

## ► The Blueprint of WE Collaboration Document Short Concept Paper

By Maureen K. McCarthy and Zelle Nelson

The Blueprint of WE Collaboration Document is a new way to build, sustain and transition business and personal relationships with trust and respect. Beyond self awareness, our world now demands collaborative awareness; how can we do this fast-paced dance without stepping on each other's toes? The Blueprint of WE is a collaboration process used to establish healthier, more resilient business and personal relationships in a world that changes in increasingly complex ways, making the old ground rules no longer reliable. It gives you the power to be the architect of your life, rather than squeezing into pre-established relationship definitions. You personally write it along with those involved (whether it be 2 or 20,000+ people), preferably at the beginning of the relationship. It captures what draws each individual to the situation, your personal preferences and expectations; and it provides a path back to peace if the need arises. It is often being used to replace or enhance traditional legal contracts.

For several years, through our company Engaging the Soul @ Work, we have been working with a Fortune 50 company in the U.K. to create a more inspiring workplace largely by questioning the way business is done, rather than sleepwalking through it. They were very open to incorporating new business foundations, including peace as a top business focus. After several months, we witnessed first-hand how their decision to place a top priority on remaining or returning to a state of grace had impacted the company.

The corporation was involved in a highly expensive, four-year lawsuit with a man fighting a zoning change which forced him to sell his land to accommodate a safety procedure. The lawyers involved asked the leadership team to refrain from any contact with the plaintiff, even though he had repeatedly requested it. Yet somewhere in their hearts, now that they were seeing business from a different perspective, they knew it felt wrong to remain in a battle with this man. Three men from the leadership team made the decision to ask this man to lunch, not to change his mind, but to hear his story. They genuinely apologized for the agony he was caused and acknowledged how difficult it must have been to sell his land. Over the course of their meeting, they learned the man was only looking for a personal response from a very large, impersonal corporation. A few short hours later the entire lawsuit was dropped.

Relationships will inevitably go through difficult patches, but it seems that having a genuine desire to remain in, or return to, a state of peace can dramatically alter the course of the rough times. It makes them far shorter and easier to navigate.

**There are three entities in every relationship: You, Me, and a third entity called Us. Even when we've each done our own internal work, there is still the "Us" entity that often needs addressing. The Blueprint of WE creates a peaceful platform to do so.**

Relationships need to change and even end at times, and unfortunately we often label that as failure. But we can create new foundations built on trust in order to more gracefully navigate the rough spots, rather than crossing our fingers at the start of a relationship, and hoping it will meet our expectations. As a society, we focus a great deal of energy on fixing what's broken, rather than creating better groundwork to build more graceful interactions. The Blueprint of WE Collaboration Document is one such innovative piece of groundwork.

The Blueprint of WE concept is being used in both business and personal venues. It is a 2+ page, personal and explicit Document designed and created in unison by those in the relationship — at the beginning of the relationship, while things are still going smoothly. It

is a radical new foundation that even replaces or enhances the legal contracts our society insists we use to legitimize our relationships. Have you bought a house/car, started a business, new job, or gotten married without a contract lately?

More importantly, the very act of creating a Blueprint of WE Document can almost ensure you never have to use it. It dramatically alters the path of the day to day relationship. When we agree to trust one another at the start, learn up front what does and doesn't work for one another, create an atmosphere that allows for vulnerability, and pay attention to signs along the way, we tend to avoid difficulties and shorten transition periods.

## Who's Using It and When

The Blueprint of WE is currently being used in communities, corporations, small businesses, non-profits, churches, families, schools, between business partners, couples, friends, siblings, etc. in countries around the world. Because it is a framework upon which to share the "blueprint of me" with others, it can be used within any relationship situation that exists, and with as many people as are involved. It creates effortless communication and easy day-to-day interactions that reduce stress and enhance overall emotional and physical health. People around the globe say it is an idea whose time has come.

## Overview of the Concept

The Blueprint of WE Document is a living, breathing document that is created by the individuals involved in the relationship, be it 2 to 2000+. It is currently being used in 60+ countries around the world in both business and personal situations.

## The 5 Components of a Blueprint of WE Document



### 1. The Story of Us

Share what draws you to these people and this situation.



