

Dr Robin Lincoln Wood - When, Where, What, Who and Why

Early Influences

Robin Lincoln Wood has been an environmental and social justice activist from an early age. He was born in South Africa into a family with a centuries long tradition of serving others for the common good. Robin's family emigrated from South Africa to Canada in the early 1960's and then at the end of the decade returned to South Africa. He was strongly influenced by the progressive, liberal tendencies emerging in Toronto during that decade, shaping his "green" values and his love of music, travel and the arts.

At the age of 16, Robin was elected as Junior Mayor of Sandton. He led a campaign to keep Sandton clean, green and serene which also involved the youth of Sandton in charitable activities in black townships, as well as planting ten thousand trees.

1975-1981

Following his passion for social justice, Robin became an Advocate of the Supreme Court. While working and studying law part time he became one of the leaders for the campaign to end Apartheid and free Nelson Mandela. At the same time Robin's fascination with the world of economics and business meant that he studied these topics intensively and worked in several businesses and major organisations to further his understanding of how politics, economics and social transformation can be integrated to create more beneficial outcomes for all.

Following two years of national service as an Army officer, it became clear to him just how serious the civil wars being fought in and around South Africa had become.

1982-1989

He decided to join Citibank to create an international career for himself and was sent to London, where he pioneered new financial instruments using the first personal computers.

Robin was inspired by the vision of Bill Gates and Steve Jobs to put a computer on the desk of every human being on the planet as he saw the potential for this to change the world for the better. He was soon head of electronic banking at TrustBank, an IT strategist at PA Consulting and went into software and services as head of Marketing and Planning at the BIS Group, then part of Verizon.

1990-1994

At 33 Robin's passion for information and transformation merged into his first entrepreneurial venture focused on transforming large organizations to liberate human potential. At the same time he was also conducting research at board level with 30 of the world's major corporations to understand the link between strategic alignment and long-term market success. In 1995 he was awarded a doctorate from London Business School for his research and development of the strategic alignment diagnostic tool.

Some of the highlights of this period include co-developing the first sustainable energy strategy for the World Bank in 1992, the year of the first Rio conference. While working on a project with Shell in Malaysia Robin was

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shocked by the devastation being wreaked upon the Borneo rain forests by palm oil plantations, making him even more determined to do work that would prevent such destruction.

Robin and his colleagues were privileged to work with the boards of some of the world's largest corporations on projects related to their reinvention of their businesses, including the privatization of Royal Dutch PTT and Lord John Brown's transformation of British Petroleum into BP as 'Beyond Petroleum'. His transformation consulting firm also worked with global banks and pharmaceutical companies undergoing major changes at that time.

The focus in much of this work was to put people and planet before profit. As one of Robin's mentors, Arie de Geus, then head of planning at Shell used to say: 'Profit is just oxygen needed to breathe', it is never the real purpose of companies.

**1994-
1999**

One of the most exciting moments in Robin's career was being asked to join a group of top executives and thought leaders in Silicon Valley in January 1995 to explore the future of computing and the internet, building on the organisational transformation and scenario planning approaches developed by Robin and his colleagues over the previous decade.

At exactly the same time that Jeff Bezos was starting Amazon, Mark Andreessen was starting Netscape and Jerry Yang was starting Yahoo, HP, Microsoft and Intel were preparing to transform themselves to fully participate in the new opportunities emerging in the digital economy.

Robin's personal passion for the work he did over the next five years in both Silicon Valley and Asia was driven by the potential the internet had to empower everyone on the planet to live better lives. He saw the realization of the dream that almost every employee of any large organization has, to escape the drudgery of sterile office environments and office politics to be able to work anywhere, anytime and become a valuable knowledge worker rather than simply being another cog in the machine.

During this period Robin also came across and started using some of the integral psychology frameworks that were just then emerging for organizational and social transformation, and then licensed his strategic alignment tools to Ernst & Young where he subsequently helped co-create the strategy and e-business groups.

**1999-
2002**

At the start of the new millennium Robin became a managing director of a fast growing e-business company. When that was taken over he decided to pause for breath. His new award winning book, 'Managing Complexity' sold out its first print run and he was being asked to speak about the implications of the digital economy to top executives in major organisations as well as the Cabinet Office at No 10 Downing Street.

