

The Space Between Knowing and Doing To see far is one thing. To go there, that is another - *Brancusi*.

It is a perplexing tendency to know something to be true and yet to act against it. It is a reminder that we do not always act logically, even though it is implicit in our structures that we should. It has long been recognised that there are values we espouse and others that we act upon. Because people read more meaning into what we do than what we say, the space between what we aim for and what we achieve is ripe for development.

Our every waking moment presents the opportunity to act in a number of ways. Some will take us closer to what we aim for than others. But which choice we make is always our decision. Even when our habits obscure the fact of our choice, we make it. When the pressure seems overwhelming the choice is still ours. This is the first characteristic of the space we are exploring. The choice is ours alone, and the seducers need our consent to succeed.

As leaders, by acting, not only do we convey a message, we *are* the message. If we act on our beliefs we sound out an unmistakable and authentic ring which powerfully impacts on the development of those we lead. But this is a by-product rather than our primary aim. We cannot change others, only ourselves. To focus on the shortcomings of our colleagues is to take our eye of the ball.

“The seducers need our consent to succeed”

The choice that is in line with our aims seems often to be the harder route to follow. It feels easier to succumb to our immediate wants than to choose something that offers a longer term reward. It feels like walking up hill when sliding down would be so much easier. Yet we know that having reached the bottom we will resent the part of us that gave up the struggle.

More than this we have the ability to rationalise to ourselves that we *should* let go, that it is best for all concerned that we do, that we have no choice. We can even fool ourselves that we are still climbing, when, to others, we gave up long ago. All of these beguiling self-deceits shield our gaze from the choice before us – to step toward our goal or further from it.

The space we are concerned with also features a deceptive timeframe. Often we are oriented to a

point in the future, a vision of a time when we have achieved our aspirations. This idealised picture can be too far from where we are today and the effort to get there, beyond us. If instead we lower our horizon, to the next choice we have to make, we find it is smaller and more within our ability. It provides greater focus on something we can do and can take us one step further in the direction we aspire to travel.

Like the future, the past can cause us to falter. Sometimes we allow past events to determine our choices. Habits and limiting self-beliefs act as weights holding us back. But beliefs are things we hold not things that hold us. They are not facts and by collecting contrary evidence we can often expose them as being of our own invention.

“Beliefs are things we hold, not things that hold us”

By maintaining focus on *ourselves in the present moment* we channel our energies in ways we can manage. After the first step comes the next, still in the present, still under our direct control. Each step provides tangible evidence of our progression and motivation for the next step. As we regain our control, the steps get fewer and the gradient easier as new habits become introduced. Now we can turn our attention to where we've been and where we're going once again.

Creating a vision of the future and recognising the past are important steps in moving forward, but they are not enough in themselves nor are they where the hard work lies.

Implicit in the sculptor Brancusi's words is the exercise of willpower over the difficulties we face. When we think of willpower in relation to ourselves in the present moment we become hugely powerful and effective in relation to the choice before us. By making the choice conscious we become the master not the servant. This self-directed control is what keeps us focused on our track and bridges the gap between what we know and what we do.

Of course there will be times, even for the best of us, when we take the easy option. For some this spells disaster; they choose to interpret a slip as real evidence that we have fooled ourselves. Others choose to replace this label of hypocrisy with irony – a slip only serves to highlight the difficult task we have set ourselves. Using this more generative framing we are able to get back up after a short fall, learn what we can and begin again.