



Blue Ocean Shoals

Understanding chaos and emotion is critical and requires system-oriented, non-reductive thinking.

“We have minds that are equipped for certainty, linearity and short-term decisions, that must instead make long-term decisions in a non-linear, probabilistic world.”

— Paul Gibbons, *The Science of Successful Organizational Change: How Leaders Set Strategy, Change Behavior, and Create an Agile Culture.*

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Counselling Versus Coaching

I am combining personal therapy and business coaching for the obvious reason that the same personal insights are critical for both: insights into oneself, others, and the process of communicating. However, when people don't see all sides of the message, I believe, they'll continue to struggle in both their personal and business endeavors.

People are predisposed to see the difference between counselling and business clients and believe counselling is for the fallen and coaching for those still in the race. The goals are different but, at the psychological level, the problems are the same. Both groups are playing the same game; they're in the same race. You can hear the truth of this in my interview with the great wrestling coach Lou Giani, for whom a championship and

personal strength mean the same thing.

The authors I read reflect this dichotomy between counselling and coaching, with counsellors offering happiness and coaches offering profits. The best of them veer toward the same goal of fortifying one's soul after they've made their point.

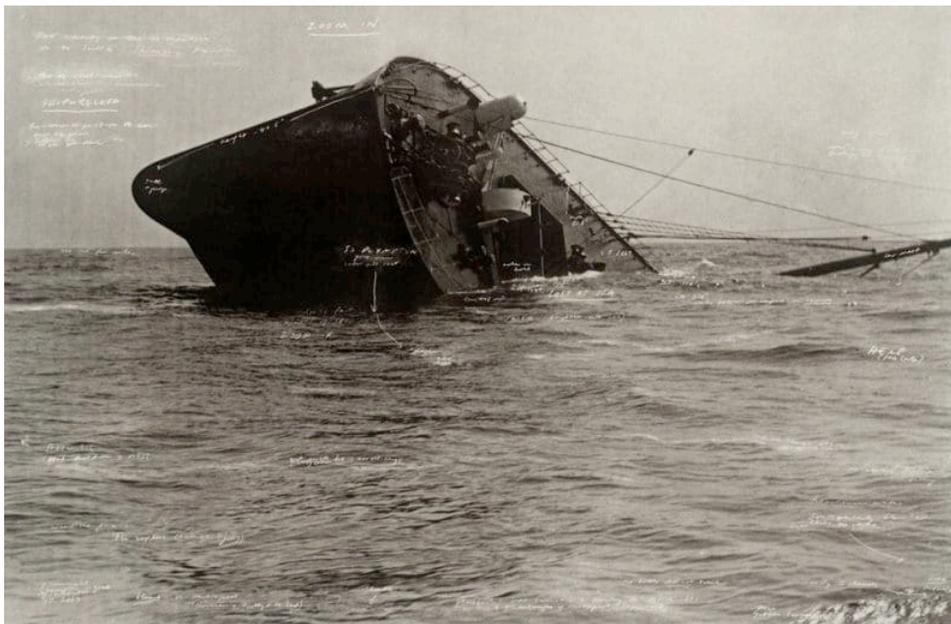
On the subject of management, consider Malcolm Gladwell (*Outliers, Blink, The Tipping Point*) and Seth Godin (*Tribes, Linchpin, The Dip*). On the personal growth side, consider Michael Singer (*The Untethered Soul, The Surrender Experiment*) and Keith Ablow (*Living the Truth*). Other names may more recognizable—like Tony Robbins and Eckart Tolle—but these authors help me make my point.

Business development focuses on networks and relationships. From the titles of Gladwell and Godin's books alone, as I've listed above, you can see the main issues are institutional structure, innovation, and growth. All features of structures composed of many people.

Those counselling personal development address values, perspective, and identity. That is, how you see yourself, and the building of one's personality. Singer explores the transition away from corporate toward spiritual values, but he's not anti-corporate. Ablow argues for truth, emotion, and understanding from an ethical perspective. His advocacy might seem more theological than therapeutic, but they are the same.