### 2. Interaction Styles and Warning Signs

The "blueprint of me," how I work best, what I look like on a good day/bad day, and what I might need that I couldn't ask for in the moment.



### 3. Expectations

Core values and non-negotiables, the structure you need to create and sustain this relationship.



### 4. Questions to Return to Peace

A tool to return to peace if the need arises, makes the difficult times shorter and easier.



### 5. Short and Long-Term Agreements

How long you're willing to go before you make peace. An agreement of no outright harm, a willingness to keep an open window if the unimaginable happens.

We all have days when we screw up, which is exactly why we created the Blueprint of WE. It's a tool used to shorten the frequency and intensity of the difficult times. Creating a Document with others, as well as a Document with yourself — addressing the relationship you have with that voice in your head that can spiral you down — enables you to build trust and resilience both internally and collectively. **We call it Exchanging the "Blueprint of ME" and Building the "Blueprint of WE."**

## A More In-depth Look at the 5 Components



### 1. The Story of Us

This is the story of the individuals as they see one another while things are going smoothly. This is done in order to capture that affirmative perspective and remind ourselves of the true beauty of the other person, in the event things go astray and we lose sight of what we once found so amazing.

Each person writes their version of The Story of Us, which is the story of the other's characteristics they most admire or appreciate and the reasons they're attracted to the situation. It could also be in the form of a bullet-pointed list. This serves as a reminder that when things get tough, these brilliant characteristics still reside somewhere inside.



### 2. Interaction Styles and Warning Signs

Each person creates a bullet-pointed list of his or her Interaction Styles and Warning Signs. The Interaction Styles are an account of how you generally like to work and live. Do you need to think out loud with a group, work alone at times, need an agenda? Do you tend to prefer quiet time, are you high energy, direct when you communicate, do you lean towards the optimistic? Interaction Styles deal with how each person likes things done, what's non-negotiable, what their preferences are, etc.

The Warning Signs is a list of the external clues you may show as signs of stress. The behaviors you exhibit right before things spin out of control. Are you less patient, do you immerse yourself deeper in your work, become a perfectionist, tap your pen on the table?

And most importantly, when you show these signs, how might someone help you pull out of the spiral? Tell them now, because in the moment, it might feel impossible to say what you really need. Come talk to me; give me space, then talk to me; help me see the data so I can step back from the emotional; offer me a back rub; reassure me, etc.

Warning Signs are the behaviors each person tends to display when things begin to go awry. Knowing these up front, and having someone tell you how to best assist, can alleviate a great deal of miscommunication and assumptions that lead to a downward spiral.



### 3. Expectations

The Expectations section lists the type of things contracts traditionally cover in terms of what's to be done, agreed upon, or intended. This is also the space to let the other person know what overall expectations you have about the particular type of relationship you've entered into. Some people also place a traditional contract into the Expectations section, if they feel more comfortable using both a Blueprint of WE and a legal document. Others have added their full Blueprint of WE as an addendum to a legal contract. This way, if it ever went to a judge, the judge would read their Blueprint of WE Document as well. And imagine how that would impact the judge's decision! The beauty of it is, if you create a Blueprint of WE Document, chances are you won't get to a place of relying on a judge to decide your fate.



### 4. Questions to Return to Peace

In many legal situations a person's fate is often decided by a judge that they've never even met. But imagine if you could pick the perfect third party mediator to help you to get through a difficult spot. Who would that person be? What would they say to you? What kind of energy would they bring to the room? Now imagine that this third party mediator is YOU. The value in creating a Document in a stress-free moment is that we have access to the emotional intelligence that eludes us when we're upset. There is no better third party mediator for you than you because your "internal knowing" knows you best. So capture it ahead of time and use it when peace eludes you.

Each person writing their portion of a Blueprint of WE crafts a list of questions they commit to answer with one another to help return them to a state of peace if the need arises. The questions are then merged together in the combined Document.

**Questions such as:**

- What am I afraid of?
- What truths do I need to tell?
- What do I need from you right now?
- Does money play a part in this situation?
- What do I gain by continuing/ending this relationship?
- Is it time to redefine or redirect our work together?



