

living & leading abundantly

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LEADERSHIP THOUGHTS

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04-09-20

1. **Defining Leadership**

“Humans have an innate capability to dream, think, learn and, most importantly ACT, in a collective, cohesive, integrated manner to achieve most anything they can conceive. Leadership is the act and art of enabling this capability.” DAS

2. **Management vs. Leadership**

Leadership and management are both important to the success of an organization and each serves a unique purpose. Management is about the present, it is about making what exist more efficient. It is about getting more out of people. Leadership is about the future, it is about creating what doesn't exist. Leadership is about investing in people and engaging people in creating a better future.

3. **Focus on the Future**

What makes humans unique versus other species is their ability to envision a different future. As Martin Seligman suggest, we are misnamed. “We should be ‘Homo prospectus’ rather than ‘Homo sapiens’.” We aren't built to live in the present. The power of prospectation is what makes us human. The wise use of this capability is at the foundation of leadership.

Leaders are obsessed with the future. They have a vivid picture/concept of something they intensely want to create and that picture guides and informs everything they do. They are not satisfied with what exists and that dissatisfaction and their concept of a better future creates tension that can only be alleviated by moving toward their vision.

4. **Transitional Versus Transformational Leadership**

There are two forms of leadership. Transitional leadership is called for when things are running just fine and one just needs to continue to fine tune what has been done before. The problem is it just doesn't last forever. At some point the old way of doing things stops working, things fall apart, disrupters come into the marketplace – innovation, a new competitor, change in consumer behavior, etc. What this requires is transformational leadership.

Transformational leadership, leading change, is not as bad as they say ... it's much worse! Change has no constituency. The only person who likes change is a wet baby. The resistance comes in many forms, but what people actually resist is not the change, but the transition that is needed to deal with the change. Change can happen in an instant, what doesn't happen in an instant is the transition that successful people and organizations make to be effective in a changed environment. With transformational leadership you can't worry about having a fan club, you can't look for approval. During transformation you can assume that about 10% of the folks will eagerly support what you bring and 10% will vehemently resist. The other 80% ... they are waiting to see which 10% will win. So to bring change requires tenacity, courage, consistency, involvement of all those affected, constant communication and clarity of direction. Transformational leadership is worse than people tell you, but it can be also be incredibly satisfying once on the other side. And without it most likely you and/or the enterprise will

eventually fail.

5. **Purpose and Relationships**

Organizations are complicated, but at their core they all consist of only two things: purpose and relationships. An organization comes together to achieve some purpose and it has some complex web of relationships that enables (or doesn't enable) the achievement of that purpose. Therefore, the task of leadership is only two things: purpose and relationships. It's about creating clear purpose and enabling healthy, productive relationships. Leadership is that simple ... and that complex.

6. **Relationships – The Ultimate Competitive Advantage**

Most leaders focus more on "purpose" than on "relationship." Purpose is easier, more concrete and tangible. But I believe the biggest leverage is often found by investing in the human side of the organization. The potential of people is almost unlimited. Perhaps leaders think relationships are below them, that they should take care of themselves, that it's the task of HR and/or it's about having ice cream on Friday afternoons, putting foosball tables in the conference rooms, etc. It is not. Enabling better relationships is about doing the hard work required to inform, educate and engage employees in meaningful work.

Enhancing the health and well-being of the people in an organization today is perhaps more important than ever. In America stress levels and suicide rates are at an all-time high, over 15% of us takes a tranquilizer, only 16% are flourishing while 33% are languishing, in 2017 over 30% were prescribed an opiate, more than 10% take an anti-depressant, only 30% of employees are engaged ... An organization is only healthy if its people are healthy.

The health and well-being of the people of an organization and their ability to work as unified, engaged team is the ultimate competitive advantage. If the leader can get everyone in the organization moving in the same direction, they could dominate almost any industry. Creating this advantage is the essential task of leadership and a matter of both material advantage and a moral obligation.

7. **Integrated Leadership**

All things ever created by man were created twice – first in the mind and then in reality. We would not start a journey without a clear destination. So, it should be with leading both our own lives and leading an organization.

I think the first step, and often neglected by most leaders, is to get clear about the purpose of their own lives. To lead in an integrated manner we must start with what do we want to achieve regarding all domains of our lives .. what is our mission in life concerning ourselves (physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually), our families, our work and with regard to the communities/world of which we are a part. Without this level of clarity we are apt to sacrifice one domain for achievement in another rather than leading and living in a wholistic, integrated manner. What I find gets often traded off by leaders is either one's own health (we sacrifice our health for our wealth) or one's relationships/family for "success" at work. We pay a steep price for this. Having made these tradeoffs, these executives often come to the end of their careers

having reached great heights from a professional standpoint, but they have been through multiple divorces, are estranged from their kids and/or physically exhausted and compromised.

