

STEPPING STONES *to* SUCCESS

VOLUME ONE

EXPERTS SHARE STRATEGIES
FOR MASTERING BUSINESS,
LIFE, & RELATIONSHIPS



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to SUCCESS

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Stepping Stones to Success

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Disclaimer: This book is a compilation of ideas from numerous experts who have each contributed a chapter. As such, the views expressed in each chapter are of those who were interviewed and not necessarily of the interviewer, Insight Publishing or the other contributing authors.

A Message from the Publisher

There are many things I've come to understand throughout the many years I have been in this business. I've learned that it's never too late to grow and learn, to change course, to expand perspectives, and to admit I don't know everything.

Because I know it's important to learn from the experience of others, I reached out to many experts when putting this book project together and I gained some valuable information from them. The people I talked with have presented some insights that will expand your horizons and make you realize that you can be the key to your own success.

This book, *Stepping Stones to Success*, is your golden opportunity to profit from the knowledge of others. It will give you the facts you need to make important decisions about your future.

Interviewing these fascinating people was a unique learning experience for me. And I assure you that reading this book will be an exceptional learning experience for you.

—David Wright

The interviews presented in
Stepping Stones to Success
are conducted by David Wright,
President and Founder of
ISN Works and Insight Publishing.





CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Wisdom at Work

An Interview with . . . **Dr. Joni Carley**

DAVID WRIGHT (WRIGHT)

Today we are talking with Dr. Joni Carley. Her international consulting practice serves successful leaders, professionals, and entrepreneurs. Much like Olympic coaches working with athletes who are already strong, Dr. Joni helps her clients strive for the gold and get there. In her work at the United Nations and in the private sector, her expertise in values-driven leadership helps her clients create an abundant triple bottom line in terms of people, profits, and the planet. Joni holds a doctorate in the Reinvention of Work and she's been coaching, speaking, and teaching for more than twenty-five years. Dr. Joni's blog, "Wisdom at Work↔Wisdom in the World," her products, services, talks, and her workshops don't just inform, they transform.

Her Wisdom at Work coaching methodology has proven effective in addressing core issues to produce sustainable results. Audiences say "she changed my life,"

“inspired me,” and that they’ll “use her material for the rest of my life.” That’s probably because Dr. Joni’s content draws from a unique depth and breadth of experience, ranging from the jungle to the boardroom, from the UN to college campuses, from coaching corporate, governmental, and nonprofit/NGO leaders to solopreneurs.

Dr. Joni Carley, welcome to *Stepping Stones to Success*.

DR. JONI CARLEY (CARLEY)

Thank you, it’s great to be here!

WRIGHT

You believe that success is all about choices, don’t you?

CARLEY

I believe it’s all about making wise choices. Choosing wisely can make or break your career. I’ve had the privilege of working with some wonderful leaders who have taught me that people who reach the top do so because they make the wisest choices. Wise choices create the types of careers that leave great legacies and wise choices create successful organizations.

Since the only constant in life is change, success is dependent on the choices we make while we’re negotiating change. So the trajectory toward success is just one choice after another. In that sense, our steppingstones are our choices. Daily choices form the building blocks of our potential. First and foremost, leadership is having decision-making authority.

My work is aimed at helping clients close the gap between where they are and where they want to be by helping them recognize and then act on their wisest choices. Wise choices are more than simply smart choices. They’re a meeting of heart and mind, of gut-generated information combined with hard data. Wisdom means capitalizing on that funny feeling that says “wait” even when all the facts say “go.” Wisdom balances the internal with the external, the hard evidence with soft evidence, and the people values with the profit values.

Our “Wall Street Wonders” are great examples of leaders who made many smart decisions that were even confirmed by standard indicators right up until the

market crashed. That's because for millennia we've squelched the voice of wisdom and that has compromised our ability to balance being "head smart" with being "heart smart." I call this balance the "Yin and Yang of Success" in my talks and in an article on my Web site: <http://jonicarley.com/complimentary-downloads/articles/yinyang>.

