

Optimizing Energy: The Theory of Action

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Basic Assumptions Regarding the Optimization of Energy

- ❑ The fundamental direction of any system is to move toward greater and greater approximations of wholeness
- ❑ Optimizing energy is the clearest and most congruent path towards approximating wholeness
- ❑ Our leadership role is to facilitate the movement of the system in its fundamental, natural direction by optimizing energy

Questions About the Assumptions

- ❑ What do we mean by an “approximation of wholeness”.
Any system approximates wholeness to the degree it acknowledges, through interaction, the interdependence of all of its constituent parts. As this occurs, systems tend to define their constituent parts more broadly, creating an ever-expanding definition of wholeness.
- ❑ Why do you call this a fundamental, natural direction?
The mystics of every great faith express their ideal state in terms of being one with a universal force or energy. The body heals itself by literally regenerating cells to a point of original wholeness. Evidence regarding moving toward greater approximations of wholeness seems to exist at every level.
- ❑ Why do you say that energy optimization is the most congruent path toward these greater and greater approximations of wholeness?
Energy is an interactive phenomenon. Einstein rocked the world by defining energy as the interaction between mass and speed. Since energy is an interactive phenomenon it is most consistent with the comprehensive interdependence that characterizes any system.
- ❑ What does “facilitate the movement of the system” entail on the part of the leader?
Primarily it means serving as a catalyst for authentic interactions and defining the broader realities of wholeness.

Living Principles of Optimizing Energy

The Basic Nature of Energy

- A comprehensive interdependence characterizes our universe and our lives.
- Energy is an interactive phenomenon
- Relationships—the quality, authenticity, and diversity—are the conduits of energy
- Energy flows with direction and purpose rather than structure and form.
- Energy has a natural path that is often unseen, yet flows in a direction that fits the larger system dynamics. This path can only be seen from a systems point of view and distance.
- The form that energy takes will change frequently depending on the context

Energy Flow Enhancers

- Any action that recognizes and facilitates interdependence increases the flow of energy
- Connection (relationships, ideas, time, information, processes etc.) increases the flow of energy in the vast majority of cases
- The increase/generation/creation of energy depends on the connection to the larger system
- Authenticity increases the flow of energy between people, even if it leads to disagreement

Energy Flow Inhibitors

- Energy flow decreases when available energy is used for containment or self-protection
- Fear inhibits the flow of energy and facilitates the containment of potential energy.
- A focus on form instead of purpose can hinder the movement of energy
- When connection results in separation, self-protection or reinforced boundaries energy flow will decrease
- When connection is cut off, so is energy flow

Tracking Energy Flow

- Mechanistic or binary thinking make energy more difficult to see and feel
- Meaning can be used to trace the flow of energy in human systems.
- Any transformation requires energy. This energy can either be consumptive or sustainable/generative. If it is the latter, it allows people to move on to the next problem rather than maintaining the previous problem.

Energy Optimization: Lessons From Modern Physics

Modern physics has taught us two simple, yet extraordinary lessons, *nothing is as it seems* and *viewing point determines what is seen*. The table below outlines what things look like versus what modern physics tells us they actually are and the change in viewing point that corresponds to this new reality. The above two lessons, when applied to organizational leadership, can dramatically increase your ability to optimize energy.

Nothing Is As It Seems		Viewing Point Determines What Is Seen	
Things Look	But They Actually Are	Old Viewing Point	New Viewing Point
Independent	Interconnected	Who can make this work?	What interactions will make this work?
Predictable	Unpredictable	What do I need to control?	What can I help unleash?
Solid and Static	Mostly Space and Dynamic	How can I create change?	How can I transform energy?
Self Determined	Mutually Shaping	Which force should we rely on?	How do we incorporate the paradox?
Limited	Holographic	What are the boundaries?	What is the largest possibility?
Simple	Complex	How do I influence individual actions?	How do I influence the field?
Opposition Splits	Opposition Holds Together	How do I avoid resistance?	How do I welcome resistance?

Energy Optimization: Where To Start

How can energy optimization help you be an effective organizational leader? Below are principles and related questions presented in the context of a typical meeting setting.

Awareness of interdependence

What is the purpose that allows us to acknowledge interdependence in this group?
Do individuals act in a way that acknowledges or denies this interdependence?

Awareness of the existence of energy

On a scale from minus to plus ten, my intuitive rating of the energy level here is?
What basic form is the energy taking, expansive or constraining?

Awareness of the energy flow within a system

What are the points of interaction within this group?
Does energy flow increase or decrease with given interactions?
What is the direction of the flow of energy?

Awareness of resistance to the direction of energy flow in the room

Awareness of resistance as an essential element in the optimization of energy

What are the points within the group that disrupt energy flow?
How can I help sharpen the resistance?

Facilitating energy occurs through connection

What can I help unleash?
What interactions might facilitate incorporating the resistance?

A sustainable system unleashes the energy potential already present

Am I dredging—bypassing or constraining the energy potential in the system?
Am I taking it where it wants to go with energy potential already in place?

Energy optimization lies in the middle of the chaos/control continuum

Is there enough chaos to create authentic connections that optimize energy?
Is this system controlled enough so that one idea of wholeness is shared?

Energy optimization leaves people with a sense of being a part of something larger than themselves

Will people experience this time as positive, sustaining and generative?
What greater wholeness, larger possibility, have we reached today?

Are core values and key actions aligned so as to create a sustained optimization of energy?

Without control, would I trust the motivation and judgment of this group?

Questions Worth Asking

- ❑ Energy level is an extraordinary diagnostic. What stops us as leaders from effectively using this data?
- ❑ Are there critical aspects of human nature that must be served to optimize energy?
- ❑ Do individuals generally increase or decrease positive energy when faced with change? What implications for leadership behavior go with your answer?
- ❑ What does optimizing energy have to do with folks telling the truth as they see it?
- ❑ Is level of positive energy in a system even susceptible to influence or control?
- ❑ Energy within systems has often been called infectious. How does this infection work?
- ❑ If such an infection exists, how do we as leaders create an infection of positive energy?
- ❑ As leaders we have generally viewed resistance as a block to energy. What if resistance actually was a requirement for positive energy? How might that change our role as leaders?
- ❑ Change efforts most often fail, turning positive intent into just one more in a long string of management fads. How do we facilitate energy in the long term, or is this even possible?
- ❑ Without the active acknowledgment of interdependence is it possible to increase energy level?
- ❑ How can I use information about my own energy level to help in facilitating an increased energy level in the room?
- ❑ Are there specific leverage points for the optimization of energy?