

Leadership Educating

By Tom Gougeon

Executive

Executive officers and business owners are focusing on leadership development for all organizational levels in order to become more competitive in the global economy. Designing creative processes and inspirational marketing images can mean the difference between success and failure, as many organizations operate on narrow margins. Therefore executives within organizations wishing to establish a market advantage are exploring strategies to make leadership an asset in gaining increased market share.

Many organizations are pouring huge amounts of money into leadership training programs as company directors attempt to gain immediate advantage. However, within this business context, James O'Toole, who is professor *emeritus* at University of Southern California and held the University Associate Chair of Management in the Graduate School of Business at USC, makes a clear distinction between training and education. According to Webster, 'training' means "forming habits of thought and behaviour by discipline and instruction," whereas 'education' means "the development of faculties and powers of a person." Therefore, "training has to do with indoctrination, while education encourages the challenging of established ideas" (O'Toole, 1999, pg. 277). It may be concluded from O'Toole's remarks that leaders cannot be trained to respond creatively to constantly changing work environments. As the organization shifts its focus to the individual worker for its success, coherent life-long learning is a requirement. O'Toole concludes that leaders may be educated by reading widely, confronting diverse opinions and values, analyzing history, participating in seminar and case discussions, and reflecting on experiences.

The leadership development program at The Banff Centre places the development of character at the core of its model, and the development of character is clearly an educational process, not a training experience. Laurie Hillis, a faculty member with Leadership Development at The Banff Centre, explored coaching as a method to develop leaders through a synergistic process where people learn, are transformed and renewed, and move organizations into the achievement of breakthrough results (2000). Through the coaching process, leaders are encouraged to look within themselves to understand their own skills, strengths, and competencies.

Bastiaan Heemsbergen, a Management Psychologist and Consultant in Performance Management and faculty with Leadership Development at The Banff Centre, stated that coaching begins with the character of a person and moves outward, enabling people to see contexts, to affirm the person, and to clarify choices (2000). The Banff Centre's Leadership Development program therefore acknowledges that if organizations are to achieve and sustain a competitive profile, they must invest over a long period in educating their leaders to become self-aware and critique the dominant discourse that guides the industry.

How does an organization encourage higher levels of self-awareness in its leadership? Leadership development strategies, that include evolution of character traits, inherently focus on self-awareness. Leaders are encouraged to seek a fit of their personality traits to situations in which they work.

Joy Humphreys, a Management Consultant with the Providential Performance Group, suggested that it is important to intersect self-awareness of personality profiles with personal interests, attitudes, and value indices (2003). She used a typology of four personality style dimensions including: dominance, influencing, steadiness, and compliance, and a typology of six value dimensions including: utilitarian, social, theoretical, individualistic, traditional, and aesthetic to engage each leader and create deeper self-awareness.

Humphreys maintained that through this process, leaders may disclose many assumptions that would otherwise remain invisible. Once their assumptions about attitudes and values become visible, leaders become empowered to make conscious decisions to change their situation, change their perception of the situation, leave the situation, or cope with it. Similarly, once their personality tendencies become visible, they can consciously respond to problems and challenges, influence others to their point of view, respond to the pace of the environment, and respond to the rules and procedures set by others.

Self-aware leaders can influence people and situations in powerful and transformative ways. When leaders consciously recognize associates' communication styles and adapt, they will experience a greater appreciation and understanding of these people. Their communication effectiveness will increase dramatically, giving them credibility and endorsement in associates' eyes. As leaders

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work side by side with associates, the synergy will be greatly enhanced if they know how to work together.

First, during the program, the typology of six value dimensions including utilitarian, social, theoretical, individualistic, traditional and aesthetic are discussed. Knowing one's own personal interests, attitudes, and values helps leaders understand the importance and significance of a few values among a field of values and attitudes. The top few values and attitudes may explain what drives leaders in most actions they take up. The bottom few values and attitudes may explain why leaders avoid certain situations. Knowing the impact of these top values and attitudes enables leaders to understand what motivates their actions and provides purpose and direction in their lives. Knowing the values and attitudes of their colleagues and associates helps leaders understand them, too.

Next, dominance, influencing, steadiness, and compliance personality style dimensions are discussed. These personality styles are based on an assumption that different people interact well in different situations. Dominance and compliance styles respond well to unfavourable situations whereas influencing and steadiness styles respond well to favourable situations. When leaders learn more about their tendencies to work in favourable and unfavourable situations they also learn that other people will have different personalities and therefore different needs for communication to be effective. This knowledge can enable leaders to attain deeper levels of understanding among colleagues and associates and appreciate their value to the organization. In addition, knowing one's own personality style and the styles of associates and colleagues will enable leaders to communicate better, to create an ideal environment in which to communicate, and to motivate associates more effectively.

Increasingly, executive officers and business owners believe that they will become more competitive through self-aware leadership. Although it may seem less risky for executive officers to train leaders within their organizations to gain greater compliance, it is becoming clearer that education is the way to enable leaders to discover new, more competitive ways of doing business. Leadership development has evolved to embrace education strategies that begin with understanding the leader's character, then shift focus to areas normally given priority including the workplace and the business environment.



References

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