



Sherry Schiller, Ph.D.

work with purpose & harmony

Helping Leaders and Organizations

WHAT SHERRY DOES

As an organizational coach, Sherry helps you develop strategic solutions to overcome the obstacles preventing your organization from achieving sustained success. She is quick to grasp an organization's critical issues, as well as assess its performance potential. She then helps you implement strategies to eliminate the gap between your current reality and your desired performance level, including measures of success and feedback mechanisms to determine progress and adjust course.

In addition to her keynote presentations and seminars, Sherry brings a team of external partners and resources to support you and your leadership team so you can effectively and efficiently eliminate the barriers to sustained success. Among our most frequently requested services are:

Facilitating Strategic Planning through Strategic Leadership

Traditional long-range planning has accomplished little, if any, of the lasting systemic results it promised. More than a decade ago, in response to needs expressed by client organizations, Sherry developed an iterative process for strategic leadership, called Connective Strategic Leadership. This process assures four critical elements that all organizations need for sustained success:

1. It develops leadership skills and capacity among existing and emerging leaders.
2. It builds a cohesive, connected leadership team that understands roles and responsibilities, practices strategic and generative thinking, and appropriately engages all stakeholders.
3. It replaces the old style of lurching through 3–5 year strategic planning cycles with a smooth, organic process for ongoing strategic decision-making and organizational alignment.
4. It connects people in meaningful ways to their purpose, their customers, their co-workers, and their best selves.

The Connective Strategic Leadership process keeps organizational leaders focused, flexible, and fresh. The process guides organizational leaders through a five phase cycle of *define-design-align-refine-shine* that, once learned, is embedded into all of their leadership decision-making. Practical in use, it allows one dimension of an organization to be in an "align" phase of continuous improvement while another is re-defining its issues and goals based on feedback it has received. Once the process is in motion, all elements are under constant study and adjustment, based on performance feedback.

One nonprofit leader whose organization used the Connective Strategic Leadership process said, "Before, we built a plan every 3 years, but rarely did it guide our day-to-day decisions. Now, everyone in the organization has internalized our strategic goals and references them regularly. We are a stronger, more anticipatory organization. We're aware of what's going on in our markets and are quick to spot and seize opportunities to further our mission. It's a lot more exciting than it used to be—and we feel so much more engaged and valued."



According to Cindy Schiffer of the US Forest Service, "Sherry's tremendous insight, straightforward style, and adaptability were perfect. She got to the heart of the matter in a non-threatening way that resonated with the whole group."

Many organizations that have revamped their strategic planning processes originally came to us for a problem that was actually a symptom of their failure to practice Connective Strategic Leadership. We started with a short term consultation, planning retreat, or leadership training seminar to give leaders the tools to not just patch their old leadership/planning patterns—but to replace them with a dynamic, results-driven process. Often, when they found themselves achieving their desired results, they returned for more advanced tools and support.

Building Connective Culture

All change initiatives fail to achieve their potential if they are attempted in a defensive organizational culture. The best investment an organization can make in its search for sustained success is the one many avoid—addressing passive- and aggressive-defensive behaviors in the organization. Defensive cultures are the hidden cause of many problems that plague and weaken organizations, such as role confusion, conflict, closed communication, low morale, poor customer service, and a weak bottom line. Leaders often try to fix these outcomes of a defensive culture “downstream,” where they are observed, rather than understanding that as *consequences* of culture, they can only be resolved “upstream” where they occur—in the organization’s culture.

We use highly reliable online assessment tools to provide organizations and their work units with a “snapshot” of what members say are their current and desired organizational cultures. We provide a full report on the greatest gaps between current and ideal performance, and outline steps that can be taken to reduce those gaps, helping the organization to build and sustain a connective culture with improved cooperation, customer service, and revenues. Contact us to review the results achieved with organizations like yours, and read the study reported on our web site that demonstrated improved student performance in a school that built a more connective school culture.

Many clients say that addressing their organizational culture was the most needed, toughest, and single most rewarding issue they’ve tackled. One benefit of our process is that it allows people to address very emotional interpersonal issues and move beyond them without getting personal. It focuses them on what they want for the future rather than what they don’t want or problems of the past. One leader concluded, “We were challenged every day, but once we became more connective, we saw we didn’t need all the fancy-named initiatives we had hidden behind in the past. We *knew* what we needed to do because we were working and communicating as a real team—so *we just did it.*”

Defining and Delivering Your Value Promise

Many organizations have lost that positive connection between people and their work, between staff and stakeholders, between workers and their colleagues, and between individuals and their best selves. The systems and structures put into place to try to rebuild or replace those connections have just the opposite effect—they distance key elements of the organization from one another. Meetings added to ostensibly promote better communication and cooperation among team members may often become nothing more than a recital of who has the most work to do with the fewest resources at their disposal.

One powerful way we have found to help organizations break these cycles is by building connections around their value promise, or proposition. A value promise is a clear, specific statement of the tangible (or intangible) results a customer or stakeholder can expect from using services of or supporting an organization. A value proposition can be thought of as the “promise” members, partners, and supporters perceive has been made to them. Their satisfaction is determined by the extent to which they believe that promise is fulfilled.

Through a process we have used successfully with a wide variety of organizations, we help leaders define their target audiences for membership/service/partnership/support, and articulate the value each group is seeking that they can meet better than anyone else. This is consistent with the “hedgehog concept” outlined by Jim Collins in his “Good to Great” research—and according to our clients, even more transformative.

This process moves very quickly, and once the value promise is defined, it usually is refined by a wider range of organizational leaders, who invariably share and own the “ah-ha” moment. Once key leaders have absorbed and adopted the value proposition, an analysis of all programs, services, and processes is conducted to determine what needs to stop, start, and continue to better deliver the promise of the value proposition. The report and recommendations generated by this audit process then becomes the framework to better align programs, services, and procedures with targeted customer and stakeholder expectations. In the process, staff shift their focus from defensively protecting the status quo to enthusiastically exploring ways to fulfill a pledge they made to those they serve.

Clients say this process is swifter, deeper, more relevant and lasting than any strategic planning process they’ve experienced. “It got to the heart of who we want to serve and what we can offer them that they need—and can’t get better from anyone else. Our program directors actually proposed letting some ‘pet’ projects go because they were so excited about building programs that could fulfill our promise. If I hadn’t experienced it, I wouldn’t have believed it!”

SCHILLER CENTER CLIENTS



Non-profit Clients

American Coalition for Clean Coal Electricity (ACCCE)
Academy of Medical-Surgical Nurses (AMSN)
Association of Fundraising Professionals (SFP)
Save Darfur Coalition (SDC)
American Productivity & Quality Center (APQC)
American Association of University Women (AAUW)
National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)
American Society for Therapeutic Radiology and Oncology (ASTRO)
Americorps Alums
Scholarship America
Calhoun County (AL) Chamber of Commerce
Auburn University
Campagna Center
Missouri Women’s Network

Typical Results Working with Non-profit Clients

- Helped large nonprofit with dropping membership and revenues reposition itself to meet societal needs not being met by others, resulting in increased partners and media attention, improved staff morale, and more focused, courageous board leadership.
- Presented a rousing keynote presentation that led members to take positive actions on behalf of their organization and the issues in which they believe.
- Shifted board behavior from dysfunctional management oversight to true, financially sound, fiscal/policy/strategic/generative leadership, resulting in a more dynamic organization.
- Reorganized staff that was being given increased responsibilities at the same time they were losing key leaders, so they could achieve long term success through a more appropriate business model.
- Coached staff to achieve a connective organizational culture, resulting in greater member/board satisfaction, lower staff turnover, and more cross-departmental, cost-saving projects.



Education Clients

Bangkok Patana School
Association for the Advancement of International Education (AAIE)
Frankfurt International School
American School of Warsaw
International School of Beijing
Taipei American School
Shanghai American School
Nido de Aguilas, Santiago, Chile
East Asia Regional Conference of Overseas Schools (EARCOS)
Association of International Schools in Africa (AISA)
Association of School Business Officials International (ASBO)
Defense Department Schools in Seoul, Korea

Typical Results Working with Education Clients

- Coached school to improve student achievement by strengthening its school culture.
- Helped board and administrative team agree on respective roles and responsibilities, as well as expectations of one another, resulting in harmonious co-leadership for the ensuing four years.
- Guided association leadership in defining its Value Promise then aligning services to fulfill those expectations, with the result that it would attract new members and resources.
- Guided a board through a strategic alignment process that resulted in selection of a strong CEO and a community united around student achievement.



