



SOUNDVIEW Executive Book Summaries®

Just Managing Isn't Enough

WHY LEADERS CAN'T LEAD

By Warren Bennis

THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

Executives must resolve to lead, not merely to manage. There's a major difference. Many organizations are well managed and poorly led because executives address routine problems while ignoring or slighting important matters. They allow themselves to become buried with details that should be delegated to assistants.

True leaders are able to draw others to them through focused commitment, make dreams come alive and unite people behind those dreams, communicate through vivid models and examples, and know the extent of their skills and apply them effectively.

Successful leaders inspire employees by making them feel significant. Learning and competence are highly valued, and workers feel they're part of a genuine team or family. The most influential leaders motivate their people through joint identification with collective goals rather than through

rewards and punishments.

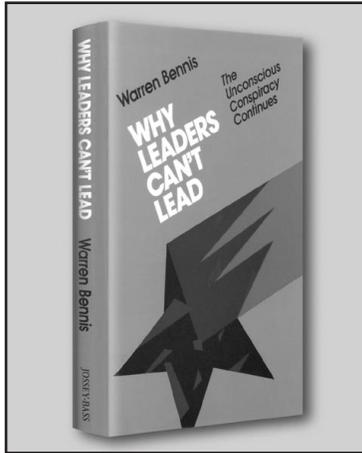
If you hope to lead your organization to prominence you must encourage dissent, disagreement, and truth from associates and search for the truth yourself by spending time in the field, analyzing your own operations, and talking with employees and customers.

You must also balance your career and personal roles, using ambition, talent, and learning ability to serve rather than enslave you.

As constant as change has been in this century, and as vital as it is today, it is still difficult to bring about.

People in leadership positions must be agents of adjustment who face things as they are and prepare for things as they will be.

If competence and conscience are to be restored to government, business, and society alike, that restoration must start with those who propose to lead our organizations. It must begin with you.



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THE SUMMARY

Social, business, and governmental organizations face a leadership vacuum so intense that an implosion is imminent. We ascribe leadership qualities to those in leadership positions, and learn, often too late, that we have credited the incumbents with greater ability and courage than they possess.

How do we get leaders to care about the organization's welfare and identify with its destiny? Both institutions and individual employees depend on these leaders for support. Such care calls for development of a corporate climate of understanding.

Without such caring, the institution becomes a place that none of us would like to be responsible for or preside over.

Basic Truisms of Leadership

Many people in leadership positions feel enveloped in an amorphous, unconscious conspiracy to prevent them from doing anything whatsoever to change their organization's status quo.

Routine work drives out the nonroutine and stifles creative planning and fundamental change. Minutiae becomes the order of the day while the long-term needs of the organization, its people, and those whom it serves go unfulfilled.

Managers must resolve to lead, not merely to manage. There's a big difference. Many organizations are well managed and poorly led because managers prefer to act on routine problems first. After all, those are the easiest to deal with. In doing so, however, executives become unwitting co-conspirators who worship the routine and ignore or slight the unique.

If you believe you're in this position, create an "executive constellation" of subordinates and assistants who

know more than you about everything within their areas of competency. Then demand that these underlings deal with routine issues instead of kicking them upstairs onto your desk.

And what should you do? Become a conceptualist — a leader with entrepreneurial vision and the jealously guarded time to spend thinking about the forces that will affect your organization's destiny.

This fine distinction between leadership and management protects you from getting entangled in your organization's routine machinery.

To be a genuine leader you must create clear-cut, measurable goals for your organization, goals that are forged with advice from all elements of the groups that it serves. Next, you must advance toward these goals without being overburdened with bureaucratic baggage that will sap your strength, energy, and initiative. Your job's charter must allow you to take risks, make mistakes, use your creativity to the hilt, and encourage those who work with you to do the same.

THE TRAITS OF A LEADER

Perhaps the most important distinction between leaders and managers is this: Leaders do the right thing; managers do things right. Both roles are critical, but they differ profoundly.

There are lots of examples of people at high levels who do the wrong things well and the right things not at all.

