



Leadership Reflection

“...Leadership is a relationship between those who aspire to lead and those who choose to follow. It is the quality of this relationship that matters most when we are engaged in getting extraordinary things done. A leader-constituent relationship that is characterized by fear and distrust will never, ever produce anything of lasting value. A relationship characterized by MUTUAL RESPECT and CONFIDENCE will overcome the greatest adversities and leave a legacy of significance...” (Kouzes and Posner in Perry, 2010)

Leadership Traits, Characteristics and Behavior

Paul Rabiner, a leadership coach, states that TRUST or TRUSTWORTHINESS is the most important personal trait of an effective leader. If a person aspires to lead, he or she must be trusted by those that they wish to influence. Countless other leadership gurus make the same point while tying back to the traits, characteristics and behavior of leaders. Extensive writings are available in this area of leadership. We will review a select few to set the stage for your introduction to our *Emotional Intelligence AT WORK™* program:

Integrity is a principle that is directly tied to trust. It is fundamental to all leader-constituent relationships that the leader does as he or she says. It is essential that those being led see a CONSISTENCY in all dimensions of their leader. If the leader highlights the need for respect, does everything that leader communicate show respect for the employees, the clients, the company's partners and vendors, and within all dimensions of the workplace? If a leader talks about honesty, are they transparent and honest in all their management dealings? Do they respect a person who gives honest feedback about a policy or personal trait? As it is said, do they WALK THE TALK?

As an aside, technical proficiency/mastery as a leader is important, but according to some research, accounts as a maximum factor by only 40% of a person's willingness to be led. Clearly, it is more important in highly technical fields and among workers who are highly trained. For example, research scientists and medical doctors typically only respect a leader who shares and has proven themselves to be an accomplished expert in their discipline. Unlike technical organizations, larger organizations with more breadth of departments do not hold technical or in-depth product expertise as a key requirement for leadership. Having experience in managing a similar company or coming up through the ranks is important, but much less than among heavily specialized firms/organizations.

Superior communication skills are a key trait of highly effective leaders. These leaders are recognized by their ability to present a simple and clear message. With comfort and ease they can deliver that message consistently to broadly diverse audiences inside (boardroom to entry-level employees) and outside the organization with confidence, relevancy and eloquence. They can determine what image and tone will spark the passion(s) of each audience as they deliver the message efficiently, effectively, with passion and conviction. Especially so, they have a highly developed ABILITY TO LISTEN and to make the team members *feel* that they have been heard, that their opinions are needed and valued. Because they are effective listeners, they can determine what is in the hearts of their workers and can motivate them.

“Self-awareness as a foundation for effective leadership has been theorized, implied and researched in a variety of context. Self-awareness is a millennia-old area of study – the aphorism ‘know thyself’ dates back to at least to Socrates. ...According to Gary Yukl, a researcher on leadership, ‘Self-awareness makes it easier to understand one’s own needs and likely reactions if certain events occurred, thereby facilitating evaluation of alternative solutions.’ He defines the concept as including ‘understanding of one’s own needs, emotions, abilities, and behavior,’ indicating that a person able to identify his or her own strengths and weaknesses will be more effective. ...For many people, a great benefit of gaining more self-awareness is developing



more *flexibility*. Understanding that one has certain tendencies leads to recognition that those tendencies serve one better in some situations than others. That recognition in turn leads to a willingness to assess a situation and adjust one's approach to it, if called for...

...The relationship between SELF-AWARENESS and FLEXIBILITY is demonstrated by a study of the Royal Navy (Young & Dulewicz, 2006) which found that leaders who were more self-aware were better able to modify their leadership style based on the context. And interestingly, studies by Van Velsor, Taylor, and Leslie (1993) found that managers who underrated themselves were perceived by others to be more effective than those who overrated themselves. The authors suggest that their better performance might be due to their willingness to seek continuous improvement – or in other words, their flexibility.”¹

Skilled leaders are developed. Evidence suggests that some leaders are more adept at leading at an early age, not so much because of genes, but because of their early training and experiences. Early life experiences can create opportunities or barriers to an individual learning how to lead or equipping them with the attitude and behavior that helps them develop more skills as a master of relationships. Those that are trained or have positive experiences at early ages demonstrate later in life what might be regarded as natural leadership.

