

Part 1

Setting the Scene

'Noticing is the art of all arts.'

Henry David Thoreau

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Who do you see in the mirror?

Deeply etched in my memory is the very first time I ever stood in front of a totally mirrored wall at Music College. Dance classes were a required part of the curriculum for everyone, regardless of what course you were on. The idea behind it was that dance taught core strength, discipline and the ability to use your body well (whatever that means ...).

Now, anyone who knows me will be well aware that any style of dancing is not really my thing. My body was just not made for dancing. Someone once asked me in a nightclub if I was having a fit – I was just enjoying the music and bopping around in my own way!

Anyway, there I stood in my black leotard and jazz shoes, gazing at myself in the floor to ceiling mirror. I was fairly shocked. How can one person look a complete idiot in such a simple outfit? I thought it must be the mirrors that offered the warped view but quickly realized that it was, in fact, me. It was excruciatingly uncomfortable. I didn't like the instant feedback that I was getting. I felt incredibly vulnerable and even if I averted my gaze, I was still only aware of the 6ft dancing ironing board I could see in front of me.

I will talk much more about the feedback loop that exists within the performance arena later on. Performers rely heavily on that constant choice point that comes with feedback. The belief is that each insight offers the opportunity to make an upgrade, to hit refresh and to Jolt.

When did you last proactively seek out feedback and insight from your team and your audience?

So, before we go any further into the book, I want **you** to take a look in the mirror. Don't worry; you don't need to wear a leotard for this, unless you really want to! You can go and look in a real mirror if it helps, otherwise the mirror in your own mind will work just as well.

★ Over to You

Not everyone I invite to do this is up for it. Looking in the mirror can be uncomfortable. If you're serious about making an upgrade and smooching with extraordinary, this reflection time is critical.

With every choice you make, comes a consequence. Choosing to look at yourself comes with a consequence, as does deciding to skip this part ...

...You choose.

If you are genuinely determined to dance with extraordinary, looking in the mirror will need to become a part of your core practice. Self-reflection presents you with the opportunity to transform.

As you now begin to gaze through the Artful lens, it is time to share with you the core principles that are the essence of an extraordinary performance. When you begin to hone each one, you too will edge closer towards extraordinary ...

Now consider the following questions. Take enough time to do this well. Scribble down your answers.

Daring: How much time do you currently spend 'daring' yourself? These are the moments when your inner chatter encourages you to push beyond, have a go, create a rumpus, dream big and push harder. These are the moments when you *hear* your *enabling* inner chatter

and act on it. How much do you currently dare others? When do you cajole your team into flirting with extraordinary or when do you leave them being ordinary?

Connection: How well do you connect with your audience? When did you last check in with them to understand if they are getting what they need? How have you upgraded the way in which you connect? When did you last ask them what they need from you to be delivering an extraordinary experience?

Impact: How well do you make an impact? We all know folks that can make an impact in a negative way by being mood hoovers, dismissive, rude, unaware ... but where does your brand truly land well with your audience? Where does it let you down? Where are you turning your audience off?

Possibility: How much time do you spend carving out what is possible as opposed to what is *impossible*? How would your colleagues describe your use of questions and teasing out of new thinking? How well do you shift negative thoughts, your own and those of others, into possibility?

Radar on: Having your radar on means being present – in that moment only with your peripheral vision and awareness ramped up to full. **Only** in this state will you create choices. How much of your day do you spend with the radar on and up? In what situations? With whom? When are you so lost in your own thoughts that you fail to even switch the radar on?

Invention: When you trip yourself up and get in your own way, how well do you invent new thinking and new actions that will allow you to move forward? How much of the *new story* for your organization are you inventing, dreaming and sharing? Where do you dream small and where do you dream BIG?

Feedback loop: Are you a part of a feedback culture? How do you role model the receiving and giving of high quality insights? When did

you last offer real precision *feedforward*? When did you last review your own input? When did you last actively seek out feedback from your audience?

Commitment: How would you describe your commitment to achieving the extraordinary? In what contexts are you driven to keep exploring all opportunities and pushing each one to its edge? Where are you in 'try' mode – that state where there is no sense of failing and yet no hunger to be the best version of yourself either? On a scale of 0–10 (10 REALLY wanting extraordinary outcomes), where would you say you spend most of your day?

Vulnerability: Howard Shultz, CEO of Starbucks, once said that: 'The hardest part about being a leader is demonstrating or showing vulnerability.' How comfortable are you with leaving your ego at the door? It is easy to get drawn into a cycle of needing to be seen as a strong action hero. Do you view your own vulnerability as a strength? Where are you comfortable displaying vulnerability and where are you not?

Lots of questions to ponder, so it is worth spending a little extra time on this part. Some of the questions will have provoked a sharp intake of breath, others less so. However, the ones that hit a nerve are the ones to tinker with first.

Now, with each of those principles I want you to consider your Upgrade; what is your new version for each of the above? If you were truly committed to bringing your hardware and software up to date to deliver extraordinary outcomes for your audience, what would you now need to do differently?

Write it down. Make it specific. Make sure it is something that will add significant value. Consider how it will make a difference to your audience.

We will tease these upgrades out in more detail as you work through the book, but for now, if you were to announce each upgrade, what

would you tell people? Again, write it down. Seeing it in front of you, in your own handwriting, changes the way you respond to it, which ultimately impacts the action that you will take. Part of your quest towards becoming extraordinary will be that you announce your outcomes and upgrades. I often observe leaders who leave their outcomes and upgrades sitting quietly in a corner of their heads, deep in the belief that if they don't tell people then no one will hold them to account. The trouble with that is that the very act of someone holding you to account, and you holding yourself accountable, sits at the core of being extraordinary. It demonstrates your commitment, how daring you are, and will be the cue for those around you to do the same.

Announce your upgrades and then be accountable for what you do and do not deliver!

Playing at your edge

'Oooh no, I couldn't possibly do that. It's way out of my comfort zone ...'

I frequently hear that phrase trotted out by people. It rolls off the tongue with such ease and is habitually used as a justification for why they can't do something or don't want to dare themselves enough. Maybe you've also used it before? Like most things in life, if you tell yourself something over and over again it soon becomes the truth in your head and therefore your reality. This will be the same for the enabling stories you tell yourself as the disabling ones!

When I hear the statement above, I usually follow up with a few questions:

How do you know that your comfort zone is *there*?

Were you born with it right *there*?

Can you not move it?!

The truth of the matter is: comfort zones are a pure invention. There, I said it.

Take some time and ask yourself the following questions. Again, it's a good idea to scribble down your answers. If you are eager to get on to the Jolts, you could easily skip this bit. Stay with it. Give this some time now. The more personal insight you gain now, the quicker you will be able to play with the Jolts.

Where does your own comfort zone come out to play?

In what situations do you tell yourself, or others, that what is being asked of you is out of your comfort zone?

Can you see your comfort zone? Touch it? Does it feel different when you knock against it?

In what way does it help you or hinder you?

What would it take for you to move it or blow it up?

Don't get me wrong; when you first invented your 'comfort zone' and decided where to put it, it would have been the right choice for you in that precise moment. As we have already agreed though, the world has moved on. Your 'comfort zone' was a fabulous invention for keeping you safe. The question to ask yourself right now though is this:

If you were to leave your comfort zone exactly where it is, how will it help you achieve what you want?

Will it help you?

Will it be a lever towards extraordinary?

In many of the workshops I run, we bring in a handful of the most extraordinary musicians. Together we unwrap the components of music, singing and performance as an immersive experience, for leaders to learn what being extraordinary really means. Rather than just building the intellectual understanding, which most people get easily, deep learning and change come about when people are in it, doing it and being it. I'm well aware that working in this way presses plenty of hot buttons, provokes discomfort and yet also unlocks immense possibility. When I spot a hot button, chances are I want to press it. You have been warned.

I recently ran a workshop where a particularly senior leader from the organization was resisting the chance to sing on his own in front of his colleagues. (I can sense you are already eager to be a part of one of my workshops ...).

His reasoning? *'It's out of my comfort zone!'*

What ensued was a bizarre scene that some might believe was set up in advance to illustrate a point. If only I were clever enough to set something like this up.

'So, tell me what's going on?'

'It's way too far out of my comfort zone to sing on my own...'

'Ok, show me whereabouts your comfort zone is ...'

He marked out the boundary with absolute precision ...

'It starts about ... here.'

'Ok, if I were to pick it up and say ... move it over here, would you then be more comfortable to sing?'

'Oh yes, sure I would.'

'Ok, let's do that then ...'

I moved his comfort zone (not really ... as it wasn't actually there!), he stood up and proceeded to sing to the group. When he finished, he looked at me expectantly.

'My mother always told me to put things back exactly where I found them so let me just move it back to ... here ... that's where it was wasn't it?'

'Yep, that's about it.'

'So, would you now get up and sing again?'

'Ha. You're joking. No way!'

Aren't people fabulous? It was the most bizarre scenario played out by someone who genuinely believed this thing existed. Simply by moving his *invented comfort zone*, something that had not been possible suddenly became possible.

I went on to explain to him that his comfort zone was not really a thing that I could move. It isn't an actual wall that physically stops you in your tracks. You don't really brush up against it. Yet sometimes that is exactly how it feels.

I am amazed at the number of times I observe very bright and switched on leaders shy away from the buttock-clenching opportunities that sit in front of them. They hit a choice point that most of them don't even notice as they are running on auto-pilot. The habit kicks in, they tell themselves it is out of their 'comfort zone' and they close down the opportunity.

There is a common theme in every instance – the comfort zone is a myth! The moment they sail close to anything that feels as if it could be their edge, their limit or their boundary, they know that by pushing a notch further, they will begin to open up the possibility of creating something different and therefore the potential to be extraordinary. The hunger for extraordinary is so strong there is rarely any negotiation required.

At some point, once you have practised this enough, it will become your new habit. Until that time arrives, I have a few questions to help get you moving. Take a moment to think about a situation you currently have on your radar where you know you are stuck with your ‘comfort zone’ limitation ... Got one? Good ...

What does having your comfort zone right there do for you?

In what way does it protect you and serve you well?

What is the risk in doing that?

What is the opportunity?

You may not feel comfortable enough to put dynamite sticks under your ‘comfort zone’ yet, of course. So if you were to move it by just a notch, perhaps even something as small as 1 degree, what would that allow you to do differently now?

★ Over to You

Taking these Jolts, making an upgrade and heading for extraordinary will undoubtedly require you to *move* or *explode* your invented 'comfort zone'.

So, are you going to leave it where it is or budge it somewhere else? Every choice comes with consequences ...

It might be as simple as in my story – you pick it up and move it without any fuss.

If it doesn't feel quite that easy yet, revisit the questions above and now decide on your next move.