American organizations tend to be underled and over-managed. Their preoccupation with doing things right causes less attention to be devoted to doing the right thing. Management schools typically focus on producing good technicians and staff people, but they don't stress developing and remaining loyal to the four competencies that characterize true leadership. They are:

- Managing attention
- Managing meaning

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TEN KEYS TO AVOIDING DISASTER DURING CHANGE

As constant as change has been in this century, and as vital as it is today, it is still difficult to bring about. Institutions are fundamentally opposed to change. Here, then, are ten ways to avoid disaster during periods of change — which means, of course, any time and all the time.

1. Recruit honestly. Refuse to paint the visible and real drawbacks of your organization as exhilarating challenges. If a recruit's expectations are too high, and your promises are too grand, disillusionment is inevitable. The disparity between vision and reality becomes intolerable.

2. Guard against the crazies. Innovation attracts interesting people. Unfortunately, it also attracts people who will distort your ideas into something monstrous. You'll then be identified with this monster and forced to spend precious energy combating it. Be sure the people you recruit are innovators, not crazies. You want change agents instead of agitators or neurotics.

3. Build support among like-minded people. There are no clean slates in established organizations. There can be no change without history and continuity, so resolve to build support among like-minded people, whether or not you recruited them.

4. Plan your changes from a solid conceptual base. Have a clear understanding of how to change as well as what to change. Any reorganization must have coherence, forcefulness, and a set of functional mechanisms to convert your ideas into reality gradually and incrementally.

5. Don't try to mandate change. Organizations have both a paper structure and an intramural or informal one. As a good administrator, you must understand the relationship between the two and create a good fit between them and any planned alter-

ations.

6. Don't allow those who oppose change to appropriate basic issues. Successful change agents make sure that members of the old guard aren't frightened at the prospect of change. If they are, they'll start to fight dirty, and they've got tradition and history on their side.

7. Know the territory. You must learn everything there is to know about your organization, which often means mastering the politics of local chauvinism, along with an intelligent public relations program.

In Southern California, for example, big developers are constantly being blindsided by neighborhood groups because they haven't bothered to acquaint the groups with themselves and their plans. Such groups know their rights and they know the law, and the developers haven't made an effort to know them.

8. Appreciate environmental factors. A change that increases organizational discomfort is probably doomed. For example, a new computer system may be a good thing, but people may see it as bad if it results in overcrowded offices. Plan ahead to accommodate the satellite effects of such changes before you proceed.

9. Avoid future shock. Executives who become too involved in planning for the future may forget the past and neglect the present. As a result, employees may already be opposed to a plan before it goes into effect. If your eye is always on tomorrow, you may not give your people the attention and support they need.

10. Involve employees in planning changes. This platitude of planning theory is as true as it is trite. Nothing makes people resist new ideas more adamantly than their belief that change is being imposed on them.

- Managing trust
- Managing oneself

Managing Attention

Leaders who manage attention can draw others to them because they communicate an extraordinary focus of commitment. Theirs is a compelling vision that brings others to a place they have not been before. If you hope to do this, you must know what you want and communicate your vision, not in a mystical sense but in the context of outcomes, goals, or directions that others can see clearly, relate to, and galvanize their efforts behind.

Managing Meaning

Leaders who manage meaning make their dreams apparent to others and unite people behind those dreams. Ronald Reagan wasn't called "the Great Communicator"

for nothing. One speech writer said that Reagan could read the phone book and make it interesting because he had a gift for metaphors that people could identify with.

In his first budget message, for example, Reagan described a trillion dollars by comparing it to piling up dollar bills beside the Empire State Building. He had the ability to breathe tangible, vivid life into ideas. People relate to and respond to mental images or models more than words. As an effective leader, then, you must train yourself to communicate through the use of meaningful models and examples. This is a time-honored way to make one's vision clear to others.

Managing Trust

The main determinant of trust is constancy — people want to know where their leaders stand and what they stand for. In fact, a recent study showed that people

would much rather follow individuals they can count on, even when they disagree with their viewpoint, than people they agree with but who waffle on the issues.

“My boss may be an SOB,” the vice president of a major manufacturing company once said, “but at least he’s a consistent one.”

Managing Oneself

The fourth leadership competency is managing yourself—knowing the extent of your skills and applying them effectively. This quality is critical, because leaders without self-knowledge can do more harm than good. Inept executives, like incompetent doctors, can make life worse and people sicker and less vital.