Godin and Gladwell build analytic solutions, where Singer and Ablow appeal to emotions. They're all offering pragmatic guidance, but somewhat different notions of it. The differences are more in the audience than the authors, and you can tell that their audiences are different because they use a different language and state different goals for each.

Gay Hendriks is the only author I know who writes for both audiences. His books written for personal health (*Conscious Loving, Learning to Love Yourself*) are strikingly different from those written for the business sector (*The Big Leap, The Corporate Mystic*). Yet, he offers similar lessons to both.



Blue Ocean Strategy

There's nothing wrong with these works, though I feel something's missing. To bring what's missing into focus, consider a book called *Blue Ocean Strategy, How to Create Uncontested Market Space and Make the Competition Irrelevant*, by the academics Renée Mauborgne and W. Chan Kim. The gist of this book is

that businesses exist in either of two oceans, the Red Ocean of competition, or the Blue Ocean of unchallenged market dominance. The book is an examination of what makes Blue Ocean inhabitants different, and how Red Ocean sailors can get there.

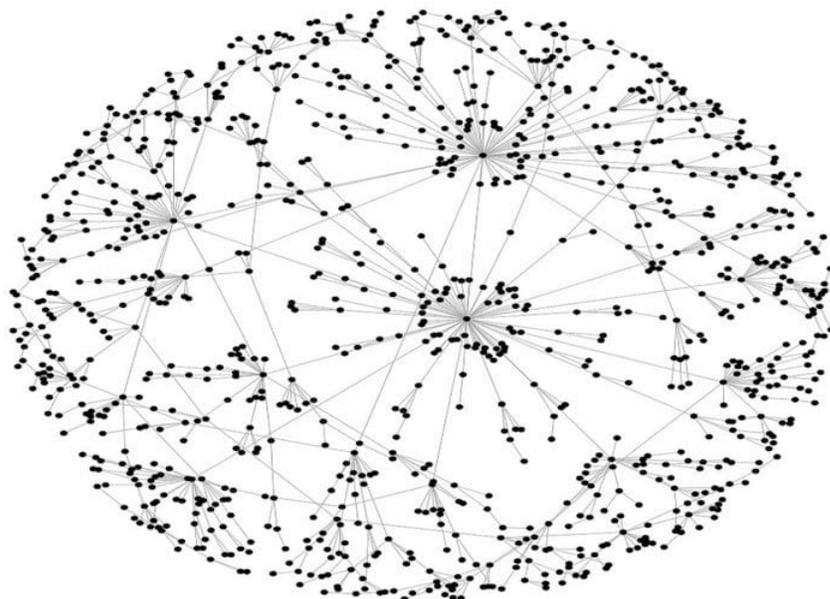
The book identifies simultaneous innovation in products, services, and value as the dominant features of market-dominating companies. Companies that birth a market-changing vision; seeing a vast untapped opportunity and satisfying it so fully that the barrier to competition is huge. If this sounds somewhat fantastic, it is!

Blue Ocean Strategy is a world-wide best-seller and a Christmas-list of all the things a company should be. It paints a photo-shopped picture of the perfect corporate body lusted after by struggling executives. It's not the picture that's wrong—though it's almost unachievable—it's the implication that you can have just by following a menu-driven path of:

- Foreseeing future needs.
- Moving outside the bounds of existing markets and products.
- Perfecting your market and corporate growth strategies.
- Assembling the best vendors, employees, and clients and satisfying them.
- Achieving and sustaining market domination.

Achieving all of these most likely would lead to unassailable material success. Achieving even one of them would be a leap forward. The problem is not in the reasoning, it's in thinking, and, if you're not thinking right, no amount of reasoning will make up for it.

The problem I see with this is that it fails to recognize that attaining these goals requires a different kind of thinking. Achieving these goals requires non-linear, holistic style of thinking based on networks, emotion, and resonance.



Scale-free network

Chaos, Emotion, and System Thinking

All the coaching books I read is reliance on reductive logic. They don't approach the issues of chaos, emotion, or systems thinking. You might think all of these are anathema to success, and that is exactly the problem, because the opposite is true. Understanding chaos and emotion is not contrary to an integrated

strategy, it's critical, and it requires system-oriented, non-reductive thinking.

