

THE VALUE WEB®

designing & facilitating collaboration around the world

NEWSLETTER - November 2010

Issue 02/10

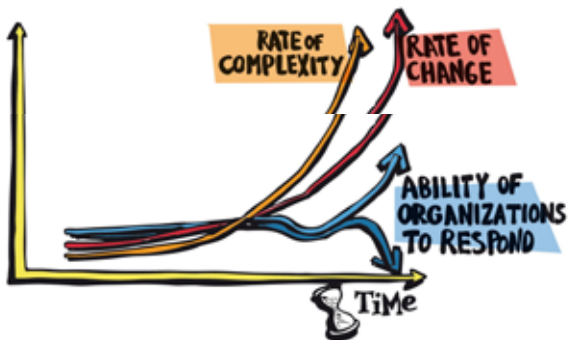
“Human beings, viewed as behaving systems, are quite simple. The apparent complexity of our behavior over time is largely a reflection of the complexity of the environment in which we find ourselves.”

Herbert Simon – Scientist & Nobel Price Winner in Economic Science

Dear Friends of The Value Web,

in our last newsletter we talked about the backdrop of ineffective decision-making processes. Being exposed to many stakeholders around the world in the last months, The Value Web is now observing more urgency for true co-design between stakeholders. There is a widening gap between the rate of change experienced in our environment and the ability of human beings to respond. Patrick Frick (founding member of The Value Web) described this “Complexity Gap” in his [speech at TEDx Munich](#) this summer.

RATE OF CHANGE MODEL



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THE COMPLEXITY GAP

In many ways, we have seen more change over the past few decades than has occurred since the Middle Ages. The rate of change in our environment has been growing exponentially.

The interaction of all these trends combined with massive amounts of information available and technological innovations, increase the complexity found in our environment at the same overwhelming rate. The ability of human beings to deal with complexity has only increased incrementally over the past decades.

These developments lead us to identify the problem: the widening gap between the rate of change experienced in our environment and the ability of human beings to respond. Let's face it: we humans have a limit to the amount of complexity we can process. And we reached that limit quite some time ago. We have created a world, where it is impossible for anyone to understand let alone control the man made human operating system of this planet. This is what we call the complexity gap.

While there is no shortage of known issues to address, the world lacks the processes to tackle them. We believe that the world has a desperate need to re-design the decision-making processes.

Examples of our recent work show that this complexity gap exists and that we need to inject our processes - potentially in an iterated manner - in order to close this gap.

VALUE WEB ENGAGEMENTS IN LIGHT OF THE COMPLEXITY GAP

In May this year, The Value Web supported two large events: the [Young Global Leaders](#) meeting (YGL) in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania and the [Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition](#) (GAIN) meeting in Dubai. Both engagements were designed to narrow the complexity gap.

The YGL session in Tanzania approached this complexity gap on an individual level. Over 350 participants worked to better understand impact measurement and then mapped out their individual [models of change](#). We asked them: How do you create positive change? What levers do you use? Who is included and how? What values drive you?

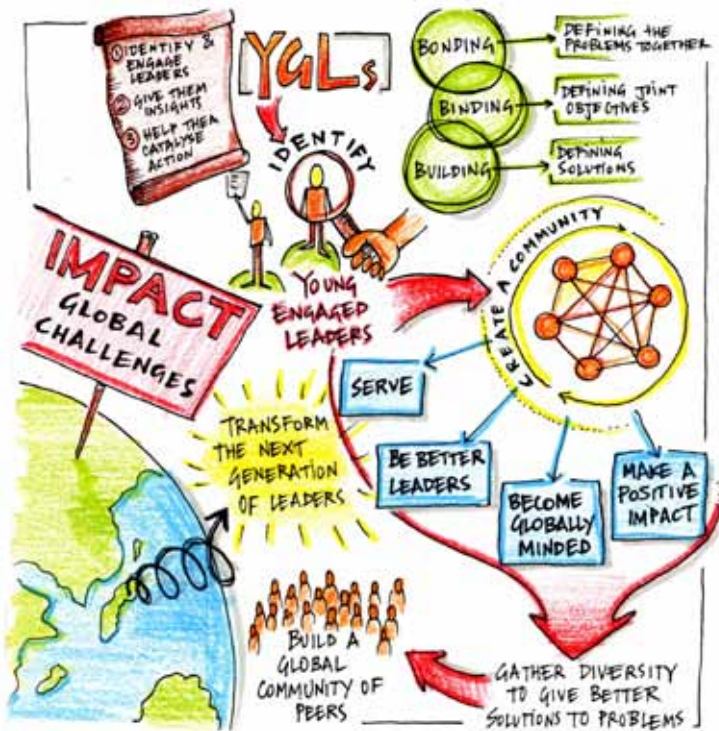
The outcome was a powerful collection of models and a dialogue about those models to help them view their impact in new ways and to allow colleagues to better understand the paths to systemic positive change. These models, which were inspired by a YGL poem of the same name, will be published in the Washington Post. We'll post the link to

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them when it becomes available.

