How to Walk on the Leading Edge without Falling Off the Cliff

By Judith A. Neal

The complexity of the business world today is astounding. Nothing is predictable. The rules of the game are changing. Just when you think you’ve figured out how to have a competitive advantage, a competitor develops a new technology. Just when you think you’ve found the right motivation tool, the values in your workforce seem to shift. Just when you think you’ve found the right geographical area for the expansion of your internationalization efforts, political turmoil erupts.

Yet some people seem to have an uncanny knack for knowing what’s going to happen before it unfolds. They’re able to create new rules for the game instead of following the rules everyone else follows. They’re able to plan a strategy that seems absurd to most people at first, and is later called brilliant when it’s successful. They are a part of an unusual breed of leaders called edgewalkers.

An edgewalker is someone who walks between two worlds. In ancient cultures each tribe or village had a shaman or medicine man. This was the person who walked into the invisible world to get information, guidance, and healing for members of the tribe. This was one of the most important roles in the village. Without a shaman the tribe would be at the mercy of unseen gods and spirits, the vagaries of the cosmos. The skill of walking between the worlds hasn’t died out; in fact it’s even more relevant today. Organizations that will thrive in the 21st century will embrace and nurture edgewalkers. Because of their unique skills, they are the bridge-builders linking and facilitating different approaches, strategies, and techniques.

Walking on the Leading Edge

Five key skills form the hallmark of an edgewalker:

- Visionary consciousness
- Multicultural responsiveness
- Intuitive sensitivity
- Risk-taking confidence
- Self-awareness

1. Visionary Consciousness
Edgewalkers began with visionary consciousness. All their other skills are in service of a sense of mission about something greater than themselves. They feel called to make difference in the world. The visionary skills arise out of a strong sense of values and integrity. Often these values are developed through some kind of painful experience or loss, and the edgewalker becomes committed to helping other people who maybe going through similar kinds of experiences. Typically the edgewalkers have gone through a major personal or career change that requires them to develop new skills that were needed previously. Edgewalkers are the consummate integrators of seemingly unrelated ideas, skills, and fields.
2. Multicultural Responsiveness

Edgewalkers must have strong *multicultural responsiveness*. They’re bilingual in the sense that they can understand the nuances of different worlds or cultures. They span conventional boundaries and act as translators. Edgewalkers know how to pick up on subtle cues that are different from their own. They pay minute attention to people different from themselves and have an open, warm curiosity about people from other cultures. They look for commonalities more than differences, and they want to know more about the worlds of others.

3. Intuitive Sensitivity

Edgewalkers have strong *intuitive sensitivity*. They’re natural futurists. Because they’re avid readers they are constantly integrating information from many sources and looking for underlying themes and patterns. Like the shamans of old, they’ve learned to pay attention to subtle, perhaps invisible, signs of potential change. They have an uncanny knack of making the right decisions, often taking action that seems counterintuitive to others. But when asked how they knew what to do in a particular situation, they have difficulty explaining. They reply, I just “knew”. Intuitive skills are gained through the practice of deep listening. When listening to others, edgewalkers listen as much for the unsaid as the said. They also look for coincidences, patterns, or synchronicities that might provide clues to guide them in their decision making.

4. Risk-Taking Confidence

Another strong skill that edgewalkers display is the skill of calculated *risk-taking confidence*. Edgewalkers have a strong sense of adventure and experimentation. They’re always attracted to the next new thing. Like entrepreneurs, edgewalkers are easily bored with stability and are attracted to what’s over the horizon. They’re constantly asking what’s next and trying to figure out how to be part of it. Because they’re able to walk in two worlds, the world of practicality and the world of creativity, the risk they take to jump into the next new thing are based on information and intuition. Having a clear vision guided by strong values helps the edgewalker take risks that might not make sense to others.

5. Self-Awareness

The most important edgewalker skill is that of *self-awareness*. A principle that edgewalkers understand is that each person is a microcosm of the whole. Leaders who are edgewalkers know that if they’re experiencing a vision or dream or hunger, it’s most likely arising in others as well. The challenge for the edgewalker is to find others who have the same passion and to work together to make a difference. Leaders who are edgewalkers have a strong sense of being connected to something greater than themselves.

These five skills can be taught. However, the leaders who tend to learn best strongly value their own personal development and have low control needs.

Avoiding Potential Pitfalls

Edgewalkers can often get too far ahead of the pack. If this happens, they lose their credibility and the opportunity to influence others to do creative work. It’s nice to have someone say you’re ahead of your time, but there are few rewards for being too far out there. The most successful edgewalkers can remain in the real world and can remember establishes language and values so they can be a bridge to new ideas. For this reason, you should:
1. Watch for signs that you may be getting to far out on the edge; if this seems to be happening, revisit your own past experience, current priorities and future aspirations.

2. When you have a new idea that you want to implement, talk to people who are likely to disagree with you or try to block you.

3. Create relationships with people who may provide a good reality check.

4. Have patience with people who don’t want to move as fast as you do; take time to build relationships with them and specifically ask for their support.

5. Cultivate the skill of honoring people who disagree with you; listen for any pearls of wisdom they have to offer.

**Conclusion**

Edgewalkers are the leaders of the future. They are the corporate shamans who bring wisdom and guidance for their organizations. It’s not an easy role to play but it’s one that’s essential to the success of your organization- and one that can make you feel fully alive.

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**Making It Happen**

- Write mission and values statements for the work you want to do in the world.
- Read professional material in fields that are unfamiliar to you.
- Listen carefully to what people and the world have to say.
- Trust your instincts about ways you can make a difference.
- Remember to take time to nurture your inner being and to pay attention to the signs you receive.
- Master practicality and common sense, as well as commanding the creative and visionary skills.
- Bring creative skills to scientific problems.
- Involve others in your ideas, recognizing different approaches and perspectives.

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Dream About Cliff Falling or Cliff Jumping

The intention and circumstance of the cliff diving or cliff jumping can change the interpretation of cliff falling related dream. Also pay close attention to how you feel within the dream. If you are fully prepared to dive and jump off the cliff with all the right gears and conditions, it can suggest that you fear that you may not be up for the challenge or that you cannot meet the expectations of others. Your mind is telling you that you may have to take that leap of faith to get to the next level, conquer and defeat your fears. When th Walking on the leading edge is frequently the only way to succeed. Innovation, risk, and an ability to push beyond comfort zones can often be decisive. Introduction.Â The rules of the game are changing. Just when you think youâ€™ve figured out how to have a competitive advantage, a competitor develops a new technology. Just when you think youâ€™ve found the right motivation tool, the values in your workforce seem to shift. Just when you think youâ€™ve found the right geographical area for the expansion of your internationalisation efforts, political turmoil erupts. Yet some people seem to have an uncanny knack for knowing whatâ€™s going to happen before it unfolds. If you wanted to be the safest while also saving someone else from falling off a cliff (assuming that dramatic thing that happens in movies happens where a character falls off the edge of a cliff as the other character leaps forward, perfectly tim...Â should try to keep your body mostly on the safe edge of the cliff and giving yourself enough room to rear up and use your free arm (assuming you have one) to lift the person off the dangerous end. 469 views Â· View 2 Upvoters. View more.

Related Questions. When a car drives off a cliff, it falls straight down.