I will explore each of these in subsequent pieces. The difficulty arises because we always start from the logical and, as the joke goes, "you can't get there from here." In this case, it's no joke: logic offers no path to understanding chaos, emotion, or non-reductive thinking.

These topics have one important thing in common: they can't be approached from a single perspective. That is their nature. That's why they're avoided or, if not entirely avoided, then poorly addressed. Each is an ocean, and for each, I'll fashion a boat of different thinking.

In the case of chaos, I'll discuss network thinking. This doesn't dispense with chaos but advances a non-deductive way of thinking about it. Rather than looking for answers, we're looking for structures, aspects of relationships between people. I call this **Blue Ocean Networking**.

Emotion remains a largely unexplored frontier. Daniel Goleman is credited with popularizing the topic with his 1995 book *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*. He was just reporting on what was a growing movement to explore the psychology of emotion, driven by advances in neuroscience and common sense.

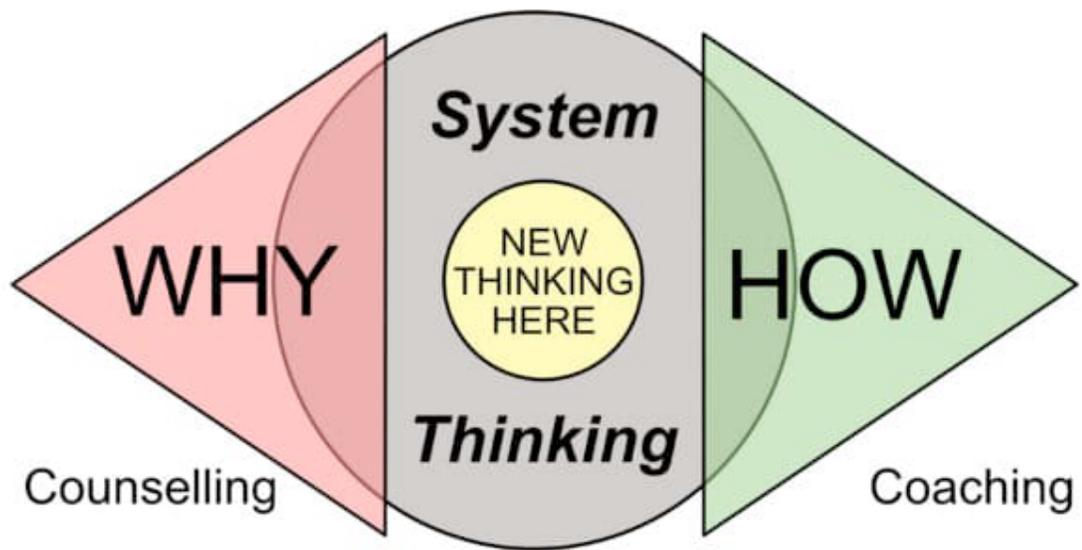
Emotion cannot be logically resolved. You can use reason and logic to knock pieces off it, but putting them together into a living form requires a different mind. Emotion is a holistic evaluation of many issues in the context of many needs. We often deride emotion as providing a weak decision foundation yet, reason is no match for the endurance and resilience of emotional thinking. I call this **Blue Ocean Emotion**.

I approach non-reductive, systems thinking using feedback and resonance. Thinking in terms of frequency can unlock new ways of understanding. Frequencies are the foundation of holism. The different skills of non-reductive, systems thinking are aspects of a single approach that's integrated into the single term "resonance." I call this **Blue Ocean Resonance**.

How To Think

I want to get away from the logic that predominates the prescriptions of counselling and business coaching. To me, these are instructions to fish on how to fly. It's not thinking differently, different thinking, that brings these pieces together.

For those of us who don't yet understand these new ways of thinking, think about them as the merging of different existing awarenesses to create a new way of thinking. This new awareness has many of the laudable features when considered separately: commitment, endurance, patience, insight, appreciation, flexibility, and so forth. However, from a holistic point of view, none of these are separate and when you put them all together you get something larger than the sum of the parts. You get a new awareness.



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