

Path Consulting: A Primer

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Copyright February 2020

Vancouver, BC



What's In This For You?

Today is a grand day!

A time of invention, vision, relationship, connection, inspiration, process and embracing greatness.

This is your moment. You will make it vibrant. How could you not?!

Path Consulting is not life coaching, therapy or spiritual guidance. All 3 of those relationships are valid and to be honoured, but I built Path Consulting out of my experience as a teacher, professor, organizational design consultant and more recently a Change Managementor: a mentor who manages change for people and organizations.

Change Management is an exciting new field that stands firmly in a holistic approach to system change, in a company, non-profit, co-op, school, healthcare clinic—or person.

I've been managing and guiding change for decades. All teachers are educators, marketing experts, demographics analysts and managers of change in our students. So we are both already a few steps down this road, together.

I've been mentoring and calibrating people since the 1980s. I thought it was just poetry, but recently I see how broadly interconnected my work has been.

[Prosci](#) is a research-based organization that trains people in the principles of Change Management: how to stickhandle change with intentionality, design, data, feedback, all embedded in principles and values.

When I pursued Prosci, I knew I was getting trained in a solid framework steeped in their continual research model. What I didn't know was that the Prosci model would pull together all the vocations I've explored for my entire adult life.

Becoming a Change Managementor will be my last career.

Path Consulting is how I apply my Change Managementor paradigm to how you need to grow to better optimize the key areas of your life.

I'm not some consultant who flies in, interviews a bunch of people in an organization, explores pain points and crises, and recommends changes that [coincidentally] match what I was "told" or "encouraged" to do by those hiring me.

Path Consulting is connecting around relationship. We explore your needs, build a plan, apply technique, evaluate and execute, review, adapt and step forward again. We explore the scope of your awareness of how

you want to change. We ground your desire to evolve. We ensure you have the knowledge to level up. We enhance your ability to achieve. We reinforce what grows and fertilize the other areas so they can grow too.

So this Primer is for you. In it, you will get:

1. *The Beginning, with the metaphors and paradigms we need to move forward*
2. *The Middle, a place to engage with technique and refine our design*
3. *The End, pulling it together for moving forward*
4. *The Epilogue, because things don't usually end when they look like they do. But you know that.*

You know you're an innovator. You know you're indispensable. This Primer is my gift to you, because we're both on the Path. And today our Paths are parallel.

*This is my gift, and my [word usements](#). Read on!
Stephen*



Always look for the lighthouse!
In this case, standing on a ferry at the [northwest corner of Mayne Island](#).

~Speaker
~ Path Consultant
~ Organizational Design Consultant
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The Beginning

Nothing ever starts in the beginning. It starts now, as I meet you. [*In medias res.*](#)

It starts when you are well past a fledgling.

It starts when you have already taken your first steps into your new world. Then I show up. Just as you've shown up on my Path.

The Compass



We start with the compass because that's where we have both met.

If you're not Canadian, you may not know how canoes and paddles have shaped our history, since even

before Europeans came here. It's complicated, yet symbiotic.

The canoe is our vessel, our vehicle that brings us to our future. It is your venture, your vision, your passion, your vocation.

But what about the paddle?

The paddle is your movement forward. It is your personal time machine bringing you from now to the tomorrow in your vision.

It is everything you are using to create your new world.

And while taking a solitary paddle across a lake or pond at sunset is magic unto itself, many of us enjoy paddling together. There's always room for 2 in a canoe!

But if we both paddle on the same side of the canoe, we go in circles. That may be fun for a few minutes but it gets us nowhere.

We each need to paddle on a different side, interdependently, yet collaboratively and with solid, honest and open communication.

Because every few minutes our arms and torso will begin to ache and we'll need to switch sides. But we have to do it without the person in the back splashing or bonking the person in the front in the back of the head.

Trust me. That's not fun. You may already know this.

Only then will we be able to paddle our canoe in the right direction, navigating clearly, turning where needed, slowing down where appropriate. All, so we get to our destination, which really, is YOUR destination.

The compass is somewhat magical. Setting aside the differences between true north and magnetic north, the compass points to something important. The North thing.

The compass image above is a design of tiles, perhaps in the yard outside my house. Different colour tiles evoke different earthen elements, different temperatures and moods. Either way, it's grounded. Only a little bit like a mood ring. Mostly like reminders that the land is with us, whatever our mood happens to be, no matter the season, the weather or whether you're alone, with me or enveloped in your people, the people who've got your back. You know who they are. More on that later, though.

The canoe points North, the destination, however we define it. The paddles—remember, there are two—will take us there. Sitting in the front or back doesn't matter, metaphorically.

And while we move along on our Path toward the North we are aware of what is to the east and west and what we have left behind. The sides are alternatives we are passing up. That is OK. But the south, that's where we trail our lessons in our wake. We tow them. Our

monstrous success, or mild failures, our abysmal moments—all these define who we are. We take what we have learned and we take the experiences we still have to learn from.

And we carry our self-judgment. It's too much. You judge yourself too much. It is easy for me to say this because I know you. You are me. We are human and we can all stand to forgive ourselves a bit more. And we will both make mistakes as we cruise toward the North.

But you knew that already. Didn't you.

Your Path

Co-paddler. That's my role with you. Path Consultant. I'm a Change Managementor for indispensables, innovators: you!

The canoe shows us the way because we guide the canoe. My job is to help you navigate the waters better.

And that starts with you, your values, your goals, your vision and destination. My job is to inspire you to manifest these in your new world.

Path Consulting is all about your growth, but it's not about maximizing anything. It's about optimizing things.

I don't want you to maximize your work-life balance. I want you to optimize the elements of your life. And I don't even work in work-life balance anymore.

We have our work. We make money from our job, or jobs. If we have more than one job out of choice, that can be a liberating thing, or it can be a trap of unfocused obligation.

This money, we use it to live and care for those we help keep alive. It's a core human experience. But our work is just our work. We need to have a life as well: friends, family, hobbies, downtime, guilty pleasures, giving back.

But we can't be complacent in a work-life balance. Your vocation may be something different. Your vocation is your calling, your passion, the thing you would do after winning the lottery and not needing money.

And if you're lucky, your work—right now—IS your vocation. But for most people it's not. They dream of something that makes their heart 10% richer and redder.

So we need to expand work-life balance to work-life-vocation balance. And by now you know we can't maximize any of these things without sacrificing too much of the others. We need to optimize them all.

But what happens if your work is not your vocation. If they perfectly overlap you're pretty lucky. If not, part of the Path we map out, is to glide from your work TO your vocation. You will need some serious scheming, an exit strategy and everyone who has your back, to HAVE your back.

But sometimes it isn't practical to make our work our vocation. Sometimes we have to work the job to make the money, and do our vocation on the side. But that may just be for the near future. We get to play the long game too.

The final element of Path Consulting to cram into our old work-life balance is volunteering. We need to give back. We need to find one or more areas in our lives where we spend some time per week or month to give

back, to add to the fabric of our communities. Sure it's optional, by definition. It's volunteering. But I think we are missing so much in life when we don't give to our communities without compensation. And this goes past spending time with your people, having their backs and mentoring others. We need to just give. Our souls ache when we don't make the space to enrich our surroundings. So our work-life balance has expanded to

Work-Life-Vocation-Volunteering Balance.

This is the essence of Path Consulting.

So let's get into this canoe. Let's paddle across the water.

There's a feeling of gliding into shallow waters at the other side of the lake. We start to see the bottom. The water is cloudy unless we're in a pristine, glacial lake where it is unbelievably clear.

Then we sense that we could hop out and stand up, but we don't. We glide the canoe gently onto the tiny round pebbles of the beach. Do you know that sound?

We're here.

Canoe-Portage

But our journey comes in phases. We now have to **portage**: carry the canoe over the stretch of land before us, until we reach the next lake.

Then we will dip the paddle in again and continue our journey.

This leg of the journey is large. It takes our whole focus. But the Path is long. Longer than one body of water. It has to be long, but you knew that already.

This phase or chapter of your life fills your present. But it's the cumulative bodies of water that make up a life.

And that's OK.

A long journey must have many segments. And they won't all be water. Stretches of land separate our lakes. We just have to carry the canoe...and all our gear.

But other times the lake leads to a stream or river to the next lake. And sometimes these rivers are smooth and happily downhill, so we can relax with the paddling a bit.

But other times [most times?] these rivers are not happily downhill. Often they have rapids. Little ones are fine, but we don't always know what they will be

like. And if we navigate a few easy ones, but we see bigger ones up ahead, we have to get out and walk. It slows us down. It's frustrating. It means carrying everything instead of letting the water pull us and everything in weightless displacement.

But really, sometimes we have to just do the heavy lifting. I don't like it either, but it builds character. Or, it builds character?

We have to carry that canoe past the rapids, then set it down and go back for all our gear. Maybe a second trip to get the rest of the gear. But not a third. We don't bring everything we own.



This is an 1897 painting called “[End of the Portage](#)” by Winslow Homer, an American landscape painter from the northeast. Despite being an America, that was set on the Saguenay River in Quebec.

This is the first grand lesson in Path Consulting:

Do you see me in the back? I’m here to help you carry your canoe.

