

# What Got You Here Won't Get You There

Barry Borgerson – Barry@2Selfs.com



## Achieving Peak Performance Has Become Discontinuously More Difficult

### Who Will Benefit Most from Understanding This Article?

This is the first in what will be a series of articles that address escalating needs of many business people including:

- Business leaders, from first-level supervisors to CEOs
- Wannabe business leaders who wish to prepare for their chance to advance
- High-level individual contributors who must lead without management authority
- Business school faculty focused on human aspects of running a company
- Venture capitalists – boards of directors
- Transformation coaches; that is, business coaches who focus on behavior transformations
- Service providers who focus on culture change in business
- Service providers who focus on leadership development

You will learn below that we have reached the transition juncture in the development of Western business where human nature now presents a formidable barrier to continuing progress because we increasingly cannot execute what we know we need to do in a timely manner – we have an accelerating *knowing-doing gap*.

### The Knowing-Doing Gap

We live in tumultuous times on many fronts. So, to succeed in the future we must learn to transform the way we have been executing our business processes and changing our business cultures in response to rapidly evolving business environments. No matter how much success you achieved in the past as a leader, your chances of enjoying repeated successes in the future will be greatly diminished if you and those you lead don't learn to execute at increasingly higher levels. You must achieve greater execution in order to outperform escalating global competition:

- Consistently execute your own *doing*; avoid *procrastinating*; take needed actions consistently, including giving timely and candid performance reviews
- Avoid undermining the *doing* of those around you, including intimidating and micromanaging

Equally determinative of future successes for business leaders will be the systematic ability to change cultures, including missions, business models, and operating processes, progressively faster to accommodate the relentless onslaught of technology innovations.

The above problems are the underlying cause of the increasingly irritating *knowing-doing gap*.

We spend an enormous amount time and effort on the knowing side of success through many years of precollege education, university studies, and then continuous learning. For a long time, those learning ac-

tivities were sufficient to create *sustainable* success. Now, the business environment has reached the tipping point where the *knowing-doing gap* is overwhelming most leaders and their businesses. To secure successful futures, leaders must learn to understand why they increasingly cannot *do* what they know they must do in a timely manner.

## **We Do Not Control As Much of Our Activities As We Pretend We Do**

Why do we have a *knowing-doing gap*? Why can't we just execute our intentions consistently once we decide what we need to do?

As the technology-driven rate of change accelerated, the *knowing-doing gap* widened. When the business community tried to understand it, insightful leaders came up with some ways to identify aspects of this mysterious problem. As a result, business people now speak, metaphorically, about:

- *soft* success factors as opposed to *hard* success factors
  - *soft* means mushy, poorly understood and managed
  - *hard* does not mean difficult but solid, well understood, and systematically managed
- the “box” as something weird we somehow have difficulty thinking outside of
- “status quo” as a mechanism that keeps us from making timely changes to culture elements
- “art” of *leadership* as opposed to *management* “science”
  - leadership is not art, but it is currently not straightforward – more amorphous than explicit
  - management is not really science, but it is something for which we have explicit processes

What is going on here?

Why do these vague success factors cause increasingly greater problems to individual careers and company successes? Why do we understand and manage well one side of the *hard/soft* success-factors dichotomy and not the other side?

We can finally penetrate these mysteries by facing the hard reality that we all operate in two distinct modes: we have a familiar *thinking mode* and an opaque *automatic mode* that we can usefully refer to as our *two selves*: our *thinking-self* and our *auto-self*.

### **Thinking-Self**



- Consumes most of our awareness
- Creates our intentions
- Solves our complex problems
- Manages our explicit knowledge

The *thinking-self* supports the *knowing* part of our business successes. Conversely, the *auto-self* plays the dominant role in the *doing* or *executing* part of our successes and in the elusive path to periodic culture changes to accommodate relentlessly escalating business-environment changes.

## Auto-Self



- Operates mostly outside of our awareness
- Produces our automatic activities
- Executes our intentions – our “doing”
- Controls our habits and cultures
- Acts like our “robot within”

Because of the unstoppable and accelerating changes in the business environment and the impact those changes are having on the *doing* side of success, we have reached the point where “what got us *here* will not get us *there*. That is, our previous path to success will not lead to our future success. In fact, as you continue through this series of articles, I expect you to be amazed at the amount of control our auto-self has over our career progress, our business successes, and our life in general.