When we get clear about what we want to achieve with our lives, then we can put what we want to achieve with the organizations we lead in proper context. Clarity of purpose is essential to organizational effectiveness -- not just in the leader's head, but in everyone's head. A leader needs to have a clear vision of how the business he/she leads will be of significantly greater value in the next five-10 years. It should be inspiring, while grounded in reality. A great example of an organization that has done this at every level of the organization is Southwest Airlines. Their vision of the future is both simple and powerful: "We exist to connect people to what is important in their lives through friendly, reliable and low cost air travel. Our vision is to become the most loved, most flown and most profitable airline." When I fly Southwest I find that most every employee I come in contact with behaves in a manner consistent with this purpose and vision. Here is a link to a 13 minute video that captures their vision/purpose.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eGxMf88l5g4&t=2s>

8. **Ideas and Values**

Leadership is not about style, it is about ideas and values. Big ideas are the things that "stir one's blood." There are four presidents represented on Mount Rushmore. These presidents were chosen because each represented a foundational idea concerning our country: Washington for the founding of a new country based on democracy, Jefferson for the political philosophy of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, Lincoln for the preservation of the union and Teddy Roosevelt for expansion and conservation. These are ideas that capture our imagination and engage us in their pursuit. Valid values ensure that the things which engage us, do so in the pursuit of something ethical and beneficial to all constituents. These "Rushmorean leaders" led with courage, integrity, vision, conviction and tenacity. Each had an individual style, but what they had in common was big ideas which have endured and clear values.

9. **Financial and Human Value**

The most successful leaders today create value not just in financial terms, but in human terms. They enhance the lives of their associates and their families, their customers, their owners/investors, suppliers, the communities within which they operate and the world at large. They are increasingly "socially conscious," not just because it is the right thing to do, but because it is a key to long term competitive advantage. They lead with their minds, their hearts and their souls.

For most of us money is the not the primary motivation. We all share certain needs – safety, security, to be respected, to use our talents, to feel our work and lives matter, to be recognized and valued, to be in relationship and to belong. Leaders understand and tap into these needs and desires, at every level of the organization. By so doing, they fully engage all their employees in their collective pursuit of the vision.

10. **Stated Values versus Actual Values**

At the core of creating the desired culture is identifying shared values and behaviors. The stated values of an organization may or may not reflect the actual values of the organization. Enron

had these four values chiseled in marble in the entry lobby: “Respect, Integrity, Communication and Excellence.” If you want to know what the organization’s values are forget what is stated and look instead at how the people behave, how they speak to one another, who gets promoted/fired, how meetings are conducted, how/who gets recognized and compensated, how “perks” are distributed, what happens when a project fails, the organization’s safety record, the level of turnover, people’s willingness to take risks and to challenge authority ...

11. **Formula for Success**

Ray Dalio has a formula for success: “Reality + Dreams + Determination = Success.” I think his formula works for successful leadership as well, but I would modify it slightly as follows: “Reality + Dreams + Determination + **Process** = Success.” To successfully lead, I believe, one must have a well-conceived leadership process.

12. **Moving from Ego to Conscience**

The most successful leaders will be those that move from ego to conscience, from status to significance, from scarcity to abundance, from win/lose to win/win. They tap into the human desire to be involved in causes that transcend an individual’s own self-interest.

Transcendence, being engaged in a deeper larger meaning, creates engagement, it inspires creativity, it cultivates extraordinary growth, and it arouses people’s passions and commitment, which in turn leads to exceptional organizational performance.

13. **The Senior Team**

Once the leader gets clear, it is essential that the senior team becomes clear. They are only a “team” if they see themselves as collectively responsible for achieving common objectives for the organization. They must see the organization’s objectives as paramount to their own functional/business objectives. This requires that they spend time wrestling with issues and topics that often don’t fall directly within their areas of responsibility. If they do not spend significant time together and they see their own function/business responsibilities as paramount, they are not a team, but a “working group.”

14. **It All Starts with the Leader**

“Authentic influence that creates value” is probably the shortest definition of leadership (Kevin Cashman, author of *Leadership from the Inside Out*). Leading in a manner described in this document requires that the leader go deeply into who they are. Being introspective and clear about their strengths and weaknesses, their beliefs, their shadow beliefs, their ideas about leadership, about involvement, about recognition and reward, about what they deem important, etc. It all starts inside the leader. To do this requires time for reflection, time away from responding and reacting, time for solitude. There is no shortcut. Without this reflection and solitude a leader’s influence is not authentic and will not create the greatest value. You can only lead others on a journey as far as you have personally traveled.

15. **The Surgeon General’s Definition of Mental Health**

The surgeon general’s criteria for mental health is: “The successful performance of mental function, resulting in productive activity, fulfilling relationships with other people and the ability to adapt to change and cope with adversity.” The basic task of leadership is to create

the environment in which these same qualities for mental health exist within the organization such that the people therein flourish. When the individuals flourish, the organization flourishes

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