



The Human Dimension

THE LEADER WITHIN

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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.

We all wish you and your family and colleagues a happy and restful Christmas break and that you return relaxed, refreshed and looking forward to how you can each contribute and make a difference to the lives of others in the coming year. Thank you for all you have done during 2007!

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.'

The Limits of Leaders:

In a new book I was reading recently 'Leadership for the Disillusioned' by Amanda Sinclair, I was reminded that we are, after all, human and therefore fallible. Leaders are only as good as their internal development allows. Our capacity to influence and assist others is ultimately governed by our own internal levels of awareness, emotional and spiritual maturity, learning and growth over time and the ability to access and reflect on our insights.

Amanda shares many great insights into leaders and their behaviour based on several decades of research and her observations of working with leaders themselves. What is refreshing about her findings is that it encourages us to reconnect with an overarching personal purpose and to operate from a deeper sense of what is ultimately important.

We all have our limits and each of us in leadership roles have no doubt been exposed to many theories and models as to how best to be a leader.

The dominant practise of leadership often appears as if it is based on self-sacrifice to the detriment of one's self and family where followers are expected to pursue ever enlarging goals with diminishing resources and unsustainable routines. This is often within a mindset that is totally focused on performance and outcomes.

The invincible, heroic leader, who is full of certainty and in control, especially in times of turmoil or change, is widely held to be the preferred template. It is too easy then to

hand over responsibility to someone else who will rescue us and to improve our lives. We therefore see the cult of the CEO where men (mostly) seek to leave a legacy, which too often, is ultimately expressed in terms of increased financial growth and returns.

Our personal histories and family backgrounds will often provide us with our first experiences of leaders, (parents) and organisations, (families). It is from these watchful memories we can recall enduring patterns about how we uniquely respond to authority and from where we draw on experiences to inform our own personal leadership mindset.

What struck a cord with me was that the research is showing we actually want to be part of a leadership framework that liberates. The true purpose of leaders then becomes a desire to free people, to open minds, to support growth and discoveries of new possibilities. This in turn is connected to personal growth that leads to more meaningful and satisfying ways of working and living.

When we are new to a leadership role we are often confused about how to behave and we tend to emulate someone else in what we think is required. It takes some time to realise we can actually be ourselves and be effective! Not only do we not have to be like someone else, it is actually essential we each find our own voice and are able to lead in our own way!

Our individual make up and character informs us in our roles, especially when we act as leaders. Not only is emotional intelligence important in becoming an effective leader, but also even more critical is the question of what purpose our leadership serves others and ourselves.

We are ultimately inspired by leaders with a vision and the capacity to bring out the best in those around them. Ultimately, it is not how clever we are but whether the depth of our character is evolving so that we lead less from ego and the need for recognition and move more towards how we serve others. When this approach is adopted, virtues of humility, gratitude and acceptance of others are essential, as these determine the quality of our lives and the shape of our external world, including the relationships we have with people around us.

As Ghandi said *'Be the change you wish to see in the world'*.

Call to Action:

Reflect during the coming holiday break and take time away from your busy roles to consider these questions.

1. Who do I have to become, to be more?
2. What are my true values and how will I express them more fully next year?
3. What makes me unique and how can I lead more from this deeper understanding?
4. What will my special contribution be in 2008?
5. How do I want to change next year and how will I know?
6. What is it about me others acknowledge and how can I leverage that?

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