

# *The Leadership Challenge: What Really Drives Our Businesses, Families & Communities?*

A true story: A child is lost in the woods and he is frightened, cold and hungry. He sees his rescuers, but he is afraid, because he has heard on the news or from his parents that children are sometimes stolen by bad people. Will he trust enough to let himself be rescued or will he opt to stay lost and possibly die from exposure, rather than chance being stolen by strangers? The outcome is that he was driven by the elements to finally let himself be rescued. But at what cost to all involved? Who or what is really running our families, businesses and communities?

Does that sound like a rhetorical question? Actually, I would like to take a stab at it. I recognize that we are getting into deep waters here, and that it's a big subject. But let's try to break it down a bit. Stay with me, I do have a point and I will layer it in. Last week we talked about how meditation through leadership is beginning to find its way into Corporate America. And, we looked at how organizations seem to have a soul or a lack of one. As we look over the next few weeks at leadership in business, family and our community, I wanted to ask you to take a look at how our belief systems affect the way these situations play out in each of these environments.

Contrary to the quote I used from *Spiritual Leadership*, by Richard Bellingham and Julie Meek, I want to make it clear that I don't think any company or leader lacks soul. I believe we all have a soul, but whether we bring it into our consciousness at work is another question. We may not allow access to it or our depth of self, during business hours. We all might agree that allowing our soul to blossom in the family system is a good thing. But, does allowing access to your soul actually help or hinder the work environment? What about your community environment? Would you say that daily operations reflect the outcomes you want? Do your work plans, communications in meetings play out the way you want them to? Expect them to? Do you feel they could play out better?

Many times our lives feel like a game that we are a part of, even though we don't seem to have or recognize all of the pieces, all of the time. Metaphorically speaking, would you like to have all of the pieces, so you can play more effectively? Of course you would. Everyone wants to take advantage of all of their resources and to be more successful at living. So, let's take a look at how to increase your skills at the game of life by adding the pieces and reconstructing the patterns that increase your chances of continual success.

How might this play out? We can illustrate this by brainstorming with the "what if" game. Now in order to play, you have to suspend judgment, right? Are you willing to do

this? OK, so *what if* you could tap all of the power that you truly have at your fingertips? What if you were only using a fraction of your brain and power, as Einstein postulated? *What if* you actually *did* meditate in the Board Room? Even farther out, what if you let your Higher Power into the Board Room? A Higher Power, you mean the G--word...in business? Pretty risky stuff, huh?

Research shows that 95% of North Americans believe in a Higher Power, but leadership feels the need to keep it private in order to “not offend” their customers. Sounds a bit like compartmentalized thinking to me. We only think of spiritual things on Sunday? Or at dinner time when feeling grateful for the food we eat-if the kids are at the table to model the way? What if everyone knew that 95% of North Americans believe in a Higher Power? Would we let go of the notion that we can’t say things that affirm a belief in a spiritual realm. Interestingly enough, the biggest problem we have with others and spirituality is when we begin to talk of religious doctrine. So, *what if* we go beyond religious doctrine?

*What if* we were to keep our language at a generic level? Some do anyway: A Higher Power, the Universe, is an example of keeping it generic. In this way, we might be more apt to stay out of areas that affect another person’s belief system. Are we getting “New Age-like here?” Not really, just generic. So, in generic terms, what exactly does that mean to have your Higher Power in the Board Room? If that means you would have all of your resources available to you, wouldn’t you want it to happen? Does that mean that we pray before meetings, like Cher (the singer) and her team used to do before concerts?

Actually, it means different things to different people. When we discussed meditation, we said that each person meditated differently based on their personal style and belief system. Meditation can be a combined effort for greater spiritual awareness, using all of your senses in alignment with your belief systems. For some, it is another word for prayer, and for others meditation is an instrument for focusing and centering all aspects of the mind, spirit and body. Wouldn’t focusing and centering be an advantage to any situation, regardless of belief system? Would business and community be ready to use all of the resources available to them if it meant that they would get more and keep more? The answer is yes! We are ready for this kind of evolution. We are a people starving for spiritual depth in a Universe filled with spiritual abundance. In fact, there is abundance everywhere, and yet we feel deprived...

