1. **Topic**

As managers, there is a tendency to perceive the world “as a map already drawn, a story already told... a construction of our own making,” according to Benjamin Zander and Rosamund Stone Zander (*The Art of Possibility: Transforming Professional and Personal Life*). When women managers accept existing assumptions about the workplace environment, as a pre-drawn map with accompanying rules, they may see only obstacles in their path. This limits their ability to chart new directions and to devise solutions to existing challenges.

2. **Assignment**

By changing how they ‘frame’ and interpret their daily circumstances, women are able to bring new pathways into view and transform the organizations in which they live. By creating a universe of possibility, women can establish a collaborative context for decision-making, and produce meaningful change. This change is rooted in the creation of value and abundance, instead of scarcity-thinking and competition. Leadership is authentic self-expression that creates value.

In this module, women managers explore behaviors and assessments that may be limiting their capacity for leadership action. How can women translate an organizational commitment or vision into reality? By fostering new conversations for possibility, and by co-creating desired futures with their team members and colleagues.

3. **Video Descriptions and Instructions**

The first video (26 minutes) to be viewed is delivered by Benjamin Zander, to the European Zeitgeist Forum on May 23, 2011. It is entitled, "Choosing Your World" ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hZIC2f0fMKY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hZIC2f0fMKY)). The video suggests that, as leaders today, our job is to awaken the power of possibility in other people. Leadership requires co-developing a shared vision and measurable commitments. Organizational transformation, the video reveals, is most often accomplished when we are inclusive in our approach and engage in deep listening.

The second video is delivered by Simon Sinek, the author of the book, *Leaders Eat Last*. The video, 23 minutes in duration, is entitled, “Why Good Leaders Make You Feel Safe,” ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lmyZMtPVodo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lmyZMtPVodo)). This video explores why some teams are able to achieve extraordinary outcomes, as leaders draw a circle of inclusion. You will investigate how you can exercise personal leadership and initiate
organizational breakthroughs as you draw a circle of safety around employees, peers, and clients.

4. Follow-up Activities and Application

Managers are asked to make critical distinctions:

Q.1. Describe the difference between serving as a manager who discharges management responsibilities, versus serving as a leader who inspires a community of leaders to act and to lead. Which of these do you most closely resemble? Why?
Q.2. How can you practice the ‘art of possibility’ and collaborative leadership to effect organizational change and transformation? Are you speaking to the ‘downward spiral’ or are you creating conversations for possibility?
Q.3. Are you creating a Circle of Safety in your organization and inspiring trust, integrity, honesty, openness and mutual accountability?
Q.4. What does a high-trust, high performance organization look like, where all employees are able to contribute to the organization (as opposed to working in small ‘tribes’ to advance and protect individual interests)?
Q.5. As a leader, how can you foster a higher purpose, innovation, transformation, and a ‘giving ethos’ in your workplace?

5. Expert knowledge

Dawn Nicholson-O’Brien is the President and CEO of Celtic Oracle, an executive services consulting firm. A former executive in the Government of Canada, Dawn served in executive level roles during three and a half decades. She also served as the Vice President of the Institute on Governance, has developed and delivered advanced leadership programs for executives, and, she is the recipient of numerous leadership awards. She is a sought-after speaker and author (see www.celticoracle.ca).

6. Key Words

Key words include: framing possibility; change management; listening for possibility; group dynamics and teams; emotional intelligence and empathy; self-limiting behaviors and assessments; creating an abundance mentality versus the downward spiral; transformational leadership; collaborative versus competitive environments; co-designing the future; circle of safety

7. Additional Resources and Readings

- Carolyn Stern, Video, “Leading with Emotional Intelligence in the Workplace” (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0oLVo3snNA0)
Curated Video Titles

- Simon Sinek, *Start With Why*
- Marcus Buckingham, Curt Coffman, *First, Break All The Rules: What the World's Great Managers Do Differently*
- Dr. Margaret Wheatley, *Leadership and the New Science*
- Dr. Rosabeth Moss Kanter, *Evolve! Succeeding in the Digital Culture of Tomorrow*

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