

## Chapter 14: Leader Personal Reflection, Vision Creation and Growth Pathway Development

### From: The Transformative Leader's Roadmap to Facilitating School Excellence and Progress Up the Growth Pathway

By John Shindler

Our job performance and our ability to lead will be a direct reflection of who we are and how we think. And it is highly likely that the quality and trajectory of our school's growth and improvement process will mirror our own ongoing personal growth process. We lead who we R. And our R's will be continually projected onto our school and its day to day activities. This realization may seem intimidating, but is really a golden opportunity to stretch and grow as a person and gain a deeper insight into what it means to be a leader as we activate more of our personal potential.

"Problems cannot be solved at the same level of awareness that created them." - Albert Einstein

If our school or organization is going to improve, it will be primarily a result of more evolved and improved R's. The same thing will be true for any of us as individuals. But because of the critical importance and consequential nature of our work, it will be especially important for those in the role of leader to have an intimate understanding of the nature of the growth and change process.

In this chapter we will provide an opportunity for you to reflect on your own process of development as a leader and a person. We begin by outlining a step by step process for discovering your personal vision. Next we examine the elements of personal vision and self-reflection within each of the two axes of the growth roadmap developed earlier in the book. First we look at the horizontal axis related to ranging between empowerment and a psychology of success and fear and a psychology of failure. Second, we examine the vertical axis related to the level of function and quality of intentionality with which one operates.

#### What is a Transformative mindset?

A transformative mindset is simply an intention to do away with the self-limiting R's that we are using currently and then opening ourselves to discovering more of the potential within us, our colleagues and the students at our school, and then finding and applying the X's that are most likely to make that happen.

#### Your Personal Vision for Your Life and Work

As we begin the process of creating a working personal vision it is useful to recall our earlier examination as it related to the school-wide vision creation process. When we look at either individuals or institutions that we could characterize as vision-driven, we see that their operating process move from R->X->O - references to actions to outcomes. Who they are and what they value drive their practice. On a personal level we could interchange R->X->O with the words Be-Do-Have. If we listen closely to many personal and institutional narratives we hear the reverse, that is – since we are/my life is/my situation is so..., then I have no choice but to do, react, cope in the ways I do, so..., then I/we can be OK/successful. However when we examine the ultimate results of a O->X->R or Have-Do-Be mode of operation we find that it is most often a formula for mediocrity and low quality.

The operating assumption being made here is that no matter how widely unique and varied each of us is and how each personality, set of fingerprints, and life's mission is distinctive to each of us, our true calling will include being excellent and sharing our gifts with others. The process of moving up the pathway to excellence is inherently defined by an R->X->O orientation in which we start with cultivating high quality values and vision. Figure 14.1 offers a set of five universally limiting R's/reference and five universally elevating R's for your consideration.

**Figure 14.1: Five limiting R/references and the Five Elevating R/references Regarding our Personal Growth and Success.**