## 5. Short and Long-Term Agreements

Part of establishing a Blueprint of WE Document is also agreeing to a limited amount of time that can elapse before agreeing to come together to go over the Document. For Zelle and me it's three hours. If we feel out of a state of grace, we commit to sitting down within three hours and beginning the process of finding our way back to grace, even if the conclusion is that the relationship container as we know it is over. For some people three hours is too long, for others two weeks is the right amount of time. It depends on your temperament, style of relating to one another, and to what degree you need alone time before you can calm down enough to have a more loving conversation. This time-frame commitment states you will bring it up within that amount of time, but once you do, the parties involved can decide if they're ready to actually go over the questions in that very moment or if they need time to process what's happened first.

The parties also agree on a long-range timeframe of five years or more to get back together to find peace if something unimaginable happens and they can't seem go over their Questions before then. They also agree that if they can't manage to come together, they at least commit that they'll not do anything to outright harm the other person. They will not speak negatively to others, or create more pain for the other person. Many of us carry the pain of a bad ending for a lifetime and never resolve it. This commitment allows us the opening through the healing nature of time. It's better late than never.

The Blueprint of WE is a written trust between two or more people who see the power in moving through the fears and joys of a relationship with grace. It's typically written in the initial stage of the relationship, although if you are in a current state of grace with someone, but the relationship is not new, it can be written then as well.

## A Time of Suspended Judgment

You start most every new situation or relationship in a kind of "in love" state, whether it's a new job or new lover. Sometimes you get lucky. In the first stages of a relationship with another we are often able to see the best a person has to offer the world, and we simply want to know and be in relationship with that person for a long time, whether as business associates, friends, lovers, or even family. We are creatures who truly want to believe in the inherent goodness of others and ourselves. The "in love" state allows us to grant one another huge margins of error. It allows for a greater spectrum of acceptance; we judge less, we trust more.

If only we could remain in that state forever.

Wouldn't it be amazing if you could live every day with that "in love" feeling that enabled you to suspend judgment of every person, all the time, and not be afraid of getting hurt? It would be ideal, but highly unlikely. So why not agree that the relationship or situation will have its ups and downs and major and minor transitions, but our highest goal is to find peace together through all of it? This could mean that we address tough subjects early on in order to sidestep the eventual eruption that stems from ongoing avoidance. Or it could mean that we agree at the outset, if we ever need to transition or end the relationship as it stands, we focus on leaving in a good place with one another. Yet we typically allow fear to drive our behavior in times of transition, causing undue pain for all parties involved.

The Blueprint of WE sets the stage for us to move through tough times and transition with a greater degree of grace and love. When the relationship's strongest thread is one of dignity, then the sentence, "It feels like we're out of a state of grace with each other, can

we talk about what's going on?" is more powerful than any legal document could ever be, and it moves people toward relationship, as opposed to away from one another.

During this time of suspended judgment, you, and those you're in relationship with, personally create the Blueprint of WE. It is used in the beginning, middle and, if necessary, the end of the relationship as a way to keep a window open when the door appears to have shut. It ensures us a way to open the conversation when even the slightest tension is rising in our stomach.

The Blueprint of WE is not a quick fix for what's currently broken. Typically our society doesn't fully support the notion that we can negotiate tough times with a greater degree of grace. Most people unconsciously believe divorce will be antagonistic, having a client fire us is pure anguish, and losing our job is a sign of failure. Because of this, we create self-fulfilling prophecies. Until given an alternative, when we're told it's going to hurt, we believe it, and thus we create the pain we most want to avoid.

We don't intend to create false hopes that life will be perfect if you use this concept. In fact, we can guarantee it won't. Life is full of contrast, change is sometimes painful, and it's never easy to say something you don't think will land well. Your first Blueprint of WE Document may not work exactly as you expected, but we guarantee, if you keep creating and massaging them, the notion of living your life in a graceful manner will materialize. Strenuous times will not disappear, but they will be easier to maneuver and won't haunt you in relationships to come. Personally, we've found living life in a state of grace has become our ultimate goal. It's about living with our heart and head in alignment, both internally and externally. We give far more to the world and experience the world in a far more exciting and positive, yet serene manner. Peace is the most exhilarating and exciting experience we've ever had.

