



**Genuine Contact™**

*...providing a holistic approach to organizational success*

## Chapter 19: The Genuine Contact Program

*The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them.*

~ Albert Einstein

### Transformational Process

IntraHealth International, Inc., was a newly created non-profit health-care organization with an inherited legacy spanning multiple countries and cultures. In its 25 years of existence prior to the creation of the new organization, IntraHealth suffered many problems including an ambiguous and ill-defined relationship with the mother institution, lack of clarity, and uncertain congruence between the goals of the organization and those of its host institutions. IntraHealth is also highly dependent on one major donor as the source of its funding.

During its transition from a university-based program to an independent freestanding organization, IntraHealth suffered from a lack of strategic vision and careful planning of its future growth, which led to an atmosphere of fear, mistrust, blaming, and unplanned layoffs. However, the organization had a rich history of quality service delivery in many developing countries, thanks largely to a staff of talented individuals who shone internationally in their respective fields. The new president's dream was to:

- Create a culture of personal leadership, collaboration, high staff morale, and unity behind a common purpose.
- Create an organization capable of supporting multiple projects rather than the singular project of the past.
- Increase productivity and efficient use of resources.
- Shift from "headquarters-centric" to equality among all locations with systems-based work (e.g., finance, human resources) supporting the front line.
- Build on the reputation and strengths of the past.

Keys to successfully meeting these goals included:

- Establishing the will and commitment of the leader.
- Developing the capacity of the senior leader.
- Developing the capacity of his leadership team.
- Developing the capacity of the organization as a whole to lead its own ongoing transformation work.

The leadership team was involved in designing the transformational process. Along with interested staff, the leadership team learned to use the tools and frameworks and participatory meeting methods of the Genuine Contact™ Program. Sustaining the new higher level, the

organization used the same tools, frameworks, and methods, creating the conditions for ongoing emergence.

## What Is the Genuine Contact Program?

The Genuine Contact Program is a holistic approach to change that fosters the shared intention, collective purpose, and vision that drive system innovation and transformation. It provides a blended, synergistic, holistic approach to change and to leadership. It is not about a big quick splash but rather about developing the skills, knowledge, and capacity to sustain the ongoing organizational change necessary to thrive in today's constantly changing, complex times.



Figure 1: Steps in the Genuine Contact Program

This capacity to thrive in changing times is the most important outcome from using this method. The liberating structure and participative architecture creates the space for staff to be responsible, highly creative and innovative, solution focused, and productive. Managers and staff truly understand the degree of freedom that they have within a set of “givens” to do their work. All of their actions and decisions take place within

these clear “givens,” fulfilling the organizational purpose and achieving its vision, strategic directions, and accompanying strategic goals.

The Genuine Contact Program is used around the world in the private sector, non-profit sector, development agencies, health and social services, and in organizations of all types. The higher-level organization that results is called a Conscious Open Space Organization.

The Genuine Contact Program navigates transformation of the organization using the Medicine Wheel Tool (figure 1). The process begins in the center of the wheel, and then goes north, east, south, and west. The order is critical to success. During this navigation, purpose, leadership approach, and vision are established, sometimes by the leadership team and sometimes by the whole organization.

While navigating the wheel, participative methods establish the information and commitment needed. Clients choose from a menu of options how to work each segment based on the business's needs. The primary methods used are Open Space Technology (OST), Whole Person Process Facilitation (WPPF)<sup>1</sup>, World Café (WC), and Appreciative Inquiry (AI). When one cycle of the wheel is complete, another cycle begins with every cycle operating at a deeper level. After the initial transformation process, this same Medicine Wheel Tool is used on an annual basis to assist the organization to build its capacity to successfully navigate constant change.

