

## Pathways to Self Actualization and Beyond

By John Renesch

For centuries, leaders of all types have found value in confiding with their peers. Heads of State seeking advice from their predecessors, heads of large corporations having confidential conversations with friends in similar positions, having private conversations with peers – even in a competing enterprise - are all examples of intimate wisdom circles where people feel understood by someone who has been in or still is in their shoes.

One of the most widely known and largest provider of executive peer groups is The Executive Committee, more recently called Vistage, which started forming groups back in the middle of the last century and now has tens of thousands of members all over the world. They've been widely imitated, but there is no doubt that executive peer groups are a powerful resource for leaders of all kinds. The goal of these groups is to be a confidential source of intelligence and experience so members support one another in ways their reports or co-workers cannot. Strong bonds are formed among members in these groups, usually numbering around a dozen people. As a result, members are better able to improve the performance of their organizations and become better leaders in the process.

The FutureShapers Roundtables utilize the same time-tested architecture. They differ because the mission is different. In addition to being a confidential source of intelligence, experience and support, the Roundtables are keenly focused on improving the consciousness of its members so they become more self-aware in their roles as leaders. This enables them to find greater meaning and fulfillment in their personal lives, their work and in the work of their organizations.



Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs pyramid

Maslow's "Hierarchy of Needs" places self-actualization at the top of the pyramid. But there is a still higher aspiration once people access this top level of Maslow's pyramid, a level championed by Viktor Frankl and others, referred to as "self-transcendence." Here one identifies the universe as an interconnected whole and themselves as an integral part of it. This is the objective for FutureShapers Roundtables – that each member is aided and informed by the Roundtable experience so they continue to grow toward this transcendent place and support their fellow members in doing the same. The Roundtables typically consist of 10 to 12 peers hosted by FutureShapers Certified Hosts who facilitate the meetings and offer individual coaching sessions between meetings.

# FutureShapers Roundtables

---

Roundtable members commit to an all-day foundational retreat followed by 12 monthly half-day meetings. A local Host arranges for the venues and oversees the group's decision as to where and when meetings will be held.

Groups are formed on the basis of members having similar roles in similar-sized organizations. For example, senior executives in large corporations would not be mixed with start-up founders or non-profit leaders.

FutureShapers Roundtables employ unique processes for quickly developing high levels of trust and intimacy amongst members and deepening those qualities amongst its members as time goes on. There is some curriculum about consciousness, healthy and unhealthy ego, the systems that influence us (mostly unconsciously), individual responsibility and other matters in order to provide a mutual understanding of these terms.

Once a level of trust is achieved amongst the membership in a Roundtable, members are encouraged to share with the group whatever challenges they are having in regard to ethical dilemmas, emotional conflicts, relationship issues, self-examination realizations and other matters. In many cases, the Roundtables may be the only place where some of these matters are shared.

Here are comments from two members of early versions of the Roundtable:

From the first meeting of the Roundtable I knew that this was an amazing group of peers. The group reminds me to get in touch with my intuition and deeper knowing, and to follow that guidance. This group has been invaluable. I wouldn't miss it for the world.

- Leslie Eveland, Change Management Consultant, Cisco Systems, Inc.

With as busy as my life can be, I am happy to have several hours to reflect with others who have common values and care for our common human consciousness. By stepping back to reflect and gain insights from the Roundtable, I am better able to step forward in my day-to-day life.

- Susan Blew, Senior Business Leader, Head of IT Business Management, Visa, Inc.

Some have metaphorically compared the Roundtable to the rope that farmers on the Great Plains used to tie between their houses and their barns during the winter season so they could find their way back and forth during storms. This practice started when many Plains people lost their lives in their own backyards because they were blinded by fierce blizzards. The Roundtable serves as a sort of "psychic rope" that allows people to get back to a place of soul-centeredness when they are bombarded by blizzards of a different kind - endless demands for their time and attention in a hectic world.

Perhaps the most unique aspect of the FutureShapers Roundtables is the climate of heart connection rather than merely intellectual. Most executive's daily interactions – especially meetings - are about tasks and projects where they tend to engage each other solely through their intellects. It has become largely a default behavior unless there is explicit "differentness."

Attending church, synagogue, mosque or temple, a poetry reading, a quiet walk in the woods, a silent retreat, or a symphony can all evoke what could be called "sacred space" which in turn evokes awareness that we are more than just mind and body.

# FutureShapers Roundtables

---

Roundtable members are invited to bring their whole selves into their time together – not just body, and mind, but heart and soul as well. This explicit differentness allows members to become increasingly conscious of how they operate in the world, their way of being in the world, so they are more present to the impact of their words, their intentions, and their choices. This way they can apply their skills beyond the confines of one particular organization or project and know - that in so doing - they are bringing more light, joy, meaning, love, peace and service into the world.

\* \* \* \*

## About the Author

John Renesch has spent over half a century as a businessman/entrepreneur, having started and managed a variety of enterprises in the fields of real estate, securities, advertising and entertainment. Since 1986, he has been working in the field of social and organizational transformation, having published 14 books and hundreds of articles. As a mentor, futurist, writer and advisor he has been writing and speaking about Conscious Leadership for at least twenty five years. John co-created the International Spirit at Work Award in 2002, is a member of the practitioner faculty for the [Center for Leadership Studies](#), past member and project advisor of the [World Future Society](#), current member and Inaugural Board Chair of the [Shaping Tomorrow's Foresight Network](#). He publishes a free monthly newsletter called *John Renesch's Mini-Keynote*, available from his website, [www.Renesch.com](http://www.Renesch.com), and is a guest blogger at the [Global Dialogue Center](#). He is a co-founder of FutureShapers, LLC.

Warren Bennis, long-standing international leadership expert calls John “a wise elder who shines with wisdom.” John has been interviewed by *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Nikkei Financial Times*, *Business Week*, public radio’s “Marketplace,” CNBC-TV’s Ron Insana on “Management Today Show,” Business Talk Radio, National Public Radio, *Forbes* (both Brazil and U.S. editions), *Chief Executive* and *Industry Week* magazines on the subject of consciousness and business. *The Futurist* magazine calls John a “business visionary.”