

The Changing Face of Leadership

We all have some kind of leadership responsibility from time to time, whether you have a role as a leader in a large company, on a sports team, in your family, community, or simply leading yourself. Therefore, it is prudent to keep up with how our institutions are changing. With many companies closing their doors today, good management and leadership are more important than ever.

The act of leading people and organizations has evolved over the past 150 years or so, although the practices of 150 years are still relevant today. One of our first great leaders, President Abraham Lincoln, Attorney, and humanitarian was a master of human relations and demonstrated expansive skill at working with and through people to get the job done. He knew intuitively that openness and honesty was a tool and he used it well to lead others.

Lincoln was an artful leader who challenged his people through persuasion and influence, at all cost avoiding grievances and litigation. He was direct, open, and supportive and used an early form of coaching, managing people through the well-chosen story. He got the best from others simply by encouraging them to think out of the box as he developed a strong set of shared values. He was dedicated to helping others to climb the ladder of success through patience, trust and respect. In this way, he shaped and lead his teams. His character and integrity was a model that his people looked to for guidance and he is still admired today.

Over the years we have tried to maintain the philosophy created within our history. We moved into the Industrial Age with systematic attention to detail. We worked through management cycles of planning, organizing, directing and controlling to accomplish work through the efforts of others, and we prospered.

As time moved on, leadership began to take on a broader concept and process than the activity of management. Leadership became a process that ordinary managers used to bring forth the best in themselves and others.

The domain of a leader became the future, and the leader's unique legacy became the creation of valued institutions that survived over time. A leader set the tone for how policy would be followed and through tone, whether or not organizational, social and cultural development was successful. In *The Leadership Challenge*, James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner points out that there are five skills that a leader must develop to lead effectively. The skill to:

- Challenge the process
- Inspire a shared vision

- Enable others to act
- Model the way
- Encourage the heart

They encourage giving power away to strengthen others

- Give people important work to do on critical issues
- Give people discretion and autonomy over their tasks and resources
- Give visibility to others and provide recognition for their efforts
- Build relationships for others, connecting them with powerful people and finding them sponsors and mentoring

Leadership primped in the clothes of the charismatic, developed its' role as a separate entity from the ranks of the management establishment. The charismatic leaders distinguished themselves as those that "do the right thing, while managers do things right." They became stewards of the "learning organization," heavily invested in the systemic view of management as a process.

In today's global economy, leadership has taken another turn on the road of the business paradigm. We are told that leadership that worked for the Industrial and Information Age will not work in these times, the Age of Ideation, whose focus is on people, culture and different ways of generating new sources of gain.

We now refer to "spiritual leadership," and "values management." We see the organization as having soul or a lack of one. In *Spiritual Leadership*, Richard Bellingham and Julie Meek, explore the mechanisms that create an environment whereby organizations evolve and change the way in which they do business. They will either keep up with changing times through an evolutionary process or go by way of the dinosaur. The authors declare there is a difference between these styles of leadership. The distinctions are reflected in the term's *sole* leadership and *soul* leadership.

While sole leadership is characterized by independence, competitiveness, authoritarianism, and obedience; soul leadership will be noted by its emphasis on interdependence, creativity, collaboration, and community development.

Soul leadership means building healthy communities that are simultaneously committed to both people and profits. Soul leadership concerns itself with ethics as well as earnings; it invites criticism as well as celebration. Soul leadership embraces the values of respect, involvement, support, development, innovation, flexibility, and empowerment.

Sole leadership was good in an independent and competitive world, producing unprecedented results in the last millennium. However, leadership in the future will require a new style. Leaders cannot just go it alone and expect to succeed. A critical mass of committed and capable people is required for success. In a global, interdependent and collaborative world, organizations need soul leadership to continue the momentum that was established during the last decade of the century.

In the past we organized our systems by the Management by Objectives method creating direction through structures such as vision, mission, goals and objectives and this worked well. Systems such as these are still valuable business planning techniques. However, we have become far too rigid in interpreting these structures and plans to live in the real world of today.

