

## Leadership Agility Conference

### Sustainable leadership finds a home in homelessness

These notes are designed as points of reference for key processes which have been used at Micah Projects. We anticipate that the workshop will help make sense of these notes.

#### A. Micah Projects

Micah Projects is a social justice organisation operating out of West End which focusses on homelessness, disability, social cohesion and community building.

The Sustainable Leadership Program includes 20 team leaders and the Co-ordinator and is entering its 5<sup>th</sup> year.

Main points:

##### 1. Likely outcomes – as described in 2008

It's likely that the following outcomes will prevail:

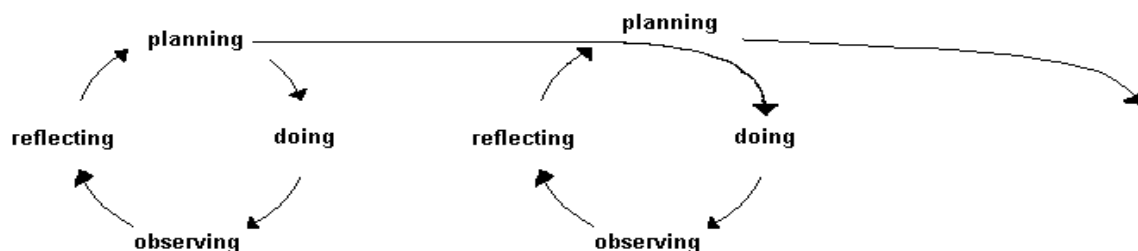
- accelerate the development and capability of leaders within the organisation regarding the leadership of a triple bottom line sustainable business
- motivate and support people in the program and, through them, other staff in MICAH
- add value to the day-to-day effectiveness of the pool of leaders as they build creative and sustainable work environments
- develop the optimism and confidence of MICAH's leaders
- improved quality systems in MICAH

##### 2. Overview of the development process - Appreciative Action Learning

The Appreciative Action Learning Process designed by NACC draws on the theory and practice relating to Action Learning (Revans et al) and Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider et al).

A detailed paper titled "Appreciative Action Learning" (Nielsen, 2010) is available if required on [www.nacconsulting.com.au](http://www.nacconsulting.com.au)

**Action Learning** is a continuous process of planning, doing, observing and reflecting.



The reflective component, in particular, is focused upon during SLP as it is most likely to be the missing link in the process used by many managers and leaders in doing their work.

To ensure the learning process does not focus too much on 'problems' at the expense of ideas, aspirations and opportunities the positive approach promoted by the process of Appreciative Inquiry is a necessary addition to the Action Learning insights.

**Appreciative Inquiry** is described (Cooperrider et al) as a process of appreciating, envisioning, designing and innovating.



In the context of MICAH’s leadership development and the proposed focus on business development, the assumptions underpinning Appreciative Inquiry are:

- MICAH is doing some good things to improve its leadership and its organisation
- MICAH managers will have more confidence to journey to new ways of leading and doing business with clients when the best of their past achievements are acknowledged
- If the managers are to carry parts of the past forward they should be what are best about their past and that of the organisation.
- It is important for managers to be challenged to improve the way things are done
- It is important to value differences.
- The way we go about conversing and questioning our managers will influence their learning and their capacity to build a sustainable organisation
- The language we may use will create a reality which is shared.
- Managers can take on new ideas about developing their leadership capacities and their work with clients if they consult well, have a high regard for the best of the past and are prepared to be innovative and challenging about what else they may do.