Five Limiters of our Growth and Success	Five Elevators of our Growth and Success
<p><b>#1 – Seeing yourself as a Victim.</b> A victim mindset is the antithesis of a leader mindset. When we start hearing ourselves say, “why aren’t things (the way they are supposed to be)” or “why do I always have such bad luck with. . .” we need to stop and hear the victim ego running the show. Recognize that in truth the only thing against you is your perception.</p>	<p><b>#1 – Giving yourself permission to be excellent.</b> How many excuses do you have running in your head for why you can’t be great? Why not lose all those agreements with mediocrity and accept that it is Ok to be excellent. That is not conceit, ambition or projecting superiority, it is just you accepting your true gifts and potential.</p>
<p><b>#2 – Being run by Toxic Narratives.</b> Listen to how you talk to yourself and others. How do you finish the phrases “the students at this school are . . .” and “the teachers at this school are. . .” Or my life is . . .” What kind of narratives do you hear? Narratives are when we make something conceptually solid in our thinking/R’s. What are the narratives that you would like to R/run you?</p>	<p><b>#2 – Tapping into your Personal Vision and sense of Purpose.</b> Do you have a sense of purpose that is at the core of who you are and why you make the choices you do? What is your picture of you and your school meeting its full potential? The more vivid that vision the stronger your commitment will be and as a result your passion, resilience, energy, and clarity as well.</p>
<p><b>#3 – Defaulting to Lower LOPs such as cleverness and coping.</b> Sometimes cleverness is useful and supports efficiently moving through life. But if it is a substitute for living from principles and a vision, it will lead to mediocrity and existence in the lower locations on the roadmap. We all need to cope, but do we have our eyes on the prize?</p>	<p><b>#3 – Using all experience for growth and learning.</b> Do we embody a growth-mindset? Avoid getting caught up in calling events either good or bad. They just happened and there is something to learn from them that will serve our growth and betterment. A grateful attitude is a powerful transformer.</p>
<p><b>#4 – Approaching things with a win-lose/me-they mentality.</b> Winning over another or a situation is mostly an illusion of the ego. When we beat someone, that losing energy is added to the overall mix of the whole as more negativity. So the question “how can I make this better,” is a much better question than “how can I win?”</p>	<p><b>#4 – Acceptance and not taking things personally.</b> Spend an hour in high judgment of others and yourself – how does it feel in your body? Now try to just allow and give up the judgment – how do you feel? Non-acceptance is paralyzing. In that accepting mindset you not only feel more alive but are actually more free, intuitive and experience more confidence to take positive action. Cultivating the skill of not taking things personally is enormously liberating.</p>
<p><b>#5 – Neglecting your body and health.</b> When we neglect our bodies we lose integrity and perspective as well as decrease our effectiveness. Exercise, meditate, take a walk, give yourself time to pay attention to your body’s needs. It will ground you in reality and help get you out of your head. Good health and the 1-Paradigm are best friends.</p>	<p><b>#5 – Feeding your spirit and level of mindfulness.</b> When we get out of our small thinking and pull back into the vast infinite intelligence and the wonder in life, we find perspective. For you is that mindfulness found in moments of silence and stillness, nature, prayer, meditation, a community/institution, books, unconditional loving others? When we bring mindfulness to our work we see more clearly the answers for how to move up our pathway most effectively.</p>

**Exercise 14.1: Creating Your Own Personal Vision**

Here we begin the process of creating a personal vision. There are many systems for going through such a process, but they will all inevitably involve a similar sequence of steps as is outlined here. It will benefit us to engage in this process periodically, as our vision will evolve over time.

### **Step 1: Preparation and Getting our head and body in the right frame.**

Begin by disconnecting from all external distractions. Give you thinking a chance to quiet down. This may take some time. A useful strategy to support being undistracted is to sit in a chair alone and away from any electronics (no TV, cell phone, computer, music with words, etc.) and just get comfortable being alone with your thoughts. Have a pad of paper and a pen ready to write down ideas that emerge.

### **Step 2: Listening to Your inner vision**

Begin this stage by letting your mind relax, and avoid “trying” to think. It will help to tune into an accepting mental space and let your goals and life situation subside for the time being. Feel into the reality that in the big picture you are accepted and fine the way that you are and life is basically good. Attending to nothing or only items from nature will be more conducive than looking at the stuff you see every day.

Give yourself 10 to 20 minutes to let the most immediate thoughts process. Most likely, after a while you will start to access more fundamental thoughts. A vision wants to emerge from you. You just need to listen from the right place. Be patient and don’t force the process. Assume that the first few thoughts will be less valid than those that come a little later, and will be come from a deeper and truer source.

When you feel like you are settled and feeling like life is on your side, then ask yourself some questions.

- What am I here on this planet to do? What is my mission?
- What are my unique gifts? And how could I best use them?
- What would I be doing and how would I be doing it, if I did what my heart was telling me to do?
- What are the most worthwhile goals and desires that want to emerge from me?

### **Step 3: Write down what comes to you**

Write down what comes to you as you answer these questions and listen for a vision for your life. It may be useful at this stage of the process to write down what you would call your R/principles. What are the few principles that you will use to guide your life and leadership? You may get ideas from the remaining pages of this chapter or the others, but try to make these guiding principles as personal and subjective to you as possible. You will live them to the extent that they come from your heart rather than just a sense that they *should* be valuable to you.