Leaders that develop earlier or are purposely developed in adult life also demonstrate higher levels of Emotional Intelligence (EI). These persons are more self-aware, better at self-regulating, more socially aware and socially adept, and are INTRINSICALLY MORE MOTIVATED than their peers. While some individuals develop strong mental skills and act as visionaries or planners early in life, others may have physical strengths and take on early leadership roles as sports captains or managers. Early leaders soon fade as the group grows and broader skilled leaders join or emerge, unless they recognize the need to continuously evolve and develop their emotional intelligence. Some so-called leaders have positional authority derived from a military commission, social class or the electoral process, but if lacking emotional intelligence are less effective leaders often using dysfunctional influence with people through fear, manipulation and controlling behavior.

Recognized emotional intelligence experts, Bradbury, Goleman and others state: 'like leadership, emotional intelligence is developed.' Rabiner teaches that every person demonstrates many of the essential skills, traits or behaviors of a leader, but that the recognized and most effective leaders are proficient in a broader range of 'soft' skills than the less effective leaders. His mantra: *"What are you working on today?"* A clearly stated challenge designed to motivate leaders to embrace a CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT MENTALITY. Exceptional leaders constantly look to improve some dimension of their leadership. Upon closer examination, Rabiner is referring to improving one's emotional intelligence.

Leaders achieve balanced growth by both expanding and maintaining equilibrium among cognitive leadership skills, the dimensions of emotional intelligence, and their personal lives. Most psychologists agree that connections in the mind are constantly evolving with new experiences, and that most people take a lifetime of adulthood to undo the negative experiences and shocks that form the human ego by the age of five. The most effective leaders are those that have the fewest negative (fear-based) schemas or methods of coping. They remain effective by CONSTANTLY ADJUSTING to evolving cultural and social situations and purging old and resistant habits and behaviors that if left unchecked, result in deeper or new negative schemas.

Leaders remain balanced. Our earlier principle examples include trust, integrity and respect. If a leader is to be effective, he or she must be above some minimal scalar value in each of these three areas. To be great or really great in two and fail in the third will most likely destroy the leader's credibility and effectiveness. The



long-term leader must be proficient enough in all key principle areas and focus on growing in one or more areas every day. Like a chain, the leader is only as strong as their weakest link. A stronger chain requires that each principle be strengthened over time.

Leaders remain positive in threatening times / times of change. Napoleon wore a red jacket into battle. When asked why he would choose to be such a distinctive target for the enemy snipers, he replied that he wore red to be a visible motivator to his soldiers and perhaps more importantly to never show that he was bleeding if wounded. He intended to be both a positive influence by his presence in the thick of battle and by his perceived invincibility, even if wounded.

Today's leader is a CHANGE AGENT. They inspire confidence through their POSITIVE ATTITUDE, especially in the critical task of confronting the risk(s) of change. Change requires individual contributors to agree to break from the status quo, take on challenges or in some analysis put their lives or livelihood on the line. The leader must approach these changes with empathy and act compassionately.

Effective leaders are servant leaders. Servant leadership means that the leader is concerned with giving the group a clear sense of direction and the supportive resources they require to be effective in contributing their heart and mind to the problem or task at hand. The leader supports the teamwork, rather than telling the team members what to do or how to do it. Stephen R. Covey states in *Servant-Leadership from the Inside Out* that: "You may be able to buy someone's hand and back, but you cannot buy their heart, mind, and spirit. And in the competitive reality of today's global marketplace, it will be only those organizations whose people not only willingly volunteer their tremendous creative talent, commitment, and loyalty, but whose organizations that align their structures, systems, and management style to support the empowerment of their people will survive and thrive as market leaders."

In Summary

The complete leader is living a life where every day and in every way he or she is striving to become better, much better in their own abilities and capacities to interact successfully in relationships. One can calmly examine oneself and determine development opportunities; can purposefully and intentionally strive to improve in those areas; assess how they are perceived and are interacting within a group; can actively listen, sense and show genuine empathy for others; and are intrinsically motivated to make the necessary changes and exert positive influence. A leader does not one day arrive at a finished state, rather is constantly adjusting to situations, shifting approaches to improve effectiveness, and selflessly gives their energy to support others.

Thank you for completing this EIW prerequisite Discovery Assignment.

We look forward to working with you! - *The Emotional Intelligence AT WORK™ Staff*

¹ 10Jan2014 Harvard Business Review/HBR Blog Network: *For a More Flexible Workforce, Hire Self-Aware People* (<http://blogs.hbr.org/2014/01/for-a-more-flexible-workforce-hire-self-aware-people/>)