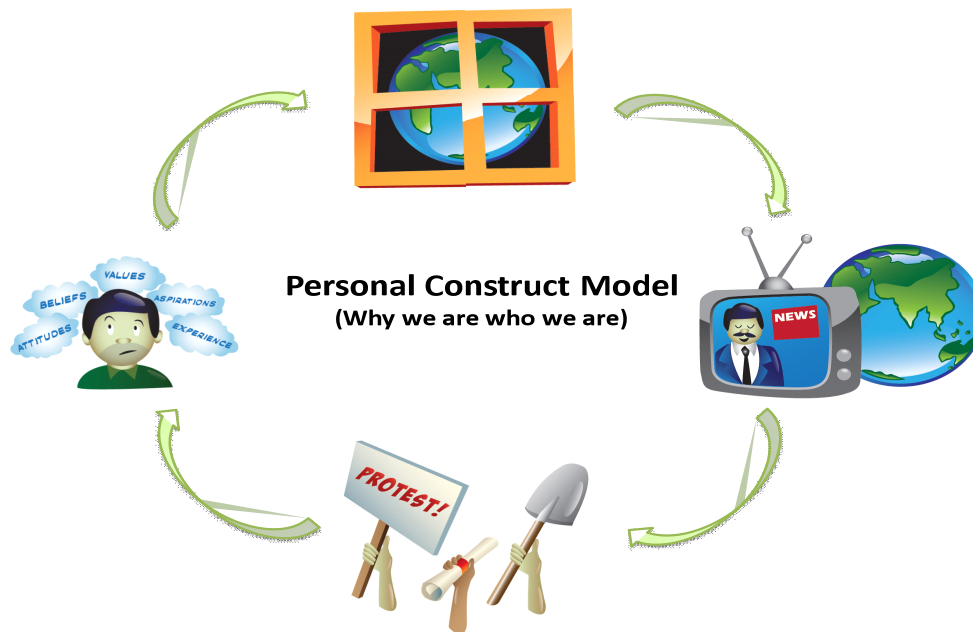
### 3. Time people have in the process

- The leadership team participates in 6-8 days of workshops each year, usually in 2 day blocks
- Each leader has quarterly 45minute sessions one-to-one with the facilitator
- Half of the leadership team have chosen to participate in a Facilitator Development Program designed for team leaders. This is happening over nine months in 2012.
- Six of the leadership team have set up the “Sus Group” to facilitate the establishment of policy and practice with sustainability at Micah. This started in 2011.
- The SLP facilitator also carries out monthly 2 hour team development activities with 8 Micah teams. This enables a broad understanding in the organisation of the culture Micah is trying to develop.

### 4. Models to prompt sustainable leadership aspirations and practice.

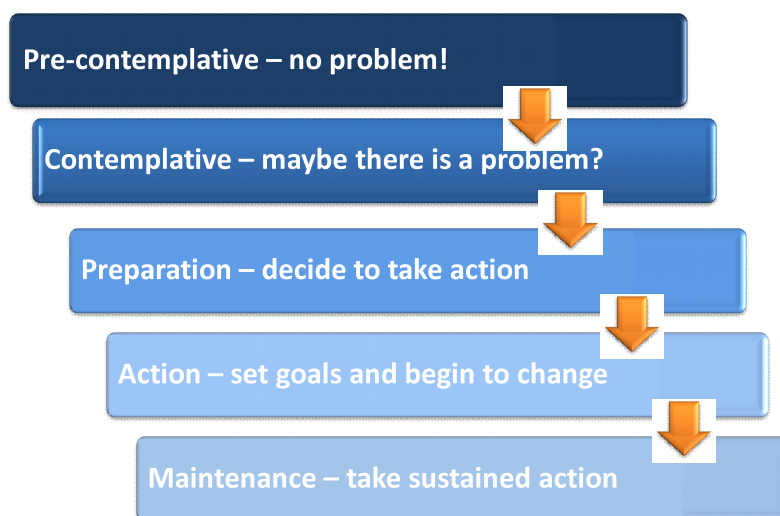
This is a very rough rundown of some of the models used by the facilitator to enable reflective practice, personal learning, skill development and improved leadership practice.

**Personal constructs:** The main purpose of SLP is for leaders to find the most aspirational, meaningful aspect of their leadership they wish to change. Then check out which of their personal constructs is inhibiting its achievement. Then challenge themselves around that construct and take on new learning and practice.