### **Step 4: Classifying your X’s.**

Now reflect on the X aspect of your life and work. X’s are all the actions, behaviors, habits, routines, patterns, practices in and out of work and ways of acting in which you currently have or might potentially in the future engage. As you reflect on your vision and values, you will better see each of these X’s as being more or less consistent with whom you are becoming and that which will support your growth.

On a blank sheet of paper, draw a line down the middle and at the top label the two columns a) things I plan to keep doing, do more, or do better, and b) things I need to do less of or not at all. As with all lists generated within this process, this one will likely grow over time as more insights come to you.

This step in your personal vision setting process is the most important to your own growth, just as the collective X classification (i.e., things you will see/things you will not see done at the school) process will be in your school's growth process. Creating principles and goals is profoundly valuable and important, and may be challenging, but changing behavior is where the rubber meets the road. For our faculty this process is as difficult as anything they are asked to do, and for us personally, it will test our self-discipline and commitment to excellence daily. And just like in the school-level process, your greatest improvement will likely come from the X's that you recognize as having been holding you down and that you will want to stop doing, even more than the improvement encouraging ones that you identify as valuable additions.

### **Step 5: Putting our Desired O's into Perspective**

The last step in this process is to examine the O's/Outcomes that we would expect to occur as a result of living consistently with the R's and X's that we have committed to in the earlier steps. In this step, we are enhancing our vision with a practical representation of some of the ways that our commitment to our process values may out-picture. How will it look and feel as my vision becomes a reality?

It is critical to keep in mind that in our personal process or in the one that we are leading at our school, becoming too emotionally and egoically attached to the outcome will be counter-productive and limit our success. Emotional attachment to the result typically leads to frustration, having our head in the future, fearing failure, wishing and hoping, taking short-cuts, seeing people as a means to the end, and being unfaithful to our R's when it is convenient in the short-term among a hundred other drawbacks.

We might simply ask the question, "If I were to be faithful and committed to my stated vision (my guiding personal R's) and improved plan of action (more of some X's and less of others), what kinds of outcomes would I expect to see?" And we need to accept that we are only guessing at this, but there are logical effects from the causes that we are attempting to create. So while we will want to give up the need to control or be too attached to them, the O's that result from our actions will provide some data for our personal data-driven decision making.

### **Creating our own personal pathway on the roadmap**

s with our school's overall vision, we could place our own personal vision on the theoretical function and effectiveness roadmap (see Figure 14.2). In the following sections we will examine both the horizontal and vertical axes introduced earlier in the book, and explore how each relates to the various R's and X's that run our day to day lives. As you reflect on where you are and where you are intending to go on this roadmap (or any other roadmap), you might consider a couple of questions. First, do you see common characteristics between your own personal path and the path of your school? Second, do you find that you interpret the events in your life in and out of your job from the lens of the quadrant and within which paradigm you spend most of your time operating?

### **Reflecting on the horizontal axis**

In this section you are given the opportunity to examine your personal situation, your current R's and X's, and your intentions in life from the lens of the horizontal axis defined as being either trust- or fear-driven. This section may feel the most challenging emotionally. It will be tempting to want to go to judgment, denial, comparison and/or defensiveness. Try to avoid this pull, and embrace the opportunity for honest self-exploration. It is said that our true selves are more consistent with who we want to be than who we are today. As you read and reflect try to listen to what your inner best self is telling you.

Figure 14.3 revisits the chart that was introduced in Chapter 4 as Figure 4.2, but the content has been modified to reflect the focus of this chapter which is the personal rather than the institutional. For each of the various dimensions of this axis, questions are offered that characterize either end of the continuum. You might reflect on each question and see what your answers reveal about where your R's and X's are currently, and what that implies about where you might want to go from this point forward.