Government Clients

The Library of Congress
U.S. Forest Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Education

Typical Results Working with Government Clients

- Guided the leaders of the Corporation for National Service in the formation of a new/merger organization to deliver domestic public service, including consultation on organizational structure, many training seminars for staff, executive coaching, and board facilitation, resulting in a dynamic AmeriCorps program as well as successfully integrated services to youth and the elderly.
- Helped a government agency build in a process—and a mindset among staff—to become more sensitive to public perceptions and more collaborative with other organizations, including public interest groups, resulting in fewer lawsuits, better press coverage, more productive staff, and (by admission of agency leaders) better quality decisions.
- Helped a program staff design and successfully implement a campaign that assured their continued existence.
- Helped a federal agency develop and share its “story,” consistent with its legal mandate, public expectations, and staff perceptions, with the result that its funding was reauthorized.



Arts Clients

Syracuse Children's Chorus
Chorus America
Washington Performing Arts Society
The Washington Chorus
The Washington Cathedral Choral Society
The Dale Warland Singers

Typical Results Working with Arts Clients

- Helped organization transition successfully from founding leader to sustainable model.
- Facilitated a board-staff process to expand the vision and scope of their association, then implement the steps needed to realize that vision, resulting in a larger, more robust, and more influential organization.
- Conducted a board-senior staff retreat to reposition organization, resulting in it having a more national-international identity than its previous local identity.
- Used the organizational culture inventory to build trust and cooperation among staff and board, resulting in greater productivity, more creative programming, and a greater sense of fun.



Corporate Clients

JB Management
Booz|Allen|Hamilton
BAE Systems
Community Wealth Ventures
Hill & Knowlton

Typical Results Working with Corporate Clients

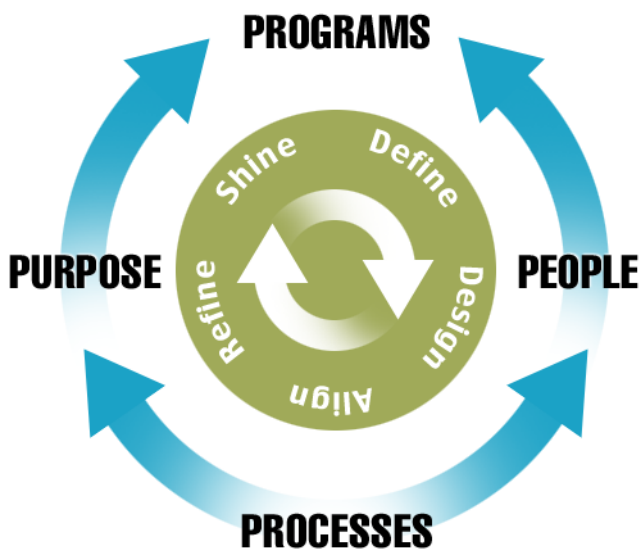
- Helped a newly-reorganized management team cooperate and communicate better in solving problems and meeting a challenging production schedule for a new manufacturing facility, resulting in high quality, a proactive leadership team determined to continue to improve, and satisfied customers.
- Helped a key unit in a large international corporation redefine its value to its customers and then its role within the company, resulting in its improved position and perceived contribution.
- Provided ongoing executive coaching, professional development seminars, and critical meeting facilitation over the course of seven years, resulting in a leadership team that continued to learn and grow, collaborate, and provide stellar support for their customers.

OUR APPROACH

We help leaders envision the best future for their organization by guiding them through a strategic analysis of strengths, core identity, competitive environment, trends, and other factors. Then we help them chart a course toward realizing that vision. This process includes understanding existing relationships among four key elements, then aligning them to achieve success.

Key Elements

The success of every organization depends on four key elements:



Schiller Center Organizational Improvement Model

- *purpose*: mission, vision, values, goals, assumption
- *people*: leaders, staff, volunteers, customers, culture
- *programs*: activities, services, products
- *processes*: systems, structures, procedures, policies

Vibrant, resilient organizations are driven by talented, caring *people* working together to accomplish their shared *purpose*. Organizational *programs* and *processes* are effectively aligned to help them achieve that *purpose* with harmony.