But I’m not the only one. You are surrounded by your people. Sure they’re busy and everything, but you know they’re your people because they have your back. When you need help, they show up. You likely even have some people who live a few time zones away who would drop everything, get on a plane and show up within 12 hours to help you out of a jam.

That is why we have people. One of our jobs is to identify our people and ensure we know whose backs WE have. We don’t always enumerate these people. We are so busy. But we need to stop and take the time to do that, while we smell the roses. Enumerating them means being intentional about both asking for help and asking to see how we can help others.

And I didn’t want to bring this up, but sometimes when we need to portage, we have to go uphill. Really, it’s the same portage, but uphill is more tiring.



Our trip chronicler, Winslow Homer, has another 1897 painting, "[The Portage](#)." Sometimes our Path leads to an elevation change. Uphill. Maybe I'm carrying the gear and you have the canoe. Or maybe it's in the near future when you can go on solo trips, knowing full well that we are never really alone. Our people are always available.

But the reality is, portaging is a reality. Unless you're paddling from Thunder Bay to Gaspé, you will hit land. It will slow you down. I'm sorry, but that's what we get. But you're becoming more resilient.

But you knew that already.

Organizational Design

And while Path Consulting is all about your growth, you are part of systems and organizations. Big and small teams, groups and organizations. We don't live in a bubble and we have immense power to affect other people.

Your wisdom, ventures and activities—your company, non-profit, co-operative, classroom, neighbourhood, advocacy group, social enterprise, faith community—they have an identity and culture that are formed by the indispensables you have brought to it, but also by their internal and external relationships.

We take a Change Management approach to making your life more intentional, and we do the same thing when we track your organizational influence. And even if you aren't "in charge" you can still build a strategic plan for how YOU can change your organization from whatever vantage point to exist in.

Your values and goals shape their existence. If you aren't intentional enough, it will drift off course. Your canoe won't bring you to that point on the compass you seek.

1. As you steer your group or organization across the lake, you need to continually evaluate relationships.
2. Are my people paddling well? What more do *they* need?
3. Who are our stakeholders, and are we keeping track of everyone who depends on us? Do we know what *they* need?
4. Are we building interdependent alliances with like-minded organizations that share our spirit and values? Are there social enterprises, charities, faith communities that we have—or should have—relationships with? And what are we doing to build good faith and mutual value?

You see what is happening here: this is part of how we map intentionality! Without it, we die, and so will our ventures and plans.

This is the second grand lesson in Path Consulting.

Taking a systems approach means mapping all the networks, groups and organizations we belong to. We have to map them to track what kinds of influence we have, both active and passive influence. It is one thing to optimize our work-life-vocation-volunteering balance, but once we map these 4 pieces, we will quickly see how we connect with groups around us.

We cannot squander our potential to move the mountains.

The Middle

These moments, I'm here for you.

I'm not your swag. I'm not your coconut hand cream or tinfoil-wrapped dark chocolate at the bottom of your swag bag, even though those are really quite delightful!

I'm here to help you carry your canoe. It's heavy.

I'm here to help you paddle more efficiently and with more clarity so you can see 360 degrees even in dusk light.

I'm filled with more truth than the dark chocolate. I have your best interests at heart, like the hand cream but more so.

This is where we design the plan, we craft the technique to move from here to there, to reach that far shore.

Mentors and Protégés

<u>Mentorship</u> <u>Grid</u>	People who know your field	People who don't know your field
People who know you		
People who don't know you		

The grid is the frame. The soul-searching is the process.

Who are your mentors? Who have been your mentors in the past? Which ones do you know personally and which ones have been symbolic: as in famous people or even fictional characters?

Who do you want to be your mentors, and how can you acquire them?

But more, you need different kinds of mentors who have different relationships with you so that you can optimize the insight you deserve.

Part of my Path Consulting program is about exploring the ways to identify your mentors and cultivate those powerful relationships.

You need people who know you well and know your field well. But you can't discount people who may not know all your depths, or much of anything about your field. Their objectivity and clarity are gifts that your close people simply cannot possess.

But life is about interdependence. You cannot just seek mentors without cultivating protégés.

The mentorship grid spins around like a coin to provide structure to map out how you mentor others.

This is a key area to be intentional. After all, you didn't get here on your own. Though many people mistakenly think they did.

Organizational Relationships

You're all doing well on social media platforms.

I don't care what metrics you read about that indicate how you should be doing better. As of today, you're doing well because you are present as a vibrant human person in how you relate to others on social media platforms.

But doing well doesn't mean you can't do better.

You need to optimize which platforms reflect your best light based on what you do. Countless social media consultants and Inc.com pieces can advise you on this.