**Figure 14.3: The Elements of the Horizontal Axis: Personal Questions to Ask ourselves to determine our Current Location on this dimension at any Point**

	<b>Toward Empowerment</b>	<b>Mixed Motivation</b>	<b>Toward Control</b>
<b>Ethic</b>	<b>Empowerment</b> – Does my positive intention project outward toward others?	Am I aware of my intention or do I let the situation dictate?	<b>Control</b> – Do I mistrust others and feel like I need to try to manipulate them into doing what I want?
<b>Emotion</b>	<b>Trust</b> – Do I feel open to possibility and trust myself and others?	Do I enter the room with a preconceived notion of how everyone will act?	<b>Fear</b> – Do I come into the room with a ready defense or a pervasive self-doubt?
<b>Who is it about?</b>	<b>Those I serve</b> – Do I see myself as a servant of the common good?	Do I try when I feel the love and shut it down when I feel unsupported?	<b>Me</b> – Am I primarily in self-preservation mode?
<b>Relationships</b>	<b>Connection</b> – When I look around do I mostly see people seeking the same basic things I do?	Do I just assume there are people who get me and others who just don't?	<b>Comparison</b> – Is what I see mostly people who are inadequate by my standards?
<b>Psychology promoted by R's and X's</b>	<b>Psychology of success (POS)</b> Am I guided by a mindset defined by an internal LOC, a sense of belonging, and a Growth-Orientation?	Am I a mixture of both POS and POF R's and X's?	<b>Psychology of Failure (POF)</b> – Am I guided by a mindset defined by an external LOC, a sense of alienation, and a Fixed Ability-Orientation?

**Reflecting on Our Personal Psychology – POS or POF**

In this section we will explore each of the three components of the psychology of success (POS). You will be guided to reflect on each in terms of your current R's and X's as well as the R's and X's that define your personal vision and desired location on the roadmap. The key to deriving value from this process will be our ability to be honest with ourselves. Most will abstractly agree that having the qualities of a POS is more desirable than those of a POF. In our intellect, we can readily appreciate that we want an internal locus of control (LOC), a sense of belonging, and a growth orientation. But as you examine the ideas and questions below, ask yourself what is the truth in you conscious and unconscious thinking related to these three areas.

## **Where is our Locus of Control (LOC)?**

Do we feel like we are authoring our own lives, or is life happening to us? The answer to this question like that of most of them will depend on the point in time we ask it. But what are we cultivating as a habit? As we are well aware, we can only control ourselves. But do we take 100% responsible for the actions of that self? Do we have a friendly relationship with cause and effect, the natural laws that govern things, and do we experience life as basically supportive? Or do we feel like we spend a lot of time resisting and battling something outside of us?

In figure 14.1, a victim mindset was rated the #1 limiting factor to our success for good reason. It not only defines an external LOC, it defines all elements of a POF. There is no need for shame when you see an external LOC arising in you, it happen to everyone some of the time, and it is the normal state of mind for most people. But it will be beneficial to become more skilled at recognizing that victim voice in you so that it increasingly weakens its effect. Start by holding a clear intention to a) not validate it or internally defend it, and b) start just listening for the victim narrative and then c) when we hear it, bring in an internal (truer) LOC. Moreover, it is useful to recognize that all external LOC thoughts are just perceptions that we have created in our minds and do not reflect any true reality.

To lose any external LOC within us, it will be most effective to build our internal LOC and cultivate a more accurate and true perspective. Here are some useful true (self-talk, affirmation, grounding) questions to help us support the development of our internal LOC.

- Am I taking 100% responsible for my thinking and action right now?
- What is important NOW?
- My thinking is making me feel the way I feel at this moment, is it in need of changing?
- If I want different O's, how do my R's and X's need to change?

### **Reflection 14.x: Energy and Locus of Control**

It is logical to think of the effort and energy that we put into things as a fixed quantity. But reflect on your own experience and it is not really the case. Considering how our LOC is involved is really helpful. Think of how much effort it takes to make others happy, be concerned if you are liked, worrying about if what you are doing will be judged as adequate to others. Now think of how much effort it takes to get into a project that you like and care about, or sharing your gifts with others, or going on an adventure. What did you notice as you compared the two conditions? When we are doing to please and out of a sense of obligation or proving our adequacy, it is depleting. When we are sharing our gifts, in the flow of the game and creating we feel more vital.

Do you make excuses or spend a lot of time defending your actions, hemming and hawing, apologizing for what you know to be right? Try this exercise. Pretend that you are listening to someone else who is doing one or more of those things. What would you say to them? That's right. You would tell them to stop it. Being open, flexible, willing to change, and/or providing explanations for our reasoning behind an action is not the same as projecting guilt or the fear of rejection. So the more we operate from a POS the more we can express from honesty and self-authority.