“He doesn’t have ulcers,” goes the comment about the dictatorial manager, “but he’s a carrier.” The world could afford fewer executives of that stripe. May their numbers diminish.

FOUR THEMES OF LEADERSHIP

Leadership provides the basic rhythm of an organization. It gives pace and energy to the work and empowers the work force. This empowerment, the collective effect of leadership, is most evident in four themes:

1. People feel significant. They believe that they make a difference in the organization’s success. That difference may be small, such as stocking an empty snack food rack in a supermarket or inserting a diode in a printed circuit board, but the people who do so believe their presence and labor have meaning and importance.

2. Learning and competence matter. Leaders value learning and competence, and so do their subordinates. Leaders make it clear that there is no failure, only experiences that give us feedback and guidance about what to do next.

3. People are part of a community effort. Effective leaders unite people and give them a collective identity as part of a team or family. This is true even when coworkers don’t especially like each other. Some top managers try to create a false sense of unity by calling their work force a “family” or “team,” but mere words cannot make it true. A sense of genuine community effort develops and flourishes only under the steady hand of effective leadership. You cannot conjure up a sense of community using smoke and mirrors.

4. Work is exciting. Tasks become stimulating, challenging, fascinating, and fun in well-led organizations. Leaders who make this happen adopt a “pulling” rather than a “pushing” style, motivating employees through identification with collective goals rather than with rewards and punishments. Leaders articulate and embody the ideals toward which the organization strives.

CHANGE — OUR METAPHYSICS

Everything is in motion today. America has transformed from a wilderness to an industrial behemoth to a postindustrial morass, and from an upstart revolutionary to a world power to, in the words of Richard Nixon, “a pitiful giant.” Big business has moved to the

suburbs, making cities more and more the province of the very rich and very poor abiding uneasily together.

Government has metamorphosed from small and informal to big and effective to big and dumb, firmly bound in its own red tape and functioning much less for us than for itself.

Although capable of destroying the world, we cannot deal with tiny bands of terrorists. The stock market has never been more of a crap shoot. The national debt is mind-boggling. Cigarette consumption is down, but marijuana and cocaine consumption is up. Typewriters have yielded to word processors, yet we seem to have little worthwhile to say, and what we do, we tend to say badly despite all the improved technology.

What’s Going on Here?

What’s going on is that the people in charge, particularly in business and government, impose rather than inspire change.

We’ve had far more bosses than leaders, so everyone has decided to become their own bosses. Imposing rather than inspiring change has given us the primitive, litigious, adversary society that we inhabit today. “We have met the enemy,” said Pogo Possum, “and he is us.”

Managers can effect change through trust and truth or through dissent and conflict. We’ve tried dissent and conflict, and have not changed but have merely become combative. It’s time, then, to try the path of trust and truth.

Only people with virtue and vision can lead us out of this bog and back to the high ground, however.

People of virtue and vision who would spearhead change today must first earn our trust. Next, they must communicate their vision clearly so that we both understand and embrace it. Finally, they must persuade us to involve ourselves. Such actions are simple enough to propose but profoundly difficult to convert to reality, given today’s rancorous society.

If you would become a true leader today, you must be both innovative and courageous, someone who is capable of seeing things differently and thinking in fresh and original ways.

Furthermore, you must seek out and use other innovators in your organization. Create a climate that questions and challenges conventional wisdom and tolerates the mistakes that are inevitable whenever people of vision and courage pursue high-risk goals.

Bucking the System

Change is difficult to engineer because organizations are social systems, and social systems have generally accepted ideas of what is right and wrong and how things should be done. People who occupy seats of power, therefore, are usually those who have best conformed to and reflected the organization’s ideals. To endorse dissent and innovation typically means to place yourself at odds with the prevailing corporate culture and thumb your nose at “the way we do things around here.” These are risks that only the most courageous managers are willing to take, and you do so at your peril.

Still, we have to try. Too many of our organizations and most of our citizens are locked into roles and practices that simply do not work. A recent Harris poll showed that more than 90 percent of the people questioned would change their lives dramatically if they could. They don't like the way they live now, but they don't know how to change. This survey is additional evidence of our leadership drought. It should serve as impetus and inspiration to potential leaders and innovators.

