCI Phoenix

WORKPLACE

FXFowle/Maki:
United Nations
KCCT:
OBO Mbabane
Keiran Timberlake:
OBO London
URS:
U.S. Capitol House/
Senate Kitchens
Rehab
Swanke Hayden:
OBO Paramaribo
Yost Grube Hall:
OBO Cotonou
Whitman Requardt:
Government

RECREATION

*Freelon/Adjaye/Bond/
SmithGroup:*
National Museum of
African American
History and Culture

**ROOM FOR
YOU!**



The entire network is engaged in myriad relationships that help shape its identity. Although we humans pay a great deal of attention to the differences that seem to divide us, in fact we thrive when we learn to participate in a web of relationships with a common purpose or vision. Our organizations can become living systems that possess the same capacity to adapt and grow that is common to all life.

It is foolish to treat one another as machines, believing that the only way we can motivate others is by pushing and prodding them into action, overcoming their inertia by sheer force. The Second Law of Thermodynamics (entropy) applies only to isolated or closed systems that tend to wear down. Everything alive is in an open system that engages with its environment and continues to evolve.

The Power of Expectations

Quantum matter develops a relationship with the observer and changes to meet his expectations. If a scientist structures an experiment to study wave properties, matter behaves as a wave; same with particles. The act of observation causes the potentiality of either the wave or particle to collapse into one or the other aspect. One potential becomes realized while the other disappears. Before the observer acts, there is an endless profusion of possibilities, but once the observer chooses what to perceive, the effect of the perception is immediate and dramatic.

Could it be that when we criticize and complain, we effect the situation we expect? The negative act destroys a better potential. Therefore let's stop arguing about who's right and who's wrong, and instead focus our concerns on issues of effectiveness. Every act of measurement loses more than it gains. How can we remain open to the information we lost when we went looking for the information we got?

This is not to suggest that organizations exist in a totally reactive state. There is an essential role for organizational intent and identity. We need to be clear about who we are and what we are trying to accomplish (who we intend to become) to be effective co-creators with our environment. We inhabit a world that co-evolves as we interact with it.

Processes undergo continual transformation of emergence, decay, and re-form. This observation changes our view of roles and org charts. Leadership is a

behavior, not a role. We need leaders, but this need can be satisfied by many different people, depending on the context.

The Power of Information

The role of information is revealed in the word itself: *in-formation*. Life uses information to organize matter into form. For a system to remain alive, information must be continually generated. If there is nothing new, or if the information merely confirms what already is, the result will be death. Closed systems wind down and decay as victims of the Second Law of Thermodynamics. We need, therefore, to develop new approaches to information: not management but encouragement; not control but genesis. As long as communication occurs in a shared context, fertility abounds.



Live Effectively in a Quantum World

The era of the strong individual is replaced by the era of the team player.

- Learn how to facilitate process.
- Learn how to foster relationships.
- Become better at listening.
- Become better at conversing.
- Welcome and encourage new information and increased participation.
- Focus on qualities rather than quantities.
- Pay more attention to patterns, direction, feel, and the internal rhythm of what's happening.
- Stop drawing lines of opposition and positioning things as polarities.
- Spend the time formerly used on elaborate plans, time lines, and analysis to create the organizational conditions for people to set clear intent and to agree on how they will work together.
- Practice becoming better observers, learners, and colleagues who co-create their environment.

- Design your environment to enhance communication and a sense of well-being.

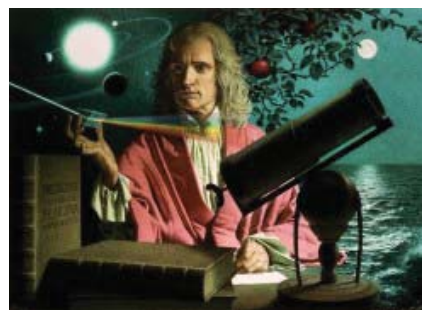
Consistency

Messages can be either congruent or discordant. We can't see the field, but we can see its effects. People pick up messages about what is truly important and behave in response to that. Space is not empty. It's either filled with harmonious voices, strong and potent, or it's filled with conflict and dissonance that drives us away, and we don't want to be there.

Have you ever been in a place where there was an obviously good feeling? The leader in that place, in word and deed, filled the space with clear and consistent messages about how customers were to be served, about how people were to treat each other. The field was strong in its congruence; it influenced behavior only in one direction. Because of the power of this field, the successful outcome was assured.

Lynn's Conclusion

We creep slowly out of the Industrial Age and peek to the left and right for signs of trodden paths. How often we run back into the dark comforts of the old cause-and-effect, isolated mechanical imagery to find Newton, who awaits our return, but with a sheepish grin that silently admits his error. His longing eyes urge us to go back into the natural world with its vast array of relationships and potential. Let's go forth together. ☺



Above: Sir Isaac Newton. Below: The Atom.