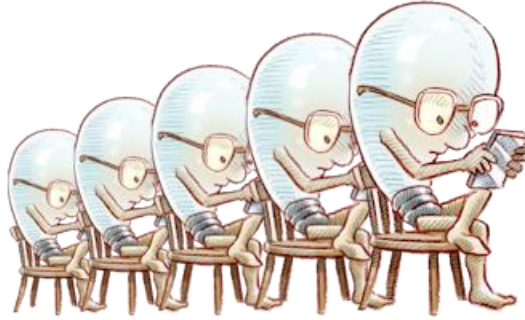
As you probably already suspect, the thinking-self handles *hard* success factors and business management activities. Conversely, the auto-self controls *soft* success factors such as *behavior habits*, *leadership* and the *status quo*; ~~and~~ it is where the mysterious *box* resides. As you read my related articles, you will learn that 2Selves Theory explains how the auto-self operates in the above, and many other situations, and how that theory provides systematic processes for managing the auto-self to overcome these otherwise mysterious barriers to success.

## What Got You Here Won't Get You There

Direct, explicit development of your thinking-self-based technical and management capabilities along with possibly leadership abilities you naturally possess are the primary assets that got you here. However, those assets will be chronically insufficient to get you there. Thus, sustainable success is now a dysfunctional illusion. Instead, we must focus on a repeated sequence of successes each built upon periodic transformations to automatic human activities. If you fail to explicitly recognize, comprehensively understand, and systematically transform auto-self activities, you are unlikely to achieve the successes you desire and deserve, which will increasingly depend on conquering what we can usefully visualize as auto-self **rusts**. You must learn to transform your own auto-self, the auto-self of those you lead, and the collective involuntary auto-contexts (hidden assumptions and beliefs) that produce the rigor mortis of the status quo.

When we make the explicit distinction between the thinking-self and auto-self, we can see that in business we *manage things*, and we do that well through explicit techniques processed by our thinking-self intentions. However, we *lead people* and we effectively carry out those activities that align with our success needs mostly through our non-intentional auto-self. Therein lies the fundamental distinction between management and leadership and therefore why business leaders have found it so elusive to articulate the difference explicitly.

## This Is Primarily What Got You Here *Continuous learning*



- Thinking-self centric
- Formal and continuing education
- The basis of the *learning organization*
- Focus on *sustainable* success
- Leadership qualities most often selected for rather than systematically developed at the auto-self foundational level
- Several heavily promoted and widely read best-practices books, including *In Search of Excellence*, *Built to Last*, *What Really Works*, and *Good to Great*, tried to extend this “sustainable” paradigm
  - Professor Phil Rosenzweig eviscerated these books in his book, *The Halo Effect: . . . and the Eight Other Business Delusions That Deceive Managers*
  - See my 2Selves analysis of the auto-self’s role in blocking “sustainable” success: [www.2selves.com/halo](http://www.2selves.com/halo)
- Rapidly changing business environments destroy any attempt at “sustainable” success

### **This Will Block You from Getting There – to a Successful Future**

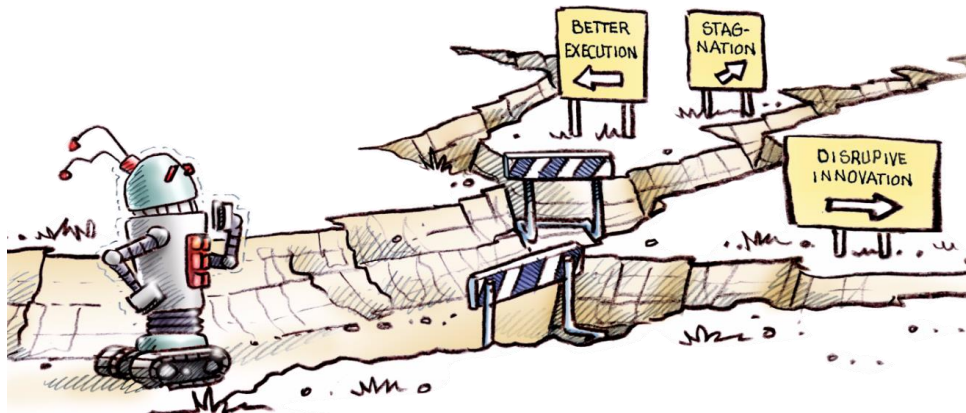
#### **Continuous learning is no longer sufficient – we must learn how to get out of our ruts**

Since most auto-self activities take place outside of our awareness and independent of our intentions, the *auto-self* has escaped systematic understanding and management because it is *elusive* and *illusive*:

- **Elusive:** We don’t notice our own auto-self activities, but those around us notice and often painfully experience them.
- **Illusive:** the hidden contextual aspects of the auto-self routinely deceive us; they create certainties “in here” that are untethered from, and often opposed to, realities “out there” – outside of our mind.

