



Leadership Living

the MasterPoint™ Series for the ascendant professional

by Tim Herd

The right inner stuff



As an environmental educator, I've often pointed out the many similarities among all living things. And as I've cultivated my particular interest in tapping trees to make maple syrup, I've come to see that we and the trees are strikingly similar in our layers of inner resources. Working together for our overall growth and development, these intrinsic assets, when properly developed, produce high value in the marketplace. Let's look at the comparisons:

In the very center of the tree grows the **heartwood**: hard, dense wood, usually dark in color that gives strength to the tree.

- Internally, our "heartwood" is our core integrity and inner strength, often formed through

years of growth experiences. It's a flexible stiffness, just like the tree, that overcomes storms and may bend—but not break—from external stresses. *What are your unchangeable, core values?*

Surrounding the heartwood is a layer of light-colored wood called the **sapwood**, which carries water, minerals, sugar food, and other nutrients upward in the tree from the roots to the twigs.

- Our personal "sapwood" is our flow of concepts, ideas, notions, and perceptions, which is the fuel for our personal development and growth. *What nutrients for improvement have you got circulating?*

Encircling the sapwood is the **cambium**, a microscopic layer of cells specializing in producing new sapwood to the inside and new inner bark to the outside.

- In us the cambium represents our particular areas of growth reacting to the nourishment of education and training. Such progress can be either miniscule or magnificent—depending on the quality of nourishment. *What are you learning? What skills are you practicing?*

The **inner bark**, surrounding the cambium, transports sap laden with sugar food from the leaves downward to the branches, trunk and roots. In early spring, however, this flow reverses to help nourish swelling buds and leaves.

- Our ability to direct sustenance to areas of special need can be considered our inner bark. *How willing and able are you to change the way you work to enable the greater goals in your life?*

The outside of the tree is clad with **outer bark**—woody tissue that protects the tree from disease, injury, temperature extremes, and pests.

- Our “outer bark” is our outwardly recognizable traits and interaction with others and the world, clad with our attitudes that either prohibit or permit attacks on our psyches and mental wellbeing. *How well are you protecting your flow of concepts, your areas of growth, your integrity?*

Radiating outward from the heartwood to the bark are **medullary rays**—specialized cells that store food and conduct food and water radially.

- In us, these rays represent our networking and sharing of our inner resources among all aspects of our being for balance and well-roundedness—physically, psychologically, and spiritually. *How are you balancing and integrating your vocation with your pastimes? Your career with your health? Your aspirations with your habits?*

Working together for our overall growth and development, these intrinsic assets, when properly developed, produce high value in the marketplace.

We also note the **annual rings**. Comprised of two types of wood, the annual rings consist of wider bands of lighter-colored wood called springwood, which forms in the moist springtime when growth is faster; and narrower, darker bands called summerwood, which is grown at a slower rate in the drier summer. One light and one dark band together account for one year’s growth.

- Well now, some of us have got a lot of rings, don’t we? And I’m not necessarily talking about age or girth! Yet we do have seasons and cycles of growth. But unlike the trees, whose expansion is greater when the livin’ is easy, most of our virtuous character traits develop during the more challenging periods in our lives when we must thrust our roots ever deeper, strengthen our resolve, expand our reach, and stretch to grow and change and adapt and strive to survive and thrive.

Both Tree and Self reveal that the healthier the nourishment, the stronger and more capable the life. *How conducive or accommodating is your current environment to your physical, mental, spiritual, and professional growth and health?* And if it isn’t all that, remember this additional great distinction: unlike the tree, we have the ability to change our environment. Go plant yourself in a properly cultivating climate. And grow and prosper!

MasterPoint 63

Nourish your assets to flourish your worth.

©Tim Herd

www.timherd.com

tim@timherd.com

The logo for Tim Herd features the name "Tim Herd" in a stylized, cursive font. Above the letter "i" in "Herd", there are three small, yellow maple leaves.

Possibility Grower Tim Herd is a career executive with extensive service in both private and public sector enterprises. He was the founder and CEO of America’s first fully mobile environmental education center, and has been nationally recognized for his “commitment and exceptional contributions to the stewardship of America’s natural and cultural resources.”