



# Sherry Schiller, Ph.D.

*work with purpose & harmony*

## About Sherry Schiller

### HELLO AND WELCOME!

For over 30 years my life's work has been helping leaders across the globe build organizations where people work with purpose & harmony.

I am an organizational strategist and coach. Whether it is a one-time intervention or an ongoing partnership, I help leaders achieve and sustain optimal team performance within a constructive culture.

### SHERRY SCHILLER, PH.D. PRESIDENT, SCHILLER CENTER

Sherry is an internationally acclaimed organizational strategist and expert on managing change. She is a confidant and coach to successful leaders who want to guide their organizations from *what is* to *what can be*. As a popular conference speaker, she shares proven strategies that help people in organizations work with greater purpose and harmony.

In 1985, Sherry launched the Schiller Center as a nonprofit organization to help organizational leaders envision and realize better futures. She quickly gained a national reputation for challenging established assumptions and offering fresh solutions to organizational dilemmas. Her book, *Dispelling the Megatrends Myth: A Leader's Guide to Managing Change*, offers a dynamic model for collaborative, strategic leadership.



*Enjoying a break in Santiago, Chile, during her work with the International School Nido de Aquilas*



*Sherry in Warsaw, working with the American School*

As President of the Schiller Center, Sherry has traveled the world, helping business, government, education and nonprofit leaders understand, anticipate, and create change. Organizations as diverse as The US Forest Service, The Royal Winnipeg Ballet, BoozAllenHamilton, the Corporation for National Service, and the American School of Warsaw have benefited from Sherry's guidance. Leaders report that her guidance has resulted in more collaborative leadership, greater clarity on shared goals, better aligned systems and structures, and a stronger bottom line.

Prior to establishing the Schiller Center, Sherry conducted international research and training as Vice President of The American Center for the Quality of Work Life. Before that, she served as the first national director of a juvenile-delinquency prevention program that is still cited for its innovative partnerships to build community through service learning.

Sherry attended the University of Michigan, where she earned her doctorate in curriculum and instruction with an emphasis in organizational change. Her dissertation, a study of large-scale innovation, received the university's highest scholarship award. She has taught at leading universities throughout the United States.

## **BUA NUA NAM: OUR LOTUS STORY**

In 1984, I found myself on an assignment that landed me in a Buddhist monastery in Thailand, where the monks took to calling me *Bua Nua Nam*, translated literally as, “Lotus Below the Water's Surface.” They explained that it meant that they saw me as serious about my calling, but not yet fully bloomed.

I felt a deep sense of responsibility to achieve the promise that the monks saw in me. When I returned to the States, I launched the non-profit Schiller Center as a platform to help organizational leaders manage change and create better futures. I knew that the realities of the 21st century would require very different perspectives and skills and vowed to help organizational leaders with positive intentions take a proactive stance toward the future. I hoped that I could achieve my own potential by helping others achieve theirs.

Eighteen years later, another assignment took me to Yangon, Burma. Several of the democratic opposition leaders of the country gave me a carefully wrapped tube as a gift of appreciation. When I returned home and unwrapped it, I discovered a beautiful oil painting of a lotus blossom, fully bloomed.

Today, the painting hangs in our office, reminding us daily to strive to be our fullest selves in the service of others. It seems only fitting that the lotus at the center of the painting should serve as our logo. We hope that its meaning inspires others as it does us.

## **ABOUT THE SCHILLER CENTER**

I launched the Schiller Center in 1985 to help people in organizations create better futures for themselves, their organizations, their communities, and the world. I had spent the previous year working and traveling overseas, including backpacking solo around the world. My work overseas involved studying the impact of emerging technologies on women in developing countries. One of the conclusions I formed was that the hierarchical, industrial organizational model of American businesses, nonprofits, and public sector organizations would no longer work in the coming years, and would need to be replaced by more interactive, dynamic organizational systems. In fact, it occurred to me that the “pre-industrial” communities in which I was working were more prepared and capable of making this shift than did many American organizations. People in these communities still knew how to work together with purpose and harmony. It was disturbing to witness top-down Western structures being imposed on these vibrant living systems in an attempt to “modernize” them.

Creating the Schiller Center provided me a platform for studying, teaching, and practicing organizational and social change initiatives. I had many questions I wanted to be able to investigate. I needed to be able to link research to practice that made a positive difference for people and the organizations in which they work. And I wanted to be free to serve those who were ready to change in order to better serve others.

In its first few years, the Center grew rapidly in size, which caused me to realize that my calling was to work directly with client leaders and not manage a staff that did the work I loved to do. I made the decision then to continue the Center “virtually”—a concept that didn't become popular for another twenty years. Over time, I have attracted an amazing team of individuals and organizational partners to provide exactly what a client needs. For example, for more than a decade I've worked with a “naming expert” whose talent is creating the perfect moniker for any service or initiative. It's not often a client needs a former Madison Avenue Superstar



*Lotus painting given to Sherry by Burmese democratic leaders during her 2002 visit*

whose specialty is honing in on the essence of something so precisely she can perfectly name it—but when that need arises, I know who to call.

Keeping the Center virtual has also allowed me to collaborate with individuals and organizations who have complementary skills and compatible values. I have learned a lot from these co-ventures, and the Center's clients have benefited from this rich cross-pollination across sectors, geographies, and initiatives.

I have been asked over the years why I decided to make the Center a 501c3 nonprofit organization rather than a firm I owned—a very logical question, given that this is not the typical consultant business model. It was essential to me that whatever I created always serve the common social good by being mission-focused. I wanted to be accountable to a Board, modeling what I teach to nonprofit clients. Today, the Center's Board of Directors consists of business and community leaders who guide and support my work and assure the Center's resources serve its mission.

The Center has also served as a mechanism for redistributing resources from clients who had greater ability to pay for services to those who were equally worthy but had less ability to support their needed change initiatives. This has worked out well—the Center serving as a sort of modern day Robin Good.

Finally, I wanted the focus of every consultation, research project, keynote presentation, or article written to express the truth as I understood it to be in the interest of the people I was serving, rather than what they wanted to hear. I believe twenty-two years later, I am still driven by the understanding that I am not a “hired” consultant but a servant of powerful ideas that improve people's lives.

Over the years, the Center has received grants and tax-deductible gifts that allowed us to pursue research and writing projects, develop curricula and train educators on how to use them, and serve “underprivileged” organizations. The primary source of our funding, however, comes from fees for services performed by myself and the partners I bring to a project. All of the work I have done since 1985 has been conducted through the Center.