Being a source of internal LOC is also related to our consistency, follow-through and sticking to what we said we would do. It is important that we make a clear distinction between what we are doing when we are embodying either a positive and vision driven leader character or acting in the role of a nice "everything is fine" character. Acting nice is externally focused and exhausting. Living from our vision is internal and energizing. When negativity arises within us and/or within our school is very often the

result of inaction – in the form of procrastination, denial, not wanting to follow-through, fear of creating temporary unhappiness, rationalizing and the like. The result is that some unwanted condition that we recognized as needing to be addressed was put off until later and grew. As it grew the negative condition likely increased and was then compounded by our own sense of shame for now living up to our principles by acting when we knew we should have. Solution – be proactive and don't put it off if possible. Nip it (i.e., R's and X's that are pulling you down) in the bud.

A final thought here. As we observe the leaders that we respect the most, we see them engaging in a common practice. They tend to take responsibility for failures and give away credit for successes. Logically this may not make complete sense, but in operational and socio-political terms, we find that it has the effect of projecting a POS and raising the respect level for that leader.

### **At What Level is Our Feeling of Acceptance and Belonging?**

Success in and out of the role of leader starts with self-acceptance. Likewise, the ability to have a genuinely accepting attitude toward others is strongly inter-related and exceedingly valuable as well. Of course cultivating this mindset is a challenging aspect of anyone's growth journey that will require constant attention. When feelings of self-judgment, inadequacy, and being in over our heads emerge, we need to work with them. Again, recognizing that they are just thoughts is a great place to start. In addition we will want to avoid a few dysfunctional solutions, beginning with denial. Denial leads to personal dis-integration and to neglecting important physical and emotional needs and information. Likewise, conjuring favorable comparisons to less effective leaders may make us feel a little better temporarily, but in the end comparison is a losing battle. Similarly, seeking confirmation from others is a losing battle. External validation may be comforting for a short while, but in the end it is no substitute for feeling like we like, trust and value ourselves.

Better and more solid sources of self-acceptance will include:

- The unique talents that you bring to your job, commitments, friends and family.
- Your sincere interest in the success of the school and the welfare of the students.
- Your commitment to being prepared and doing your best.
- The benefits to the school if it accomplished the improvements that you envision.
- Your basic goodness, decency and intention for the highest good.

It should be added that few if any other leaders have not felt like they were faking their way through certain parts of the job, or felt like they were going to at some point be exposed as frauds. We all feel that way sometimes. We are humans with human limits. We can by definition only do the best we can do. So avoid perfectionism or getting too attached to winning. It will only lead to fear and stress. And stress is always a sign there is a lack of self-acceptance. So do not confuse your pursuit of excellence with the goal of perfection. Excellence is trusting, integrated and process-oriented. Perfection is based in a fear of failure, is a concept in our heads/egos, and is outcome-oriented.

For many of us cultivating a sense of belonging will be a major challenge. There is no easy advice given here. We just need to do the best we can in the ways that we can. A great place to start is to work on our ability to accept, like and feel compassion for others - our family, friends, colleagues and students. Our attitudes about them will show and it will define our ability to relax and enjoy our work.

Our best results here will likely come from asking ourselves guiding questions such as the following:

- How can I be more accepting of those I work with?
- Can I see the best in others and try to be less judgmental?

- Can I see the whole school community as the unit, and feel a sense of belonging and liking for everyone and not just those that are easy to work with?

The life of a leader can be lonely. Few people outside the job understand the politics, the stresses and the challenges involved. Moreover, in the role of leader, we need to make difficult decisions that can at times inevitably distance us from the teachers and staff. The more responsibility we obtain the fewer friends we might seem to have.