Five-step Process

This provides both flexibility and structure to help people in organizations help themselves:

1. *Define*: describe conditions, goals, challenges, and desired outcomes
2. *Design*: develop effective, measurable strategies
3. *Align*: implement strategies that align leadership, culture, programs, and structures with goals
4. *Refine*: use performance data to make adjustments that improve results
5. *Shine*: assure that reward systems encourage continued success, celebrate group accomplishments

Our Guiding Principles

We want everything we do to demonstrate that we value:

- Strategic Partnering
- Pragmatic Idealism
- Servant Leadership

RESULTS AND STRATEGIES

Benefits of Working with Purpose & Harmony

- More motivated, productive people with lower turnover
- Improved business practices, resulting in sustained success and a stronger bottom line
- Greater flexibility in response to change
- Anticipatory stance toward market shifts and customer needs
- Deeper customer loyalty

Proven Strategies that Help Organizations Work with Greater Purpose & Harmony

1. Clarify expectations and define roles
2. Build authentic relationships
3. Act on the change agenda. Demonstrate commitment
4. Model and reward flexibility, innovation, creativity, playfulness
5. Be inclusive and transparent in decision-making
6. Reward group success



With teachers at the Shanghai American School: "Sherry Schiller has an innate ability to immediately identify areas of concern in an organization and then assist the management in constructively transforming the environment of these areas. Her work with the School has been an invaluable tool to help propel our organization to achieve a higher level of excellence."

OVERCOMING RESISTANCE

All meaningful change initiatives face possible roadblocks or obstacles. Common obstacles to change include:

- Fear of change
- Uncommitted or ambivalent leadership
- A belief that positive change is not possible
- Lack of a felt need for change
- Lack of a clear vision
- Lack of an empowered coalition or team
- Missing practical first steps
- Unconstructive organizational culture

Resistance to change is natural. It should not be personalized. Among the successful strategies we help leaders use to address resistance are:

1. Share the change agenda widely.
2. Act on the change agenda, demonstrating visible commitment.
3. Provide safe opportunities for expressions of concern and loss.
4. Share information openly, widely, and frequently.
5. Listen carefully and reflectively. Ask questions. Acknowledge.

WHY IT MATTERS

A Forum for ever-changing reflections on the question

I believe that every person who works in an organization knows at some fundamental level the benefits of working together with purpose and harmony. Bad habits, inappropriate structures, misguided leadership, time pressure—hundreds of potential obstacles—prevent us from being our best selves. My work is about helping people in organizations remove those barriers and achieve better futures for themselves, their customers, and their communities.

“Why does it matter?” is clear to me. Through decades of working with people in organizations all over the world, I’ve seen the pain, frustration, distrust, dis-ease, inefficiency, lost opportunities, and outright damage generated when people fail to work constructively toward shared goals.

I’ve also seen people transform their organizations—and often, themselves—when they build a compelling vision and collaborate to achieve it. It is the opportunity to help people do this for themselves that drives me personally. I’d like for the people in organizations I serve to make the most of what they have, so they can say together: “We did our very best. Together, we achieved results we couldn’t have imagined—and we had fun doing it.”

The tangible results are obvious to everyone who has experienced work with purpose and harmony: fully engaged staff, a stronger bottom line, effective systems and structures, delighted customers, and a focused, resilient organization.

COMMENTS FROM NON-PROFIT CLIENTS

“Sherry knows how to take your organization from ‘good to great.’ She partners with CEO, boards, and staff to identify barriers, then, develops strategies to revitalize and move forward. Sherry is the most responsive consultant with whom I’ve ever worked—always willing to go above and beyond in accomodating a client’s needs.”—*Michele Warholic Wetherald, Executive Director, AAUW*

“Dr. Schiller skillfully launched a strategic planning process that shifted our short-term mentality to one focused on a clearly defined mission and goals.”—*Merle Lindby Young, Member, Upper Trinity Regional Water District, Texas*

“Sherry’s intuitive, probing, sensitive but direct, facilitative style gave us the tools and motivation to take a hard look at our organization and to begin to make productive changes.”—*Ilene J. Hoffman, Director, Infant/Toddle Family Day Care Center for Northern Virginia*

“Carpenter’s Shelter was blessed the day Sherry Schiller walked through our doors and volunteered to guide us strategically. Sherry has taught me to look within, articulate my thoughts, trust my gut and challenge myself to see the bigger picture. Her energy, vision, and dedication to our mission energize me to think big and think blue sky. Thank you, Sherry, for being a friend of the Shelter. You are helping us rebuild fragile lives, strengthen families and make a better tomorrow for hundreds of children.”—*Fran Becker, Executive Director, Carpenter’s Shelter, Alexandria, Virginia*

COMMENTS FROM EDUCATION CLIENTS

“Sherry Schiller’s work is a catalyst for positive change. She has an innate ability to immediately identify areas of concern in an organization and then assist the management in constructively transforming the environment of these areas. The organization can then begin to initiate and experience greater success and genuine growth as a whole. Sherry’s work with the Shanghai American School has been an invaluable tool to help propel our organization to achieve a higher level of excellence.”—*Bonnie Wisnewski, Board Chair, Shanghai American School*

