

An Invitation to the Heart of Being

Alan Seale



Just over a year ago, Rita van der Heijden participated in the *Soul Mission * Life Vision* intensive workshop in The Netherlands. At the end of the workshop, she told me that a part of her vision was to take people to Egypt on self-discovery journeys. She has been organizing and hosting

groups to Egypt for eight years, but now she wanted to take it to another level. She asked me if I would consider joining her to be the resident coach—to create a space in which tour participants could process what was happening to them and through them, to explore what they were learning on deeper levels, and to get the most of the transformational opportunities that presented themselves. I said yes, but that I needed to go there first. So in January Rita took me on a trip that changed my life. (See the [February](#) and [March](#) newsletters for related articles.)

There are a number of places in the world that evoke powerful feelings and emotions, thoughts and awareness, or even physical sensations or responses. Egypt is one such place for me. In fact, at one time or another during my Egypt journey, I experienced all of those things, and more than once, all of them at the same time.

Now six months after that first trip, in many ways I am looking at my life as “before and after Egypt.” What changed for me? What made the “after” different from the “before?” Those are questions I’ve been sitting in since returning home on January 11th. What is different, and why?

One shift is in my relationship to time. I experience time differently now in that, while I often maintain

a fairly packed, linear-time schedule, at the same time I seem to be “in” that schedule in a much more circular, expansive, non-scheduled way. While I meet my appointments on time and my coaching sessions remain roughly 45 minutes in length, my experience of time within time frames is different. I experience time as being more expanded, flexible, and pliable, here to serve me rather than me being here to keep up with it. While I admit there are occasional exceptions, most of the time I feel much less harried in my full schedule, even when it is tightly packed and it seems impossible to get everything done that is on the list.

That brings me to another transformation that has occurred. I am now much less controlled by a “need” to get it all done. Prioritizing seems easier. I am much clearer about what is essential or must be done, what would be great to get done but is not essential, and what truly can float because it just isn’t that important. For me, this offers a huge sense of liberation. I acknowledge myself as a very responsible person. I trust that I’m not going to walk away from what, in the big picture, really needs to be done. Trusting that, I can let go of the things that are “merely important” and give my attention first to what is really essential.

This takes me to another big personal shift after Egypt: perspective on why I do what I do and why that is important, both for me personally and for my role in the world. On the morning that I awakened in the White Desert with the first signs of light and realized that not only did I not know what day it was, but in fact couldn’t even figure out what day it was (see [February 2008 newsletter](#)), I also was confronted with the questions, “What do

you do back there in the U.S., and why is that important?" In the moment, I had no answer. In fact, I didn't really care. For the first time in my life I was experiencing what it was like to be truly outside of our Western orientation to time and the need to do something, think something, say something, or produce something, and I was completely in awe of that feeling. For the first time I truly understood why people "unplug" for long periods of time and disappear to Bali or some other exotic place where they can leave behind the world as they have known it. Before Egypt, I could make up a story about what that must be like, but suddenly in that moment I completely got it. And in that moment, I couldn't imagine why anyone would want anything else.

As the days went on and Egypt kept "working on me," I had to really look at what I do back in the U.S. and find out why that was important for me. Otherwise, I knew I was going to have a really hard time going back. Through a camel-back exploration of the sand dunes and rock hills of the desert around Dakhla, visiting the temples and tombs in and around Luxor, and visiting local neighborhoods and farm villages, I realized that if I was honest with myself, my calling was to be part of a greater evolutionary development of our human consciousness. I was called to be engaged with the world and actively involved in supporting its positive and constructive evolution. My last days in Luxor brought more clarity about exactly what my role was in that evolution. I have been clear about my work for a number of years, yet I received profound insights into the depth of that work and what it truly meant to fully inhabit the role I am called to live.

So Egypt gave me three enormous gifts, all having to do with awareness:

1. a greatly expanded awareness of time
2. much greater clarity around what is truly important
3. a truer sense of who I am in the world and why it is critically important for me to fully live who I came here to be and what I came here to do

What might be the gifts you would receive from Egypt? What might she have in store for you? I knew from the moment that I committed to take this trip that it was going to be life-changing. Yet I had no idea how. In retrospect, it seems that my soul and the powerful energy that churns under the

surface in Egypt were in cahoots, as it were. Together they had an agenda for me that I could only discover by being fully present in each unfolding day. Today I invite you to come to Egypt with us to discover what your soul and the powerful energy of Egypt have in store for you.

I can't say what your experience will be – only that you will awaken more deeply to the heart of your being in whatever way is the next profound step for you. When you first arrive, Cairo will awaken you to another world. And then just when you think you are getting a sense of that world, off we will go to the Western Desert where you will meet yet another new world. Much of what is familiar to you will have been left behind and you will greet a new world that will show itself to you on its own terms. When we leave the desert and go to Luxor, you will find yet another world – a region rich in the presence of ancient architecture and energy, humanity, and life force.

