



Dedicated to the development of capacity and capabilities in adults for change and growth.

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## Out of chaos emerges opportunity

**To:** Prickel, Don

**Sent:** Wednesday, July 17, 2002 8:09 AM

**Subject:** Spirit Mt. Offered me the job!

Don, I will be using my second student loan to make means meet, but what the hell. Someone wants me. :-) If you had not personally passed on the position announcement, this would not have happened. Thank you so much. By the way, did you have a chance to re-review my learning philosophy and did you happen to read my essay. Would love to discuss. Take care and talk with you soon.

### *Discussion of critical leap*

On July 3, I e-mailed Don and wrote, "...I have no confidence in what I am doing and if it is at all valuable." By the time I received my job offer on the 17<sup>th</sup>, I was demoralized and frustrated. Was I doing good work? Was I an asset to the cohort? Was anyone ever going to hire me? As my resources ended, this offer could not have come at a better time. It was great timing for both Spirit Mountain Casino and me. More importantly, this was the start of my career in OD and training. The Spirit Mountain Casino opportunity has transformed my career into the career I had envisioned. The only difference, I did not realize it would come so close to home and in the hospitality and gaming industry. This has turned out to be the perfect position for me and I am now building the foundation for the rest of my career.

Not long after joining Spirit Mountain Casino, another event created deep learning for me and a strengthening of my relationship with Don. A series of e-mails between Don and I created a critical learning experience that solidified the importance of conversation for me. Without creating a conversation, I misunderstood Don's input on questions that I had asked via e-mail and by the time our electronic communication was finished, we had really created a chasm. Don called me on a Saturday and through conversation, we both had an extraordinary learning experience and this will forever ward me off of trying to create understanding without engaging in conversation with someone. This was one of the most important learning experiences I have had. I have created other issues through past e-mails and I believe it is simply a lack of courage to address an issue directly that prevented me from engaging in conversation. It is oh so much easier just to fire off a note, but at what cost? Conversation is so important and is a dying practice in our culture. My understanding of the significance of conversation has had an everlasting impact on my future.

### *Alignment with metaphor and learning philosophy and References to literature*

Out of chaos emerges order. My critical experience is certainly part of my journey as described in my metaphor. Yes it is a journey and yes it is experiential as Kolb (1984) describes in his work on experiential learning. I am able to relate to the absence of conversation and what that can create as well as the extraordinary learning that occurs through conversation. The experience

with Don solidified the importance of conversation in creating learning as described in Baker, Kensen, & Kolb (2002). Even more important to me was the extraordinary lesson I received in living systems.

Intellectually knowing that order will emerge out of chaos does not mitigate the pain and apprehension experienced during chaos. This deep understanding helps me empathize with others faced with chaos, as so many are in our dynamically changing world and organizations. In Capra (1996) and Wheatley (1999), the topic of order out of chaos is deeply explored and my experiences during this time gave me a living laboratory to experience what the authors were describing. Living systems thinking really came alive for me during the summer of 2001. I embraced the lessons learned and after several conversations with Don, my life in chaos was fully revealed to me and this helped me see emergence as a possibility rather than seeing no way out.

### *References*

Baker, A., Jensen, P., & Kolb, D. (2002). *Conversational learning: An experiential approach to knowledge creation*. Westport, CT: Quorum Books.

Capra, F. (1996). *The web of life: A new scientific understanding of living systems*. New York: Anchor Books.

Kolb, D. (1984). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Wheatley, M. (1999). *Leadership and the new science: Discovering order in a chaotic world* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers