

LEADERSHIP ESSENTIALS

A NWS SR Newsletter promoting BLAST and the principles of leadership



Volume III, Issue 1, May-June, 2006

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LEADING WITH AN OPEN HEART



by Ronald A. Heifetz and Marty Linsky

Leadership has never been easy, but at the beginning of the twenty-first century, it is tougher than ever. As a nation, we are challenged by the events of September 11 and the ongoing threats that stunning day represents. As a society, we are challenged to maintain cherished values and rights and at the same time to change some of the missionary zeal with which we relate economically, politically, and culturally to other peoples. As an economy, we find our leaders and organizations more open and vulnerable due to increased scrutiny and persistent demands for transparency in the wake of Enron and Andersen. These and many other challenges require all of us to change some of our attitudes, habitual ways of doing things, and even deeply held values.

These are *adaptive* challenges. An adaptive challenge is not like technical work, in which you can prescribe a solution that doesn't require people to change. To

take a medical example, when you give someone penicillin for an infection, she is cured. She doesn't have to change how she lives. But when you unclog the plumbing in someone's heart, that plumbing will stay open only if he changes his life -- changes how he eats; stops smoking; gets more exercise; learns to manage stress.

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LEADERSHIP ESSENTIALS - 2 YEARS OLD ?

By Jody James, Editor
WFO Lubbock, TX

It's hard to believe it's been two years since a few BLASTER's - vintage 2004 - decided to start up a newsletter with the goal of encouraging positive leadership practices and providing an opportunity for all of us to continue what was started in Atlanta - learning about various aspects and angles of leadership. Many of us from 2004 have continued to find new opportunities to lead, and we have come to realize that everyone who is

serious about leadership will always be students of the subject - ever-growing, self-actualizers who enjoy discovering more about themselves and others. This newsletter has been a "BLAST", and we hope to continue bringing it to you every quarter. We have discovered that we do have an audience outside of the Southern Region, and we would like to thank all of you for reading, contributing, and learning along with us. I would like to thank my team members for keeping the ball rolling, and providing support and encouragement. See you next time around!

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To meet adaptive challenges, people have to go through a period of painful adjustment. Leading people to make these changes is risky, because you are asking them to absorb various forms of loss -- asking them to out and out give up something in the interests of something to be maintained, to be conserved, or to be gained. They may have to go through a period of refashioning loyalty to the people to whom they feel beholden or of feeling disloyalty to their own roots. Or you may be asking them to go through a period of experiencing some incompetence as they fashion new competencies and sources of confidence.

Adaptive change is painful; leading it can be dangerous. Just ask Martin Luther King Jr., Rudolph Giuliani, or Carly Fiorina.

If leading were about giving people good news, it would be easy. Unfortunately many leaders avoid the hard work. How many leaders have you heard say something like this? "We can't keep going on this way, but the new direction is yet undetermined, and how effective any plan will be in enabling us to thrive -- or even survive -- in the new environment is also unknown. We're going to have to go through disagreements and conflicts as we sort through what's precious and what's expendable; loss as we abandon comfortable pieces of the past, old routines, and even close relationships with people; feelings of incompetence as we strive to innovate and learn new ways; and doubt and uncertainty as we make inevitable wrong turns along the way." Clearly, this is a very difficult message to deliver, however honest.

Dangers of Collusion

When you meet up with a significant challenge for which you don't have the answers and for which the people around you are even more desperate to hear some certainty, the temptation is to provide reassurance. This temptation is reinforced by the fact that it is also politically dangerous to express uncertainty. Most situations generate a mixture of technical and adaptive challenges. And because they are a mixture, the easiest way to avoid the adaptive challenges is to simply focus on the technical ones. We see this a lot in business. We certainly see it a lot in public life. People in authority will tackle that aspect of the challenge about which they feel confident, rather than tolerating the awful experience of feeling somewhat incompetent.

And what that often generates is a collusion, of the "blind leading the blind," in which the leader first deceives himself or herself by pretending to know more than he or she does know. (It's easier to sell something when you believe in it yourself.) And then others, wanting to believe, wanting to put the responsibility on people in authority and take it off themselves, convince themselves that the leaders really do have the answers.

The Enron debacle is a prime example of the dangers of collusion. Investors wanted to believe. Analysts wanted to believe. People in the company wanted to believe. The people at the top of the company wanted to believe. There may have been a few people who, in a more sinister way, knew what they were doing, but our guess is that they were rare players. Much more common is a systemic dynamic, in which lots of people are deceiving themselves because nobody wants to face reality. They don't want to face reality, in part because there are so many people around them looking to them to represent a happy certainty with a happy face.

**"Most situations
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Leader to Leader, No. 26
Fall 2002; for complete
unabridged article, visit the
Leader to Leader website
at
leadertoleader.org

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The Open Heart

After years of raising questions and accumulating scars, most of us develop a set of defenses to protect ourselves. We buy into the common myth that you cannot survive a demanding leadership role without developing a thick skin. But that diminishes us, because it squeezes the juice out of our soul. We lose our capacity for innocence, curiosity, and compassion. In a sense, our hearts close -- our innocence turns into cynicism, our curiosity turns into arrogance, and our compassion turns into callousness. We dress these up, of course, because we don't want to see ourselves -- and certainly don't want others to see us -- as cynical, arrogant and callous. We dress cynicism up as realism. So now we are not cynical; we're realistic. We are not arrogant, but we do have authoritative knowledge. And we dress up and cloak our callousness by calling it the thick skin of wisdom. But to stay alive in our spirit, in our heart, requires the courage to keep our heart open; it requires what Roman Catholics call a sacred heart or what in the Jewish tradition is called an open heart. We can talk about the practical reasons why it's important to keep an open heart -- and there are practical reasons -- but chiefly it is important for your own spirit and identity.

Innocence

Innocence and naivete enable you to see things, to be alert to new, emerging realities that other people won't see because they think they already know the answers. We live in an age of expertise, where people pride themselves on knowing rather than on being naive. This can be a real trap for managers in today's organizations. People in authority have risen to their positions because they have been rewarded throughout their careers for taking responsibilities off other people's shoulders, solving problems through their experience and expertise, and delivering solutions. Managers take a great deal of pride in their capacity to solve problems and provide answers and be decisive. By the time you get to be a senior authority figure, that behavior has been reinforced through countless rewards. The seductive temptation for anybody in authority is to step in with the decision and resolve the problem. That's what people are going to reward you for doing. Even the people who aren't going to like your decision are at least looking to you to make a decision. If you don't step in, you'll be criticized as "weak."

Interested in Applying for the Regional BLAST Program?



Applicants' packages will be screened initially by a team made up of four field leaders and one SRH Division Chief. A Human Resource Adviser from the NOAA Human Resources Office will be a consultant for the team. After the screening process, the team will conduct interviews of the remaining participants. The team's recommendation of up to 14 participants will then be sent to the Regional Director. For more information visit...

www.srh.noaa.gov/srh/blast/blast.htm



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“It's important
to maintain
your own
humanity, your
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Curiosity

Curiosity is critical, because, without maintaining doubt, you can't stay open to changing realities; you can't be open to hearing what the more naive people around you are saying. If you are too proud of your authoritative knowledge -- a shell for defensive arrogance -- then you are robbed of new information, and then, blinded in a sense, you simply reproduce the world in the image you know from your past.

Finally, without compassion you can't come to understand the stakes you're asking other people to give up. The work of adaptive change is emotional work and requires what Daniel Goleman describes as *emotional intelligence*; it requires an open heart to respect and appreciate the pains of change that you are asking people to sustain, and you need to have a stomach for those pains, but that doesn't mean you need to become callous -- and therefore blind to the disturbance other people are having to endure.

It is a sacred task to receive people's anger, and not to do so in an arrogant or defensive way, but to say, "This is helping me understand what I'm asking people to do." That capacity to receive people's anger with an open heart is a great gift to people in an organization in which painful adjustments need to be made.

Compassion

In sum, there are a host of practical reasons why it's important not to lose heart, but more fundamentally it's important for yourself. It's important to maintain your own humanity, your own aliveness, your own spirit. We all know people who, even in the last decade of their lives, are enormously vibrant, full of questions, capable of hearing your story even though you know that they must have heard a thousand stories very much like yours. They listen to your story, and they really do care; they listen with an open heart, and they seem alive; they seem creative; they seem curious; they seem willing to doubt, willing to change their views. People who maintain that aliveness of spirit, even as they get on in their years, are an inspiration for us because they are modeling the delights of life, the blessings of life, the gift of being alive, because they have maintained an open heart.

Leadership FACTOID

In the April 8, 1996 issue of Forbes Magazine in an article entitled, "Leadership Can Be Learned?", a Penn State Report estimated that organizations in the US spent over \$15 billion in 1995 on leadership training (defined as training executives or the hierarchy).

LEADERSHIP STYLES

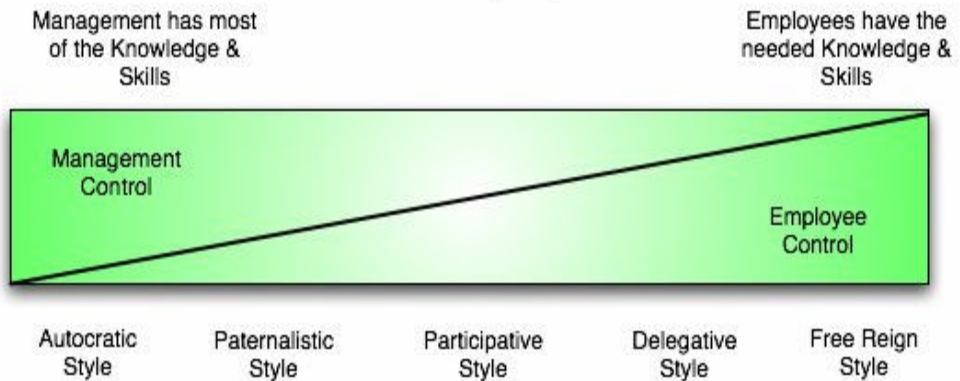
Leadership style is the manner and approach of providing direction, implementing plans, and motivating people. There are normally three styles of leadership (U.S Army Handbook, 1973):

- Authoritarian or Autocratic
- Participative or Democratic
- Delegative or Free Reign

Leadership styles vary from Autocratic to Free Reign.

“A good leader uses all three styles...”

Leadership Styles



Ulysses S. Grant

“It is men who wait to be selected, and not those who seek, from whom we may expect the most efficient service.”

Personal Memoirs of U.S. Grant, Chapter 46
 Eighteenth President of the United States
 General of the United States Army
 during the Civil War



LEADERSHIP STYLES— CONT'D

Authoritarian (autocratic)

This style is used when the leader tells her employees what she wants done and how she wants it done, without getting the advice of her followers. Some of the appropriate conditions to use it is when you have all the information to solve the problem, you are short on time, and your employees are well motivated.

Some people tend to think of this style as a vehicle for yelling, using demeaning language, and leading by threats and abusing their power. This is not the authoritarian style...rather it is an abusive, unprofessional style called **bossing people around**. It has no place in a leader's repertoire.

The authoritarian style should normally only be used on rare occasions. If you have the time and want to gain more commitment and motivation from your employees, then you should use the participative style.

Participative (democratic)

This type of style involves the leader including one or more employees in on the decision making process (determining what to do and how to do it). However, the leader maintains the final decision making authority. Using this



"We're not looking for someone with good leadership qualities, but for someone with good herding instincts"

style is not a sign of weakness, rather it is a sign of strength that your employees will respect.

This is normally used when you have part of the information, and your employees have other parts. Note that a leader is not expected to know everything -- this is why you employ *knowledgeable* and *skillful* employees. Using this style is of mutual benefit -- it allows them to become part of the team and allows you to make better decisions.

Delegative (free reign)

In this style, the leader allows the employees to make the decision. However, the leader is still responsible for the decisions that are made. This is used when employees are able to analyze the situation and determine what needs to be done and how to do it. You cannot do everything! You must set priorities and delegate certain tasks.

This is not a style to use so that you can blame others when things go wrong, rather this is a style to be used when you have the full trust and confidence in the people below you. Do not be afraid to use it, however, use it **wisely!**

A good leader uses all three styles, depending on what forces are involved between the followers, the leader, and the situation. Some examples include:

- Using an authoritarian style on a new employee who is just learning the job. The leader is competent and a good coach. The employee is motivated to learn a new skill. The situation is a new environment for the employee.
- Using a participative style with a team of workers who know their job. The leader knows the problem, but does not have all the information. The employees know their jobs and want to become part of the team.
- Using a delegative style with a worker who knows more about the job than you. You cannot do everything! The employee needs to take ownership of her job. Also, the situation might call for you to be at other places, doing other things.

Using all three: Telling your employees that a procedure is not working correctly and a new one must be established (authoritarian). Asking for their ideas and input on creating a new procedure (participative). Delegating tasks in order to implement the new procedure (delegative).

BOOK REVIEW

THE FIVE DYSFUNCTIONS OF A TEAM

By Jeff Cupo, WFO Midland

Upon my morning greeting to Midland's team members on shift after the Thanksgiving holiday, I was approached by one of our senior forecasters, Brian Curran, about a book review he recently read in *USA Today*. The book was entitled, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*. Being extremely observant, Brian noted that the failure of many teams within our own organization can be attributed to one or more of these five dysfunctions to which the book refers. I immediately exhibited interest in reading this book and asked our MIC about it. Ray Fagen took it upon himself to purchase the book for the office and allowed me the first opportunity to digest it. In its most basic message, the book explores the fundamental causes of organizational politics and ultimately, team failure in the workplace.

The book accomplishes its task first by telling a story of a fictitious CEO who takes the helm of a struggling technology firm near Silicon Valley, and turns around the upper-management team. The story is engaging and clear while demonstrating how an effective team really works, even if difficult and unpopular decisions are made. To drive the point home, the author finishes the book with a model for team development, including a brief outline to help get started.

The model is powerful, while easy to understand through the use of real-life examples and situations. As a leader, tough decisions have to be made for the good of the organization. Is it any wonder that many of us hide behind politics to avoid the very conflict that is needed to drive an organization to superiority? Here is a summary of the five dysfunctions:

Lack of Trust

When a team cannot fully trust one another, they hold back conclusions, feelings, and information (for fear they will be taken advantage of).

Avoid Conflict

When team members hold back, they tend to avoid conflict rather than resolving it.

Lack of Commitment

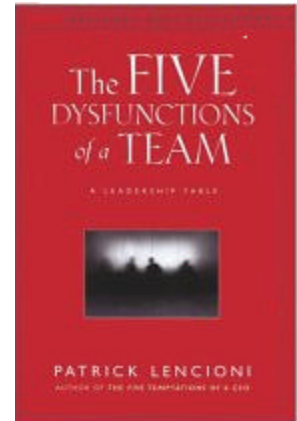
When they routinely fail to work out their differences, team members often end up not committing to group decisions (they never heard or understood my objections, so why should I bother!).

Lack of Accountability

This lack of commitment makes it impossible for the team members to hold each other accountable.

Lose Sight of Results

When the team lets accountability slide, the natural tendency is for the team members to lose their attention to results and focus more on their own egos or protecting their department.



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See the BLAST section
of the Southern Region
website at
[www.srh.noaa.gov/srh/
blast/blast.htm](http://www.srh.noaa.gov/srh/blast/blast.htm)



Regional BLAST in Atlanta 2006 Class July 30 - August 4

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contributing to this
newsletter, please contact a
member of the
BLAST Newsletter team, listed
below.

LEADERSHIP ESSENTIALS

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and the BLAST Newsletter Team**

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