If such people have the determination to achieve their potential, and the rest of us have the courage to follow them, we might finally find our way out of this bog we're in.

THE LONG SLIDE FROM LEADERSHIP

Eighteenth-century America was noted for its geniuses, nineteenth-century America for its swashbuckling adventurers and entrepreneurs, and early twentieth-century America for its scientists and inventors. Today we celebrate the age of bureaucrats and managers.

Unlike either our nation's founders or the industrial titans, those who manage today's gargantuan corporations and the elected and appointed bureaucrats have no gut stake in their enterprises and no vision beyond the bottom line. More often than not, they're just hired guns who follow the money and their own self-interest.

The national rebellion of the 1960s, the "Me Decade" that followed, and today's success-obsessed Yuppies are the blighted fruit of the mistakes and crudities of sterile, detached organization men who had no talent for advancing anything except their own careers. For all their brass and affectations, today's business kingpins are not leaders, merely bosses. Like dinosaurs, they may tower over their surroundings, but they aren't necessarily equipped for survival. These bosses confuse quantity with quality and substitute ambition for imagination.

Much like Washington's tin soldiers and sunshine patriots, they do not understand the world as it is, much less attempt to provide the genuine leadership it needs.

Like them or not, FDR, Truman, Ike, and JFK were all true leaders, the last that this country has known.

True leaders are made, not born, and they are not made as much by others as by themselves. America's founding fathers, adventurers, and inventors were dreamers on a grand scale. Today our dreams have given way to fantasies about such things as money. As a dreamless sleep is death, a dreamless society is meaningless. We desperately need uncommon men and women who, having invented themselves, can reinvent America and restore the collective dream by expressing for and to us that irreverent, insouciant, peculiarly American spirit.

A Withdrawal into Ourselves

People have come to retreat into their electronic castles, working at home and communicating with the world via computers; screening their calls on answering machines; ordering in movies for their VCRs, food for their microwave ovens, and trainers for their bodies; and

The Challenge Is Yours

People in positions of authority are at best agents of adjustments, striving to face things as they are and prepare for things as they will be. Thus, if you believe that competence and conscience must be restored, you must demonstrate both. These are hard times, but true leaders are not deterred by hard times.

That is perhaps what makes them leaders. As Abigail Adams wrote long ago to Thomas Jefferson, "Great necessities call forth great leaders."

keeping the world at bay with advanced security systems. Trend spotters call this phenomenon "cocooning," but it might more accurately be described as terminal egocentricity.

Such activity is not all that difficult to understand, given the national siege mentality and disaffected attitudes toward organizations and society in general. Every day we face the possibility of being randomly assassinated by a sniper on the freeway, victimized by backstabbing office politics at work, discovering that a loved one has become hooked on drugs, and hearing that a Congressional investigation has just dragged a rotting corpse out of some high-level government official's ethical closet.

A nation cannot survive without virtue, and it cannot progress without a common vision and high expectations. Just as individuals must continually challenge society to live up to its promises, society must continually encourage individuals to live up to their promises. At the moment, neither the individual nor society seems interested in doing better — except on the most primitive level. It abuses us; we abuse it: We coexist in a atmosphere of mutual contempt.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

In his roles as a college professor, management consultant, and university president, Bennis has been required to believe that people can and will improve — with a little encouragement. In the last two decades, however, he has seen that people either can't be improved or don't want to improve. Our ambitions have killed off our conscience and made competence irrelevant. If competence counted for anything today, would Prince be king, and would Sly Stallone (alias Rambo) be paid \$12 million per extended grunt?

What values do we reward today, anyhow?

Alfred North Whitehead wrote, "In this modern world, the celibacy of the medieval learned class has been replaced by a celibacy of the intellect which is divorced from the concrete contemplation of the complete facts." And he didn't even know about Ivan Boesky, Ollie North, or Gary Hart. They, along with their less infamous counterparts all over America, were so egocentric, so absorbed in their own adventures, that they saw the rest of the world as an annoying encum-

brance. To know everything about one thing is to understand nothing about anything.