The 2008–2009 stock market collapse demonstrated that "smart" choices made without heart can lead to major problems. On the other hand, choices made only from the heart can lack substance. Beneath the financial crisis was a moral one. When leaders take the time to apply the lens of wisdom, not only are their actions more ethical, they generate a special kind of spark, as if they're bringing together a positive and negative electrical charge. It is almost metaphysical when you craft your intuitive instincts together with your knowledge base.

Wise choices lead to less drama, in spite of the fact that wise people tend to attract more opportunities. They also take more risks than their intellectually oriented colleagues and high caliber leadership demands meaningful risk-taking. The path of wisdom leads to a more abundant and more sustainable triple bottom line in terms of people, profits, and the planet (the 3Ps). And, wise people tend to sleep well!

WRIGHT

If smart choices aren't always wise, are wise choices always smart?

CARLEY

Yes. Look at Gandhi. He opted for wise choices instead of the "smarter" choices advocated by the powerful people around him. He was a lawyer and today most lawyers are trained to manipulate the law to win at any cost. But Gandhi never allowed legalities to trump justice or winning to trump compassion. Legality requires smarts but true justice relies on wisdom. I see the smart/wise conflict in play at the United Nations and in the private sector because values-driven leaders who refuse to compromise their wisdom—no matter what the affect is on their short-term career goals—tend to leave great legacies.

In terms of the number of cases he won or the fees he collected, Gandhi's career appeared mediocre. All the time he spent in jail would seem to spell failure.

But, because he understood the distinction between wise and smart choices, his career (and life) has become a model—in fact, a gold standard for success. Gandhi’s actions were well ahead of his time but there is now a critical mass of leaders across all sectors who are creating a new values-driven paradigm. These are the people I work with at the United Nations and in my private practice (Complimentary MP3—“Mastering Leadership” at www.drjoni.com).

People who choose to work at the United Nations are usually driven by their values; they’re dedicated to making a difference. And, the UN’s Charter, the Millennium Development Goals, and the UN Global Compact principles perfectly reflect great and wise vision. Unfortunately, just like in many less values-oriented organizations, what shows up in day-to-day work lives can feel very, very disconnected from the vision that people signed on to in the first place. The result is a stagnation of organizational mission and lackluster career trajectories.

To combat this problem at the UN, we’re using a coaching methodology designed to help create more fertile ground between the values that attracted people to their positions and the extreme protocol and hierarchy that can fill their days. Using a coaching approach means that leaders and their teams create specific concrete actions to reconnect their vision and values with their duties.

Our work at the UN, through Global Vision Institute, is dedicated to creating a values-driven international community. We help people unleash the deep drive that’s at the heart of their work. Their evaluation forms tell us that reconnecting with their vision and values not only helps them feel recharged but leads to taking positive action. I see the same thing with my business and non-profit clients—*the ones who keep the values conversation alive are the people and organizations that thrive.*

Leadership studies have shown that executives can make wrong decisions 50 percent of the time and still be considered good leaders! That’s because they’re keeping things moving while staying accountable—which makes good leadership but it doesn’t make great leadership. Great leaders make sure their decisions pass the test of wisdom. Each choice they make is one that feels good in the gut and satisfies the mind. Wise decision-making is based on solid information as well as core values.

We tend to think that choices are about right and wrong, but everybody knows that you can make a choice that looks completely right and then you end up

thinking, “Boy, I wish I hadn’t made that decision.” And, how often have you thought a decision was a huge mistake only to have it turn out to be the best thing that could have happened? That’s why it’s really not about right and wrong; it’s really about discernment. Discernment comes from being mindful as well as “heartful,” which turns out to be a winning combination.

An important reason that successes increase so dramatically with coaching is that coaching is all about discernment, which, neurologically, is a higher-level decision-making process. Olympians can’t get to their best without their coaches. Likewise, leaders who exercise their discernment with a coach are more likely to realize their visions. I specialize in moving you from bronze to gold.

