



SQUARE CUBE

Social Impact Consulting and Coaching

Understanding and Getting Out of Your Own Way

Oftentimes we are one of the biggest obstacles in our paths to powering up our passion and compassion projects, developing a social enterprise business or even more fundamentally working out what we would like to do.

Getting Out of Our Own Way is a skill and a practice with multiple elements. We're not going to cover them all here but let's scratch the surface of what it might mean to work with Square Cube and see what resonates for you. As these notes are only a sound bite let's make use of a visual, which may help you to guide yourself on some exploration.

Many people are familiar with Maslow's hierarchy of needs and the importance of certain conditions to be in place to enable self-actualization or personal fulfillment. A hierarchy of needs to be met which perhaps leads us to focus on outward facing actions. In these notes we're focusing on a model, a hierarchy based on work by Dilts asks that we take an inward focus and looking at the arrangements of our own emotional and mental furniture and see how they are in alignment or misaligned. This is a model from Neurolinguistic Programming (NLP) and while Square Cube is not practicing NLP this is very useful model to help guide thinking. Square Cube is nothing if not very eclectic in its borrowings and meldings !

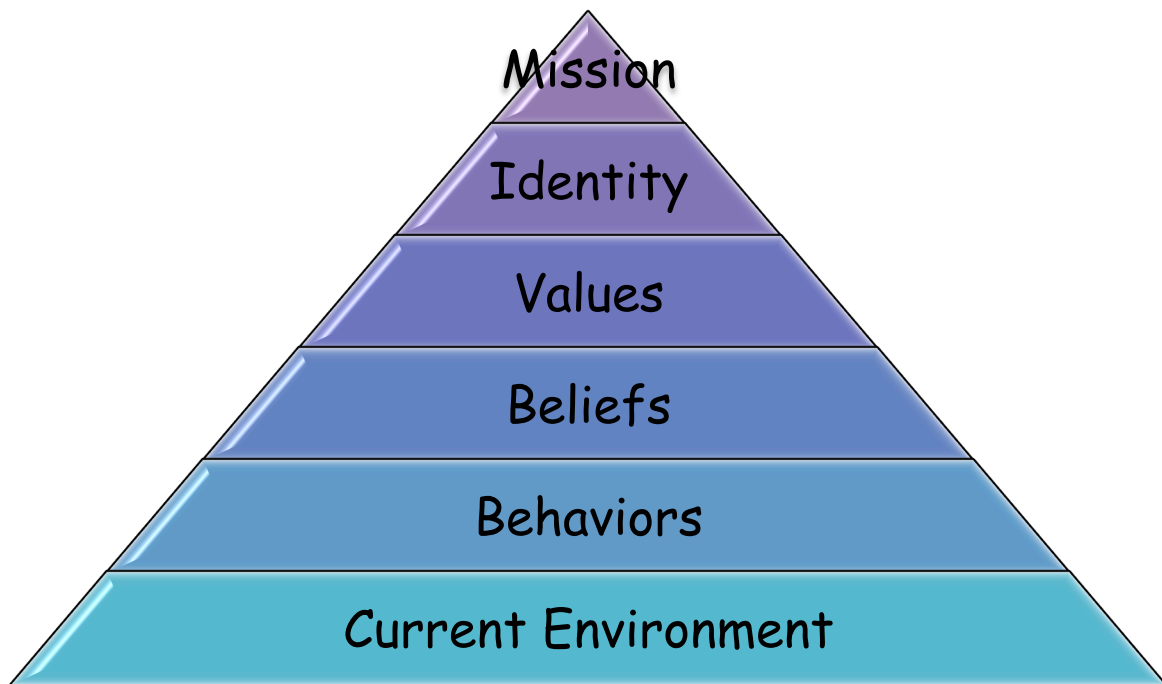
You can play with some of the ordering in the hierarchy, but let's run with these layers and these inter-relationships.

We know that to have a goal in mind, to be mission driven is very motivating. It is the thing that reflects and supports who you are. It is a source of energy. It is a reason for action. It is the organizing principle for your future. Uncovering and stating a mission is sometimes very hard work, sometimes it drops into our hands like a ripe plum and sometimes it moves through a number of iterations before it feels right. Missions or

goals for some of us evolve over time or change with time. For others a mission is life-long with maybe some modifications and additions.

Having a firm mission, for now and the foreseeable future, is empowering and powering.