The social world that we have wrought is vastly inelegant, unpredictable, and unfixed. Made of ambiguity and ambivalence, contradiction and conflict, it is a clown in the temple, a chameleon that changes before our very eyes. Such a world requires alertness, curiosity, impatience, courage, and skepticism — qualities that are in very short supply in everyone over twenty-one, but proliferating in the very young.

Our Cynical Children

Our children know more than we do now, and what they know has made them premature cynics. They may be woefully ignorant of history, philosophy, and literature, since public education in this country has deteriorated into a nationwide system of holding pens, but they are street smart — alert, curious, impatient, brave, and exceedingly skeptical. They are also sad and mad.

We have taught them so badly that they cannot express rage coherently and so must demonstrate it. They are far more comfortable with images than with words, given, like their principal heroes, to “acting out.” They say to each other and to us, “get real,” but, having created our own reality, which is anything but real, we don’t know where to begin.

WHERE HAVE ALL THE LEADERS GONE?

In the last several decades there has been an appalling mortality — both occupational and actuarial — among leaders. We’ve lost Roosevelt, Churchill, Schweitzer, Einstein, Gandhi, Meir, Sadat, Jack and Bobby Kennedy, and Martin Luther King, Jr. In business, the landscape is equally flat. Ford, Edison, Sloan, Kettering ... all are long gone.

Today’s corporate heads are either organization men who have risen to their level of incompetence (such as GM’s Roger Smith) or followed the star of celebrity (Lee Iacocca) or become megalomaniacal one-man bands, such as Donald Trump. It’s not an accident that the most celebrated captains of industry today are those who spend their time demolishing rather than creating companies. The problem isn’t just a domestic one, however. It’s global.

Do It Ourselves

Bereft of leaders, finding no one to replace them, we decided to do it ourselves. We questioned everyone in authority and every institution. We formed blocs of like-minded people to agitate for what we wanted and opposed what we didn’t want. We went into the streets and onto the barricades. In this light, Lee Harvey Oswald, James Earl Ray, and Sirhan Sirhan could be called the principal architects of America.

As individual autonomy waxed, institutional autonomy waned. External forces impinged and imposed more and more on the perimeter of our institutions. For decades the government had assumed more and more power over corporations and institutions.

Now the people were challenging not only the government but the corporations and institutions, too.

A new form of politics was invented, the politics of multiple advocacy. Its proponents made the law the court of first resort. Our new reliance on the courts has not only diminished the autonomy of institutions, it has threatened the autonomy of the individual. Surgeons, for example, are more likely to do today what they consider legally safe than medically right. The law has been transformed into a weapon, not a tool, and its confusion, ambiguity, and complexity — augmented by conflicting judicial interpretations — tend toward paralysis.

The sense of individual responsibility that animated the Constitution has vanished as both chiefs and Indians now trumpet the new credos: It’s not my job and/or it’s not my fault. The psychology of entitlement prevails. If some injury befalls you, even through your own negligence, stupidity, or unlawful act, someone else ought to pay. A product’s manufacturer, perhaps. Or the victims who defended themselves against your assault.

Where have all the leaders gone? They’re out there pleading, trotting, temporizing, putting out fires, trying to avoid too much heat. They’re peering at a landscape of bottom lines. They’re money changers lost in a narrow orbit. They resign, burn out, or decide not to run or serve in the first place. They motivate through fear, by following trends, or by posing as advocates of “reality,” which they cynically fabricate as they go along. They are leading characters in the dreamless society, given now almost exclusively to solo performances.

Thus, precisely at the time when the trust and credibility of our alleged leaders are at an all-time low, and when potential leaders feel most inhibited in exercising their gifts, America most needs leaders — because, of course, as the quality of leadership declines, the quantity of problems escalates.

As a person cannot function without a brain, a society cannot function without leaders. And so the decline goes on.

Bosses as Celebrities

Today we acknowledge executive superstars. Their names, pronouncements, conspicuous consumption, and corporate derring-do in quest of profits are dutifully reported by an eager press.

Armed with briefcases, fax machines, and cellular telephones, this new generation of heroes commutes to its paper war daily in stretch limos or private helicopters.