WRIGHT

You have a unique perspective on success. You consult with a wide range of professionals, you have a doctorate in the Reinvention of Work, and you’ve also traveled around the world discovering ancient and modern keys to realizing human potential. So, what are the steppingstones to success and how do you know when you get there—wherever the “there” of success is?

CARLEY

That’s a great question because there really is no “there” of success. Success is a moving target and so are the steppingstones toward it. There is no evidence that there is one ideal way to success and if we just get it right, we’ll be successful and if we don’t, we won’t. Having a fixed notion of success is really a trap, unless it’s a huge dream like Gandhi had for liberating India. If he had just kept on practicing law, and doing a little community work on the side, he would have better met day-to-day definitions of success. But, instead of gauging his success by cultural norms, he followed his vision and inner wisdom.

We often mistake success as a stagnant endgame, but it’s much more dynamic than that. It reminds me of the Zen saying, “If you meet the Buddha on the road, shoot him.” Zen followers believe enlightenment is a forever unfolding experience and that anyone claiming to have arrived at enlightenment as an endpoint shouldn’t be trusted. That’s because enlightenment, like success, isn’t about arriving and then being done.

Most of my clients define success by how much joy and satisfaction they have, as well as by the ease with which they can live to their hearts' desires. They also define it as being able to make a difference in other people's lives. I'm often struck by how many end up enjoying financial abundance even when that wasn't their primary coaching goal. At the same time, it's fascinating how many say they want to make more money, but what they want more than that is satisfaction.

So if success isn't a fixed destination, it stands to reason that the steppingstones aren't fixed either. If you mapped out every single steppingstone during a river walk, you would miss exploring all the nooks and crannies that nature is always creating. But without some plan for crossing the river, you could drown. Still, if you never venture off your pre-determined path, you lose the possibility of finding even better opportunities. Take my own field of leadership coaching, for example. Formulaic models are popular but they can end up being less effective than more adaptive methodologies because no fixed system can adequately account for changes in the stream or changes in a dream.

You couldn't ever perfectly map your path across a river anyway because rivers, like the path of leadership, are always changing. Leadership studies indicate that adaptability creates greater success than rigidity. Keeping your focus in the moment might mean that you don't step on the stone that you thought you would. But altering your path doesn't mean that you're any less focused or that you've somehow failed. Steppingstones to success are no more permanent than steppingstones in the river, but people are often resistant to changing their own professional paths and to you changing yours.

My most successful clients are always wrestling with questions of change. I'm often hired at a transition time but many people continue working with me for years because, once the dramatic stuff has settled down, they realize that coaching helps maintain a kind of vitality that best accommodates change. Good leadership coaching helps you maintain the integrity of your long-term vision while keeping you agile in the moment.

I firmly believe that quality coaching must include values work because the data shows that values-driven leadership generates a high return on investment that is sustainable over time.

WRIGHT

What is values-driven leadership?

CARLEY

The phrase is fairly self-explanatory. It is leadership that emerges from a foundation of clear core values rather than from the drive for profit at any cost.

Values-driven leadership is an emerging paradigm that's based on trust, virtues, relationship, transparency, philanthropy, ecology, co-creativity, abundance consciousness, and partnership. It creates dignity in the workplace and develops organizations that are vital community members that honor all stakeholders. Best practices include creating the time and space to develop vision and to strengthen individuals and their relationships. Values-driven organizations act with enlightened self-interest.

The emerging values-driven leadership paradigm requires that we walk our talk. If we really want liberty and justice for all, then we have to do business with companies that don't exploit employees or pollute their neighborhoods. Therefore, the task for leaders is to devise new sets of rules and new ways to measure success. Values-driven leaders see values as steppingstones, but that doesn't mean they compromise their dedication to solid research, strong profits, and robust productivity. They recognize that success needs to be measured by how they do what they do as well as by what they actually do.

The definition of success is morphing. Values-driven leadership used to be seen as a weakness—it was too soft, unquantifiable and even considered flaky. That's partly because the concept emerged along with what's sometimes called the LOHAS sector, meaning Lifestyles Of the Healthy And Sustainable.