**Table of Uses**

<b>Description</b>	<b>Project Length/Key Events</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>
<p>Small, single-location organization responsible to government for community development</p> <p><i>Issue:</i> Improve performance, going from good to great</p> <p><i>Results:</i> Achieved and sustained 5 years later</p>	<p>Total project time:6 months <i>4 events over 8 days</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organization diagnosis and regeneration plan</li> <li>• Whole-Person Process Facilitation and</li> <li>• Open Space Technology meetings</li> </ul> <p><i>2 events over 6 days</i> Skill and knowledge development</p> <p><i>2 days</i> Coaching with leader</p>	<p>14–20 people (whole organization involved)</p>
<p>Medium-sized organization in a single location, responsible for national emergency information dissemination</p> <p><i>Issue:</i> Develop vision and strategic directions to guide organization for improved performance despite pending loss of their biggest contract.</p> <p><i>Results:</i> Vision and strategic directions now mobilize the organization to find its way in new circumstances (the serious layoff from the terminated contract)</p>	<p>Total project time:3 months <i>12 days</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organization diagnosis and regeneration plan</li> <li>• Whole-Person Process Facilitation</li> <li>• Open Space Technology</li> <li>• Appreciative Inquiry meetings</li> <li>• Strategy mapping</li> </ul> <p><i>3 events with leadership team</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diagnosis &amp; regeneration plan</li> <li>• Final strategy mapping</li> </ul> <p><i>3 events, whole organization</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whole-Person Process Facilitation</li> <li>• Open Space Technology</li> <li>• Appreciative Inquiry</li> </ul>	<p>80–120 people (whole organization)</p> <p>Leadership team of 10 people</p>
<p>Medium-sized, multiple-location health-care organization</p> <p><i>Issue:</i> Transform to culture of personal leadership and unity</p> <p><i>Results:</i> Achieved significant organizational transformation for the organization to thrive in a competitive global market</p>	<p>Total project time:12 months <i>40 days</i> <i>6 events whole staff</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whole-Person Process Facilitation</li> <li>• Open Space Technology</li> <li>• World Café</li> <li>• OpenSpace-Online Real-time and Appreciative Inquiry meetings</li> </ul>	<p>80–120 people Leadership team of 8 people</p>

Description	Project Length/Key Events	Number of Participants
	<p><i>8 events with leadership team</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diagnosis and regeneration plan</li> <li>• Establishing purpose, leadership approach, vision</li> <li>• Management planning focused on developing liberating structures and a participatory architecture</li> <li>• Leadership coaching</li> <li>• Strategy mapping</li> <li>• Feedback and evaluation</li> </ul> <p><i>4 workshops for specific skill development</i></p>	
<p>Large computer software organization of 10,000 people</p> <p><i>Issue:</i> Establish programs for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• leader development</li> <li>• leadership development</li> <li>• management skills development</li> <li>• organizational capacity enhancement</li> </ul> <p><i>Results:</i> Corporate university established as a Conscious Open Space Organization and developed skills to carry on the work over the coming years</p>	<p>Total project time: 18 months <i>40 days</i></p> <p><i>6 events whole staff of university</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whole-Person Process Facilitation</li> <li>• Open Space Technology</li> <li>• World Café</li> <li>• OpenSpace-Online and Appreciative Inquiry meetings</li> </ul> <p>8 events with leadership team of university</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diagnosis and regeneration plan</li> <li>• Establishing purpose, leadership approach, vision</li> <li>• Management planning focused on developing liberating structures and a participatory architecture</li> <li>• Leadership coaching</li> <li>• Strategy mapping</li> <li>• Feedback and evaluation</li> </ul> <p><i>4 workshops for specific skill development</i></p> <p><i>8 events with senior leaders of organization requiring 17 full days, 16 half days, 14 hours over six months for skill, knowledge, and capacity development</i></p>	<p>10 people</p> <p>University leadership team of 4 people to oversee development</p> <p>Organization leadership team of 50 people</p>

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## About the Author

Birgitt Williams ([birgitt@dalarinternational.com](mailto:birgitt@dalarinternational.com)), in partnership with her husband, Ward, created a holistic approach to business success, the Genuine Contact Program, the International Alliance for Mentoring, Dalar International Consultancy, and Bright Future Holdings. She is one of the pioneers of Open Space Technology and created the concept of the Conscious Open Space Organization. Her background is in cognitive psychology, clinical behavioral sciences, and the healing arts. She has had extensive international experience with a wide range of organizations, challenges, and opportunities.

## Where to Go for More Information

### References

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### Influential Source

Waldrop, M. Mitchell. *Complexity: The Emerging Science at the Edge of Order and Chaos*. New York: Simon & Shuster, 1993.

### Organizations

Dalar International Consultancy—<http://dalarinternational.com>  
Genuine Contact—<http://genuinecontact.net>

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<sup>i</sup> Whole-Person Process Facilitation (WPPF) is a means of facilitating meetings that taps into the whole person, into intellectual and intuitive wisdom, creating maximum choice and freedom for participants while simultaneously offering a guided facilitation approach. It uses the same principles and law as an OST meeting. For more information on WPPF, visit [http://www.genuinecontact.net/mtg\\_whole\\_person.html](http://www.genuinecontact.net/mtg_whole_person.html).