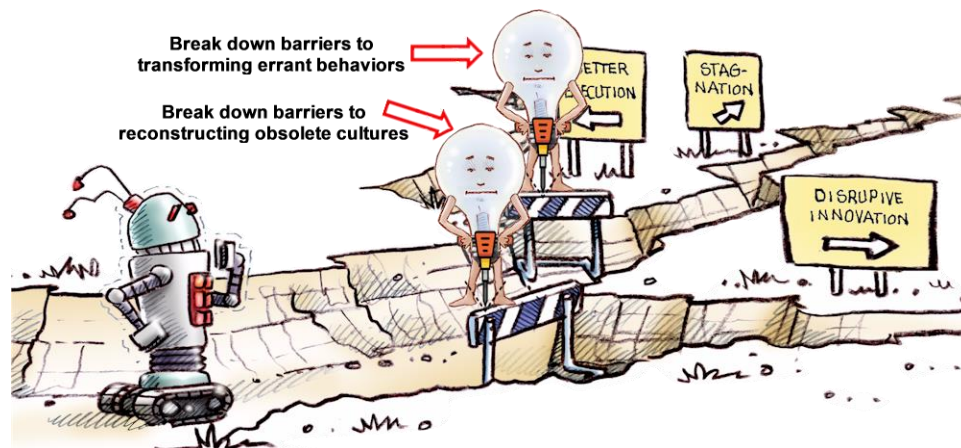
Because of these elusive and illusive properties, the *auto-self* has remained mysterious until now. To help you gain access to some aspects of your *auto-self*, it helps to use some visualizations mechanisms. Viewing your auto-self as a robot perpetually running in ruts over which your thinking-self has little control can help you understand how it operates. Because your “robot within” is very difficult to reprogram, you can now understand why you may need a transformation coach to break through barriers to get out of your current ruts and into a new set of ruts that match your immediate success needs.

## Our Auto-Self Ruts Block Our Path to Career Advancements and Business Successes



The path to better execution or doing requires transforming dysfunctional behaviors. The path to disruptive innovations requires, in addition to the thinking-self's invention of the innovation, a culture reconstruction to accommodate the new direction. Auto-self transformations create the underlying distinction between disruptive or discontinuous and incremental or continuous innovations.

### We Now Must Conquer Periodic Transforming To Break Out Of Our Ruts



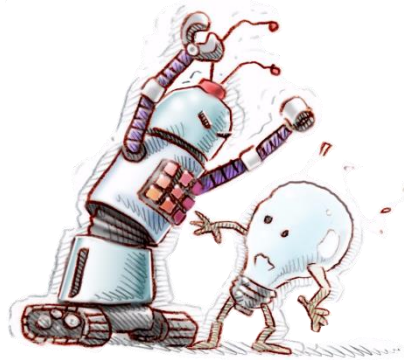
- **Initiating Transformations:** Our thinking-self is where our awareness and intentions reside. Therefore, we must use our thinking-self to initiate transformational change.
- **Thinking-Self Insufficient:** However, our auto-self ruts run so deep that our thinking-self normally cannot empower us to break through the transformation barriers.
- **Unfair Fight:** This results in an *unfair fight* between the thinking-self's attempts to initiate transformational change and the auto-self's relentless resistance to such change.
- **Become Transformable:** The above diagram also illustrates that after we break down one barrier – a behavior barrier on the top or a culture barrier on the bottom – our auto-self will temporarily align with current needs, but we also enter new ruts that we will need to break out of when the environment inevitably changes around us. To achieve repeated successes, business leaders and the companies they run will have to become *transformable*.