LOHAS leaders are everywhere now. Though it's sometimes still linked to the Birkenstock and granola industries that spawned it, the LOHAS sector is now a \$355 billion chunk of the economy and it's growing at 10 percent a year. Not all values-driven leaders are LOHAS sector members but I submit that all have benefited from LOHAS distinctions, which have also informed the Socially Responsible Investments (SRI) sector.

We have tangible proof that this new approach works. During the recent crash, the SRI stocks and mutual funds didn't experience the volatility of the rest of the

market. Both the stock market and the research are starting to prove that ethical action and values-driven decision-making are steppingstones to sustainable success. That's why more and more companies are dedicating resources to corporate social responsibility (CSR).

WRIGHT

It's a new approach to many people and corporations. But you have twenty-five years of experience and a doctorate in it! What do you think about the more recent developments in this field?

CARLEY

It's really an ancient way of thinking but it's new to most of us. The profit-at-any-cost mentality about success is shifting toward a different mindset because that old paradigm is setting new benchmarks on the scale of failure. We've all been told that sometimes you have to use people as a means to your own ends, that you really can't do well and do good at the same time, and that you should get the next guy before he gets you. We even made "do-gooder" into a bad word! Yet, something in us knows that the Golden Rule rules.

On an individual basis, values-driven businesses aren't as likely to have stellar returns in the short run, but they sustain and they demonstrate extraordinary vitality. The 3P's (people, profits, and the planet) are in the organizational DNA of values-driven businesses. Triple bottom line awareness is beginning to penetrate old paradigm organizations because these companies have to shift. The writing's on the wall: we're at a stage in our evolution where we have to make profound systemic changes so that we place more appropriate value on what really matters.

I wrote a post called "10 Reasons why Greedy Jerks Make the Worst Leaders" (<http://jonicarley.com/complimentary-downloads/articles/10-reasons-greedy-jerks-make-the-worst-leaders>) as a simple way to examine what weakens foundational pillars. The recent financial meltdown brought us face-to-face with the reality that a lot of what we see on television about success is just not working out for millions of people. Truly great leaders never bought into the dog-eat-dog myth of success. Instead, they developed their passion for compassion and became great by being good.

We're evolving from models of radical antagonism toward partnership models. After all, we are all interdependent on the expression of core values. I think coaching is so beneficial because its respect for values helps naturally develop partnership, which is definitely a steppingstone to success.

WRIGHT

The word “steppingstones” is an interesting metaphor, isn't it?

CARLEY

It sure is! I've seen stones used in fascinating ways in many different cultures around the world. In the West, we think of a stone as rigid and fixed and strong. But Native Americans called stones “the stone people,” sculptors see a figure to be freed, the Bible talks about a stone in your shoe, and Buddhists stack stones while praying.

The most fascinating stone tradition that I ever experienced was in Ecuador where I spent several weeks traveling from high in the Andes to deep in the jungle to learn from tribal elders. I met a woman shaman who had trained through a very ancient lineage. Her name was Maria Juana. (I kid you not, and no, she didn't partake!) Before we got there, our guide had been trying and trying to reach her but he couldn't get through to her or anyone else in the village. He warned us that we might not find Maria once we reached her village and, if we didn't see her, we would go to the local market and just move on.

But when we pulled up to her little wooden house, Maria was completely prepared for us. She had set out the right number of glasses and snacks and had already been making spiritual preparations for our particular group. When our translator asked her how she knew we'd be there, she said her “huacas” told her that we were coming and she pointed to a tray of about fifteen different sizes and types of rocks. It sounds unbelievable, but I'll tell you, her diagnoses and insights were amazingly accurate for all five people in the group.

Maria Juana helped me understand *heuristics*—the act of arriving at a decision not by following set rules but by being completely present to your sense in the moment. She taught me how fine-tuning to your immediate presence provides valid, actionable data. In this culture, we often dismiss, even ridicule, the world of

precognition. But imagine if we could train our leaders to have her kind of presence! I find that the more clients develop a kind of heightened sensibility, the greater their competitive advantage.

