



## The Leader to Leader Series

*"There is absolutely no inevitability as long as there is a willingness to contemplate what is happening"*

(Marshall McLuhan)

## Opening Session – Leading in these times

This opening session will be a chance to connect as a broader leadership community, to identify core themes characterising our leadership at present and to set in motion a process of ongoing 'leader to leader' exchanges through the Autumn.

### Part 1. 0915-1045 - Sensing into Change

Having briefly shared some opening themes and questions we will break into small group 'diagnostic' discussions. This will not be a regurgitating of some of the superficial and speculative narratives that we are all too familiar with by now, but a deeper consideration of what are the real, powerful forces at play in this. Each of us, by virtue of where we sit in the system, will have within us a deep, almost instinctual awareness of what is really going on around us. The challenge is that so often our existing narratives and patterns of sense making cause us to shut down this awareness, 'explain it away' or distort it into existing constructs and channels. But new times call for new ways of thinking and by definition we do not know what these are – we have to sit in the discomfort of not knowing and let these emerge.



This is about curiosity and openness – an opportunity to enter the worlds of different leaders from the rich variety of sectors and contexts that makes up the Society and to hear about the practical and deeper challenges and opportunities that life under the pandemic has posed for their systems – and their role as leaders within these:

- How are we now looking differently at our systems
- Where/how are we innovating radically in the face of this?
- What do we sense/know will never be the same again
- How are we sensing into the long term implications of short term decisions
- What new aspects of culture and behaviour are being unlocked by this – for better or worse
- what are we questioning that before was unquestionable
- What deep changes in the structures of our markets, relationships and activities are we (a) sensing happening (b) taking an active lead to encourage.

The intention is not to try to solve all these difficult questions!! It is however to surface them, to think the unthinkable, and then to discern which of these it will actually be fruitful to explore further – whether in our own systems with our own people or in the ongoing work of the Society.

There will also be a collective element to this. For each of the small group conversations we will ask for a volunteer co-ordinator. This person will gather the core common themes and main insights from the discussions (protecting strict confidentiality).

Following the conference we will host another zoom gathering for the co-ordinators to share the wisdom and insights from the conversations they were involved in. On the basis of this we will discern key questions and explorations that we will take into the autumn programme (and beyond). At this stage of course we have no idea how radical these will be, but it will allow us to think carefully about the conversations and activities we engage in as a Society going forwards into 2021.

## **Part 2. 1115-1300 – Getting to the heart of the matter**

Having laid out the territory in the opening session, we will then explore what it really takes to lead within it. This is about wisdom and personal transformation, using 'self as instrument' to sense into what is happening below the surface of events. This is what the Society is all about – stepping into tough questions, accessing a wisdom freshly extracted from challenging experience for which there are no ready answers.



The key of course is creating a special space in which this is possible. We will begin therefore by sharing some practices for creating this space, even in an online setting. These practices, which are all about inhabiting and sustaining a resource-full state, are something we will be making a cornerstone of our approach to facilitation in the Society. Although this will inevitably be only a start point in a process that will continue in more depth in the months ahead, these practices will help you:

- Develop the core skill of 'self-remembering'. Staying more present to yourself, noticing how you are responding to events as a leader, and expanding your range and freedom of action.
- Further develop your capacity to listen deeply to others and draw out their wisdom and insights
- Get the absolute most from the conversations you have as you participate in these Leader to leader exchanges
- Create the space for similar exchanges in the other arenas of your life



## Follow-on Series - Leader to Leader Exchanges

We are living through one of the largest social science experiments in recent memory and this is a chance to be in substantive conversation together as a group of highly respected peers as the story unfolds. These leader to leader exchanges will follow a similar format as the 'Heart of the matter' conversation in the opening session above. It will be a forum in which we openly share and honestly examine our own responses as leaders.



The opening for the conversation will be a profound reflection on the question 'how am I doing?' ... 'no, how am I really doing?' ... By answering this deeply and honestly, and hearing ourselves answering it, in the company of fellow

leaders with no other agenda than nurturing wisdom, we will access profound insights and breakthroughs. What this taps directly into is the 'emergent' knowing that is so crucial in times of transition – the knowing we didn't know we knew until we found ourselves expressing it. The knowing we often wouldn't trust without the affirming, sifting presence of respected peers on similar journeys. This kind of knowing reveals itself in the subtlety of our experience. We have to be alert and available to it to be able to access it. This programme will help strengthen your capacity to access this on an ongoing basis.

Each session will run for two hours, beginning with a session as a whole group to bring us into the space, highlight the core themes that are emerging as we are progressing and to stimulate thinking/enquiry on the themes that are relevant for each of us. After this we will work in small groups to get into depth around our own questions. Key insights will then be captured and consolidated at the end to inform the ongoing enquiry into 'leading in these times'.

## Benefits

Our expectation is that by participating in this programme you will:

- Enjoy a safe, stimulating environment in which to express some of your deepest, perhaps unspoken, thoughts, ideas and responses to what you are seeing around you right now
- See and sense into the bigger story that is unfolding around us by seeing the world through each others' eyes.... and be able therefore to see more clearly your own part
- Allow yourself to be stimulated, and challenged, by the experience, wisdom and struggles of fellow leaders facing similar issues in very different contexts
- Share ideas and insights for how to nurture and mobilise your teams in these times
- Test and grow your own confidence in your own deeper instincts and judgement
- Return to your own organisations to start some new or different conversation