Improvement conditions present different challenges than contexts in which there is a status quo. In a static condition (a school, family, or any group that is comfortable staying in the same patterns over time), acceptance of the current R's, X's and O's and those that are producing them is less difficult. We can bond over anything that makes us feel commonality – complaining, small talk, sports, likes and dislikes, others that are not part of our group, etc. Belonging is relatively easier to cultivate. In contrast, within a condition defined by the goal of improvement and growth - where there is a transformative vision and a definition of quality – sources of commonality will likely be more difficult to find, and sources of potential separation will increase. When change for the better is the order of the day, the one leading that effort cannot, by definition, validate all the existing R's and X's. Decisions have to be made which disrupt the status quo, producing winners and losers and as a result divisions and resentments. Those in the role of encouraging growth will often be called to acts of “tough love.” There is never an easy answer when there are no absolutes involved, but it can be helpful in cases where we feel conflicted to ask ourselves the question, ‘what needs to be done for the long-term greater good of all?’ And see what answer emerges. Belonging in the service of the status quo can encourage mediocrity and operating in the lower realms of the effectiveness roadmap.

Finally, when we are in the role of a leader in an improvement condition we need to find that delicate balance between creating a team of allies and advisors and minimizing the perception of a clique of insiders who have special privileges and are above the law. (Insert advice here from successful principles). But we do need a team, and we need to have others with whom we can process ideas. We will also need to surround ourselves with positive energy. What has a grounding effect on you? Looking around at all the students who have shown up to the school to pursue a better life? Engaging in small talk with a genial janitor? Appreciating a flower outside of your office window? And where do you need to give yourself permission to keep boundaries between yourself and those who tend to have a toxic effect on you? You owe people your honesty and service, but not access to your inner being, guilt strings, or dignity. It all hinges on our state of mind, so respecting ourselves needs to be job one.

**Reflection/General thought:** It may seem like a paradox, but we can confirm in our experience that the life conditions that we resist, dislike, avoid, and complain about tend to persist. Oppositional energy tends to keep things in place. So if we want to make a change, the place to start is to let go of the internal resistance to it – whatever it is. We still take action to make the change, but we can do that without making the situation or person “bad.”

Can you think of any example of this from your experience?

### **Are Our R's and X's in Life Defined more by a Fixed or Growth-Oriented Mindset?**

We are confronted with the choice to use either a growth or fixed ability orientation dozens even hundreds of times each day. We cannot model a growth mindset to those we lead if we do not have it deeply embedded in our own personal R's, just as the teachers at the school cannot model it to the students if they don't either. So it starts with us. And that means it starts with our own self-examination.

It is a great first step to understand the difference between a growth and fixed mindset. And then as that understanding grows we can begin to better see when we are operating out of one or the other. But if we want to ultimately work from that top (system) level of perception (LOP, see next section) we need to internalize that growth mindset into our being, unconscious R's and day to day actions/X's. To do that, we have to examine things operationally. We need to see clearly what a growth mindset looks like in practice. No matter what we might say about ourselves, we can always learn what we deeply believe by looking at what we do (i.e., our R's translated into X's).

So let's start with some questions. Our honest answers will help us see where we are solid and also where we need to grow:

- Do you trust the quality processes to which you are committed, or do you bail out and take short-cuts when you feel threatened?
- Are you persistent when challenges arise, or do you start hearing a (fixed-ability) not good enough voice coming in?
- Do you find yourself trusting that good will come and you will learn important lessons even if the path is not perfectly predictable, or do you find yourself fearing failure if things get a little uncharted?
- Do you learn from your mistakes and move on, or do you obsess about what you should have done differently and beat yourself up over past events?
- Are you driven by the desire for safety and the sure thing, or do you take risks that are likely to improve things (but not 100% assured)? Great leaders are risk takers.

“The desire for safety stands against every great and noble enterprise.” **Tacitus**

Brian Tracy in his series the Psychology of Achievement (reference) provides some wise perspective on worry and fear of failure. If you find yourself fearing an undesirable outcome take the following three steps, 1) imagine the worst case scenario, 2) resolve to accept it and recognize that you COULD live with it, and then 3) go about taking the action to ensure that a positive outcome becomes the ultimate result.