If you are seeking a five-star tourist experience, this is not your trip. If you are open to very simple and clean accommodations, letting go of what places and things are "supposed" to represent, and allowing yourself to just be with them for what they offer specifically to you, you will have an extraordinary life experience. This is a trip about heart and soul – about tapping into the primal creative life force that gave birth to humanity and allowing it to work on you. It will inspire you, confuse you, challenge you, and ultimately heal and transform you into a wholeness that you may have imagined, or perhaps that is beyond what you could have ever dreamed.

See the [Transformational Travel](#) page of my website for details of this first trip – Awakening to the Heart of Being: A 13-Day Odyssey to the Nile Valley and Western Desert of Egypt. We will travel from late October into November. There is another trip in the planning stages for February if the October dates do not work for you. I hope you will join us for what promises to be an extraordinary journey of the soul.

Many blessings,

Alan

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Soul Mission Profile—Strategy Solutions, Inc.

The Business of Building Healthy Communities

by Johnathon Pape



It might seem strange to think that a business or organization has a soul, or for that matter a soul mission, but in fact it does. The idea of corporate mission statements and branding platforms is nothing new, of course, but for most organizations, identifying and implementing those familiar tools from an understanding of who and what the company is at its most fundamental level – its soul – is very new. This approach goes beyond just establishing a unique place in the market to maximize profit, to creating a completely different perspective and, dare I say, paradigm for doing business. Just as identifying a personal soul mission serves as a guide and anchor for living an individual's unique truth, recognizing the soul mission of an organization or business can make a huge difference in the quality of day-to-day operations, the clarity of focus within products and services, employee and customer satisfaction, and bottom-line success.

Debbie Thompson, the Founder and CEO of Strategy Solutions, Inc. met Alan a couple of years ago at a *Soul Mission * Life Vision* workshop in Pittsburgh. "I had gone through about 9 months of soul searching to find out what I was about," Debbie explains, "and that retreat brought it together. I discovered my personal soul mission – *I inspire and unlock potential* – and for the first time realized that I had an obligation to create a vision for myself that is about how to live that mission in my life. That was transformational for me in a lot of ways. I also watched others in the process of the retreat and saw how quickly and easily they

uncovered their missions." Debbie spoke to Alan about bringing his transformational work to the business sector, and together they hosted a series of webinars that combined his work with her company's process of strategic alignment.

Debbie had started Strategy Solutions, Inc. or SSI back in 1998 with the mission of creating healthy communities. But as the company grew and prospered it became more of a consulting business, largely due to what the market seemed to want. Around 2005, Debbie and her staff started talking out loud about what their products and target markets should be – about what their mission truly was. "My introduction to Alan's work was very timely, and as we started looking at how to help businesses find their soul missions, I realized that my own company needed to do this work first."

So a little over a year ago, SSI became the prototype for Soul Mission in a business setting. The entire management team had a retreat with Alan to work through the process and discover SSI's soul mission – *we catalyze potential for sustainable growth*. In preparation for the retreat, everyone in the company completed a "company as a person survey" – an assessment tool that Debbie and Alan developed together. Alan then walked the participants through a number of exercises to uncover the intention and energy that actually created the business, what was unique about the company, what SSI brings to the world, and what that means in terms of moving the business forward.

"The soul mission work is so helpful, particularly for entrepreneurial companies. It's very easy to look at a company like mine and think of the company *as* the entrepreneur, that SSI = Debbie Thompson. But the company has a life, a soul, an identity all its own. It is certainly connected to me and my personal soul mission, but they aren't the

same. This was really liberating for everyone, including me. My life used to be much more blended together between my personal stuff and my work stuff, so that I wasn't quite sure where one began and the other ended. Now it's different. I see clearly the difference between what I'm involved in personally and what pertains to the business."

Johnathon Pape: We're very excited to feature Strategy Solutions, Inc. as our first Soul Mission Profile of a business or organization. I know that you and Alan have been taking this work to other companies with great results. How has knowing SSI's soul mission changed the company?

Debbie Thompson/SSI: It has definitely changed our point of view about how we look at our products and services and how we approach serving clients. Up until the soul mission retreat, we realized that the mission of the business had something to do with unlocking potential. But while the idea of sustainability was present in most of what we did, it wasn't explicit in our intention and actions. The discovery of our soul mission has impacted how we think and how we act in terms of our products and services as well as our own internal sustainability. Our products have shifted in our service lines – for example, we have added an Organizational Development component to what we do in order to better support clients with implementation and sustainability of their strategic plans and projects. We have added funding research, analysis and support to help clients get the funding for implementation of their projects.

