

The Wisdom of Robert Quinn

A Biographical Sketch

Bob Quinn is a noted educator and consultant working with business and government leaders to understand and manage organizational life. He has written several books including *Deep Change (Discovering the Leader Within)* from which these quotes are taken. Bob is currently a Professor of organizational behavior and human resources management at the University of Michigan.

Examination of Consciousness

Examination of consciousness is a fundamental discipline for people and organizations seeking to lead intentional and purposeful lives. Bob Quinn, in his book *Deep Change*, offers a set of reflective questions for individuals as they examine how they might be called to change. He also offers a companion set of questions for how individuals see the organization in which they work focusing on how it might be called to change. It is this dialogue of the individual with him/herself and with the organization that is so powerful.

Some Helpful Observations

"Deep change differs from incremental change in that it requires new ways of thinking and behaving. It is change that is major in scope, discontinuous with the past and generally irreversible. The deep change effort distorts existing patterns of action and involves taking risk. Deep change means surrendering control. (Emphasis mine)"

"To bring deep change, people have to "suffer" the risks. And to bring deep change in others, people have to reinvent themselves. Perhaps the most difficult thing to comprehend about deep change has to do with our relationships with others."

"Over time, I began to understand that I needed to consider the reality of death more fully-and not just physical death but all forms of decay. It was important that I engage it, envision it, make it come alive, and see it for what it might be...Conceivably, upon reexamining my views on decay and ultimately death, I would have the discipline and courage to engage deep change."

"What we fail to see is that our success by the old formula is like a map that has guided us to the edge of known territory. We cross a line into new territory and when we try to apply our old map there, strange and frustrating things happen. We get into a vicious cycle. We continue to explore our new and problematic territory with an old map, and that makes our problems worse."

"Deep change (for the organization) requires more than the identification of the problem and a call for action. It requires looking beyond the scope of the problem and finding the actual source of the trouble. The real problem is frequently located where we would least expect to find it, inside ourselves. Deep change requires an evaluation of the ideologies behind the organizational culture. This process happens only when someone cares enough to exercise the courage to uncover the issues no one dares to recognize or confront."

"When we do decide to initiate action, there are not written guarantees, no insurance policies that will save us if we fail. The possibility of failure is a constant companion who walks beside every real leader. Leaders cope with this presence because they understand that whenever they sacrifice their principles for pressure, both they and the system take another step to slow death."

"Overcoming our fears and facing the challenges of change can be a painstaking process. To champion our vision, we must be willing to deviate from conventional methods, strive through the seemingly endless series of hurdles and roadblocks, and continue confidently and with courage toward our goal. We must accept the fact that we have the power and ability to change.

Over the years, I have become a strong believer in the fact that the external world can be changed by altering our internal world. This, however, is not a popular theory."