

### Chapter III – Merlin's Art

*"To accomplish your desire, you must make use of such arts as have not been heard of in your time."* –  
Merlin to King Arthur

Merlin has been invoked before – even in reference to modern organizational challenges. In early iterations, before he was known for magic and funny hats, he was thought to be a Druid prophet. This prophetic thread is vital as we discuss the neurology, typology, and unique practices of integral process leaders. IPL's see literally things differently. Their mindsight is future focused and floats nimbly across the data most people engage in a much more sequential and literal way. Carl Jung (1921) suggested rather emphatically that "there would be no Old Testament prophets without introverted intuition" (see the EEG wireframe on the right in Chapter 2). Introverted intuition lends itself to accurate predictions- especially in the long term. If we could scan Merlin's brain it would fall on the right-hand side of our diagrams and his personality would be one of the rarest and most misunderstood.

According to Jewish scholar and author A.J. Heschel (1962), prophets were not only seers, but garment-rending, irascible souls who were tormented by wayward, destructive leadership. They were hyperbolic at times, sensitive to human suffering, masters of the dream world, and audacious critics *and* advocates of kings. Like Merlin, sometimes they lived in the wilderness and sometimes they lived in the palaces. They took the helm at times and at other times and were executed by insecure, paranoid leaders. They were the first management consultants and they have descendants.

When performance leaders look out across the Egyptian desert, they see pyramids. Their first impressions are of precision, scope, scale, grandeur, and achievement. To their brains, it feels very good. On the other hand, integral process leaders are less impressed. They tend to overlook the grandeur and more easily focus on the human and environmental downside to progress. They see the injustice, the hypocrisy, and the waste. They see the shortcuts and the end runs. They are conscious of the death preserved between the bricks and the broken line of the horizon. In times both ancient and modern, they shake their heads at oppression, unmitigated drive, and the ultimate impermanence of achievement. They are innately aware of the broken eggs used to make often mediocre omelettes.

Integral process leaders sense a more balanced way. They draw from a deep reservoir of cooperative energy. In their hands, conflict and complexity are converted into insight, learning, growth, adaptation, retention, engagement, enthusiasm, loyalty, and sustainability. This is the real magic of modern Merlins. What is kryptonite to performance leaders is an easy fast ball down the middle for IPL's – and vice versa. The very things that drain performance leaders of energy and trigger bad behavior, are the things that invigorate, challenge, and validate the process leader. Their flow state is human complexity and relationships. Moral, philosophical, intellectual, and behavioral inconsistencies are detected immediately, taken seriously, and resolved effectively by these types – sometimes without a formal intervention. Integral process leaders read peoples' inner realities -often before people are aware of these themselves. Their brains demand authenticity and purity. Conflict and complexity are easy adversaries for Integral process leaders. To the uninitiated, it may look like magic.

Integral process leadership lends itself to insightful communication, multi-factorial perspectives, early identification of problems, and an easy handling of interpersonal tensions and pain. In addition to

validation from decades of personality theorists' research and the new indicators from neuroscientific exploration, their gifts above align with my own observations inside dozens of systems.

The measurable contributions of Integral Performance Leadership include:

- High morale (positive employee experience, engagement, commitment and synergy)
- Authentic trust
- Unity and alignment
- Authentic inclusion
- Good stewardship and financial accountability
- Talent attraction and retention
- Environmental care
- Strategic wisdom
- Crisis, conflict and scandal averted or managed at low levels
- Sustainability

IPL's enable and deliver these outcomes within systems via their training and temperament. Their skill set is highly aligned with that of mental health professionals, but also of priests, coaches, and friends. It is a list of those things "not heard of in our time" or at least not heard of as business advantages. It includes a deep and natural expertise in things like:

- |                                 |                        |
|---------------------------------|------------------------|
| • Inquiry                       | • Tolerating ambiguity |
| • Compassion                    | • Non-dual thinking    |
| • Listening                     | • Embracing mystery    |
| • Humor, levity and perspective | • Patience             |
| • Pattern recognition           | • Transparency         |

Performance leaders may recognize these words and they may strive to demonstrate some or all of them, but no matter what, there are those among us that practice these arts with a natural ease and sustainability that is quite uncommon – 1 or 2 percent of people perhaps. Their temperament positions them for above-average mastery of cooperative energy. In addition to a natural predilection toward these skills and abilities, IPL's are trained. IPL's are recruited from the ranks of I/O psychologists, positive psychologists, counselors, social workers, and other mental health professions.

