ABSTRACT
        A lack of congruency on the part of many leaders results in
diminished effectiveness, if not outright failure. The soundness of a person
in authority is an essential characteristic for potency as a leader.
Irrespective of what system of ethical thought is proposed, effectiveness for
leaders only comes from a stream of thought that demonstrates a congruency
among beliefs, core values, demonstrated behavior, and truth. This paper
reports on a study of some theories over the years that relate to the topic
of leadership effectiveness. Included in this study is Senge's bestseller
"The Fifth Dimension" in which he proposes that "personal mastery" starts
internally and even serves as a spiritual foundation. This need to move
toward a higher moral path, which in turn invites others to follow, is
consistent with Lao-tzu and Confucius. Anderson's "Leadership Skills
Inventory" is discussed to identify qualities of personal mastery of leaders.
Thomas Kuhn's "The Structure of Scientific Revolutions" and Stephen R.
Covey's "The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People" talk about the "Aha!"
experience when someone sees reality in a different way, and they make a
needed paradigm shift. Works by Bower, Blanchard and Peale, Seibert, and
Covey discuss core values that serve to provide direction. Finally, the study
explores difficulties in agreeing about what are acceptable, universal
truths, using Ken Blanchard and Norman Vincent Peale's work "The Power of
Ethical Management." (Contains 12 footnotes.) (DFR)

IN SEARCH OF THE CONGRUENT LEADER

by

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If nothing else has been established as "fact", however you want to define that term, from all the debates, commentaries and political rhetoric of late it is that the lack of congruency on the part of many leaders results in diminished effectiveness, if not outright failure. The soundness of a person in a position of authority is an essential characteristic for their potency as a leader. Some argue that "the system of ethical thought people have used in the past and which is still in use today is inadequate to the task of making moral judgements about the content of leadership."[1] Irrespective of what "system" is proposed effectiveness for leaders only comes from a stream of thought which demonstrates a congruency between beliefs, core values, demonstrated behavior and truth.

With ten or more articles a day being published on leadership,[2] to say nothing about editorials, books, and commentaries, there is a plethora of literature. No attempt will be made to discuss all points of view but these authors would like to reflect on some notable theories over a wide spectrum of years which relate the topic of leadership effectiveness. In Senge's (1990) bestseller, *The Fifth Discipline*, he proposes that "personal mastery" starts internally and even serves as a spiritual foundation. Only then does he move from examining individual

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1.   Rost, J.C. (1991) *Leadership for the twenty-first century.* New York, N.Y.: Praeger.

2.   Grint, K. (Ed.) (1997). *Leadership: classical, contemporary, and critical approaches.* New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press.

characteristics to building team characteristics. It is this train of thought we will pursue for the remainder of this discussion. This need to move towards a higher moral path, which in turn invites others to follow, is consistent with what Lao-tzu, China's most revered philosopher who once said, "He who knows other men is discerning; he who knows himself is intelligent. He who overcomes others is strong; he who overcomes himself is mighty."[3] Or perhaps Confucius' thoughts that leadership was a "spontaneous flowing of moral power" captures the unavoidable relationship between the characteristics of the inner person and the position being held by the leader. Which ever road, or philosophy, is traveled one is soon confronted with the need to align beliefs, core values and behavior, with natural or universal truths. The leader, and their team of followers, who are unable, or unwilling, to do so loses the synergy of such an alignment and opens themselves up to unspeakable consequences.

Beliefs and Reality

A person's assumptions about reality are not necessarily accurate yet they remain as operating beliefs. Anderson uses his Leadership Skills Inventory [4] to identify qualities of personal mastery of leaders and feels a "clear and consistent set of beliefs" is a skill commonly used and needed for self control, improved performance and development as a leader. Express beliefs are at best that person's interpretation of their experiences and may, or may not, represent reality. Yet, the more we are conscious of our internal assumption, beliefs, and the extent of their influence on our limited experience, the more our beliefs can be examined against reality. Often beliefs can be validated by the perceptions of others who hopefully have a more objective view. Swami Vivekananda, India's Cyclonic monk born in 1863, felt that a leader should be able to

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3. Chatterjee, D. (1998). *Leading consciously*. Boston. MA: Butterworth-Heinemann.

4. Anderson, T.D. (1998). *Transforming leadership*. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press.

"accommodate a thousand minds." Jealously of self-centered thought is not an option for those who seek to serve others. Leaders must be willing to test their assumptions and beliefs against the greater reality and good of not just their followers but truth where ever it can be found. More recent authors such as Thomas Kuhn in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* and Stephen R. Covey in *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* talk about the "Aha!" experience when someone sees reality in a different way and they make a needed paradigm shift. After such an experience their world, and the world they influence, will never be viewed in the same way. Although most leaders of today may not shift the entire globe's perspective as did Ptolemy, Copernicus, Newton or Einstein never-the-less their shift can be just as important for themselves and ultimately their relationship with their followers. Deeply held beliefs must be tested against the realities and universal truths of life. Not doing so could result in inaccurate actions taken by the leader. Hopefully such examinations will allow the leader to make continuous belief adjustments as they move toward their vision thus avoiding the need for potentially threatening leaps into a new and uncharted reality.

Core Values

Like beliefs values can often be right or wrong, true or false but rather they are often defined only in the mind of the holder. While some leaders value honesty, fairness, integrity other leaders could, and do, just as easily treasure dominance, manipulation and deceit. For the leaders, and their followers, it is important for the leader to be able to identify and live consistently within their stated values. Only by doing so does the leader communicate a clear enough signal that can either resinate with a potential follower's goals and eventually attract others of like mindedness. Bower[5] and others feel that this process of living out one's values or "role modeling" is a proven approach to leadership. As the leader models their deeply felt, internalized values they have the opportunity to communicate their aligned beliefs and values to their audiences.

5.   Bower, M. (1997). *The will to lead*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Values serve to provide direction while they may, or may not, be ethical or be based on the truth. One's perception of their beliefs, i.e. their interpretation of the facts, still allows values to be open to modification once absolutes are discovered. Leaders should be able to not just articulate what they value but confirm it through their history of actions. Walking the talk requires the first step to be the alignment of beliefs, values and behaviors against the reality of truth. Socrates is credited with saying, "You never know a line is crooked unless you have a straight one next to it." Recent leadership authors such as Blanchard and Peale, *The Power of Ethical Management*, Donald Seibert work *The Ethical Executive*, and Steven Covey's *Principle Centered Leadership* all point us toward universal truths on which most reasonable people could agree upon. So the question then becomes how does one recognize, and eventually align with, truths? Given the reality that a leader could have strongly held beliefs, which are consistent with their core values and even live them out on a daily bases, they still may be totally in the wrong. An 'untruth' no matter how well articulated still remains what it is–a lie. Even if significant others repeat, add to, defend, or join in on the living out of an untruth, it, and they, still remains a prevarication. Only from an unchanging truthful foundation can a leader accurately examine their held beliefs, values, and their life. Buddha captures this desire to pursue truth with his *last words* when he said, "Hold fast as a refuge to the Truth."[6] In these authors' opinion Buddha was not asking his followers to limit themselves to the truths he had exposed them to but rather truth universal. As Buddha and other great religious, political and community leaders have demonstrated in their lives that the never-ending search for truth comes as part of the price that must be paid by both the leader and follower.

The problem comes in agreeing as to what are acceptable, universal, truths. The question of, "What is truth?" has been asked before. Those leaders who adhere to a spiritual background

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6. Chatterjee, D. (1998).

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find their cornerstones more readily than those who feel the need for the continued re-examination of the question. But a word of caution for one must be carful not to attempt to substitute inspiration and passion for truth for in the long run all you get is a misinformed zealot who is determined to get their ideas accepted. Before the search begins, or is finalized, one would be well served to read Ken Blanchard and Dr. Norman Vincent Peale's work entitled, *The Power of Ethical Management*, which we interpret as encouraging everyone to ask for themselves three questions when deciding if a decision or action is ethical and based on truths, they are:

Question 1: Is it legal?

Violation of criminal or civil law must take precedence. But just importantly are the commonly accepted operating procedures of the society, institution or the company or institution in which one is a member in residence.

Question 2: Is it balanced?

Will everyone win in the long run? Fairness to all concerned must dominate over the needs of the few, the elite, or the one.

Question 3: How does it make you feel about yourself?

If all the facts were exposed could you take pride in the decision?

And is it consistent with your advocated beliefs and values?

These authors make the assumption that most people want to find truths which can provide a solid foundation for their lives. This may not be the case for all individuals for there is a price to be paid for holding onto absolutes. Ted Koppel of ABC-TV fame, told Duke University graduates that, "Our society finds Truth too strong a medicine to digest undiluted. In its purest form Truth is not a polite tap on the shoulder; it's a howling reproach." He went on to say, "What Moses brought down from Mount Sinai were not the Ten Suggestions...they are Commandments.

Are, not were."[7] Koppel believes that a person can find an "inner peace" when one has a "moral compass that points in the same direction, regardless of fashion or trend."

If one does not have written commandments then the search for established truths, beyond one's own held beliefs, values, and life, propels the learner into a lifelong search for universal, abiding, and non-relativistic truths. Ignorance of truths becomes the enemy which must be kept at bay by "in-depth analysis of the writings of noted experts in and out of one's particular field, as well as available hard research results (preferably original) for any topic under discussion."[8] Reading, debating with the author's thoughts, distilling of classic literature from all cultures to commentaries by contemporary authors can add to the potential leaders understanding and wisdom. Being held accountable by study and discussion groups keeps the leader moving towards the implementation of truths in one's personal, professional, and family life. Having such a compass provides direction for the leader, and thus their followers, hopefully always pointing in the direction of absolute truths. One example of an absolute truth worthy of consideration is *service to others before self.* Swami said, "he only lives who lives for others. The rest are more dead than alive." Jesus of Nazareth said, as recorded in Matthew 20: 25-28, "Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave–just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." This truth, like many others can be learned, and can change the leader's heart and mind.

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7.   Koppel, Ted. (1987). Address to graduating seniors at Duke University in Thomas, *The Death of Ethics in America*, 133.

8.   Kussrow, P. (1998). Are the absolute truths in education? *School Administration.* (Jurenas, A.C., Ed.). Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt Publishers.

Meyer writes that the leader who lacks the heart of a servant may enjoy temporary success, but they soon become disillusioned.[9] Robert Greenleaf's 1977 book entitled, *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness* captures the thought that "the great leader is seen as servant first." He asks the leader to grow others and to constantly ask themselves, "Do they [followers], while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants?"[10] While more recently Spears states;

> There is a revolution underway. In corporate boardrooms, university classes, community leadership groups, not-for-profit organizations and elsewhere, change is occurring around the ways in which we, as a society, approach the subject of work and leadership. Many people are seeking new and better ways of integrating work with their own personal and spiritual growth. They are seeking to combine the best elements of leadership based upon service to others...[11]

Prominent leadership theorists such as Steven Covey, John Gardner, Peter Senge, M. Scott Peck, Margaret Wheatley as well as practitioners such as Ken Melrose, CEO of the Toro Company and C. William Pollard, chairman of Service Master, agree that being a servant is a necessity for being an effective leader. Covey call servant-leadership "a natural principle, a natural

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9.   Myer, P.J., House, R. & Slechta, R. (1998) *Bridging the leadership gap*. Arlington, TX: The Summit Publishing Group.

10.   Greenleaf, R. K. (1977) Servant leadership: *A journey into the nature of legitimate power greatness*. New York: Paulist Press.

11.   Spears, L.C. (1994). *Servant leadership: Quest for caring leadership*. Inner Quest 2,1-4.

law. Natural laws [truths] are simply there, like true north.[12] Such absolute truths point any leader in an acceptable, a congruent, direction for their life. If a leader becomes a servant leader they build up and empower others who will fulfill their shared vision. They accept criticism, avoid personal recognition, give up their rights, listen first before trying to communicate with their followers. In short, they serve others before themselves.

Some Final Thoughts

The congruent leader is faithful to their beliefs, values, and their discovered truths both in their personal and professional lives. They have come to realize that their quest for the hearts and minds of others first begins with their own. They fight against self-preoccupation and narcissistic self-destruction. They come to realize the enemy and the battle is within one's mind. And the best defense is a clear set of beliefs, values and life patterns which are congruent within the leader, monitored by others and checked against accepted truths. Amiel felt that, "So long as we are able to distinguish any space whatever between Truth and us we remain outside it." The congruent leader never quits trying to close that space.

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12. Flick, D. (Summer, 1996). *The Servant Leader*, No. 26.

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