### Overcoming Unfair Fights

No amount of knowledge-based learning will come remotely close to creating the levels of execution that leaders will increasingly require. Instead, we need reliable processes for transforming individual behav-

iors and business cultures. For a variety of reasons that you will learn about—as you read my subsequent articles, self-help processes to change our own undesired behaviors and seat-of-the-pants attempts to change the counterproductive habits of those we lead, rarely produce results we desire. This is where transformation coaches can apply systematic techniques to achieve reliable and enduring habit changes. Likewise, new forms of competition and escalating technology innovations cause a periodic need to change the way companies do business. Understanding the need for culture change, which is a *knowing* activity by our thinking-self, is fundamentally insufficient because the actual process of implementing deep change is a *doing* activity controlled by our auto-self. While a *learning* organization will remain a needed attribute, the *transforming* organization will be much more important to achieving repeated successes. That is, the methodical, theory-based abilities to transform automatic behaviors and to reconstruct business cultures will become the main differentiating assets that determine repeated leader and business successes. Therefore, business leaders must acquire systematic transformation coaching capabilities.

### **Unfair Fights in Transformational Change**



#### **Auto-Self Discomfort and Drives Normally Overwhelm Thinking-Self Intentions**

Behavior and culture changes are difficult to achieve because they are impervious to advice and instead require transforming automatic habits that impact consistently executing required activities and automatic mental contexts that frame the way we understand issues and solve problems. Debilitating discomfort and untethered “in here” certainties, such as basic assumptions, theories, assertions and beliefs about the world “out there” robotically block transformations. Self-help approaches routinely fail because they create unfair fights between our thinking-self’s hopeful intentions and our auto-self’s tenacious resistance to transformational change. To overcome this unfair fight, leaders need to apply expert transformation coaching.

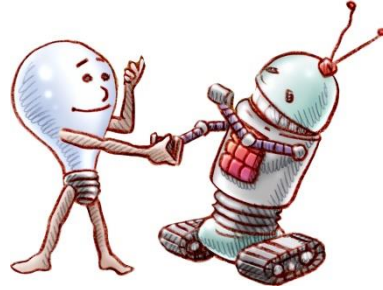
### **Existing Transformation Processes Help However, They Are Falling Increasingly Behind Escalating Needs**

Many service providers focus, at least indirectly, on automatic human activities, including:

- Transformation coaches
- Leadership-development providers
- Culture-change specialists

Although these service providers have developed many effective empirically based processes for managing the aforementioned success factors, technology-driven and global-competition needs have passed the point where they exceed the capabilities of these processes. Also, we have lacked a theory of the mind that reveals the commonality of the above issues and provides the opportunity to develop generalized transformation processes. 2Selves Theory reveals the underlying mental properties of the auto-self, the synergy among the above success factors and many more, and the intricate cooperating and competing interactions between the auto-self and the thinking-self.

## Understanding and Leveraging the Synergy between Our Thinking-Self and Auto-Self



With the understanding provided by this new model of automatic human activities, 2Selves Theory also provides systematic, reliable processes to transform a wide array of success-determining auto-self activities.

The business environment and many other social environments including our governing systems have irretrievably passed the point where we can manage the auto-self ramifications of the systemic changes based mainly on our amazing thinking-self-driven information and communications advances.

### We Just Got Dropped into Boiling Water

The frog fable describes that if you put a frog in water and turn up the heat, it will stay there until it dies but if you drop it into boiling water, it will immediately leap out and save itself. The relentlessly escalating technology-driven need for change at the auto-self level has been like the environment slowly turning up the heat, and many individuals, leaders, and businesses simply stay there until they die professionally, while lamenting the negative effects of mysterious “soft” success factors. Even after convulsions in our political systems that will inevitably flow over into many businesses have caused the environment we operate in to start simmering, the elusive and illusive nature of automatic human activities has paralyzed most business leaders from engaging in systematic transformational change. Now, the coronavirus has suddenly created massive upheavals for individuals, businesses, and economies, so we have all been dropped into boiling water in the form of the forced destruction of major aspects of the “status quo.” Consequently, many people now realize that they must leap out of this imposed threat to their professional well-being to a new normal, but so far, the form of that new normal has remained elusive. However, now that we recognize the widespread impact of automatic human activities, we can understand that **our new normal will not just be that we intentionally think differently but that we periodically transform so that we automatically act differently.** We can let this changed, and quite possibly detrimental, business world happen to us or we can seize control and construct a new world that is in fundamental ways better than the one we previously occupied. Fortunately, we now can make that choice because we understand the roles the auto-self plays in fundamental changes and we can manage them, which will require systematic, reliable guidance from expert transformation coaching specialists who have a solid theoretical understanding of how automatic human activities operate.

For a free 45-minute coaching session on how you can transform your *auto-self* to achieve repeated future successes, contact me at [Barry@2Selves.com](mailto:Barry@2Selves.com).