As we increasingly cultivate a POS, and internalize it into the R's that guide our day to day actions we can expect to feel the clarity, ease and confidence that will result. And doing so will inevitably encourage your movement both over to the empowerment end of the horizontal continuum as well as to the more intentional levels of the vertical axis. Just as with our school improvement effort the nature of the destination and that of the process are the same. When we do 1-Paradigm, we experience 1-Paradigm. In the next section, you are given an opportunity to explore the intention and effectiveness level of your overall vision and on your personal growth pathway.

**Reflection 14.x;** Think of a situation in which you currently fear something bad might happen. Engage Tracy's 3 steps and see if you feel less of an emotional charge than before.

### **Reflecting on the Vertical Axis and Our Dominant Use of the Levels of Perception (LOPs)**

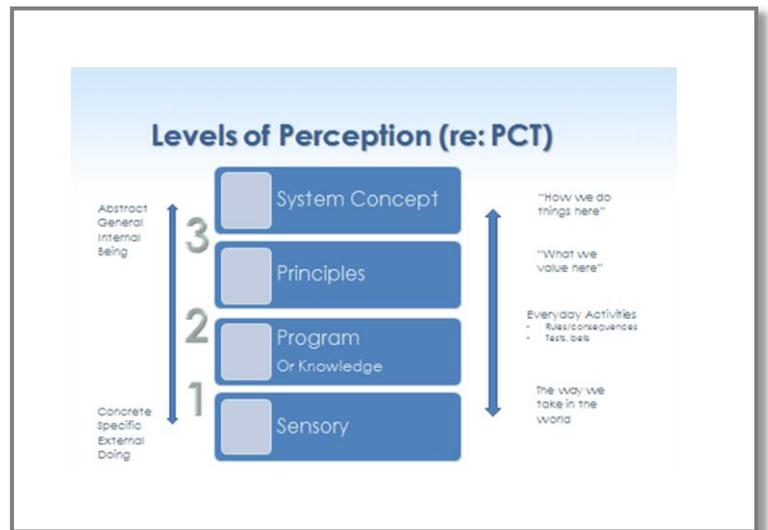
As you recall from chapter 3, the vertical axis of the function and improvement roadmap deals with our level of intention, function and which of the levels of perceptions (LOPs) we operate from most regularly. So can we gain more clarity of our most essential intentions? Function will always follow high quality R's and X's, therefore, making that our priority will be the best place to focus our energy.

Consequently, engaging in the vision clarification process should be greatly helpful in encouraging our movement up this axis.

We might also periodically ask ourselves a few questions to explore what might be limiting our progress up our roadmap. They include:

- Where have I been holding back, instead of being true to the excellence that wants to emerge in me?
- What (unnecessary baggage) do I carry around that is holding me down?
- What would it take to be more receptive to the vision that wants to pull me up the pathway?

As you might recall the levels of perception (LOPs) – starting from bottom to top – sensory, program, principle, and system relate to what we are using to interpret and act in the world. At any particular time (See Figure 14.4). We are working with all LOPs all the time, but questions we might ask include which levels are defining our thinking and action most of the time, or which ones at this particular moment? When we use our higher levels of perception – system and principles, our lives reflect more intention and as a result higher quality and effectiveness. When we get too stuck in living from a routine (program) and reacting to our comfort level (sensory), we can lose touch with our vision and values.



Let's examine each LOP from top to bottom, with the use of questions that represent the concerns at each level. Your answers should offer some insight as to where you are operating most of the time.

**System level (What R's and X's are we systematizing into our being?)**

- Am I being true to who I am and my sense of mission and purpose?
- Am I being true to what wants to emerge from me?
- How much do I feel like I am aligned and integrated and not having to compartmentalize?
- Do I trust my intuition and gut instincts?
- What are the narratives running my life?

**Principle level (What are the values that guide me?)**

- Are my highest values apparent in my personal vision?
- Do I have a clear sense of my priorities?
- Do I find it easy to be honest?
- Do I live from more of a POS or POF?
- Or
- Do I have trouble being honest with myself or others?
- Do I have trouble making decisions or keeping commitments?
- Do I have trouble inferring my priorities?

### **Program level (What has become routine and habitual?)**

- Do I find routines that keep me from having to get lost in the minutia of life and the job?
- Do I create healthy habits that keep me living from my principles?
- Am I disciplined in how I make my high quality X's a seamless part of my day?  
Or
- Do I find ways to be clever and think of a way to rationalize not doing what I am committed to?
- Do I find that I find patterns that help me just get through the day and cope?
- Do I just do what "works" in the short term without reflecting on the long-term implications or how it fits with my vision and values?