The old saying, “plan your work and work your plan” still holds; it’s advisable to have a plan and to follow it. But we’re also finding that to reach higher levels of success, a plan-and-goal orientation has to be balanced with the heuristic ability to discern in the moment whether or not a particular steppingstone is the ultimate best choice.

Leadership coaching is all about negotiating that cutting edge of discernment. Strong leadership, by definition, is frontier territory that can be very lonely, unclear, and challenging. Just like a frontier on land, living at the professional forefront creates tension, confusion, and even chaos. It’s easier to conform to the norm than to transform.

Because my clients tend to be at professional frontiers where challenges are always evolving, they have to develop their inner compasses to maintain a winning edge. Since they often find themselves with no road maps, fine-tuning their inner guidance systems ends up being a highly effective use of their time, although hard to reconcile within standard time management practices. I’ve seen people do well by staying the course on pre-determined paths. But, the opportunity to reach greatness only comes when leaders have the discernment and flexibility to hop on unexpected steppingstones because they can lead to unplanned-for successes.

Oprah stays true to her heart and mind to the point that it’s actually her brand identity. In fact, Oprah has said that she never set a goal. She just knew intuitively that a more heuristic, or non-formulaic, more experiential, way was just as valid as the path that her television news colleagues were pursuing in their very goal-oriented, highly competitive field.

Oprah’s a great demonstration of the heartedness that’s part of greatness. But having her kind of heart is not for the faint-of-heart because, though simple, it is not usually an easy path. It’s a lot easier to follow a goal-driven, predetermined path because it’s much more predictable and less psychologically and/or emotionally challenging.

The nature of the heuristic path is more chaotic, but ultimately, it’s more geared toward people building the lives they want, the work they love, and the

world we all want to live in. If we could help leaders better incorporate the heuristics that Oprah and Maria Juana instinctively mastered, we would set new benchmarks for success. Unfortunately, on the ground, incorporating heuristics can be messy and take much more time than it seems like it should. But more recent indicators show that developing a better balance between heuristics and goal-driven approaches yields excellent returns on investment of time, talent, and treasure.

WRIGHT

Speaking of return on investment, judging from the studies on your Web site, the latest numbers on coaching are extraordinary, aren't they?

CARLEY

You know, they really are. And the interesting thing is that the numbers only represent the measureables. I don't believe we have adequate tools to fully assess coaching results yet, but studies show that the return on investment (ROI) in coaching ranges from 150 percent to 689 percent.

One surprising thing in those studies is that what I call coaching at the "leaderful" edge yields a far higher ROI than coaching strictly for problem-solving. Simply working with a coach or mentor to resolve an issue certainly pays off; however, the big payoffs happen when clients aren't in crisis but are coaching the way Olympic athletes do. Olympians don't go to coaches just to fix broken ankles or transition to new teams; they hire coaches to keep moving beyond the status quo. By using coaching to do the "soft" work of values alignment and vision development along with problem-solving and task execution, you can unleash formidable forces of passion, commitment, creativity, partnership, and action.

Before turning to full-time consulting, coaching, and speaking, I was a director of a philanthropic foundation and helped start up a community foundation. I have also sat on many boards of directors of non-governmental organizations. Over the years, I've coached and consulted with hundreds of successful professionals throughout a wide range of sectors. My experience tells me that success really can't be pinned down to a dollar figure. Is money important? Absolutely! But you get the

best return on a coaching investment that helps you balance your dollar data with the data from your inner GPS.

WRIGHT

What do you mean by “inner GPS?”

CARLEY

Your inner GPS is a lot like a real GPS—the Global Positioning System receiver in a car that lets you type in where you want to go and automatically tells you how to get there. Both your inner GPS and a mechanical GPS are highly accurate guidance systems, but the inner one is hard-wired for reaching your full potential and it always leads toward your greatest good.

From searching for answers all over the world and from working with extraordinary clients, I’ve learned that reaching full potential is a constant unfolding of personal vision and the capacity to realize it. Whereas a real GPS receiver takes you to a particular destination, the journey with your inner GPS is a lifelong, ever-unfolding path. You don’t just fully “potentiate” one day and then you’re done.

