



A new paradigm
for leaders: The
**MACRO-
TO-MICRO**
approach

Joan Marques reviews the new millennium paradigm, the macro-to-micro approach, in which leaders first consider the macro needs and then formulate ways to fulfil those needs. In this perspective profits are reformatted from a starting point to a rewarding consequence of need-fulfilling actions, and gratification of all stakeholders at all levels is guaranteed. The article provides five considerations that leaders could use as a guide toward implementing the macro-to-micro approach.

In the past years several authors have indicated that we are going through a tremendously important transition stage at this point in time. Barbara Marx Hubbard, author of the 1998 book *Conscious Evolution: Awakening the Power of Our Social Potential*, stresses that humanity has “gained the powers of co-destruction of our world, or the co-creation of immeasurable futures” (Hubbard, 2003, p 359). Hubbard (2003) further asserts, “We stand at a threshold, and it has become clear that if we continue to use our new powers in the same state of consciousness in which we created them, we can wreak greater havoc upon ourselves and the other species on earth” (p 359).

Along the same lines but in more radical language Daniel Quinn, author of, among others, *Ishmael and Beyond Civilisation*, underscores the importance of a paradigm shift as the only way for us to save our planet from rapid destruction. The basic message in *Ishmael*, Quinn’s 1992 book, is that we can no longer hold on to our ‘taker’ mentality of storing, controlling, and thinking that the earth was made for man. The taker

Takers have to realise as soon as possible that their culture does not ‘fly’, but is heading for a fatal crash

culture, as described by Quinn, is what we now know as modern civilisation. Quinn (1992) affirms that there are three hard lessons the taker society has to urgently adopt:

- 1) The earth is NOT the centre of the universe (p 103);
- 2) Man evolved, like all other creatures, from the common slime of the earth (p 103); and
- 3) The gods did not exempt man from the law that governs the lives of all other creatures (p 103) [which entails that] species that do not live in compliance with the law become extinct (p 104).

Quinn subsequently warns that takers have to realise as soon as possible that their culture does not ‘fly’, but is heading for a fatal crash (Quinn, 1992, p109), unless they restart obeying the rules of the game, which boils down to empathy and reverence toward one another and the environment based on the awareness of our foundational equality to all life on earth. He thereby stresses that lesson three will be the hardest to accept by the takers, and explains that it will require an awakening and a renewed respect for natural laws, thereby putting mother culture – the foundation of the takers’ perception of uniqueness and superiority – to sleep forever (Quinn, 1992, p 144).

As an elaboration for those who doubt the possibility of anything beyond our current civilisation and, hence, our present ways of behaving toward the environment and the global results of our mismanagement, Quinn points out in *Beyond Civilisation*, “No invention is ever unsurpassable. The steam engine was surpassed by the gas engine. The radio was surpassed by television. The calculator was surpassed by the computer. Why should civilisation be different? (p 3). It is Quinn’s opinion that “the flaw in our civilisation isn’t in the people, it’s in the system” (p 171).

The reality of interconnectedness

For leaders in our times there is nothing more important than the act of waking up. Not in the literal sense of the word, but as an act of realising that, with the new millennium, the imperative requirement has manifested itself more steadfastly than ever before to shift into a radically different way of perceiving the most foundational aspects of our existence. In this day and age the realisation that everything is interconnected should lie at the basis of every thought and act.

Interconnectedness may still be perceived by some as an overly idealistic and surreal perspective, but it is far from that. There is actually no reality more factual than that of our interconnectedness, not just to all of humanity but also to all life on planet earth.

Through the ages we have learned that our planet is just one minuscule part of a vast universe and that, thus far, although highly probable in the near or far future, we have not encountered another microcosm in the universe that has proven to be habitable for our type of life. Moreover, it is yet unknown when and how we will come across such a location which we





our examination of our intentions passes the test of universalisability, should we work toward implementing them.

Even though Kant's theory has thus far been highly praised yet left dormant, it can no longer be treated as such. Today's leaders in any setting, whether they are billion dollar business leaders, managers of micro-level non-governmental organisations, owners of small mom and pop stores, or heads of families, should be aware of the tell-tale signs that we face in today's global environment. These include global warming, famine and war, all of which ultimately are the consequences of shortsighted and short term profit oriented behaviour from our side, driven by a win-lose (if I win you lose),

then – depending on its circumstances, livability and existing population – could consider as an alternative to mother earth.

Now, since this alternative has not presented itself yet, we should be very cautious about the ways we treat our precious home. And here's where the key surfaces: Earth is our home. All of us who live on it should realise that any act we undertake toward harming our earth in any way, shape or form, ultimately harms ourselves. Even more importantly, we should realise that every time we become aware of some imbalance or suffering on this planet, and we choose to ignore it because it seems "far from our bed", we basically approve of it, particularly when we are in a position to do something about it.