“Effective board governance is a key to success in our diverse international school environment, where constant change and divergent perspectives are the norm. While attending the international school Heads conference in San Francisco, in February of 2004, my Board President and I attended a session on governance and leadership by Dr. Sherry Schiller. We were impressed by her presentation and by the strategies she shared that could be of value to our school. Follow-up meetings resulted in our school’s Board of Directors inviting Dr. Schiller to conduct a training workshop on the characteristics of effective Boards at our school. Her informative and helpful workshop was so highly valued that we are currently making arrangements for her to conduct a follow-up visit to assist us in developing specific implementation strategies leading to a more efficient and purposeful Board governance model for Nido deAguilas. If your school is seeking someone who can provide informative, practical, and results oriented outcomes, I enthusiastically recommend Dr. Schiller.”—*Dr. Don Bergman, Headmaster, International School Nido de Aquilas, Santiago, Chile*

“Dr. Schiller has skillfully helped us lead this large system through two comprehensive strategic planning processes in the past ten years. Both times the results have been truly exceptional.”—*Dr. M.E. Hickey, former Superintendent, Howard County, Maryland Public Schools*

“The Minnetonka Public School District has benefited tremendously from Sherry Schiller’s expertise, knowledge, and hands-on experience in the area of strategic planning. We have received top-notch, personalized service that will help our organization continually improve.”—*Dr. Dan Jett, former Superintendent, Minnetonka, Minnesota Public Schools*

COMMENTS FROM GOVERNMENT CLIENTS

“Sherry’s tremendous insight, straightforward style, and adaptability were perfect. She got to the heart of the matter in a non-threatening way that resonated with the whole group.”—*Cynthia R. Schiffer, District Ranger, US Forest Service*

“The Corporation for National Service was both a merger of several existing federal agencies and a start-up of the new national AmeriCorps program. During a period of great stress, political controversy, and internal confusion, Sherry Schiller’s strategic planning, management coaching, and executive training sessions brought together feuding factions, developed new leadership skills in senior staff, and put staff and board on the same path—toward goals that everyone could support.”—*Shirley Sagawa, first Executive Director, Corporation for National Service/AmeriCorps*

“Sherry Schiller has the rare ability to bridge between visionary/conceptual thinking and the tough realities of day-to-day production with a need for hour-by-hour action. She is comfortable with executive leaders, line and staff managers as well as production employees.”—*Bob Breazeale, former Deputy Director, Ecosystem Management and Coordination, USDA Forest Service*

COMMENTS FROM ARTS CLIENTS

“Sherry’s business savvy appeals to the hardest core business minds. She inspires leaders to have greater courage and grit, and reach beyond what they thought they could achieve.”—*Ann Meier Baker, President and CEO, Chorus America*

“Sherry Schiller literally ‘saved the day’ at our last board training session, and helped us build consensus on a sensitive and controversial issue. Her instincts in dealing with a room full of perfect strangers are uncanny. She employed a perfect strategy to diffuse tension and move us along as a consensus-building board.”—*Mark Ohnmacht, Executive Director, National Cathedral Choral Arts Society*

“Very stimulating and thought-provoking. Sherry has experience with such a wide range of organizations!”—*Dr. Peggy Quackenbush, participant at a National Guild of Community Schools of the Arts conference where Sherry presented*

“Our members have a wide range of experience, and Sherry Schiller was able to push all of us—in ways we enjoyed—to work toward our goals.”—*Jonathan Katz, CEO, National Assembly of State Arts Agencies*

COMMENTS FROM CORPORATE CLIENTS

“Together with Sherry, we have been able to find ways to operate more effectively and establish the type of leadership that our work force desires, requires, and deserves. Undeniably, the work is challenging, but with Sherry’s guidance, we achieved amazing results.”—*Robert Houston, VP Performance Based Logistic and Product Support, BAE Systems*

“Among her many and varied talents, Sherry Schiller is flat-out one of the best management consultants anywhere. If you plan to change your organization, or you’re considering whether or not you should, check first with Dr. Schiller.”—*Paul Clark, Senior Vice President, Media & Crisis Communications, H&K*

“Sherry was a catalyst in helping us create a future-oriented outlook within our organization. She had a profound effect on my methods of conducting business.”—*Richard Parisi, Director of Marketing, GenCorp*