On a day to day basis, IPL contributions can be hard to detect, especially in a workforce made up of primarily performance leaders – more than 90% of people. Jung described introverted intuitive contributions as being recognized for greatness and impact primarily when looking back. He went on to say that among the more pragmatic types, nothing seems more worthless than expressions of introverted intuition. Philosopher Lao Tzu described leadership as a shadow presence and IPL's are nothing if not shadowy. Performance leaders not used to Merlins being around may initially question their value and role.

"What do you even do around here?" they may ask.

Of course, real IPL's facilitate trainings and group processes. They coach, they mediate, they administer assessments, and they observe and report. However, their real contribution is in their natural approach to interpersonal exchanges so nuanced they are almost invisible. Paul Watzlawick, Janet Helmick Bevin, and Don D. Jackson (1967) describe the illusory and "as yet uninterpreted calculus of the pragmatics of human communication whose rules are observed in successful, and broken in disturbed, communication." They were ahead of their time. Communication is very complex. What is really going when two or more people interact is far more advanced than most people realize. It is a lightning fast, deeply entwined interplay between complex organisms. It includes the non-verbal, the paraverbal, meta-communications, proxemics, contextual factors, historical factors, and on and on. Fortunately, it is the native tongue of the IPL.

This capacity for cooperative energy manifests during heated exchanges, tense meetings, awkward silences, and difficult conversations which constitute the primordial origins of organizational pathology. The IPL models and embodies compassion, calm, and optimism. That someone is angry, embarrassed or disengaged at work does not leave the IPL in shock, silence, frustration or paralysis. IPL's have therapeutic inclinations and training to recognize negative feelings, validate emotional experiences, and translate all that energy in a positive direction. The timing of their smiles, nods, hand gestures, and "hmm's" is unexpectedly powerful. Where a performance leader can naturally and quickly organize a fiasco on the factory floor, a freeway, or spreadsheet, the IPL can deftly navigate a disastrous human moment – the kind that creates organizational cholesterol. Performance leaders cannot help but process via competitive energy filters like "What does this mean for the bottom line?", "Who do they think they are?", "What will people think of me when my employee is struggling like this?", "We don't have time for this", "Where in the holy hell is this heading?", "I don't know how to respond", and "There's no crying in baseball!"

For performance leaders, emotional moments, probing questions, and uninvited suggestions are allergens, but more tangible business and tactical problems are gateways into what Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1990) described so well as 'flow'. IPL's and performance leaders face different barriers to flow and need each other to navigate these barriers in pursuit of organizational effectiveness and optimal performance.

When an emotionally dicey question emerges during a meeting, the IPL can lean in with his or her calming gestures and exquisite timing and say, "Yeah, so true Allan, great question. I think we might all suspect this is a big deal that requires some care, so glad you brought this up.... Hmm, my impression is that... How is that sitting with everyone?" The performance leader can adopt a posture of a deep listener presiding over a valuable process, even if on the inside they are going, "What the hell? Allan has some real nerve to bring that up. I mean, what the hell, Allan? Okay, well, I'm glad Merlin was in here, otherwise somebody would be toast." All the while on the outside they can honor their desire to appear in control and unflappable – perhaps even gracious because they aren't pressured to stretch into weaker cognitive territory. When the emotional bomb has been defused, the performance leader can re-engage using their subject matter expertise, experience, and problem-solving powers....

*Stay tuned for the release of the full book exploring Integral Process Leadership.*