

living & leading abundantly

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LEADERSHIP THOUGHTS

DAS

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1. **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.

2. **What Makes Humans Unique**

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.

3. **What Obsesses Leaders**

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 never 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. **Defining Leadership**

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

5. **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. Great, 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. This type of 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 and what people really resist is not the change, but the transition that is needed to deal with the change. In bringing about transition you can't worry about having a fan club, you can't look for approval. During transition you can assume that 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. It is worse than people tell you, but it can be also be incredibly satisfying once on the other side. And without it, without transformational leadership, most likely you and/or the enterprise will fail.

6. **It's 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.

7. **It's also about 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, engage us 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.

8. **The First Step**

The first step, and often neglected step, in achieving what we want is to decide what we want. 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 an organization. Clarity of purpose is essential to organizational effectiveness -- not just in the leader's head, but in everyone's head.

9. **What Is in the Vision**

A vision is a clear picture of the future. It describes what the leader wants to create. It captures how the organization will be of significantly greater value in 5-10 years. It is inspiring, while grounded in reality. It is leader initiated, shared, input gained and supported by all. In my opinion a vision should include an endpoint summary, a description of core capabilities and the desired culture/DNA that will enable the achievement of the endpoint. The vision should provide context for everyone and every action/decision.

10. **Vision Requires Action**

Creating a vision is only the first step. Vision/visioning has a bad name because leaders create a vision, communicate it and expect everything to change. Nothing happens until it gets into the fabric of the organization. This requires that the vision guides the organization's goals, roles, processes, systems and structure, thereby guiding all the decisions and actions of all employees. Vision without action is just a dream. Vision with action can change the world.

11. **Relationships overrides Purpose**

Most leaders focus more on "purpose" than on "relationship." Purpose is easier, concrete,

tangible, and measureable. 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 is the task of HR and/or it is 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.

12. Relationships Are Even More Important Today

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, over 30% were prescribed an opiate this past year (2017), more than 10% take an anti-depressant, only 30% of employees are engaged, ... An organization is only healthy if its people are healthy.

13. The Ultimate Competitive Advantage

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/leadership team 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 leaderships and a matter of both material advantage and a moral obligation.

14. 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 employees 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.

15. Leadership & Universal Human Needs

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.

16. 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 ...

17. 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.

18. 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.

19. The Executive Team

Once the leader gets clear, it is essential that the executive 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.

20. “No Involvement, No Commitment

“If they don’t weigh in, they don’t buy in.” To engage an organization requires that the direction/expectations be repeatedly, consistently and effectively communicated. But even more importantly, it requires giving people the opportunity to push back and provide input as to where the organization is going. Involvement leads to commitment.

21. 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 what he/she believes, values and desires. 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.

22. 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