One big difference between the two is that our internal GPS can be much trickier to access because unlike the mechanical one, it gets a lot of static from the world around us and from our own internal racket. Both GPS systems point the way toward our desired destinations but our personal one is more challenging to follow. Much of coaching is about helping clients clear the static so they can better access their own GPS’s for a smoother, more efficient journey to success.

It’s difficult to quantify what tapping into that internal GPS looks and feels like. Some people describe it as a flow, or a zone, or a vibe. Different people have distinctive sensations; some feel it in their stomachs, some on the backs of their necks, some “hear” it in their minds, and others just feel a general sense of things. Regardless of the manifestation, the more people follow it, the clearer it gets.

Unfortunately, current productivity models are based on old paradigm systems that totally disregard the intuitive and other “softer” indicators. It’s clear now that leadership development methods that don’t account for the inner GPS factor are under-developed, yet they’re still over-relied on. We are beginning to create the

instruments to quantify so-called “softer” indicators, but it will take generations before we can fully integrate “flow/zone/vibe/knowing” kinds of measurements into organizational assessment tools. The more we do, the more we will capture the moral spark that fuels the best of best practices.

I’ve done transition coaching with people who thought that they were going to be entrepreneurs but ended up going the corporate route, and vice versa. Just like a mechanical GPS receiver, their inner GPS’s allowed for recalculation. I’ve never seen it fail—the inner GPS is incredibly accurate. Nonetheless, when it steers you off the path you thought you were on, it can be disorienting and can lead to personal and interpersonal misinterpretations, some of them quite damaging.

The mechanical GPS has a very non-judgmental way of simply saying “recalculating” when you make a mistake or change your mind or choose to go a different way because you knew more about the road you were on than the GPS did. Attuning to the internal GPS isn’t nearly so accommodating because we have to interpret it through the personal and cultural cacophony around us.

For example, imagine if your spouse or boss was navigating and you missed a turn; it’s unlikely that their words would be as neutral as your car GPS’s simple “recalculating.” In fact, as great a coach as a spouse or colleague can truly be, the lack of attachment to outcomes is part of what makes professional coaching so effective. Because, in the coaching relationship, when it’s time for a shift, there is no judgment, no fuss, and no grounds for divorce—just a conscious recalculation.

It won’t always take you on the route you’ve envisioned, but your inner GPS will take you exactly where you want to go. We all know the best choices for ourselves. Sometimes, though, the voice of wisdom is impeded by the static of old-paradigm success indicators, of other people’s needs, of defining “right” according to arcane standards, and of old stories about who we are and what we do.

For example, I have a client I’ll call Lou who lives in Los Angeles. Lou hired me after he started a radical sabbatical. He’d risen high in the ranks of the advertising industry at a very young age and had totally burned out, but he’d saved enough money to take a year off. We spent months exploring possibilities from his moving to a small town and opening up a little ad agency or getting a job in somebody else’s, to opening up his own wine store or a travel agency. You name it, it came up over the “research and development” phase of Lou’s transition.

He started exploring values-driven leadership and the more he learned about it, the more it resonated. He thought it could never happen, but he ended up going back into the ad business, earning a healthy three-figure income as a partner in one of the world's top three firms. While it's almost the antithesis of a values-driven industry, he's in a position to introduce values-driven distinctions into the culture every day. He got the position three years ago but we've continued our coaching sessions to ensure he is doing his job in the most joyful, leaderful, life-enriching way possible.

Another client, Linda, recently turned down a position that would have paid more than \$500,000 a year. My mother asked me why somebody wouldn't fire me for missing out on that kind of opportunity! But Linda's internal GPS was clear that at this stage in her career, she's feeling led to make a difference. That particular job wouldn't have changed the world enough to satisfy her.

WRIGHT

Is the inner GPS spiritual?