## **What To Do If You Want To Write a Blueprint Of WE Document But Are Not 100% at Peace With That Person**

As a rule of thumb, Blueprint of WE Documents are not written with someone you're currently out of a state of grace with. They should be written either at the beginning of the relationship, when you have yet to experience any stress, or at the very least, when things are in a good place. Otherwise people tend to be less open and trusting, and thus the Document is less impactful.

If you're looking to find your way back to a that easy, effortless place with someone, we suggest visiting our webpage where we offer tools to help you find that

When Maureen went through a difficult time with a friend of hers, she decided to write her half of the Blueprint of WE as if it were the very beginning of the relationship. It helped her to get back in a good space by remembering what she found so remarkable about her friend. It helped Maureen to know that the relationship was worth saving, that she needed to get over her fears and judgments and find a way to talk to her. Even doing just your half of a Blueprint of WE can work wonders with where the relationship sits inside of you. It can either be the path to reconciliation or a tool to create your own inner peace. At the very least, you're less likely to carry the weight of a bad relationship into your future relationships.

## **The Creators**

The Blueprint of WE concept was created by Maureen K. McCarthy and Zelle Nelson, as they first began their dating relationship in 1998. After seeing its impact, they went on to create Documents with family and friends. Eventually, through their international consulting firm, Engaging the Soul @ Work, they made the decision to solely use Blueprint of WE Collaboration Documents with their clients, rather than legal contracts. Their clients, including global corporations, governments and universities — organizations who often live and die by their contracts — have all been willing to create Blueprint of WE Documents as the business contract. And every client has gone on to create their own Documents because

they see the powerful impact it has on their day-to-day business interactions and bottom line. As Stephen Covey, Jr. puts it, it's about the "speed of trust."

As international leadership consultants, large group facilitators, senior executive coaches and keynote speakers, Maureen and Zelle are dynamic communicators, pioneering advancements in business and personal relationship tools within corporations and communities across the globe. They are a true living example of effortless relationship at work and at home. ([www.maureenandzelle.com](http://www.maureenandzelle.com))

#### **At Work**

*In Zelle's words:* "We created a 1-page Blueprint of WE Document for our company, Engaging the Soul @ Work, which we give to new and potential clients. It's an excellent way to begin the relationship to share with people what we're all about and how we work. We then invite the client to write their half, and it's on this foundation that our work together is built. It has turned every client into a friend because you start from such a profoundly different space of trust and respect."

#### **At Home**

*In Maureen's words:* "We're amazed at how creating a Blueprint of WE at the beginning of our relationship so deeply impacted our lives, even after many years of marriage. Because we co-own our business, we spend 24 hours a day together, and it's not nearly enough time. Our relationship feels effortless and exhilarating, and yet it's the most peaceful experience I've ever had. I always thought peace would be a bit boring, but trust me, it's a thrill ride!"

Maureen and Zelle have worked to create places where people actually look forward to going to work. Workplaces where everyone's knowledge, passions and interests rise to the surface to create a stronger, more vibrant company or community. They engage an organization on many levels by transcending the hierarchy. They show every individual how to do the Dance of Leader and Follower and give them the tools to better balance people and profits. People spend more time at work than anywhere else, and when a person doesn't feel respected and appreciated in their work environment, it ultimately affects their personal life, as well as the life and profit of the company—strong profits being integral in the health of an organization.

Maureen and Zelle are gifted communicators of foundational thoughts, feelings, and ideas. They have a compelling grasp of the power of storytelling and are known for encouraging even the largest audience to their feet to participate. Their power resides in the numerous tools, ideas and network of people they make use of in an almost intuitive sense. They facilitate large group change initiatives and are trained facilitators in The Work, Open Space, and World Cafe, among many other tools. Visit [www.maureenandzelle.com](http://www.maureenandzelle.com) for more.

Maureen and Zelle live in Asheville, NC, USA in the stunning Blue Ridge Mountains with their daughter, Kate, and their son, Kerrigan. They are deeply grateful to be caretakers of a 158-year-old stone house in a forest of 300-year-old trees, where they often hold retreats and workshops. It is a magical sanctuary which was once the ceremonial grounds of the Native American Cherokee Indians.