



### Connecting with Metaphors

Metaphors are often building blocks for how we define our experience: the nuts and bolts of communicating to others. "Flying on the wings of change" – "racing against time" – "walking the talk" - "riding the waves" are all metaphors that provide a symbolic bridge, expressing deeper levels of meaning.



A well-timed, pithy metaphor has potency. When it is spoken or experienced at the right moment, it can hit you square between the eyes. Sometimes when a particular comment is



heard or an image presents itself, one's perspective can change on the spot. That is the power of metaphor – it is a shortcut to meaning and essence – while establishing immediate connection to what's going on in *your* world.

### Using Metaphor for Learning

Drawing upon a powerful metaphor can provide a unique opportunity to understand a problem differently, realize diverse perspectives, and create new possibilities. It's easy to get stuck in the mud, when you are trying to solve a problem from the same realm of thinking. Creating the shift from the old to an innovative approach can be facilitated by a well thought out and meaningful metaphor. At its best, a metaphor can drive change and stimulate new learnings when associated with business-relevant issues and needed behaviors.

*Metaphors and images are not only interpretive constructs or ways of seeing, they also provide frameworks for action. Their use creates insights that often allow us to act in ways that we may not have thought possible before.*

*-- Dr. Gareth Morgan  
Distinguished Research Professor at York University in Toronto*

Driving change in corporations has not always been done quickly or efficiently. With ever-increasing competition and cost-cuts, many companies have an urgent need for innovative, time sensitive and high-impact learning experiences where change is evident. The Henry Ford is providing just that.

At the Henry Ford, the distinctive historic venues provide a learning context for working on key business topics. Venues such as the Rosa Parks' bus, Thomas Edison's Menlo Park, and Henry Ford's Bagley Avenue shop become *tools* for drawing from the historical figures whose leadership was on the line, and then bridging to one's own experience in confronting business challenges and solving problems.

Even more powerfully, by engaging in a learning venue like the Henry Ford, the opportunity to shift entrenched patterns and move toward creating significant change becomes possible. The historian sets the context with the relevant, enduring metaphors for individuals, teams and organizations. From there, it's the participants' responsibility to internalize the key messages and then, apply them to current day realities. Targeting priority action items and next steps close the session. The visual to the right further describes these roles.



### Leveraging Metaphors at the Henry Ford

Each session will challenge participants to be in the driver's seat – taking an active role in their own learning. The historic venues allow for shifting one's mental gears, quickly and meaningfully. To ensure that your time is well spent at the Henry Ford, consider the tips below. Then, while you're there, give yourself permission to discover new avenues for you, the team, and your organization.

- Engage with a learner's mindset – be open and test your assumptions
- Immerse yourself in the historic venue – watch for behaviors, cultural norms and environmental factors that have business relevance for you (and your team)
- Authentically participate in discussions – be honest and candid; listen as an ally
- Transfer key insights and learnings into actions – ensure that you (and your team) are explicitly accountable

