



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE INSPIRATION Stephen Covey, renowned US author and self-help doyen, provided the inspiration for University of Cape Town Professor Kurt April's Choice Model. April recalls being interested when Covey observed: "Between stimulus and response is your freedom to choose" - in other words, while there are many things (including negative ones) coming your way all the time, how you respond to them is more important than trying to prevent them.

THE RESEARCH The problem, says April, is that Covey "never looked at what influences your choices". In his efforts to better understand the process, April conducted some 6 000 interviews which enabled him to narrow "freedom of choice" down into six areas - and gain some important insights.

Dimensions of CHOICE

FOR MANY OF US, DECISION-MAKING IS BEST ENCAPSULATED IN THE WORDS OF AMERICAN POET ROBERT FROST'S *THE ROAD NOT TAKEN*: "TWO ROADS DIVERGED IN A YELLOW WOOD/AND SORRY I COULD NOT TRAVEL BOTH/AND BE ONE TRAVELLER, LONG I STOOD..." WE FEAR LETTING GO AND WE OBSESS ABOUT MAKING THE "WRONG" CHOICES. WE SPOKE TO THREE WOMEN WHO THROUGH A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE PROCESS, BEGAN TO ENJOY THE JOURNEY.

WRITTEN BY **KURT APRIL**

The future, being uncertain, inevitably provokes stories of uncertainty in our minds – and uncertainty provokes anxiety, particularly about our aloneness in engaging the future. Rather than banish or ignore such stories, or resort to projecting our fears onto others, we have to acknowledge our stories, recognise the legitimacy of our fears and allow them to be voiced. Fortunately, most fears and worries aren't rational, although the strong hold groundless fears take over individuals is very real.

LETTING GO

"Letting go" has to do with "less adversarial stances", "less domination of others", "less control of ourselves" and "being vulnerable". It's about being honest with your feelings, admitting you can't "solve the issue" and being open about your doubts, fears and concerns. It requires a certain level of awareness and personal courage, because it's also about letting go of old notions of control, old habits, fixed expectations, old anxieties and old ways of seeing the world.

EVERYTHING IS AN OFFER

We have lots to learn in business from the world of improvisation. Improvisers work together, under extreme time pressure, with few resources, to create a satisfying result for a paying customer. Improvisers are adept at dealing with changing and unpredictable circumstances. The practices are a small set of rules that guide behaviour – the one that's important here is

treating "everything as an offer". Offers aren't always pretty or easy to see, but re-labelling mistakes and failures as offers often opens up new possibilities. They create a shift in your perception and move you into a relentlessly constructive mode, where your primary interest isn't "Do I like this?" or "Is this right?", but "What can I do with this?"

PATTERNED AWARENESS

Our minds face ongoing difficulty in reducing the unworkable complexity of the world to something we can grasp and act on. Instead of three dimensions, they must cope with many more: time, for example; importance, urgency, meaning and relevance. What reaches your conscious mind must come complete with a sense of *what it is*, *why it matters* and *what you need to do about it*. This mental perspective relies on trickery. The brain tricks the conscious mind into seeing something as complete, solid and ready for action, although there's little or no substance to justify the picture. We believe we understand our world. In reality, all we have is an incomplete model, dressed up to look like the real thing.

How does your mind trick you into thinking you have a complete picture? By using your assumptions, values, beliefs, opinions and expectations – which can be dangerous and unreliable. Patience, awareness, relationships with people, information and things which are different to our usual experience/knowledge are the only antidotes to false and hurried assumptions. >

**Tshepiso
Ramotsehoa**

CONSCIENCE

Times have changed – the battleground of warfare that Aristotle once felt was the only place to find true courage now depends less on physical courage of the individual warrior and more on technology, information and relationships (this is particularly true of business leaders). However, if the need for physical courage is dwindling, the opposite is true for moral courage.

Morally courageous leaders appear to have at least five attributes in common: (a) greater confidence in principles than in personalities; (b) high tolerance for ambiguity, exposure and personal loss; (c) acceptance of deferred gratification and simple rewards; (d) independence of thought; and (e) formidable persistence and determination. There's a heightened awareness in these leaders of the immensity of their own social and moral purpose.

Standing up for what we think is right isn't always easy, but it may well become easier if we cultivate the habit of doing so.

INDEPENDENT WILL

Real character development begins with the humble recognition that we aren't in charge – that principles ultimately govern. Building character and creating quality of life, through conscious choice, is a function of aligning our beliefs and behaviours with these universal principles. These principles are impersonal, external, factual, objective and self-evident. They operate regardless of our awareness of them, or our obedience to them.

This gives you the ability to say “no” when you have to and admit a mistake when you recognise it. Your own independent will frees you from the influence of pressure or value groups, and allows you to be proactive in any situation. Theorists now claim that the degree to which we've developed our independent will is measured by our personal integrity, and “integrity” is the value we place on our principled selves.

IMAGINATION

What possibilities have you not considered

because “it's never been done that way before”? Use your imagination to create new possibilities and solutions.

Your call to imagination is also your call to become proactive and mature, to move beyond the realm of mere “good intention”. If we wish to be open to new possibilities, we need to be aware of the unexpected ways in which they can surface. Something can seem so ordinary that we can't imagine why anybody would want to pay attention to it. Yet perhaps this “ordinariness” is the source of our salvation. It keeps our gift within human dimensions and protects us from the hidden dangers of becoming overblown. And within the “ordinariness” of the gift, there's something else that *is* extraordinary. **D**

• Kurt April is a Professor at the Graduate School of Business of the University of Cape Town, as well as MD of LICM Consulting and Director of Performance Through Inclusion (SA).