The wakeful approach: a responsibility of every leader

Because we are all sharing one house – our planet earth – we are all responsible for its preservation. And although not all of us are capable of contributing on such a massive scale as Bill Gates and Warren Buffett, each of us can engage in enlightened behaviour on our own level. As leaders of our companies, families, and most of all, ourselves, we can start behaving wakefully by questioning the purpose of all our actions. This, too, is nothing new. Emmanuel Kant, an 18th century German philosopher, introduced the idea of universalisability, entailing that we should contemplate, for every act we plan to undertake, whether it is universally acceptable, and only when

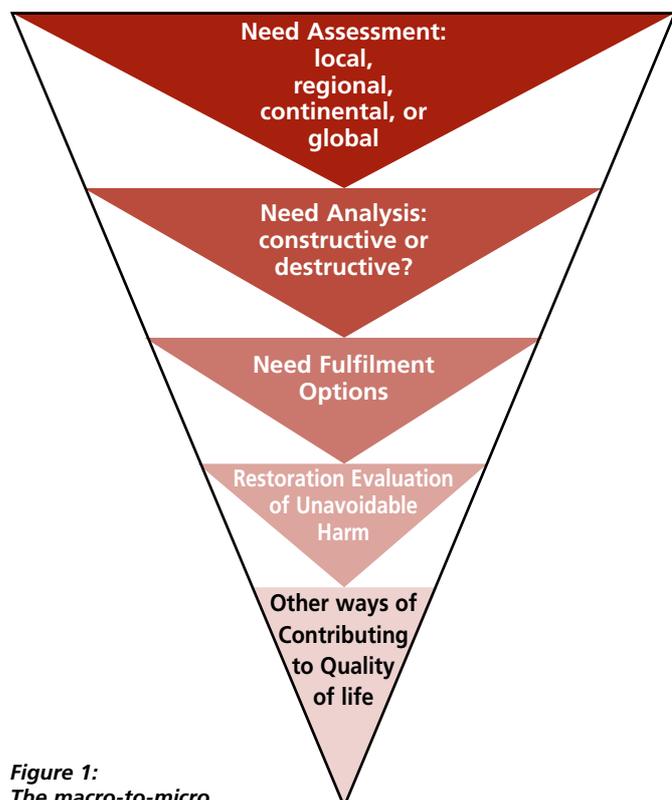


Figure 1:
*The macro-to-micro
paradigm*

rather than a win-win (if I win, you can win too), or better even, a win-win-win (if I win, you can win, and the environment can win as well) mindset.

It is unacceptable in a world where everything is increasingly transparent and interdependent – a world where most of us can easily witness at any time of any day what’s wrong in various corners of the globe – to continue ignoring that, or even worse, continue enhancing it through short-term focus on immediate profits at the expense of other constituencies in the world.

It is not more than our moral duty to realise that if not us, our children and theirs will ultimately suffer tremendously from the consequences of our shortsighted greed if we keep that going.

A New Paradigm

Business leaders who want to practice wakefulness should realise that the time for micro-to-macro thinking, which entails the sequence “A) What can I do, and B) How will it possibly benefit others?” has become obsolete. Today we actually have no other conscious choice than the application of the macro-to-micro perspective, which entails exactly the reverse: “A) What does my neighbourhood, city, country, continent, or world need; and B) How can I best help – given my talents, connections, skills, and education – to make it happen?”

Awakened leaders can easily see that the new paradigm, the macro-to-micro way of thinking, entails no less profits than the outmoded micro-to-macro prototype. On the contrary, the gratification that will be earned from applying this mindset reaches far beyond financial profits. This new mindset will enhance profits to a logical and satisfying consequence of enlightened behaviour rather than a starting point, but more importantly, it will bring gratification to all parties involved, because it involves “doing good while doing well”.

So, how can any leader initiate his or her individual implementation of the macro-to-micro paradigm? Five Guiding points may help:

- **Need assessment:** What need is there in my surroundings, city, country, or in the world that I can fulfil given my strengths, talents, education, specialisation, available resources, and interests?
- **Need analysis:** Is this need a constructive or a destructive need? (Cigarette companies, street drug traders, and the big cocaine bosses that supply them also fulfil a need, but it’s not a constructive one. Awakened, conscious leaders only consider the fulfilment of constructive needs)
- **Need fulfilment options:** How can I fulfil this constructive need in a way where I do as little harm as possible to the environment?
- **Restoration evaluation:** If I do unavoidable harm to the environment through my activities, how can I help to restore that? Example: if you run a company that processes trees to wood for building purposes, you could ensure reforestation whether required by governments or not.
- **Other ways of contributing to quality of life:** How

Today’s leaders in any setting should be aware of the tell-tale signs that we face in today’s global environment

can I, aside from this need fulfilling activity, also contribute in other ways toward the alleviation of needs and the lessening of suffering in this world of which I am an interconnected part?

Figure 1 (below left) illustrates this the macro-to-micro paradigm:

If every leader in every setting of every country devotes at least some of his or her funds, time, efforts, or talents toward a noble purpose, regardless of how microcosmic this level may be, the ultimate outcome will be an enhancement for the entire quality of life in the world.

Endnote

For those who are already practicing the macro-to-micro approach it has become clear that this paradigm is not just a new fad on the horizon, but the only mindset that can save our planet, and therefore us, from self-destruction. The fascinating part of

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The macro-to-micro approach allows every leader to act in line with his or her mission in life

the macro-to-micro paradigm is, however, that although it represents the only way to guarantee longevity for our world, it can be executed in an almost infinite magnitude of methods, driven by the leaders' interests, talents, education, location, and other prerequisites. So, at the individual level, the macro-to-micro approach allows every leader to act in line with his or her mission in life, and work toward those things he or she wants to be remembered for. Executing the macro-to-micro paradigm provides the advantage to every leader in his or her own circle to contribute toward the elevation of the quality of life in their organisation, neighbourhood, city, country, and ultimately, the world. It also enhances feelings of gratification amongst those who get the opportunity to partake in noble activities,

particularly if these noble goals are communicated appropriately. And it enhances the rewards for immediate, mid-range and far-away stakeholders through the results generated from such initiatives.

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