



The Human Dimension

THE LEADER WITHIN

November 2007

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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 achieve within ourselves, as leadership is basically a personal growth experience over time.

'For things to change first I must change.'

Change is Inevitable:

Change is no longer a force in the environment. It is the environment. Organizations around the world struggle to keep their footing in a whirlwind of technological innovation, customer demands, competitive pressures, globalization and economic volatility - knowing that any of these forces can turn a business model upside down in an instant, rendering even the best strategies obsolete.

To succeed during turbulent times, organizations and individuals must find ways to *thrive* - not just survive - amid complexity and uncertainty. Those enterprises that continually evolve and adapt to transform themselves in response to constantly shifting conditions gain a tremendous advantage.

So what does it take to flow with change in today's world?

Managers looking to help their organizations (or teams or departments) make sense of change in the 21st century need a completely different set of skills and mindset than their counterparts in the last century. Forget about issuing orders or coercing with

threats. Success in the Knowledge era requires *employee engagement and creative collaboration*.

It takes guidance by managers who know how to harness the energies and talents of others while keeping their own egos in check. It takes leaders at all levels that manage by influence rather than by position.

The dictionary says that *leadership* means going ahead or showing the way. To lead is to help a group define and achieve a common purpose. But look carefully at that last sentence - helping a group define and achieve a purpose is not the same as setting that purpose and then "selling" it throughout the organization. Change driven from on high without significant across-the-board participation is bound to meet with workforce scepticism and resistance, resulting in disengagement.

On the other hand, the co-creation of purpose/vision/strategy is an inclusive process that encourages employee engagement from the very beginning.

Effectively steering organizational change also depends on early, comprehensive, and transparent communication. In most cases, the manner in which change is communicated is more important than the nature of that change. Speeches and articles are limited in their impact and are only part of an effective strategy, which leaders can use to communicate. Every action and off-the-record comment carries weight. As one insightful manager said, "How I behave day to day is more important than anything I say in the meetings."

Abrupt change that comes as a complete surprise is the hardest to accept. To reduce fears of the unknown and squelch fantasies of the rumour mill, leaders "set the stage" by informing people upfront about the real-life challenges and opportunities that are likely to become the future impetus for organizational transformation. They also make sure that employees have enough business acumen to make sense of financial data. The more everyone understands about the current situation, the trends and forces shaping the future, the economic realities of the business, the alternatives being considered, and the consequences of not changing - the easier it is to accept and even anticipate the need for change.

Respected change-managers are powerful communicators who don't ignore or 'sugar-coat' negativity. Instead, they help people make sense of it. If a past change effort has failed, it's publicly acknowledged and reviewed so that everyone can extract its lessons and move forward. (Likewise, if a best practice is discovered, it's also publicly acknowledged, reviewed, and learned from.) Candid change-communication means that both positive and negative

aspects are disclosed. The most motivational managers are those trusted by their team to share knowledge and "tell it like it is."

Effective managers are catalysts, creating synergy in their organizations. They delegate responsibility and authority. They encourage and protect their teams. They model attitudes and behaviours they want to see reflected back. Most of all, they realize that steering change today takes emotional literacy. It is no longer enough to appeal solely to people's logic.

Leaders also have to *touch people's hearts*.

And the best of today's leaders do so by revealing their own *passion* - for the future success of the organization and for the individuals in that organization who face the tough job of *transforming themselves* in order to collectively create that future.

The most important place to look for sustainable change is within you.

As a leader you set the tone and mirror the kinds of behaviours and attitudes you wish to see in others. No matter how many models you can refer to or how smart you are in leading change, in the end it is the quality of your character, which will determine whether foundational elements are present. These qualities are intangibles yet critical to sustainable results. They can be developed and grown in abundance – our current personal profile can also change. They have much to do with your capacity to engender trust, commitment, honesty, openness, creativity, innovation and personal responsibility.

Call to Action:

Question #1 - Do you have honest answers to tough questions?

Not only can employees tolerate honest disclosure, they are increasingly demanding it. And when it comes to **change**, employees want straight answers to these tough questions:

- Will I keep my job?
- How will pay and benefits be affected?
- How will this affect my opportunities for advancement?
- Will I have a new boss?
- What new skills will I need?
- What will be expected of me?
- How will I be trained/supported for the new challenges?
- How will I be measured?

- What are the rewards or consequences?

Question #2 - Can you answer the most important question: What's in it for them?

There are personal advantages to be found in almost every change, but people may need help discovering what the advantages are. Sometimes employees just need to be guided through a few questions: What are your career goals? What are the skills you would like to learn? What job-related experiences would you like have? In what ways might this change help you to fulfil some of your personal objectives?

Question #3 - Have you narrowed the "say-do" gap?

Organizations send two concurrent sets of messages about change. Formal communication is what companies "say" to employees about the organization and its goals. Informal communication is what the company "does" in terms of rewards, compensation, training, leadership behaviour, organizational structure, etc. to demonstrate and support what it says. For today's sceptical employee audiences, rhetoric without action quickly disintegrates into empty slogans and company propaganda.

Question #4- Who's vision is it?

Effective communicators understand the power of vision to imbue people with a sense of purpose, direction and energy. But if the vision belongs only to top management, it will never be an effective force for transformation. In the end, people have to feel that the vision belongs to them. The power of a vision comes truly into play only when the employees themselves have had some part in its creation. So the communicator's role moves from crafting executive speeches to facilitating interactive events.

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