The Thrill of CHANGE

These three South African women don't just embrace change – they live it. DESTINY discovers that when choices and changes collide with passion and purpose, the results are spectacular

WRITTEN BY CARA BOUWER

THE YOUNG GUN: TSHEPISO RAMOTSEHOA

At just 21, Tshepiso Ramotsehoa (www.tsheto.co.za) is the youngest consciousness coach in Africa. Fresh out of matric she embarked on a voyage to practise her passion for inspiring other young women.

Three years of training with Cape Town-based Marc Steinberg's Creative Consciousness International followed and today she's coaching people three times her age. “I battled with self-confidence at first,” she admits. “I had to believe in myself.” Her brother's death in October last year highlighted the importance of pursuing her dreams.

What holds us back from making choices and changing?

Fear. We're afraid to put ourselves first, so we end up as zombies. I wish people

would get out of their boxes and use them as platforms instead.

You have a particular focus on guiding South African youth. Why?

The issue of poor choices really begins at high school. Grade 11 and 12 students don't know what their passions are, but these are the young people who need clarity and that's why I want to coach them.

How do you help people align their passions with their choices?

Over time, people do become conditioned to what's familiar. But once they open up to what I offer, it's amazing how they shift and reconnect with their dreams. It starts with knowing what makes you happy. Ask yourself: “What would make me spring out of bed each morning?” Be clear about it. Then you can make decisions aligned to your passion.

RAMOTSEHOA'S TIPS FOR HANDLING CHANGE

- Put your fear aside. Acknowledge it's there, but set the context you want to create for yourself. You have to create your life and take responsibility for it.
- Make choices that are aligned to the picture you have of your future.
- Maintain your integrity. If you say you'll do something, then do it.
- Communicate – in particular, with your children, if you have any. Talk to them and help them make the right decisions.

THE RISK-TAKER: MOKGADI MATLHAKO

Eighteen years ago, nine-year-old Mokgadi Matlhako moved to the US with her sister and mother, Mamadi, who enrolled at



Emory University in Atlanta. The tight family unit grew up divorced from their extended family. In 18 years, Matlhako never returned to her native land – until she took a massive personal and professional risk and flew to SA on a two-week return ticket to try to secure a FIFA World Cup licence for the unique National Basketball Association (NBA) handbags she makes in the US. The risk paid off and, after penning the contract with FIFA at the tender age of 26, her company – Kgadi – is now gearing up to roll out 32 handbag designs for the 2010 FIFA World Cup.

How much of a risk was it coming back to SA?

It was going into the unknown. My mother took a risk by taking us into the unknown in the US, so I'm following in her footsteps. Professionally, I'm fortunate because people take risks on me. Personally, it was a bitter-sweet experience: we'd missed out on so much... I hadn't buried any relations in 18 years and in the last few months, I've buried two cousins and an uncle.

Tell us about the NBA licence

At college my passion was going to Madison Square Garden for basketball games. I was studying design at the New York Fashion Institute, so I put my two passions together. The bags are made from the same fabric as the players' shirts, with added leather accents, and sell for \$110 [about R1 210].

How much will the 2010 FIFA World Cup bags sell for?

The high-end products will be \$110 –

but we're also working on an entry-level handbag.

You're also looking at a tie-up with Jenna Clifford.

Yes – Jenna's currently trying out product samples. They'd be higher-end handbags with the "Dream Big" rose. But it's a work in progress.

What's your favourite quote?

"Impossible is nothing."

MATLHAKO'S TIPS FOR HANDLING CHANGE

- Don't just say it – believe in yourself. There's a big difference.
- You have to be willing to take a risk – if you fail, you'll cry, but then you'll move on.
- Don't have regrets. For me, not knowing is worse than knowing.



THE EXPERT: RUTH TEARLE

Cape Town-based Ruth Tearle, head of management consultancy Change Designs (www.changedesigns.co.za), is a busy woman. She's a strategy and change consultant, a publisher, a trainer and the author of inspirational books such as *Blackboards*, *Bubbles & Cappuccinos*, *Ride the Wild Tiger* and *Mastering Personal Change*. Tearle is no stranger to difficult choices in her own life: "I've experienced many changes, from being married to divorced and married again, from working in a corporate to starting my own consulting firm and from being a consultant to

becoming an author and publisher. None have been easy, but they've all helped shape the person I am today."

Does fear cause us to resist change?

Fear is a very powerful driver in our lives. The opposite of fear is courage, which everyone has – but we often focus our courage on the wrong things.

Should we alter our thinking to see changes as "offers"?

Often when I ask groups of people in corporations for associations that come to mind when they hear the word "change", they come up with negative concepts, like "frustration", "fear", "more work" and "pain". Yet when I ask them: "What would be wonderful with regard to change?", they name terms with positive associations, such as "growth", "learning", "achievement", "success", "becoming powerful" and "solving our problems". So, yes, we need to alter the way we view change.

TEARLE'S TIPS FOR HANDLING CHANGE

Tearle explains that when a change occurs, we go through the following stages:

1. **Resistance.** "Change requires us to surrender what we know and trust. We try to hold onto our old habits. It takes every ounce of courage we have to finally accept that we have to let go. And when we do, we spiral into chaos."
2. **Chaos.** "This is a time when nothing works for us. We can't go back to the old way, but we haven't mastered the new one yet."
3. **Creativity.** "When nothing makes sense any more, we tend to look inwards. We re-evaluate our beliefs, our values and our purpose as we try to discover who we could be. We experiment with new ways of being. Then, as we practise them, they become habits, and we go to a new sense of control and confidence." **D**

ONLINE BONUS: Find out how to shake off those limiting old thought patterns at: www.destinyconnect.com.

PHOTOGRAPHERS: MIKE BLIGNAUT & VANESSA VAN VREDEN. MAKE-UP: KARINDA RISTIC