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Robin co-designed and co-led programs at London Business School to develop the abilities of senior executives to lead complex strategic transformations. Despite the painful repercussions of the dot.com crash he still remained convinced that collaborative capitalism was finally emerging into the mainstream.

Shortly after the collapse of the Twin Towers, his yearning to focus on his own personal transformation grew irresistible. Having spent much time with thought leaders in integral psychology and personal transformation theory and practice, he decided to fully embody in his own life the psycho-spiritual truths and practices he had previously 'kept in the closet' and only shared with his most trusted confidantes.

The crucial insight for him at this time was that our own consciousness and the culture that that produces around us are the most powerful transformative forces in the world.

**2003-
2013**

With this in mind, Robin decided to transform a derelict Chateau in in Perpignan, South-West France, to create an oasis where a new generation of leaders could be inspired and developed, reconnecting with nature, themselves and their true purpose. Over the next few years, many of Robin's most trusted allies who were themselves thought leaders in different parts of the world, met at the Oasis to collaborate on transformation projects.

As a result Renaissance2 emerged as a vehicle to enable this network of innovators and transformation specialists to co-catalyse other major initiatives being undertaken by dozens of similar organizations around the world.

Building on the insights from all of these collaborations in 30 major meetings in 12 major cities of the world it became clear that how it might be possible to design a new operating system for a thriving human civilization on a thriving planet, but the big question was: `How?

**2008-
2014**

Following a year-long research program, it became clear that the five core ingredients of this new operating system for thrival were:

- 1) The increasing availability of a new, more integral understanding of human evolution and the development tools needed to create irresistible shifts beneficial to all life in every human endeavour and organisational decision.
- 2) A detailed appreciation of the drivers of human thrival and the ways in which every one of us can experience greater thrival with a smaller footprint that doesn't cost the Earth.
- 3) A method through which the key strategic decisions of the organizations that shape the future on our planet can be made to maximize ThriveAbility, i.e. empowering every single one of their stakeholders to enhance their own ability to thrive through their interaction with each and every organization and individual that is important in their lives.

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- 4) Our ability to harness the power of Big Data to build predictive models of the business and governance policies and strategies that drive key decisions in major organizations and communities.
- 5) The most vital ingredient requires each of us at all levels to integrate the first four ingredients of ThriveAbility in our own beings and our actions.

As a celebrity speaker Robin has been privileged to address many audiences around the world on these topics. The key question to implementing such a big vision was, again: How?

While preparing a speech for a major conference in Scandinavia in early 2012, Robin had an Aha!-moment:

He realised that the equation for sustainability that focuses on the minimization of impact would never mobilize enough people to make the breakthroughs required to resolve the current crises we find ourselves in.

It became clear to him what we need to focus on is maximizing each unit of thrival for the lowest unit of footprint. This then becomes the design objective for every decision, every choice each one of us makes anywhere at anytime.

A powerful consortium has emerged to build a ThriveAbility prototype that can be used as a tool that radically simplifies the key decisions that impact key organisational stakeholders and their thrival.

The ThriveAbility Foundation has now attracted the seed funding required to develop and test the ThriveAbility prototype in major organizations beginning in 2015. The ThriveAbility prototype consists of three key ingredients:

- **ThriveAbility Assessment** –a detailed assessment of the stage of maturity of an organization in its journey through six stages, from a compliance driven approach to sustainability to being a role model for the implementation of ThriveAbility global good practice. Includes an analysis of strengths, areas for improvement and possible strategies for breakthrough to the next stage of maturity.
- **ThriveAbility Pathways** - applying the latest insights into human development and the appropriate transformational tools to create irresistible shifts in the human systems that are the core of every organization. Measures resonance, alignment and coherence in individuals, teams and organisations to help decision makers dramatically improve the success rate of their change initiatives.
- **ThriveAbility Index** - integrates the most significant indicators that enable decision makers to both determine the viability of their current business model and identify the pathways of innovation and transformation that ensure the thrival of all key stakeholders in the longer term.