

## A Leadership Opportunity

Russ Volckmann, PhD



Subscribe to  
Integral  
Leadership  
Review

Leadership

Coaching

Training

About the Book

Order Book

About Russ

Archives

Links

Home Page

## Conversation with Leo Burke

October 16, 2002

RV: What I know of you I think first came out in Ken Wilber's book on Theory of Everything in which he talked about you as heading up Motorola's leadership development program, is that right?

LB: I was at Motorola for 12 years, the last six of which were in Motorola University. During part of that time, I was Dean and Director of the College of Leadership and Trans-cultural Studies.

RV: That's a big title. Tell us what it means.

LB: At the time Motorola University was organized by colleges in terms of content oriented around different subject areas. One was in software engineering, another in hardware engineering, one in quality, another in sales and marketing. We had one in leadership and trans-cultural studies. The idea for that particular unit was to increase leadership education particularly focused on middle managers and above. There was an added dimension given the global nature of the corporation to increasing trans-cultural literacy among our managers.

RV: Being able to deal with the diversity effectively and actually leverage it?

LB: Yes, absolutely leverage it to understand what the components are that requires it so much more when doing business in Brazil, China or India. We were also interested in

the unique characteristics of those cultures that we can incorporate, both with our associates working there in country as well as exporting perspectives to use elsewhere in the world.

RV: What brought you to that position?

LB: Well, I had been doing leadership and organizational effectiveness at Motorola University when we formed those new colleges. It was kind of a natural step for me to start that unit and head it up.

RV: Did you come to the whole area of development and change out of the management role or out of a consulting role?

LB: I had a Master's degree in organization development and had worked as a consultant. I was always in education at Motorola. I started though in engineering education.

RV: Are you an engineer by background?

LB: No, I'm not, but actually that assignment was invaluable to me in terms of understanding our business and where we were going.

RV: Since leaving Motorola you've started an executive program in Integral Leadership?

LB: When I left Motorola I became Associate Dean for Executive Education at the business school at Notre Dame.

RV: When did this executive program on integral leadership begin?

LB: We're just launching it now. We designed it several months ago. The design that we had I would describe as too robust for the market. The design called for a week at Notre Dame, six weeks back on the job with telephone coaching, a lot of assignments and another week at Notre Dame. People thought it was a great idea, but nobody had the time to attend. So we've now condensed it so there's a one week

version that we're running in December.

It's full, I'll have you know

RV: Congratulations. What was the path that brought you to the concept of integral?

LB: When I was at Motorola U heading up the leadership college in the mid-nineties we had a skunk works projects called the Fayol project, named after Andre Fayol. Fayol's categorization of the functions of management was something that had a lot of staying power for many generations. What would it take to create another breakthrough that would have that level of impact on the thinking about managers and have that kind of staying power? The guiding impetus was two sets questions. First, what if human beings really aren't who we think they are? Second, what if business really isn't what we think it is?

We have these uninspected assumptions of how we plow through our lives and our work. Maybe there's something more here than meets the eye. If we could explore these maybe we could have some insights as to how managers could do their jobs more effectively and serve their constituents by truly adding more value.

I had read some of Ken's work much earlier, but at that time Sex, Ecology and Spirituality came out. I was taken with that work and thought that it had significant implications for us. I began passing it around Motorola wherever I could and writing to Ken. At the same time as part of the Fayol Project we were bringing in folks to come to talk to us who were kind of a little bit off the beaten path for the kinds of people that Motorola would normally be engaging. One was the futurist, Willis Harmon.

RV: One of the founder's of the Institute for Noetic Sciences.

LB: Exactly, and then the co-founder of the World Business Academy. Another was a physicist Dana Zohar who had written Quantum Society. Another was a management consultant from India, Debashis Chatterjee, had written a book on Buddhist and Hindu principles of management.

These people would come in and talk to us. We would kick around ideas about where the world was going and how managers needed to develop to be effective in this world. One of the things that struck me was that each of these folks had concluded that the most important thing managers could do was to understand themselves better. That made a real impression on me. They were coming from very different points of view and different educational backgrounds, but they had all reached the same conclusion.

Ken had introduced the quadrants and the holon. It was a very neat, clean notion of the interior dimension that fit with what we were hearing from a variety of other people. Things began to match up.

In my own experience in working with managers at various places around the world of Motorola in China, India and a lot of European states, I found that this whole interior dimension if it were not fully developed, the ramifications could be disastrous. In fact there is a case study I use now in one of my classes around a famous now fired executive of Motorola who was clearly very brilliant in some respects but didn't have other dimensions of his life together. He led a relatively uninspected life and then created a lot of havoc and damage. It cost the company billions of dollars.

RV: This resonates with what's going on for a lot of financial executives and CEOs these days, doesn't it?

LB: Absolutely. So in early 2000 I was on sabbatical from Motorola and at that time Ken was forming the integral institute. We had various pod meetings and I was invited to the first meeting of the business group. After that meeting we formed a small core team that would meet quarterly with Ken and try to flesh out his ideas for applying them to world business. I don't know if you would know all these players, but the guys who are still with this core team, Bob Richards, Fred Kofman, Michael Putz who's a strategy guy at Cisco, and me. We continued to meet and work. I found it really stimulating and helpful to attempt to take Ken's work, see how we would apply it in the world of business and how we can make it relevant, practical and tangible.

As an outgrowth of those meetings and in my new role at Notre Dame it seemed like just a perfect match to launch something like the executive program. We got it together and we'll see where it goes. Equally exciting is that we are now introducing a one week version of integral leadership into our Executive MBA curriculum.

RV: What is integral leadership?

LB: It's thinking in a kind of simplest exposition, taking a look at various dimensions of leadership. This means looking not only at the exterior components of our work life but the inside, or interior, as well. The way we've specifically presented this is to go through not only Ken's notion of quadrants but developmental levels and Ken's treatment of lines of development. These form a pretty coherent picture for people in terms that are sufficiently robust for managers to consider how they both further their own development as well as lead their organizations.

RV: There's an implication in taking this approach that I'd be interested in hearing your ideas about. I don't think most people in business would have a struggle with the notion of the interior at least in some senses, and the exterior at the individual level. What I find challenging for some, or a different way of thinking about what leadership has to do with the inclusion of the interior or exterior collectives. How do you approach this notion of integral leadership as a phenomenon that is more than an individual phenomenon but is also a collective phenomenon.

LB: The way we've treated it is we've defined the collective exterior as all of the systems and processes that businesses engage and employ. So it's all the stuff you can see when you walk into a factory that's going on, in fact what enabled widgets to be made. The collective interior is culture and shared values. When you look at the collective interior from that point of view, most people get that. Most business managers really acknowledge the validity of culture even though most don't fully understand it and certainly don't know how to manage or engage it effectively. But there's at least the notion that , yes, this is the variable we need to be

paying attention to.

One of the exercises used is to see what questions you can ask around each of the four quadrants with regard to a given business issue and the notion that any change initiative that doesn't take all four quadrants into account is likely not going to result in a solution. The set that have some pieces missing.

RV: I think of the holon and the holarchy as a representation literally as a model of everything in the ways that Ken has talked about. Well, if leadership is a phenomenon, at the individual level we can look at values, beliefs, assumptions, aspirations and things like that on the interior as well as individual developmental levels. Then we can look at the behaviors in the upper right related to that. What is the leadership phenomenon in the lower left lower and lower right quadrants? It's something more specific than culture and shared values, isn't it? It's something more specific than systems and processes?

LB: Clearly our integral business core team acknowledges that that needs to be fleshed out more and I think a lot more work needs to be done there, so I don't have a good answer for you. There clearly are ways a leader engages, leverages, uses, somehow interacts with the collective dimension at various levels within an organization, whether it's within a team, a department, a division or the entire enterprise as an example. But frankly, we have not fleshed that out with the core team, so that's sort of a watch this space. Frankly I think we're talking about a good five year project that needs to involve lots and lots of people to share enough information. You know, this is where you play a critical role, as sort of a kind of the hub of an information wheel so that practitioners and theorists can learn from each other and flesh these things out more.

RV: One of the things that I think is very interesting about this is the question of how do we begin to make it intelligible to people who are not used to this way of thinking, no matter what quadrant we're talking about. And so there are ways of introducing these ideas and these approaches that are more successful than others. What thoughts have you about that?

**LB:** The way that we're going is building blocks. You know there's a theory piece people need and then there is obviously practice. The building blocks certainly include a discussion of quadrants. Discussion of quadrants for most people I think has face validity. At least that's what I found in my courses that I've taught to our EMBA's, particularly if it can be framed as a way of looking at how they might think from the point of view of each quadrant as they look at a business issue.

The way we've defined lines of development is we've parsed out six seven lines --a cognitive line, a moral line, an interpersonal line, a physical line, an emotional line, a values line, a spiritual line. When we say physical, we really mean the kinds of decisions you make, interior decisions you make about physical health and well being. When people see that it makes a lot of sense to them. They can understand this, or they've had a boss who was very strong in the cognitive line but a real moron in the interpersonal line. That all makes sense. What it stimulates most people is the interest in horizontal development. One might say, "I haven't been exercising. I need to be thinking about that or cleaning up my diet. Or my interpersonal relationships are not the quality I need them to be. Or the feedback I'm getting suggests that I really need to engage stuff around emotional intelligence." It doesn't scare people off.

The moral line these days with all this stuff around ethics is sort of a no-brainer. The whole discussion of spiritual is interesting. People find that intriguing. Our approach has been to basically to say, "Do you think this is a legitimate area to talk about? What are your perspectives here?" We point out as Ken does in Integral Psychology that there are a lot of ways to define spirituality. When we talk about the levels, that's a little bit trickier.

**RV:** Do you use a particular developmental model?

**LB:** Well the model that we have, that we started with in our core team, was the Spiral Dynamics model. Ken impressed upon us that it's really important to not get into typing

people, to say you're an orange, so-and-so is a blue, somebody else is red. The Beck-Cowan-Graves taxonomy applies to the values line and so life is a complex. There are all kinds of different levels for different lines. It's much more complex than just stereotyping somebody, kind of pegging them to a certain point.

In our integral leadership course we use Jenny Wade's terminology, as well as her mindsets instrument. It maps well with Beck since Jenny's work is also based on that of Clare Graves.

When presenting from an instructional or pedagogical point of view the question always is: Why are you conveying this material? What utility does it have or how does it fit in? I think the justification for presenting something on levels is that it enables people to see the different levels of complexity in a way that they can grasp. They come to appreciate the fact that there are people in their organization at various levels driven by various value sets and interests.

Managing such diverse sets of people is not something you can do with one kind of fell swoop. It requires much more. It's a more complex task than people might think. People know it's complex at one level because they see that things aren't working the way they think they ought to work. They've just never understood why, and this can provide some kind of insight into the kind of drivers, diverse drivers that people have.

RV: Does it give them anything fresh in the way of tools, strategies or approaches for dealing with that?

LB: For example, Jenny Wade has a very useful workbook. It offers suggestions of how you would lead under certain circumstances, how you would reward people who are coming from different perspectives, how you would design the best job matches. So there are some very practical kinds of suggestions.

We use Wade as the front and then have supplemental material for people that are interested in exploring things. My

sense is this is just about enough theory that people are willing to absorb on a first pass here. Especially the folks who are in our population: busy executives.

Now they've come away with the notion that there really are these different dimensions: interior, exterior. They hadn't quite thought of it this way before. These lines of development make sense. They can see that. They understand that and say, "These levels are really something. I didn't know that people really go at life quite differently, I get this values level and now I can begin to see that these other levels on these other lines, and..."

RV: And now they're overwhelmed?

LB: Yes, it's a lot. So how do we make that digestible and actionable? The way the device we're using -- and there may be ways to do this -- is they build a personal action plan of things they want to do differently. And there's a whole lot of other stuff that goes on in this program: 360° feedback and simulation. Also lots of inputs. Fred Kofman does several days in terms of communication, truth telling, emotional intelligence kinds of things.

There's also a business issue that threads through the whole week. They engage with looking at a business issue, taking into account the new information that they've gotten at every point.

RV: What would be an example of that?

LB: It can range from "How do I increase market share or introduce a new product into a market?" to "How can I more effectively merge two business operations that are now coming together?" to "How can we more rapidly innovate new product development?" You can really take a range of issues.

RV: Let's look at the implementation, the making it real piece. It sounds like after they're first been introduced to this material they go back home and they have a period of time in which they're receiving coaching, is that correct?

LB: Well, that was true under the original model. Now it'll be a little different with our EMBA's because I have access to them for a longer period of time. But under the new model, they are only with us for a week.

RV: I see, with no follow up.

LB: My experience is the whole follow up process is so challenging in the non-degree world. People just get onto other things. They're just very busy. We'll do some evaluation to see how they are applying and we're trying to figure out. Perhaps there is a pay-per-view service we could offer with regard to follow up that would be of interest to people: either guidance or some kind of coaching. But we have much more to learn there.

RV: Yeah. And how many people do you have in the program?

LB: The first one we wanted like 25. The first one I think is at 40.

RV: Wow!

LB: Yes. We thought we were gating right, and then more water came over the dam than we were anticipating.

I gave a presentation at the Executive EMBA Council Conference. It was very interesting because these are mostly people that run executive MBA programs. I brought out what we're doing and an overview of an integral model as we're using it with our students, a discussion of quadrants, lines and levels.

I described how we're doing that and then we had a conversation as educators. What should we be doing in executive MBA Programs? Is this legitimate subject matter to be engaging? It was a really interesting set of conversations. The consensus was that all the emphasis we place on functional and quantitative skills is clearly necessary but not sufficient as we look at the world today. Engaging our students, whether it is through an integral model like we're

trying at Notre Dame or something else, is absolutely essential. And so the reason I'm excited about that is the whole notion that business education, and I think the recent epic scandals can be an accelerant here, is potentially going to renew itself in a way that could be very positive in terms of a much broader view about what it means to be a successful executive or to be an educated MBA.

RV: Have you noticed any fallout from what's been going on with the Enron and post-Enron era in terms of people's openness and receptivity to these ideas?

LB: Yes. I think at Notre Dame there's a self selection process that goes on with our students, because we're pretty explicit about the fact that one of the things that we offer is an attempt to imbed a discussion around values into most of what we do. This definitely is an area that has the interest of our students. We have a series of CEOs that come in and speak to our students. It has just been very, very interesting in terms of the seriousness with which people are examining these issues. I think there's much more reflection. And, you know, part of it too is given what is going on with the economy, people are coming to the awareness that they're not going to be millionaires in three years. Business really is hard. and do I really want to do this, and...

RV: Maybe I should be a teacher.

LB: Right. We have a huge number of undergrads in Business and I think all because of the run up in the NASDAQ in the nineties. It will be interesting to see the impact of the ethics scandals and the economy. I think the whole thing is for a reduction ...

RV: People are starting to question and reexamine, and that can't help but help, you know?

LB: Exactly.

RV: Well, wonderful, Leo. Thank you so much.

LB: Sure enough.



**Russ Volckmann, PhD, LeadCoach™** ↗  
**733 Mermaid Avenue, Pacific Grove, CA 93950**  
**(831) 333-9200**

**Copyright © 2001, 2002, All Rights Reserved, Russ Volckmann**