Why does such a large segment of the population view these people as heroes? One reason might be that CEOs tend to be more important to companies in these troubled times. Another might be that this is the most exhilarating climate for businesses that we’ve seen in decades. A third, more discouraging reason could be that selfishness is suddenly respectable, and in a status conscious society there’s no greater status symbol than occupying the top rung on the ladder in a corporation whose annual sales may rival the GNP of many third-world countries.

There’s another explanation: American cultural traditions define personality, achievement, and the purpose of life in ways that shower individuals with glory. In recent generations, however, this tendency has run

amok, eclipsing individualism's opposite — a sense of community, collective aspirations, and public service. No matter how wise, shrewd, or visionary its leader might be, a corporation is a collective endeavor. It needs the aggregate wisdom and vision of all employees to function at the optimum level. CEOs who run companies as extensions of their own personalities and egos take an unconscionable power trip at the expense of employees, stockholders, and the public at large.

Too Many Chiefs

The higher people rise in the corporate hierarchy, the more exposed their weaknesses are. This is particularly true of the relationship between the CEO and the COO.

On paper, the differences between these jobs are clear. The CEO is the leader, the COO the manager. The CEO is supposed to take the long view, concentrate on the what and why, and do the right thing; the COO is supposed to take the short view, focus on how, and do things right. The former is supposed to have vision; the latter, hands-on control.

Trouble develops when one person starts envying the other. The CEO, for example, may wish for the COO's hands-on control. The COO may long for the opportunity to think ahead, dream, and innovate.

When this condition exceeds the boundaries of wishful thinking and border skirmishes erupt between the two executives, their conflict is bound to send shock waves throughout the company.

Simple Solution

The solution to the CEO-COO dilemma is as simple as the structure is complex. The key responsibilities of both jobs should be combined and assigned to a CEO in chief who would reside at the center of the "executive constellation" mentioned earlier. This person would be expected to do the right thing, enabling the managers to do things right, and would also be responsible for blending both long- and short-term views so that today's actions are compatible with tomorrow's goals. He or she would define the whats and whys and assign the hows to associates, would have both vision and hands-on control to ensure that the vision was always realistic, and would think in terms of innovation, development, and the future, while associates took care of administration, maintenance, and the present.

With less structure and more leadership, American business might begin to recover its energy, spice, and fire. But, for the moment anyway, there's little demand for such qualities in the nation's executive suites. Instead, there's an unnatural and unhealthy reverence for the status quo.

THE PERILS OF ACCORD

Corporations in this volatile era tend to create an impression of false accord. Managers usually avoid encouraging what Johnson & Johnson's Jim Burke and Intel's Andrew Grove call "creative confrontation" with associates. These two executives demand dissent in the executive suite and surround themselves with subordinates smart enough to know the truth and independent

enough to speak it — especially when it may be at odds with their own perceptions.

If you hope to lead your organization to prominence in the real world, you cannot afford to surround yourself with clones.

Expect dissent, disagreement, and truth from associates and go in search of the truth yourself by spending time in the field, analyzing your own operations and talking with employees and customers.

Effective executives remain inquisitive about everything. They read, look, explore, wonder, and perpetually remind themselves that any product can be improved and any procedure upgraded. In a dynamic world, organizations must, themselves, remain dynamic, and their managers must accept change as a way of life.

When Winning Is Losing

Sometimes it seems that every activity is expressed in terms of competition. At home, at work, and in social situations we talk of winning and losing, scoring, carrying the ball, close calls, and going down to the wire. Preachers and politicians, among others, see this national obsession as good, clean fun. Perhaps, however, it's time to find a new model. Life isn't a baseball game. It's never called on account of darkness or canceled because of bad weather. Business is not, and never was, a sport; thinking of it in those terms was always simplistic. Now it's downright dangerous.

No business can or should be designed purely to win. It should be designed to grow both quantitatively and qualitatively and to vie at least as much with itself as it does with its competition. This is not to say that there aren't winners and losers in the battle for advertising accounts or market share. But aspiring leaders must acknowledge that winning is just one of the many things that a business must accomplish.