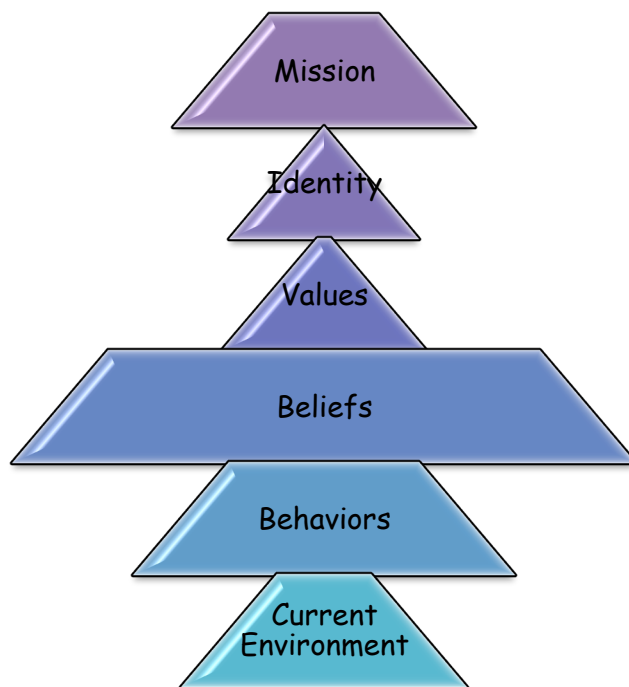
Working towards a bigger picture goal is enlivening. It is also something that can help us develop perspective and balance. When aspects of our lives get toppled, mired and stuck we can re-group and look again at the bigger picture and that can generate perspective for us. As a friend of mine so frequently said, “small thing big world”, this can apply equally to our small wobbles and stuckness in the face of our bigger goals. Being able to realize multiple mini-goals and targets gives a great sense of progress and satisfaction creating a fuel to continue.



Our goal or mission needs to be aligned with our identity. That is who who do we think that we are, who is it that we are trying to show up as in the world. To have a mission that does not express our sense of self, will sit very uncomfortably and will probably not get completed. If it does it will probably not feel joyful or easy.

As we delve into the lower layers of the pyramid we need to see how these elements align with each other and with the ideas we have about mission and identity. Again, without alignment we'll be metaphorically crunching through the gears, needing to get out and walk or push a car uphill. It will be seriously tedious work with more time spent reflecting on setbacks than on forward motion. Certainly there will be very little joy to be found.

Without alignment will end up with a very unstable structure. You get the idea from the visual below. Effort will go into propping up the structure rather than in harnessing forward motion.



So how do we ensure that the elements aligned and balanced ?

Let's explore a few more layers.

Everyone says that values are important. How much time do we really spend thinking about our values and how they show up in our lives, how we support our values and honor them or how we step over them ?

Beliefs are interesting. They drive so much of our thinking and so many of our behaviors, they can become the 'rules' that we live by and

organize our world around. But where do beliefs come from ? How often do we question our beliefs or rules ?

Our values and our beliefs drive our behaviors and help us understand who we are and our place in the world. They therefore require attending to.

As a very beginner rider after a recent fall while I was contemplating getting back in the saddle I noticed a number of ideas coming to mind. It was best not get on a mare, way better to find an old boy, that way I might not fall. Probably it was not a good idea to ride any horse that's solid brown or has too much brown in it. It was probably better to have a very wide horse. Probably it was not a good idea to have any lesson in the rain. Maybe it would be a good idea to avoid Fridays... maybe weekdays altogether.... perhaps even days in general.

You get the idea. By the time I had worked up this series of beliefs I could have created an edifice of rules that would have painted myself into such a corner that the self-imposed limitations would have been very hard to satisfy and indeed could have meant not riding again. We do this kind of magical thinking a lot of the time. What is interesting is that beliefs that we hold about one area of life often manifest unquestioningly in others.

The powerful counter-balance to ignoring values and beliefs or just accepting them is to question and not just accept the first idea, but to really dig and question again, to uncover various layers of responses. Finding a question to unlock what is of value and importance to you is important. Questions to experiment with might include:

- Why is that so important to you ?
- What could you not live without in your life ?
- What is it about that which is so important to you ?
- If this was not in your life, what do you think your life would be like ?
- If you had to choose between x and y, which has greater value ?

Having clarity about core values and being able to interrogate what supports or what dishonors a core value is a very powerful position to be in.

It is possible to hold beliefs that do not reflect values, in which case they are not going to be helpful. Beliefs drive behaviors, behaviors which then run counter to or only work part way to values being realized are

not going to serve one well. Exploring beliefs is important. How does a belief serve you, or not serve you ? How does a belief serve or undercut a value ? How does a belief serve, or hinder, your sense of identity ? How does a belief serve, or hinder, your mission ?

As you dig into values and beliefs you may be surprised about some of your behaviors, behaviors that fail to support your values and your mission. These would be areas to think about changing. That takes us to another area of discussion that of changing of behaviors and habits, which we will not explore here.

Finally no one lives without existing in an environment. It is important to really look at the environment and to explore what it is about the environment that you react to ? What is it that you think requires that you behave in certain ways ? What is it in the environment that is perceived as a limitation ? What is it about the environment that you could focus on to support you or take better advantage of ?

Being aware of your interaction with your environment and how you might be bringing limiting beliefs to it or not taking advantage of elements that might be more supportive is a powerful enquiry. Many can make choices about how they respond to environmental influences or make decisions to make changes to their operating environment.

Of course the project of getting your ducks in a row is one of a process and attending to all these more interior moving parts and responses is an on-going project.