Over the years we have dogmatically, viewed things in the same traditional way. This can be a helpful way of controlling the spiraling changes that keep us in constant flux. Foreword thinking leaders of today are caught at various stages of cultural development, from the Industrial Age to the Information Age, just looking for the next strategic move in the process. Like chess pieces, we move our lives around, planning strategically from what we see available at any given moment, hoping we get it right with the information we can visibly see. With that thought in mind, I am going to ask you to suspend judgement for a time to look at your world differently.

We all know that visioning and regulating attitude help us to move forward. I would even suspect that most of us are from Missouri and we need to see things to believe it. In life and even in our management structures, we vision a process and this vision controls our perception of what is, and that is what creates our reality.

What I am asking you to do is to turn how you see things around. To look for what is right in the world, even in your management structures, that is, to believe it before you *can see it*. I am not suggesting ignoring clues like it is raining outside and not take an umbrella—that is good planning and planning is important to solid management practices. What I suggest is that we are a slave to these structures, and there are many ways we keep ourselves, our systems and our families stuck. We go to meetings that we need not be in because it is expected. We make decisions with the group when we see an obvious disaster ahead. We think a lot, but not in ways that use all of our *self* to make decisions about our thinking.

Truly having the soul of leadership, an individual, company or agency has acquired a spirit of community that steps past the judgement of facts. So, what does that mean? When we say “step past the judgement of facts,” we mean to suspend judgement and look with something other than the intellect. Look with the whole of your mind, body and spirit to see past what is happening to find what is right or what can be useful about what is happening. Then, celebrate what is right with your world.

In management circles, especially when dealing with financial matters, we plan our budgets and for contingencies, setting out a net of safety for every eventuality. So much so that we predict conclusions so well, we actually create our situation. We see this clearly with the media. The media tells us how to think, what is working and what is not working in the world of commerce. One word from the right media placed consultant sends us scurrying around changing our financial plans, creating new directions, and if we are not careful, financial slumps and even recessions. In our work world, we also create elaborate management plans and visions only to get stuck in the dogma of the time, electing to believe what we see and hear rather than what we know to be our innate ability to make things work out. So, how do we break this cycle?

The cycle is an intellectual paradigm that the world is based on fear and scarcity of resources. Choose to see the possibilities, since perception controls reality, then the door to the possible will open. This requires opening the *self* to see differently and withhold judgement about what is happening until there is real clarity about the situation. Somewhere inside a small voice is saying, sounds true, but...?

Let's look at an illustration of this concept. Dewitt Jones, a world-renowned photographer with National Geographic tells this story in the video "Celebrate What is Right About the World," which I will paraphrase here

He tells about his job, which is to travel and look for interesting shots of people and places all over the world. Well, one day he came to a glorious field of dandelions. He started to take a picture of this field, but ended up waiting until the next day and as these things go, the next week. When he came back for the shot all he saw was a huge field of puffballs, you know the fuzzy things that dandelion weeds turn into when they are through blooming, and gardeners hate?

He was devastated. His great opportunity was gone, and the chance of a prize winning shot vanished with the proverbial "puff." He was so disappointed that he almost left without taking any pictures at all, but then he started to study the field and took a variety of shots from all sorts of angles from an instinctual place inside.

Well, when he developed the pictures he was stunned at the beauty of one of them. It is hard to describe here, but the one shot was overwhelmingly beautiful and was the one for which he won a special photographic prize. Picture this: darkness surrounding the bulk of the shot, looking up through the puffball, into a stream of sunlight—just breathtakingly beautiful.

But, he never would have gotten this picture, had he seen it with photographer's eyes, he may have missed the shot entirely. There he looked at things a different way, with a spirit that is indefinable. Even he did not know where it

would take him. He explains that this experience and others since then, has helped him to adjust his thinking about his work, and he now tries to look without judgement at what is ahead.

In the world of business, community or family, we don't have to have an epiphany to start looking at how we work differently. We can start by celebrating what *is* and the beginning of that is to see the best in people and trust them enough to let their best shine through. Sometimes that requires supporting, guiding and helping them to be successful. We all have a light inside of us and we can let it out for all to see—just watch someone truly smile. The whole concept helps us to accept and be the author of change, to be energized by it for the good of our future, our personal and work life.

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