CARLEY

It can be, but not everybody experiences it that way. We can all be successful, wise, and good, regardless of our spiritual orientations. Our inner guidance system is certainly mysterious—the more we understand it, the more questions we have. It has a lot to do with values because they function like internal GPS coordinates. Nothing derails the journey to ultimate success faster than compromising your values. When we stay true to our unique value systems, we move toward full potential with every choice we make. A strong GPS signal requires ethics, compassion, and the understanding that personal development is critical for professional growth.

Taking time to deliberate and to wrestle with your core values helps you make wiser choices. Developing a reliable inner GPS requires dedicated time, space, and focus. People use many ways to tap into the GPS “zone”—organized religion, walking in nature, playing an instrument, meditating, running, and so on. Even though they seem unrelated to work life, those kinds of activities can catapult careers.

Personally, I'm on a spiritual path of many paths. But whether or not clients have any kind of spiritual leanings, they develop reliable GPS's when they choose to live life without any blinders—when they refuse to ignore what's going on in the world around them and they demand authenticity, dignity, truthfulness, civility, and compassion.

WRIGHT

Can you help your clients learn to rely on their own GPS's?

CARLEY

Yes, I can. I know from experience that if you master the courage and discernment to follow your inner guidance you'll rise far beyond standard measures of success. It's only logical because, ultimately, only you know what's best for you. You're the expert on when it's time to build your soil or time to fruit, when it's time to step up or stand still or to say yes or say no. Leadership coaching helps you discern when it's time to load a new destination into your GPS, or to follow its direction, or to trust your instincts to take a detour.

This might seem like bad business on my part, but my objective is to make myself obsolete. My goal is for clients to become their own best coaches by relying on their inner GPS's, which is not as easy as it seems because it not only requires staying on top of your professional game but also keeping up with personal homework.

WRIGHT

When you say “personal homework,” I imagine you mean taking care of your “baggage” or doing self-reflection. Is your work similar to a therapist's job?

CARLEY

No—leadership coaching is very different from therapy or even life coaching. I have a holistic approach to professional development, so personal issues do come up. But, I'm definitely not a therapist. Although I do believe that the more you work out your “stuff” the more available you are when opportunities arise, my work is not therapy.

The difference between therapy and coaching is like the difference between an Olympic coach and a physical therapist. Therapists work on healing what's hurting, digging into the causes, and naming the pathology. Coaching is about real-world, inspired action. Therapy is important work; I don't hesitate to refer people to it. I don't do therapy but I do support clarifying unresolved issues because they can become roadblocks on the path to success.

Everybody's got personal issues—even if you had perfect parents and nobody ever teased you—they're just part of the human condition. The coaching context uses issues as steppingstones to change. People who have experienced the kind of personal exploration and development that therapy offers can sometimes move forward faster in coaching; but if they've spent too much time contemplating themselves, it can perpetuate a personal narrative that's stuck in a cycle of limitation. Good leaders take time to self-reflect but, instead of getting into ruts, they turn their insights into gold and sometimes my job is to support that process.

It takes a lot of tenacity to break through old ideas of what success is, and sometimes the process creates psychological discomfort. In the therapy model, you would dissect that discomfort and connect it with past experiences, whereas coaching turns the scars into stars to create a stronger personal foundation for supporting professional excellence. Many people are unconscious of how much their personal issues show up at work. When they raise their awareness of themselves, they become clearer leaders who are much easier to work with.

One problem with the coaching field is that many coaches believe you have to be positive 100 percent of the time and never embrace the negative stuff. But, just like a seed has to fall apart in dark soil in order to grow, sometimes we have to fall apart into our challenges in order to get to the win. For some, the falling apart requires a therapist; for others it's an opportunity to coach toward restacking the deck exactly the way you want it. To do that in a more personal way, hire a life coach; in a more professional way, hire a leadership coach.

WRIGHT

You seem to bring a unique depth and breadth to your work. Your clients must appreciate your perspective.

