



The Human Dimension

THE LEADER WITHIN

August 2005

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"We help both people and productivity flourish by developing a positive culture of shared leadership."

We find improved performance is the reward for your investing in people.

The emphasis in THE LEADER WITHIN is on the changes and growth we make within ourselves, as leadership is basically a personal growth experience over time.

'For things to change first I must change.'

How to Survive in Unpredictable and Changing Circumstances.

Last month we talked about the essential qualities required of leaders. One of the most important jobs of a leader is to create the culture of the team or organisation. To do this we need to appreciate the kinds of changes, which are occurring in society and ourselves so that we can focus on the important elements. This means organizational leaders must make their organizations more flexible and more responsive.

To make organisations more flexible and responsive leaders need to:

1. Foster an environment, which is conducive to learning and self-renewal.
2. Create an appetite and agility for continuous change.
3. View every organizational member as a source of valuable ideas.
4. Share your expertise as well as mistakes freely with others.
5. Demonstrate a high level of patience and tolerance for ambiguity.
6. Share power and decision making with others throughout the organization.
7. Demonstrate courage and inspire others through our own actions.
8. Have high personal and professional standards.

The rapidly changing marketplace, increased global competition, and leaner organizational structures require radically different skills and attitudes from all individuals in the workplace.

What we all need to learn to do:

1. Embrace change:

Never has the pace been more rapid than it is in today's market place. Organisations must respond quickly and be innovative to survive, let alone have a competitive advantage. This requires a flexible, adaptable workforce. Corporations simply do not have the reserves to tolerate anything less. This translates to a variety of new work arrangements, including changing work assignments, flexible work schedules and frequently re-forming work teams.

2. Learn to thrive on uncertainty:

Flatter, leaner organisational structures mean that there is less day-to-day direction from the top. Individuals will be expected to form networks within and outside their organisations, master the skills of creative collaboration, respond to frequently changing priorities, and assume personal responsibility for setting their own direction.

3. Stay abreast of technology:

The internet is rapidly becoming the hub of the global marketplace, and the corporation's workforce will need to develop and maintain its proficiency in computer and telecommunications technology in order to be viable. Teleconferencing and virtual learning are but two examples of how organisations are orienting their practices in the global economy.

4. Learn to make the most of network relationships:

Increasingly, organisations are entering into alliances, mergers and joint ventures with former competitors. The ability to manage lateral relationships will be a critical determinant in peoples' ability to achieve results. No longer can organisations afford internal compartmentalization and the associated redundancy characteristic of traditional management structures. Cross-functional work teams and matrix structures are becoming commonplace, and they require a more demanding set of interpersonal skills.

5. Make the most of learning opportunities:

Organisations, which survive and thrive in the 21st century, will be those that are continually renewing and learning. People who work in or with them will be expected to assume full responsibility for managing their learning in response to changing organisational needs. Learning will be different than that in traditional organisations as well. Rather than prescribed curriculum being handed down from "experts", people will be responsible for creating their own learning opportunities to harness their individual creativity and talents.

6. Develop a different perspective on career advancement:

Career advancement in the traditional organisational structure consisted of upward promotions throughout one's career. Leaner organisational structures preclude that expectation within 21st century corporations. Instead, career advancement, including the ability to add value to the organisation, will increasingly be evidenced by "career latticing". People will develop a broader base of experience and more extensive networks by making a number of crisscross career moves.

7. Add value:

The organisation can no longer afford the workforce that merely meets expectations. Increasingly, standards are being raised to ensure competitive advantage, and exemplary performance will be the norm. People who thrive in organisations will be those who pursue opportunities to add value. They will see themselves as stakeholders in the enterprise.

8. Alter expectations about employment:

Contract work, outsourcing, temporary employment, telecommuting, virtual organisations—these are but a few of the changes in the way people are already being "employed" as organisations are downsizing and restructuring to be more competitive. The workforce of the 21st century will not expect to have a lifelong relationship based on dependency with one employer. Instead, people will have a series of short-term relationships throughout their careers in which they contribute their knowledge and expertise in response to particular business needs. They will have to operate more like business owners whose customer is the corporation.

9. Embrace new workplace relationships which will replace traditional supervision and mentorship:

Reshaped organisations will have fewer leaders at the top than traditional vertical organisational structures, and, given the rapidity of change, those at the top will be incapable of being the repositories of organisational knowledge and wisdom. In the new era, leadership will emerge throughout the organisation regardless of job title or status, and individuals will have relationships with "leader coaches" who will sponsor them in their development of new knowledge and achievement of evolution performance.

Call to Action:

The Human Dimension's programs are designed so that workplace cultures flourish through the conscious development of your people.

Much of this month's newsletter is taken from our article entitled 'How Today's Organisations are Changing'.

It is important we understand the changes, which are occurring and be able to put our own experience into perspective in order that we can lead appropriately.

If you would like a complete copy of this article please email me with 'article' in the subject line and you will be sent your own copy.

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Written by:

Gary Russell, BSW. Grad. Dip. Soc.Sc. MCC (Master Certified Coach)

The Human Dimension Pty Ltd

Ph. 61 *2 6296 4133

Fax. 61 *2 6296 4144

Email: Gary@humandimension.com.au

Web: www.humandimension.com.au

PO Box 3083

Weston ACT 2611

AUSTRALIA

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