I don't care if you're a multi-national corporation, a founder of a local environmental NGO or a human with a variety of interests. You don't need a brand manager, but you need to manage your brand. There is only one you. Only you have your bouquet of interests and capacities. And you need to be smart about how you express your expertise, share your passions, advocate for your causes and develop your influence.

Instead of broadcasting your valuable content and identity in an unfocused way, you need to get intentional again and develop a *Social Media Amplification Team*.

This isn't a team of employees or devoted aunties. This is a carefully curated group of cheerleaders and credible validators and calibrators who know the value you offer the world and commit to amplifying it.

You cannot casually build this team. You need to develop rich, interdependent, committed relationships.

But hey, you're supposed to be doing it already, right? You're supposed to be living the integrity of your passion and vision.

Not that we can't all do a better job of that, but trust the value of your integrity already. Leverage that in a

respectful way to build reciprocal relationships filled with win-win-win.

And while you're living your integrity, you need to ensure that you're mapping your personal values onto your vocational life.

What does this look like? It means building interdependent relationships with values-aligned social enterprises and non-profits.

There are groups out there that complement your vocation because they match your values. You need to map out how your organizations should be working with these values groups.

And I don't mean sending some cash to a charity, but truly building deep relationships that amplify your shared values in both organizations.

There are innumerable ways to accomplish this. Not being intentional about it, however, means you're missing out on opportunities

Let's make sure you're on the ball here. We're all missing out until we map out all the possibilities!

Skyping the Vision

I know there is no way I can spend less than 30 pages digging into the marrow of all these methods to enrich both your personal Path as well as your ventures and activities.

And as we create our futures, we can't do it without devoting time to each other.

Regardless of where you are on your Path or in your passion ventures, you deserve 30 minutes of time to share with me who you are, where you want to go and what you've packed into your canoe. On Skype or whatever other platform works for you.

The **E~B Strategy Primer** is a brief compendium of artifacts that carry and inspire meaning. In half an hour, we can flesh them out to make significant meaning for you. You're worth it, otherwise you wouldn't even be here.

My contact information is on page 5. Use it!

The Promo Code

SWATCA2020

That's it. No secret. That's the 50% off code for working with me beyond our 30 minutes.

You can go to ebstrategy.org/blog/connect/ to book my time and enter that coupon code.

It expires at the end of June 2020. You can use it as much as you want, and you can share it with people you think deserve the kind of work we can do together. I value your insight and understanding of your people.

No secrets. Just value.

The End

It's not necessarily ALL about value-for-money, but it's OK if it is.

We need criteria to evaluate whether we're on the right Path.

The canoe only works if we know where to paddle it.

[#SWATCA2020](#) is a brief canoe through a short pond.

At the end, we all go our separate ways. But the goal is to develop deeper interdependent relationships.

I don't know how you've grown this week. I don't know what light bulbs have lit up above your head.

But I want to.

I want to know how you are at the end of the week is wiser and more devoted to your Path than at the beginning of the week.

I also know that I'm here to help carry your canoe to next week, next month and out to the ocean of pretty much infinite possibilities.

THAT's why I've built this Primer. THAT's why I'm here for you.

You're worth it. I know this because I'm worth it too.

Epilogue

There's this chopstick...

When I was a raging poet in university when the internet was just expanding past the uber-geeks into the realm of common people, a bunch of poets went out to dinner.

This was more momentous than it sounds. We were internet dorks who wrote poetry online, often with multiple pseudonyms. We were rather shy, it turns out.

And in the days before slam poetry, shy was OK.

But after some years of writing poetry anonymously but probably alongside each other in computer labs, we got brave and began meeting in person.

And one night we made a bold reservation for 22 people at the Thai House on the west side of Vancouver. That was 1990.

That night was one of the most sublime nights of my poetic—and social—life. I kept the chopsticks.

It was a night that cemented friendships and melodramatic romances for years.

It also ensured that poetry and imagery and metaphor would always be a part of my life. And they are.

In fact, Path Consulting, the lighthouse, the compass, the canoe...all these models of being a Change

Managementor could not exist if I wasn't a raging poet in university.

So what about the chopstick?

It's on the table beside my bed. It's been there since 1990. The other one? Well there's another story about what happened to its partner, but the remaining chopstick is my artifact.

Artifacts are symbols that carry meaning, emotion, experience, wisdom, history, vision, passion and...in a way...are a 2-way time machine to a rich past and a vibrant future.

When we speak for 30 minutes, don't let me forget to ask you about an artifact that's significant in your life. And there are always more than one. Don't worry.

And if you aren't intentional enough about tracking artifacts, you're missing out.

Trust me.

Stephen Elliott-Buckley

February 2020, Vancouver BC