

Tall, Dark, Handsome and No.1 - a response to the financial crises and economic instability of October 2008 -

For many years, Tall, Dark, Handsome and No.1 – a unique, ‘facilitated provocation’ for management audiences - has been anticipating the reconstruction of financial capital and ‘corporate man’. It has been helping leaders to align themselves most constructively with such a shift and its allied consequences, and supporting the movement towards a more sustainable form of economic activity and development.

Tall, Dark, Handsome and No.1 has taken many different forms over the years, but generally comprises Nick Mayhew presenting analysis and ideas via a combination of ‘lecturing’, images, music, acting and interactive dialogues.

The title – Tall, Dark, Handsome and No.1 – serves as a metaphor for a range of associated phenomena, for example: a neo-liberal economic development model that has lost contact with social and environmental realities, corporate cultures centred on a particularly narrow - often male - form of heroism, and arrogant and egotistic forms of leadership thinking and behaviour.

The ‘provocation’ helps audiences to respond to the following questions:-

- what sort of leadership do the current times require – and how quickly might we build the relevant leadership capacities among those in positions of authority and responsibility?
- what if the current financial restructuring is just a prelude to a much wider restructuring that is required to avoid environmental collapse and much greater social conflict?
- how might we better understand the roots of ‘trust’ and ‘confidence’ that underpins healthy economic activity – meanwhile avoiding reactions of blame and denial of responsibility?
- what is the future of so-called ‘corporate responsibility’ and what might more socially-responsive and ecologically-embedded forms of economic activity look like?

Audiences find themselves moved swiftly ‘out of the box’ and into a journey that is simultaneously global in scope, deeply personal in affect – and yet also delivers professional development to them as potential ‘leaders of change’.

This journey moves through various stages – underpinned by the ‘U process’ developed by management theorists such as Otto Scharmer and Peter Senge. Classically, this involves helping audiences gain distance from their customary thought patterns and ways of seeing the world and ‘letting go’ of their ‘default’ thinking about business and its relationship to the wider world.

The process then also helps audiences face the emotional consequences of seeing their relationship with ‘Tall, Dark, Handsome and No.1’ more clearly – and of confronting the anxieties involved in the reconstruction that is now being seen as so evidently necessary.

Ultimately – by drawing on some ground-breaking ways of understanding both the world and our human potential - ‘Tall, Dark, Handsome and No.1’ points the way for each individual to connect with their own particular strengths and possibilities as a ‘leader of change’, by not just thinking anew, but also *embodying* some new and powerful sensibilities: to ‘be the change they wish to see in the world’...

“It seems to me that what you do is help people get a felt sense of the connection between different ways of being and different ideas - and hence what might need to change for a "sustainable" future. They often seem to experience what you do as a demonstration of "bravery" that they could emulate, a sort of liberation, opening to a new set of possibilities - in which the head takes its place alongside a more emotional knowing.” Dr Gill Coleman, Bath University Management School