Athletes perform in a static environment — the size of the field, the length of the contest, the presence of referees. The universe of business, on the other hand, is volatile. It changes from moment to moment and hardly ever repeats. Companies must constantly cope with the effects of new legislation, changes in competitors strategy, consumer attitudes, domestic and global economic conditions, and waxing or waning social trends.

Clearly, then, there are far more differences than similarities between sports and business. It is a business's ability to adapt to an ever-changing world that forms the basis for both its success and its progress.

The truth is that there is no appropriate model for business except business itself. Business is not a diversion. It reflects the character of life itself; complex, difficult, susceptible to success and failure, sometimes unruly, always challenging, and often joyful.

LEADING TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

How can we simultaneously exercise our ambition, talent, and capacity for learning and contribute to society and its organizations? Our parents, schools, and organizations all, however inadvertently, conspire against us when they focus on career development and relegate the rest of life to unanticipated consequences.

Several actions characterize genuine leaders. If you aspire to a higher plane of success, embrace these actions and make them your own:

First, resolve to lead an integrated life, one that balances your career and personal roles harmoniously. Professional and private activities complement and enhance each other.

Second, use your ambition, talent, and capacity to learn to serve rather than enslave you.

Third, use those qualities to fulfill your own visions of excellence through the application of passion, energy, and focus.

Fourth, use your qualities to help your own employees fulfill their own visions.

This fourth action is perhaps the most challenging of all, because it isn't always easy to set free the visions of your people. In many cases they have placed artificial limits on themselves or have difficulty seeing themselves in roles different from the one they have filled for several years. The idea of moving into unknown territory may frighten some subordinates, so they may resist your efforts to get them to explore new territory.

Real leaders persist in such cases, however, because they're unwilling to settle for anything less than the best in themselves, their organizations, or their people. In this way, leaders' passion, energy, and focus are contagious; they cause subordinates to conceive and display passion, energy, and focus of their own. In the best-led organizations people are not dutiful. They're inspired.

A Bright Future for Complexity

H.L. Mencken once said, "For every complex problem, there's a simple answer, and it's wrong." But with the complexity of the problems facing us today, the tendency to grasp for simple answers — answers that are easy to understand and accept, even though they turn out to be wrong — is very great.

If you would be a genuine leader in today's crazy-quilt environment, you must challenge yourself to think about things in new or different ways. There are many resemblances between poets, children, and leaders. All are simple but never simplistic; all are full of questions and wary of easy answers; all trust their instincts; all are capable of simultaneous truth and originality. If you aspire to leadership, mold yourself into a practical dreamer who digs deep to view the complex roots of our various predicaments, identifies the real questions, and thereby produces some workable answers.

THE VIRTUES OF A LEADER

Few of us in these fast, mean times seem willing to use our best qualities even 50 percent of the time. Those qualities are, however, the basic ingredients of leadership. Our unwillingness to tap them consistently in ourselves explains, to a large extent, why leaders have become a vanishing breed. If you find these qualities within yourself and display them in both your personal and corporate roles, you can distinguish yourself from the crowd that populates today's business scene.

Integrity

Integrity simply means moral and intellectual honesty. Without it, we betray ourselves and others and cheapen every endeavor. Integrity is the single quality whose absence we feel most sharply on every level of our national life, but the nation's integrity will not be restored until each of us asserts our own integrity. The slogan for these seedy times is, "Everybody does it."

Dedication

Dedicated leaders believe in something passionately. This intense and enduring commitment makes marriages, corporations, and governments work. It's the basis for great works of every kind. If you would be dedicated, give yourself wholly and fully to something beyond yourself.

Openness

Openness means you're willing to try new things, listen to new ideas, and tolerate ambiguity and change. This stance will not make you uncritical. Rather, it will inspire you to be both adventurous and creative.

Creativity

Every child under ten is not only creative but original. Most adults are not only uncreative but also copies of other adults.

Despite the fact that they make a lot of money and have a lot of responsibility, executives often lack either the creativity or even the courage to choose suits that are different. Unfortunately, their minds are generally as conventional as their garb.

To restore your sense of creativity, restore your sense of wonder. Break through preconceptions; force yourself to see things as new and fresh as you did when you were a child. This means making the familiar strange and the strange familiar.



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