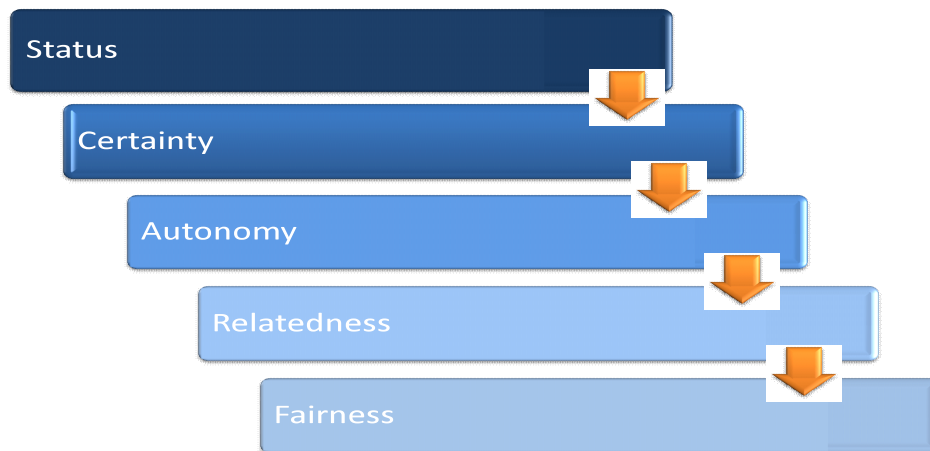
Sometimes this means confronting addictive practices.

**Addiction theory and practice:** This is focussed on during one-to-one sessions with the facilitator – how to change what has become unwanted embedded practice.



It also means being mindful of the way the brain works.

**Neuroscience and the SCARF Model:** This model provides a core understanding of the way in which we view ourselves and others and how to make meaningful changes.



According to neuroscientist David Rock (2008), “Status is about relative importance to others. Certainty concerns being able to predict the future. Autonomy provides a sense of control over events. Relatedness is a sense of safety with others, of friend rather than foe. And fairness is a perception of fair exchanges between people.”

These domains stimulate either the 'primary reward' or 'primary threat' circuitry in the brain. If we want changed behavior we need to activate the 'reward' mode rather than the 'threat' mode.

**Strategic Questioning:** The work of Fran Peavy on Strategic questioning is used as the basis of skill development with leaders. This enables greater ownership by people over the issues and solutions in front of them and builds confidence in leader's capacities to manage people and to prevent/handle conflict.

**Servant Leadership:** The work by Greenleaf and others on Servant Leadership provides a framework which is consistent with the long-term philosophy and practice of Micah Projects.

**Shared Leadership:** The very flat management structure at Micah Projects has heightened attention on shared leadership and on decision forming strategies which are inclusive, structured and simple.

**Leadership and self- deception - being in the box or out of the box:** The book Leadership and Self Deception (Arbinger Institute) provides insights around how we can easily fall into rationalising poor behaviour.

We can dishonour our own sense of doing the right thing and that leads to a self-deception where we end up exhibiting self-centred behaviour. We get 'in the box'.

This can be triggered by a number of things.

**Better than box**

**I deserve box**

<b>View of myself</b>	<b>View of others</b>
Superior Important Virtuous/right	Inferior Incapable/irrelevant False/wrong
<b>Feelings</b>	<b>View of world</b>
Impatient Disdainful Indifferent	Competitive Troubled Needs me

<b>View of myself</b>	<b>View of others</b>
Meritorious Mistreated/victim Unappreciated	Mistaken Mistreating Ungrateful
<b>Feelings</b>	<b>View of world</b>
Entitled Deprived Resentful	Unfair Unjust Owes me

### I must-be-seen-as box

<b>View of myself</b>	<b>View of others</b>
Need to be well thought of Fake	Judgemental Threatening My audience
<b>Feelings</b>	<b>View of world</b>
Anxious/afraid Needy/stressed Overwhelmed	Dangerous Watching Judging me

### Worse than box

<b>View of myself</b>	<b>View of others</b>
Not as good Broken/deficient Fated	Advantaged Privileged Blessed
<b>Feelings</b>	<b>View of world</b>
Helpless Jealous/bitter Depressed	Hard/difficult Against me Ignoring me

A short video is available which features interview segments with participants in the program. This video is currently being edited to include a wider range of participants.

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