JP: Has there been an impact on day-to-day operations?

DT/SSI: Our soul mission is in front of us every day in the company operations – and we have been working on how we “brand” the company based on it. We're in the process of revamping our marketing materials – and the visuals have been redesigned to convey the essence of “catalyst/movement.” We have also gotten really serious about our own sustainability of the company and have put a great deal of effort into updating our own business plan and identifying the financing strategy that will support our operations and growth moving forward.

JP: What about the bottom line? Has SSI's soul mission affected the company's financial and non-financial assets?

DT/SSI: It's a little early to answer that. Getting in touch with our soul mission and the whole idea of sustainability actually prompted us to expand. We saw that we had to add an Organizational Development component to help companies get past their stuck phase to implement sustainability. So we acquired another consulting firm – an OD arm of the company – to add to our product line. We trust that there will be significant returns on that investment in the next few years, but right now we're still in the investment phase of the process.

JP: And the human assets – your employees?

DT/SSI: For the people who get it – those who understand the importance of SSI's soul mission and how it applies to them – it has had a big effect in how happy they are at work. We see a clear difference in the employees who understand our mission and can align their personal goals/missions with the energy of the company. The challenge is institutionalizing the understanding of soul mission uniformly across the company.

JP: How do you do that?

DT/SSI: There are a couple of different concurrent processes. In hiring new staff, we have to make sure that part of their orientation is in really understanding what the true essence of the company is all about, and that this is an overlay for how we do business. And then we have to remember to reinforce what we're all about – I call it the Quality Control Police. I do a lot of that, but I also have some key employees that help with the process and understand how to bring it together.

JP: What about your customers? Are they more satisfied with the new soul-mission-driven SSI?

DT/SSI: From a client perspective, we're looking through the lens of “how do we make this sustainable for them.” Before the soul mission work we weren't as focused on that. Now it is key

to our thinking, and of course it makes a big difference in how our customers can use the strategies we craft for them.

JP: *Has the company's vision changed since you first explored it during the soul mission discovery process?*

DT/SSI: In many ways, I think we're still figuring out all the ways to fully live our soul mission. It's a work in progress. We have always known that the vision of SSI was to create healthy communities. Since understanding our soul mission, we have clarified that a component of that vision is to make an economic impact in the "rust belt states" of the northeast US, in order to help companies within those states achieve global competitiveness and sustainability. We also recognize that we need to work in other states/areas to learn what practices and methods are working for companies, communities, and regions that are thriving so we can learn from those experiences and help the companies and communities in our region.

JP: *Is there a particular tool from the soul mission process that you regularly apply in the company business?*

DT/SSI: The Manifestation Wheel. It's a very important tool in terms of long-range vision. Understanding the various houses — particularly Intention, Peace, and Energy — has helped us realize that we should not simply jump into action, but resolve concerns, issues, and conflicts, and really look at where the energy is moving forward before we create an action plan. The Wheel has also helped us in our day to day operations. We still have a long way to go before we are using it consistently and uniformly in all our operations — mostly because everyone in the company doesn't understand it and/or how to apply it themselves. However, the more we're able to use the tool, the more long-term benefits will start to show up.

JP: *Speaking of the Manifestation Wheel, what is SSI currently manifesting and how does it relate to the company's soul mission?*

DT/SSI: We are working on some VERY interesting community health projects, including

one that would teach regions how to better analyze their community health data, plan from it, and evaluate their community health intervention efforts. We are also working on another community health project that could accomplish "community based health care reform" and redesign the payor system to support it. And we're expanding our workforce and economic development service lines at the state level and identifying contacts that could take us into different states. Our efforts in "nonprofit sustainability" have gotten the attention of some major funders and this has opened up opportunities for us. The "intentionality" to focus our efforts in these directions was a direct result of better understanding our soul mission and what it might mean to move in that direction.

JP: *As SSI has encountered challenges, doubts, or setbacks, how has knowing who you are at the soul level gotten you back on track?*

DT/SSI: We've had a number of challenges and some setbacks since discovering our soul mission. However, understanding that mission and how each of our callings hooks into it has helped us "stay with it" and not give up when the going has gotten tough. It has also helped us to understand and reaffirm our intention and know that things WILL manifest related to that mission if we stay true to it.

JP: *What would you say to an organization that wants to find its soul mission and create a clear vision of how to bring that mission to life?*

DT/SSI: The more that people who work in a company understand the true soul mission of the organization, the more likely the company will be to achieve the mission and the results they are seeking. It is absolutely critical for the senior leadership of a company to understand the mission as well as truly align their energies to it. This is a process that I think any company could benefit from.

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