CARLEY

Thanks—I hope so! I certainly have a passion for my work. I’ve learned so much from scientists, cutting-edge personal and professional development experts, scholars, and other thought leaders. I’ve explored human potential in a monastery in Thailand, in a seminary in New York, with shamans in the Amazon jungle, tribal leaders in the African bush, and in boardrooms, as well as countless classrooms. I’ve participated firsthand as many board members and business and organizational leaders debated their next steps. I’ve come to the conclusion that we are now making an evolutionary quantum leap in our definitions of leadership and professionalism.

“Quantum” is an interesting word because when you put it with the word “leap,” it means a big, dramatic movement. But “quantum” as a noun means the smallest of the small, like a photon, which is so tiny that scientists don’t even know whether it’s a particle or a wave. Some of the biggest leaps in my own life have been almost invisible to the naked eye. I have the privilege of partnering with clients through the big leaps as well as the little moves that create profound differences in career paths.

What sets my methodology apart is that it isn’t just about linear movement. Too much leadership coaching is still based on old paradigm distinctions and on one-size-fits-all methodologies. I find, though, that when the voice of wisdom is amplified, it naturally strengthens leadership. It seems like a paradox—if you pay attention to the “softer” things by going for breadth and depth instead of just focusing on a series of goals, it will make you weaker. But history and leadership studies, as well as my professional experience, have shown the opposite.

WRIGHT

So how exactly do you work?

CARLEY

Much like an Olympic coach partners with an athlete on the road to success, I help clients and organizations negotiate their paths. I work mostly by phone, either with individuals or in MasterMind groups, and I also do on-site consulting. I have a number of different one-on-one coaching plans that are explained on my

Web site. People usually register online and/or they e-mail me at manager@drjoni.com to schedule the first session or to talk about custom on-site solutions or keynote talks and workshops or seminars.

Not that long ago, I realized that such high caliber clients could, in fact, contribute to each other's successes so I started Wisdom at Work MasterMind Coaching groups. These groups are usually limited to five members who meet over two months by phone, and the package includes deeply discounted individual sessions. By putting their businesses "on the table" to work intensively *on* them, group members unleash possibilities that they just can't get to while working day-to-day *in* their businesses. MasterMind Coaching groups are a good bargain because members tend to share resources and insights generously; so in addition to getting more economical coaching with me, participants fuel one another's sparks.

I also offer a Wisdom at Work self-coaching program on my Web site.

WRIGHT

What an interesting conversation, I've learned a lot here today; you've given me a lot of new information. I really appreciate the time you've taken this afternoon to answer my questions.

CARLEY

Well, thank you for asking them! It's been my pleasure.

WRIGHT

We've been talking with Dr. Joni Carley, a knowledgeable and entertaining speaker whose international consulting practice serves successful leaders, professionals, and entrepreneurs.

Dr. Carley, thank you so much for being with us today on *Stepping Stones to Success*.

CARLEY

You're welcome and thank you!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

DR. JONI CARLEY'S international consulting company serves successful leaders, professionals, and entrepreneurs. Just like Olympic coaches work with athletes who are already strong, Dr. Joni coaches individual clients, organizations, and MasterMind groups to go from bronze to gold. She's also a dynamic keynote speaker and workshop leader for companies and organizations of all sizes.

She has incomparable expertise in facilitating transformation from the inside out, and in helping to close the gaps between where you are and where you want to be. Her clients maintain a sharp, "leaderful" edge so that they produce an abundant triple bottom line in terms of people, profits, and the planet.

Dr. Joni has been coaching, speaking, and teaching for more than twenty-five years. She has traveled the world to learn from and collaborate with leading personal and professional development experts and she holds a doctorate in *The Reinvention of Work*. Her leadership coaching addresses core issues for sustainable results so that her clients do more than excel—they leave legacies.

Keynote and workshop audiences have said: she "changed my life," "inspired me," and that they'll "use her material for the rest of my life" because Dr. Joni's content draws from a unique depth and breadth of experience ranging from the Amazon jungle to the boardroom, from the United Nations to college campuses, and from working with top-level corporate executives to solopreneurs.

Her blog, *Wisdom at Work ↔ Wisdom in the World*, is an entertaining and enlightening professional resource (available on her Web site).



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