The learning's around process design are manifold. The engagement with this community is ongoing and we are moving from a "session to session" way to design to a recursive one with multiple feedback loops. One challenge is that the community attendance changes with every engagement. How can we create coherence, themes and feedback loops into the system when only about 10% of the participants are the same from one session to another? How can we manage the transition or segue to another big topic? What other themes do we want this exceptional community to address for the good of our planet? How do we engage super busy people to care over the longer term? This requires our flexibility to adapt and iterate our own design processes.

In May, we worked with GAIN to co-design their annual [Business Alliance Global Forum](#), an event that brings together global and regional business leaders and influential stakeholders to discuss the latest in sustainable business models for the base of the pyramid and other strategies to fight malnutrition. We delivered several shorter work sessions and a large graphic wall that integrated the outcomes of all sessions into a red thread to highlight the

complexity and highlighted the connections.

A number of process design insights came to us from this event. The team agreed that, although we used a variety of tools to cross pollinate ideas, there was still not enough space or time for the coming together of all the pieces across the streams. We sensed a strong need (and in fact a call) for



processes and events that allow for much deeper vertical understanding of core issues (regardless of how they are framed) paired with wider cross-disciplinary, cross-sectoral/cross-industry understanding, linked to actual doing. – We looked forward to having the chance to iterate our approach and taking the time to break the silos inherent in the structure of solutions.

THE HARVESTING APPROACH

We found our chance to do just that! In September we instituted a new process at the [Annual Meeting of New Champions in Tianjin, China](#) for the World Economic Forum. In this largest engagement ever with the Forum, our team of 23 creative minds co-designed and delivered 14 sessions in 3 days in five separate rooms. New was the concept and execution of what we called the "harvesting" product.

We used the harvesting approach (based on part of the well-known World Café process) to collect and synthesize the strongest ideas of each session, then distilled them to find patterns, red threads and "laser beam questions". Every evening, we looked at the day's harvest and wrote down questions that were strong enough to beam through the

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technologies are redefining financial services and the way people behave in a digitalized economy.

Our intent was to create a lively set of scribed pictures that would be understandable both for people who were present at the sessions and for people who were not.

We used a “four ears, four hands, two minds” approach. One of us was scribing at a meta level, different than a usual real-time scribing would dictate. At the same time, someone else was taking notes in a mind-mapping form. Both were listening for trends, important questions and points of controversy.

The Value Web

About who we are

The Value Web is an international non-profit association, based in Switzerland, focusing on engaging NGO's, social enterprises, foundations, non-profits, governments and multi-sector collaborations in transformational projects for a more sustainable, equitable world. We design and deliver collaborative engagements to support like-minded leaders and their organizations around the world. The Value Web's collective experience allows our design processes to cut through the complexity found in the worlds of business, government, non-profit and civil society – and build connections at the intersections where these communities come together. The Value Web stands for integrity and sustainable solutions that best benefit the organization and the larger world in which it is a part.

WHAT'S NEXT

Although the content is striking, the most important learning for us is about the process, which aims to cut through the sheer volume of information we experience in work sessions and get to the core of the matters facing us all, to rise to a higher level of insight and thoughtful action. Ideally, this is a process we would like to apply to all our gatherings towards bridging the complexity gap. At some point, as an offering in and of itself, we could facilitate a meta-harvest, at a global level, that drives decision-making into a new direction.

To conclude, The Value Web feels a strong call from all our clients and the world at large for coherence-finding through the noise and connecting the dots.

The Value Web's intent is to bring to the world our skills to design and facilitate collaboration to close this complexity gap. We believe that our collective toolkit can play an important role in dealing with critical challenges that threaten the sustainability of our planet for future generations.

Look out for a key event hosted by The Value Web at the end of 2011 to make all of this happen.

Warmest regards,

Svenja Bodtlaender
President of The Value Web

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RECURSION & ITERATION COLLABORATION DESIGN THINKING