Last night I saw a commercial for a program about sports and children. A mother was challenging her daughter: The kid wanted to be out playing somewhere and she was saying, “Come on now, where’s your competitive spirit?” While another father was telling his tearful child it’s all about focus! She was lamenting while wiping away tears of frustration, “I don’t know why I get so emotional.” She was about 10 years old, does she have to have that kind of pressure at that age. Isn’t it enough that we are driven adults?

There is something terribly wrong with this picture. Meditation, focusing, prayer, etc. is a way to get more to your center, not to win at any cost.

What would happen if we collaborated towards a win-win scenario? What would the process look like? What is the advantage? Does everyone have to win all of the time? Since there can be only one winner, does that make the rest losers? Let me ask you this. *What if* you could catapult yourself to your future self? There you could ask yourself anything at all. What do you want to know about yourself at the end of your life? How will you be remembered? Will your journey be worth the trip? How much baggage will you hang onto during the trip? When will you be willing to let go of some of it? Will we always be driven by sheer competition? Ponder these for a moment while I tell you a story...

This spring my granddaughter's class won a high school state championship in an advanced civics program, and the opportunity to go to the national finals in Washington, D.C... In this program the young adults were given the opportunity to participate in hearings, challenged by retired Supreme Court judges, attorneys, professors, political journalists and other leaders in political arenas. They had to know all about our history, our constitution, and the laws tied to it, and much more. In addition, they also had to tie it to past and current events and the 51 articles. Of all of the participants nationwide, these young adults were one group of 1200 selected to participate. When they won the nationals they were invited to compete on the Hill! I was completely impressed! I was awestruck. Because, these kids were awesome--not just mine, but all of them!

Then, I watched helplessly as the final selection created an underlying pall of discontent, because there was only one first place. This is out of 1200 kids that went to D.C. and then out of these kids, *10 golden classes* made it to the Hill. Were they impressed that they participated nationwide? How many high schools are there nationwide, anyway? A huge bunch will do it for our purposes here. But even my granddaughter's class seemed bummed when they got *only 4<sup>th</sup> place* out of the thousands of kids that competed in this prestigious competition of young intellectuals. What is wrong with this picture? What are we feeding our kids anyway? Our families? Our companies? Our communities? When will we wake up to the fact that competition breeds fear, pain and suffering, a spiraling down to the depths of despair...unless we are the *one and only winners!*

What lessons can we learn here? Is competition wrong? Are we operating from a basis of fear and scarcity? Fear is an important tool, because it tells us to get out of the way when we might be in trouble, but in our daily life, most of the time it just drags us down. Fear is the lowest energy in the realm of the bodies' energy systems. In order to be successful, we need to stay out of fear and operate from the knowledge that we are meant to do well whenever we follow our own true passion.

The only person we can really compete with is ourselves. When we start competing with others whether that is in our businesses, or within our community, we get into trouble.

There will always be a better widget maker, a more skilled person, more effective community, or a more dynamic family. Getting better than we were yesterday is the only thing we have to offer humanity. But, my being more doesn't make you less, it only makes me more. Staying the same and working harder doesn't get us far on our journey. We are on a journey, not moving towards a destination...We are all working towards one main goal, to expand our consciousness' and collective vision towards an ever evolving higher self.

If we work on a better self, we have an opportunity to truly contribute to humanity. We don't have to have big contributions. Simply looking at how we can make things work for everyone is a winning response; it is a right attitude, an enlightened attitude. We can collaborate together to make every daily event a true victory in living. True collaboration is to operate from the position that we are in this universe together. We can do this in business or in a family...we are a community of one people, making small wins that we offer to the whole. We are united by our common humanity reaching out to bring together one spirit of winning for all.

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