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LEARNING OUTCOMES OF *PathFinder* ARC OF PRAGMATIC INQUIRY®

Promise: “At the conclusion of the *PathFinder* Arc of Pragmatic Inquiry, participants will come to a decision on their Strategic Issue – their “Challenge/question” - that can be put into action and tested.”

Introduction:

Does the *PathFinder* Pragmatic Inquiry result in **decisions which lead to action**? Here, from over 25 years experience with thousands of executives and business students, is a sampling of results of their inquiries.

As you read these comments, keep in mind the Inquiry Objectives and Inquiry Results promised at the start of each Inquiry.

INQUIRY OBJECTIVES:

- Structure a question that, when answered, will have a positive impact on the organization.
- Understand the impact of your assumptions in decision making.
- Gain an understanding of the issue from multiple perspectives.
- Interpret the data intellectually and intuitively
- Answer the question and develop an action plan and “story” to enlist others.

RESULTS OF YOUR INQUIRY – you will be able to more clearly determine:

- Your question/issue/opportunity/challenge (did it change during the inquiry?)
- Highlight the key insights that emerge as you proceeded through the steps and exercises of the *PathFinder* (Begin, Explore, Interpret, Decide, Act).
- How values, core purpose and goals are impacting your decision.
- Decisions made based on the evidence and interpretation.
- Action plan to implement the decisions and lead others – specifically how you will communicate the results of your inquiry.



Typical Comments by *PathFinder* Inquirers (e.g. 3M, Levi Strauss, and Quaker Oats; and Notre Dame, Stanford and Kellogg EMBA and Executive Programs, etc.)

“The *PathFinder* allowed me an in-depth look into the issue, the meaning of the problem and how to take the appropriate steps for the resolution of the problem.”

“The *PathFinder* was a great learning tool during the Inquiry, and I am determined to utilize this resource going forward addressing my work and personal problems when they arise.”

“*PathFinder* helped us define not only the essence of our product offering and service but also helped identify the real customer. We completely changed our thinking. The high point of the *PathFinder* Inquiry was when we got all the data out on the table - seeing all the preliminary findings from different perspectives. It was a unique moment for us when eight people and an EVP agreed on the essence of our product and service offering and who our customer was. Finally, to our surprise, we ended up using one of our drawings from the Maps and Images exercise in our presentation to the 3M Board. While crudely drawn, it showed the essence of our thinking – both the question and the revised answer.”

“It’s been an excellent tool in helping me identify, dissect, and evaluate the components of a business issue that has been troubling me for the past few years. Although mine won’t be an easy or fast fix, I’m certain the awareness the *PathFinder* journey has raised will be a positive first step in the long road to a permanent solution.”

“The *PathFinder* tool was extremely useful in guiding me through a process to examine past behaviors and biases that have not just prevented us from solving the problem, but have, in fact, fostered a negative environment in which the problem could grow.”

“*PathFinder* allowed me to think about different aspects of the question and their relative importance. Especially, the risks associated with organizational and culture impact. My original answer would not change but the method of going about evaluating and processes for making the change will probably be altered.”

“The *PathFinder* Inquiry allowed me to achieve the following learnings:

- Clarity of the intended question is key to understanding how to overcome it.
- Going through the thought process outline in the Inquiry allows for inputs to flow into your thinking on an issue that may not otherwise come to mind.



- Seeking input from different angles of thinking is imperative to successfully answering your question.
- Using some of the framework with others you are involving allows the critical ideas to be received much more readily.”

“One of the useful things about the *PathFinder* is the way it helps you work through your topic not just by attacking it head on, but by the comprehensive approach that encompasses the person(s) involved, their values, beliefs, purpose and mission.”

“The *PathFinder* makes you take the time to look inside yourself and the organization to define the true picture of what you are actually dealing with. The *PathFinder* makes you “think” and “explore.”

“You learn a tremendous amount about yourself, your organization and your real topic if the tool is used properly. It does not just give you the answer to your topic; it makes you work for it. It is not hard work, but it is a time consuming thought process that does put you in the proper direction and lead you to the answer you are looking for. It is the ease of use that tells me that this is one tool I will use again.”