**Reflection 14.x;** If your primary internal thought as you read this chapter is that it all seems kind of difficult and you are looking for clever short-cuts that will require less actual growth, it is a good bet that your life and work will tend to hover at this program level.

### **Sensory level (How do I interpret and respond to my physical and emotional sensations?)**

- Do I feel pretty relaxed and at ease during the day?
- Do I pay attention to how my body is feeling and what it is telling me?
- Do I find myself laughing some most days?  
Or
- Do I tend to ignore my body as it is inconvenient to listen to what it is telling me?
- Do I feel a lot of distress during the day?
- Do I feel overly serious at home or work?

As you reflect on these questions you will naturally elevate your position on this axis. You will not usually have to think too hard for an answer, just asking yourself the question will lead to more intention and effectiveness.

**Reflection 14.x:** What did you find as you reflected on the questions for each level? It might be useful to pick one or two areas at a time with which to focus. It can be helpful to share the areas that you have committed to improving, but be sure that anyone that you share with is trustworthy and has the integrity to respect the process.

### **Your Personal Pathway**

The more clearly we see our current mental and emotional processing patterns the better we can appreciate that like our school we are on a pathway. And the better we get at hearing the personal vision that wants to emerge the more we will find a clarity of intention. We are on our own pathway heading toward being more of our true self, guided by our vision.

Figure 14.5 outlines the concept of the four quadrants used throughout the book, but relates them to one's personal narratives. While we all need to find the map that makes the most sense to us and functions best to encourage us, this quadrant offers a parallel framework for personal assessment and improvement as that applied to the school's collective process. Encouraging our personal growth along a similar trajectory to the one that we are supporting in our schools has several benefits including consistency of R's/values, the ability to apply insights and breakthroughs across domains, and a well-conceived definition of "better" that works as

both process as well as destination. And like our school’s effort the movement up and over leads to a more natural and enjoyable condition.

**Figure 14.5 Quadrants as it relates to one’s personal experience**

	<b>Trust and Empowerment</b>	<b>Fear and Control</b>
<b>Function, Intention and Effectiveness</b>	<p><b>1-Paradigm Personal R’s</b>  <i>Pulled by a vision of Excellence</i>            I win the right way and with my team</p> <p>I trust the high quality processes I have found. The more I trust and focus on refining the process the better the outcomes get.</p> <p>Others are basically good if I let myself see them clearly. Everyone is on their own journey and is trying to get their needs met.</p> <p>I can feel a movement to a self-evident natural condition that feels internally right. Overall life is improving.</p>	<p><b>2-Paradigm personal R’s</b>  <i>Working hard to make it happen</i>            I need to do whatever it takes to win</p> <p>I make it happen with effort, telling, selling and policy. It mostly “works” for me.</p> <p>Others tend to be really helpful one moment and then let me down the next, if others were a little better my life would be better.</p> <p>I feel like I am having to work hard to keep everything together and working right, with moments of success and relief.</p>
<b>Dysfunction, Accidentalness and Ineffectiveness</b>	<p><b>3-Paradigm Personal R’s</b>  <i>Letting life happen to me</i>            One can’t ever really win in the end</p> <p>There is really not a lot anyone can do to make things better.</p> <p>Others are doing their own thing. Who am I to judge, we all have to do what works for us.</p> <p>I feel like I can mostly just rely on myself and can’t really relate to any definition of universal good or “the right way.”</p>	<p><b>4-Paradigm Personal R’s</b>  <i>In Opposition to a resistant world</i>            I win and you lose</p> <p>If you don’t take to the offense you will get run over by the system and all the predators out there.</p> <p>Others tend to be mostly confused, brainwashed, prejudice, losers, etc, if they were smart they would see how great I am and respect me.</p> <p>I feel like life is a struggle against so many oppositional forces, and overall the world seems to be getting progressively worse.</p>

**Conclusion of the book**

TBD

Exercises:

Reflections:

References: