

The 12 Requirements for Embodied Action

The Gathering for Change Agents

A global paradigm shift is emerging, and many who hear the call to make a better world consider themselves “change agents.” Change agents share a strong motivation to find new solutions for the challenges that face us as individuals and as a society. We’ve already seen new models emerging, such as B corporations and L3C organizations, which measure success using the triple bottom line of People, Planet and Profit.

While we can't all be visible on the global stage, we each have a sphere of influence in which we can make a difference by demonstrating a better way forward in our area of expertise. Some of the many ways we contribute as change makers is by mediating conflict, advising, healing, teaching and speaking the truth that others fear to tell.

Yet the majority of well-intentioned initiatives and activities fall short of the ultimate outcome envisioned. The truth is that we can't create a new-paradigm world merely with good intentions and skill, because unconscious, old-paradigm behaviors make it challenging to move beyond the status quo. Examples of this predicament are blaming, rigid positioning and magical thinking. Even when opposing interests (either within your own psyche or externally) agree on the desired outcome, the means to get there can still evoke conflict.

In order to succeed as an agent of change and manifest your highest vision, you will need to master three arenas: inner harmony, outer skill, and the bridge between your inner wisdom and outer behavior. Tim Kelley's previous article ***Inner Requirements for Change Agents*** discusses the first arena which is a *prerequisite for embodied action*, and this article focuses on the alignment between your inner and outer worlds.

The shift from ego-habitual behavior to inner-wisdom-directed behavior is the foundation of purposeful embodied action in the world. “Purposeful action” means that you focus on and follow through with your purposeful priorities. “Embodied action” means that your outer expression reflects your deepest inner truth – how you treat yourself and others, how you share and act on your wisdom.

As you read the following 12 requirements for embodied action, notice which ones you've already mastered and which ones still need attention:

1. Honor the Self
2. Expand Your Sense of Identity
3. Act on Purposeful Priorities
4. Harness Your Brain's Natural Imperatives
5. Express the True Nature of Power, Authority and Leadership
6. Integrate Projection and Reactivity
7. Demonstrate Spiritual Entrepreneurship or Intrapreneurship
8. Speak From Presence in the Moment
9. Write From the Soul
10. Market and Sell as Sacred Service
11. Co-Create From Inner Wisdom
12. Commit to the Hero's Journey

1. Honor the Self

You are the vehicle of the change that you deliver, which requires becoming visible as an innovator to larger and larger audiences in order to touch as many lives as possible. By the nature of your job description, you don't fit in – because if you did comfortably fit in, you'd be happy with the status quo! At the same time, it is a genetic imperative to belong to a tribe that ensures our physical survival.

One of the ways we were taught when young to gain social acceptance was the false humility of belittling ourselves to set others at ease. It can be challenging to shed old habits like these, and they are among the biggest impediments to succeeding as an agent of change. “Who am I to do these big things?” These thoughts keep us from taking the kind of risks that change makers regularly face, and even prevent imagining what might be possible.

Others may wear a false inflated ego self to shield a vulnerable deficient-feeling self.

Learning to honor the self includes a healthy balance of knowing your actual capacities and limitations at any moment in time, and how your gifts complement the gifts of others. This form of honoring also calls for profound self-acceptance that appreciates exactly where you are right now, as you embrace the dance of opposites within. It is important to heal the core wounds that cause you to feel deficient and unworthy, so that the full extent of your resourcefulness is available to you whenever you need it. Whether you have a habit of belittling yourself or exaggerating your capabilities, neither serves when you are speaking about your mission to those who need to move into action!

Another key element of honoring the self is life balance and self care. Mastering this requirement requires evolving those aspects of the self that regularly push and drive you from that mindset of “It's not enough” or “I'm not enough.” Such a mindset leads to lack of presence, as well as burnout and potentially injury and disease.

Once these “deficiency” wounds are healed, your full capacity becomes available to make the difference you are meant to make.

2. Expand Your Sense of Identity

Perhaps the greatest limiting belief that diminishes our impact in the world is who we take ourselves to be. The ego identity is ultimately a cluster of concepts including memories, roles, beliefs and behaviors. You take yourself to be a certain something or someone and therefore you have certain beliefs that then cause you to follow certain behaviors.

Your ego is constructed from the past in order to ensure the survival of the physical body. It's important to not belittle the function of the ego because we cannot accomplish much without physical well-being! The problems only arise when we let the ego's world

become the whole story, because the ego defines itself by dividing what is “me” from what is “not me.”

Accepting the limitations set by our ego will prevent us from taking the risks and undergoing the personal transformation we need in order to transform the world.

When you expand your familiar self-concepts, you can achieve what seemed impossible before.

Who are you taking yourself to be right now? Do you think of yourself as a female, with an associated limiting belief that women can't have as much influence as men in the world? Or do you think of yourself as an introvert while believing that introverts can't succeed at public speaking? Or, perhaps you like being a non-profit executive as a way to stand on higher moral ground than those earning large corporate salaries.

The point is not that self-concepts are bad in and of themselves, because they give us a framework to take shortcuts in moving about our day.

Rather, as you transform yourself in service of transforming the world, the familiar self-concepts you've used your entire life become outdated and are in need of an upgrade. Take the time to notice what identities you are using as you operate in the world and how they limit what you believe is possible for you. Then, consciously choose a larger framework that serves the mission that calls you.

3. Act on Purposeful Priorities

Knowing your purpose is not enough to make the difference you are meant to make. Nothing will change unless you take consistent action in the direction of your intended result. Many well-meaning change agents run aground because they let their own resistance and external distractions direct their actions rather than staying on course.

Staying in alignment with what matters most is a matter of focus and follow-through. It's much easier to stay in the flow when you use four basic vehicles: (1) Specific business goals that fulfill your mission as a changemaker, (2) Strategic plans to meet those goals (3) Actions to execute those plans and (4) Support systems to keep you on track (e.g. calendars and alerts)

These practical vehicles for manifestation often bring up inner resistance. Reflect on where outer alignment typically breaks down for you. Do you: (1) Dislike setting goals? (2) Enjoy setting goals but dislike making plans? (3) Find you're not good with todo lists - you don't take actions that you need to take? Or do you (4) Try to do it all yourself, not getting the support that you need?

Parts of your psyche that may need some attention in these areas include such characters as the procrastinator, the inner rebel, the constant connector, and the structure avoider.

The more you honor the needs of all parts of yourself and grow your capacity to focus and follow through, the easier it becomes to consistently meet all of your purposeful priorities.

4. Harness the Brain's Natural Imperatives

If you don't understand the way your brain works, you can spend decades struggling with inner conflict as you try to transform yourself in order to transform the world. Strength of commitment and optimal systems will still not guarantee the results you seek if you are pushing against the brain's three primal imperatives: to avoid harm, approach reward and form secure attachment to others. These drives won't go away, and embodied action requires that you harness the force within them to purposeful ends.

The projects that stretch you the most are often the ones that cause you to drag your feet. In our multi-tasking information overload culture there is never a shortage of distractions to turn your head away from your purposeful priorities. Think of the last time you planned to work on your most purposeful project, and you did something else. Which primal survival strategy hijacked your agenda?

Without bullying yourself or making that part of you wrong, find a more productive strategy to get that need met. For example, if you find yourself avoiding the project because it feels too big ("avoiding harm") and the reward of accomplishment too far off ("approaching reward"), break the goal down into bite-size pieces that will deliver more frequent results. Or if you keep chatting too much online ("forming secure attachments") when you need to be working on your own, find a way to integrate breaks to connect with others at regular times throughout your day.

Once these survival strategies are met at the basic level, you can guide the natural force behind them to a higher octave of fulfillment. Situational pleasure-seeking expands to include the deep joy of living your purpose. The concern about avoiding harm for oneself becomes avoiding harm to anyone. The desire to form connection grows beyond your identified tribe of like-minded others to embrace all of humanity as family.

5. Express the True Nature of Power, Authority and Leadership

Power in our society has become a maligned quality, because of our love-hate relationship with it. Power is necessary in order to do great things, while at the same time it can be severely and unnecessarily destructive.

Ultimately, power is the capacity to influence and impact the world. The degree to which you embody your essence while directing this neutral force of nature, as opposed to acting out your purely instinctual drives, makes all the difference in the world as to the result.

"Essence embodiment" in a leadership context means responding appropriately to the situation as inner wisdom guides us, rather than blindly following or rebelling against external authority. This form of embodied action calls for inquiring into what is needed

for an optimal win-win situation. The challenges we face today as a society cannot be resolved by individuals acting alone, or even by a single leadership model.

Notice where you are unconsciously falling back on traditional models such as hierarchy to get things done, rather than expressing the authentic authority of your embodied wisdom for the best result.

6. Integrate Projection and Reactivity

Sigmund Freud first identified the subconscious mechanism of projection, a means of rejecting one's unacceptable qualities, behaviors, feelings and thoughts by attributing them to other people. Projection is one of the ways that our ego protects itself from disapproval by others. We react to others who either display or trigger parts of ourselves that we do not want to acknowledge.

It's important to note that both "positive" and "negative" qualities can be deemed unacceptable. For example, growing up in a logic-driven household might have caused you to habitually hide your intuition in public. In order to experience that side of yourself, you might be drawn to highly intuitive partners and believe that you need them to have intuitive guidance in life. Or, you might judge and ridicule people who rely on intuition rather than logic.

However, as long as you disown parts of yourself, you are denying wisdom and resources that are part of the difference you are meant to make in the world. Increasing your impact as a change agent continually requires you to reclaim more of who you are.

As these disowned aspects of yourself are discovered and transformed into their true nature, you can step more powerfully into the fruition of your higher purpose in this life.

7. Demonstrate Spiritual Entrepreneurship or Intrapreneurship

What does it mean to be a spiritual entrepreneur or intrapreneur? We've all heard the terms social entrepreneur and socially conscious business leader, both of whom add the metric of social value to the bottom line in areas such as health care, alternative energy and the environment. The result is a triple bottom line of People, Planet and Profit.

A spiritually-oriented business professional honors the quadruple bottom line of Purpose, People, Planet and Profit. Inner wisdom provides guidance for all business decisions, to ensure that your priorities match your highest purpose as individuals and as an organization.

Mastery of this requirement arises from years (if not decades) of inner transformation to heal the artificial split between spirit and business. As change agents, part of our task is to demonstrate that it is possible to make a great living while pursuing spiritual truths.

8. Speak From Presence in the Moment

In order to touch the most lives with your unique gifts, you will need to speak in one-to-many situations at least occasionally, whether teaching, consulting, managing, marketing or delivering a keynote. Traditional speaking to influence and inspire depends on crafting a performance that is memorized and delivered. If you do not trust that it is safe to share your passion in one-to-many situations, you are likely to find yourself relating more to prepared phrases or a script than to your listeners and the present moment.

In contrast, embodied speaking makes use of the fact that when you are sharing purposeful information that expresses your life mission, words will flow spontaneously from your deepest inner wisdom, whether you are speaking to one person or many more.

Ultimately, it's about being in relational presence with your listeners, rather than relating to a static script. Being present and relational at the same time is the state of listening *with* another beyond agenda. It is a state of availability and responsiveness that acknowledges the unity of presence beneath personalities and roles such as teacher/student and speaker/audience. You are responding in the moment with the simplest of outlines to guide your focus and key points, trusting you'll adapt what you know to what's needed in the room.

To reach hearts, minds and souls from a place of authentic power requires no less than trusting your inner wisdom to speak directly through you.

9. Write From the Soul

Writing is a mission-critical way to inspire and impact others in service of your purpose, whether for staff, clients, colleagues or the public. The written word is a very efficient method for reaching those you are meant to serve because its influence extends beyond your personal presence.

Embodied writing is very different from normal business writing, because it communicates soul to soul rather than personality to personality. Such writing does not seek to convince through the instinctual drives to approach pleasure and avoid pain, nor does it try to appeal to everyone in the world. Trying to avoid offending anyone results in a bland message that doesn't inspire anyone!

When you allow the essence of your purpose to flow through your writing, it will speak directly to the soul of those you are meant to serve. This includes making peace with the fact that some people will not resonate with your message because it is not what their soul needs to hear right now. But those who need what you bring will find your message irresistible.

10. Market and Sell as Sacred Service

The most basic function of marketing and selling is to simply exchange goods and services for funds of equivalent value. Yet, the process has one of the most negative associations of any business function because of the prevailing old paradigm models.

Military, competitive and conquest metaphors such as “target” audience, “overcoming objections” and “dominating the market” are examples of commonly accepted best practices to meet bottom-line and market share goals.

In contrast, new paradigm models for marketing and sales are an extension of the purposeful service or benefit being provided. The commitment is to serve your prospective clients and customers in fulfilling their desired outcomes through your core values and inner wisdom. The goal is to find the best solution through whatever means available, whether through your offering or a referral to someone else’s.

Embodied marketing and selling require a commitment to *servicing the prospect* rather than a commitment to *making a sale* or numbers goals. This level of detachment from outcome requires making peace with your primal survival fears and your desire for mirrored value from others. This is one of the more challenging areas for embodied action, and when you live your core values and purpose in this way the resulting fulfillment and alignment will ripple into every other area of your work and life.

11. Co-Create From Inner Wisdom

Together with others, you are capable of creating much more than you can on your own. Change agents, in particular, face missions with scope and complexity calling for many collaborators.

However, collaborations without guidance from inner wisdom often get sidetracked with the interpersonal agendas and the disowned parts of the participants. We have all witnessed “politics as usual” for so many well-intentioned ventures. At the least, the results are likely to reinforce old paradigm thinking more than the kind of radical innovation required of you as a change agent.

Embodied co-creation is based on the collective inner wisdom that arises from a shared stillness of presence. This form of collaboration requires a commitment by all participants to catching the moments when distracting agendas interfere. The shared value of repeatedly returning to the ground of sacred guidance is the key element that allows a new paradigm approach to creative ventures.

12. Commit to the Hero’s Journey

The hero’s journey is a universal theme in our mythology. Heroes answer a call to leave the comfort of their ordinary lives to face supernatural forces that challenge them to the utmost. Ultimately victory is gained, and the hero comes back transformed from the adventure with the power to bestow a great boon upon the community.

The hero’s journey is the one that change agents face. You must allow yourself to be completely transformed by your inner wisdom, to let go of all that you have known and relied upon in order to make the change you are called to make in the world.

It takes courage and a fierce commitment to surrender to your own hero's journey, no matter how daunting the path may be. And the nourishment you receive will continue to deepen until there's no looking back.

As you assess these different areas of embodied action, it's important be honest with yourself, because your capacity to fulfill the mission that calls you is directly related to how aligned your outer expression is with your inner truth.

At the same time, remember to acknowledge yourself for all the hard work you've done over the years to reach your current level of mastery. Seeing that there is more you want to reach is not the same as judging yourself as inadequate. Notice if there's a part of you that is impatient that you're not enlightened yet!

Embodiment as your true nature in the world of form is not a destination. There is no “there” to get to, only a journey of deeper awakening to savor as we shape the world around us to match our highest vision.