“I found the *PathFinder* very useful. I used it as a sort of map. It helped me look at where I was, and then I was able to see where I needed to go, and how to get there. As I mentioned above, my question changed over time and this was a product of exploring what I was really after and asking myself questions that I had never thought of before.”

“The *PathFinder* really allowed me to slow down and think without any distractions from work, home, etc. and open myself up to many ideas and different ways of thinking.”

“I find that using the *PathFinder* has given me a more efficient way to think about problems/issues/questions and how I should go about finding solutions in a well thought out manner.”

“It was an opportunity to identify, reflect, and address the most significant issue in life. Although the process was not always pleasant, it was extremely beneficial. The *PathFinder* exercise allowed me to really think through, what I thought was a very basic question, the survival of a Company; to a much deeper realization of the concern for my survival and the survival of my family business question and take a view from another perspective.”

“Often times the answers to our greatest questions are already inside of us, we simply need an opportunity to bring them out. The time spent reflecting on my



business issue may prove to be some of the most productive time I will ever spend on any activity in my entire career.”

“The *PathFinder* is a great tool because the process forces one to look at their problem from many different perspectives and although they knew the answer all along, without the *PathFinder* they may have never discovered it. It is really an internal journey that we don’t take the time to go on in our day to day lives. Or in the case of some, the *PathFinder* forced them to peel back the layers identifying the “real” problem that turned out to be far different from the problem with which they began.”

“The *PathFinder* is structured effectively and when you get to the end, you have truly accomplished addressing the problem. It is a good roadmap to problem solving, but without all the fancy jargon.”

“The use of the *PathFinder* as instructed, provided the flexibility to use as much or as little of it and did not force a certain procedure. It provided a good guideline and was open enough for anyone to tailor it to their specific situation.”

“The *PathFinder* process was constructive in its ability to break down a complex and critical business question into a natural trail that was easy to follow. As I moved through the steps I was able to gather important insights into the question underneath the question and grasp key conclusions that could help me become more effective. The *PathFinder* process was very useful by helping me address my leadership questions. The organization and flow of the *PathFinder* helped me with my thought processing which ultimately lead to constructing objectives.”

“What I liked most about the *PathFinder* is the way it confirms or redirects your thoughts to possibly a more significant underlying issue to address. And, the best part is that it is based on your values.”

“I plan to use the *PathFinder* process throughout my life now that I know of its power to help work through personal and organizational questions, issues, and problems. The *PathFinder* originally seemed complicated but eventually became a steady stream of reflections and encouraged disciplined thought.”

“The exercise forced me to take a disciplined thought process and identify a disciplined way to execute on personally transforming myself into a better person and leader. It is this that I hope to share with others with rigor.”

“I can’t overstate the value of the *PathFinder* exercise with regard to my issues. The systematic approach contained in the exercise provided invaluable tools to reflect and assess the issues, and develop cogent arguments to fix the problem and support the position. I will use the *PathFinder* system again.”



“This *PathFinder* process was very effective. It enabled me to build an analytical framework for my question and helped me step outside of the framework to view the question objectively and on a fact basis. It allowed me to posit my own opinions and decisions. I then was able to critique myself. The context of honesty and privacy that the Path Finder provides helped me perform a more truthful analysis.”

“*PathFinder* Pragmatic Inquiry is a unique service for a CEO who is in the process of trying to develop a company mission or a president’s vision for a company.”

The method of inquiry did assist me in my efforts to bring to my conscious thought processes what was my vision for the company going forward. The writing exercises helped me then in turn to get that down on paper so it could be communicated.”

“Thank you for a great meeting last week. The process of pragmatic inquiry helped me remember things that I forgot and also discover things I did not know about my values and myself.

As a result I believe I will be better equipped to make sound business decisions and also I will be able to share the meaning of our values, purpose, goals and strategy with my organizations across the Americas from a different place.”