

## EXCELLENCE IN LEADERSHIP

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### INTRODUCTION

The call for leaders is necessary because we are experiencing a crisis of leadership in our world. The deterministic, fatalistic, and materialistic practices of agnostics saturates the thinking of people that snaps the fetters of moral restraint. The population explosion is frightening and real and is one cause of the crisis of leadership. Another cause of this crisis is that many in leadership positions have abdicated their responsibility.

The crisis of leadership trickles down from the presidency of corporations and the governorship of states including crisis in leadership of family. At all levels, our world's societies plead for leadership-in our educational system and in international politics. The masses look for true leadership.

The world is looking for leaders, men and women who are compassionately committed for the concern of people. The world needs leaders who will exert that special influence over aching people looking for a way to resolve their personal crisis. This influence carries the stamp of beneficial permanence.

**“Leadership is the discipline of deliberately exerting special influence within a group to move it toward goals of beneficial permanence that fulfil the group’s real needs.”<sup>1</sup>**

As, Ivan W.Fitzwater in his book, “In You Can Be a Powerful Leader” says, leadership is neither an inborn trait nor an inherited tendency. He says the real difference between leaders and non leaders is attitude.<sup>2</sup>

The real test of the leader is to discover whether he or she is a leader is to look behind and see who is following. **The qualities of a leader and character irresistibly lifts up the leader above their colleagues and associates.** The test of courage in a leader is his ability to face unpleasant or even devastating facts and situations without panic, and his willingness to take firm action when necessary, even if it is unpopular. The man who does not know fear cannot know courage. The effective leader will go into action regardless of consequences. He will be willing to burn his bridges behind him and accept responsibility for failure as well as for success. **Procrastination and vacillation are fatal to leadership<sup>3</sup>.** Effective leaders understand that qualities like imagination, creativity, and potential for success become useful only when they are put to work to achieve a meaningful goal. An integral part of this actualisation process involves learning to dream, to use imagination and creative power in ways that will produce specific goals for themselves and their team members. But it takes courage to dream. The moment you generate a creative idea, you become a minority of one. You stand alone until others can be persuaded to join in pursuit of your dream. Even then you will be the only individual who has a singular depth

of belief and commitment to the dream. "Leaders bear the responsibility of sharing the necessity for dreaming with team members who may lack the courage to visualise greater achievement."<sup>4</sup>

You can tell a man by his friends. There is more than a grain of truth in this adage. A man's ability to make and maintain enduring friendships will in general be the measure of his ability to lead. It was John R.Mott's counsel to 'rule by heart'. When argument and logic and other forms of persuasion fail, fall back on the heart-genuine friendship. "Nothing can take a place of affection, those who have it in generous measure have a magic power over men."<sup>5</sup>

The leader who is impatient with the weakness and failings of others will be defective in leadership. The good leader knows how to adapt his pace to that of his slower team member. Patience is especially essential when we seek to lead by persuasion rather than by command. It is not always easy to bring another to see one's viewpoint and act accordingly, but there is great value in cultivating the art of persuasion that allows the individual to make his own decision. A leader is able to lead others because he disciplines himself. He who does not how to bow to discipline imposed from without, who does not how to obey, will not make a good leader. Nor will the one who has not learned to impose discipline within his own life. The leader is open to the danger of being defeated through over-indulgence of physical appetites or through laziness, and this calls for stern self-discipline. At the other end of the scale is an excess of physical activity which can lead to fatigue and exhaustion. The leader must be prepared to work harder than his colleagues, but an exhausted man easily falls prey to the adversary. We should be alert to guard against both extremes.<sup>6</sup>Sincerity is an unconscious quality that is self revealing. Wisdom involves the knowledge of the intricacies of the human heart. It is the right application of knowledge in moral matters, in meeting the perplexing situations and complex human relationships. It is a quality that restraints a leader from rash or eccentric action, and imparts a necessary balance.

**The key to excellence in leadership is Character. Character is the key to leadership. Research at Harvard University indicates that 85% of a leader's performance depends on personal character.**<sup>7</sup>

**Let us examine the 5 key ingredients of excellence in leadership.**

As narrated, some decades ago, a fifteen year old boy named John Goddard made a list of all the things he wanted to do in his life time. When he had finished the list, he had 127 items that became the blueprint for his life. Some of his earlier accomplishments were relatively easy: become an Eagle Scout, learn to type fifty words a minute, and study Jujitsu. Some other goals Goddard set were a little more unusual: milk a rattlesnake, read the entire encyclopaedia, and make a parachute jump. Then there were goals that to the average person might seem utterly impossible: climb the Mt.Everest, visit every country in the world, and go to the moon. Now the amazing part of the story: by the age of forty-seven, John Goddard had accomplished 103 items on his original list of 127.Goddard was motivated to identify important dreams and to begin working on them by hearing older people say, "If only I had done this or that when I was younger."He realised that too many people miss all the fun, excitement and thrills of life because they do not plan ahead. Making the list-creating the vision-was the beginning of Goddard's success.<sup>8</sup>

Success is the progressive realisation of worthwhile, predetermined personal and organisational goals. As Paul J.Meyer says, "If you are not now making the progress you'd like to make and are capable of making, it is simply because your goals are not clearly defined."<sup>9</sup>

- 1) **Crystallising your thinking:** The first ingredient for the leadership bridge involves crystallising your thinking so that you know where you stand now and where you want yourself and your organisation to go. Developing a vision, mission, and purpose for yourself and your team is critically important. Highly effective leaders use crystallised thinking to arrive at a decision, and then they act on that decision. Asking these questions will help define the purpose;
- I. What do we want?
  - II. Why do we want it?
  - III. Why do we not already have it?
  - IV. Can we obtain it?
  - V. How will we measure it?
  - VI. Whom will it affect?
  - VII. Whom will it benefit?
  - VIII. Where will it lead us?

All great leaders understand a simple truth: to get the organisation right, they have to get the people right. But many leaders and managers just assume that once they themselves are “right”, the organisation will naturally follow a path toward stellar success.

## 2. Developing a written plan of action:

The second ingredient of the leadership bridge involves the development of written plan for achieving your organisation’s goals along with deadlines for their attainment. It is extremely important that this plan is a written one; otherwise what seems crystal clear today may easily become vague or forgotten in the urgency of tomorrow’s affairs. Written goals keep you and your team members on track, eliminating outside distractions and interruptions. Highly effective leaders are more committed to a particular plan of action and are more confident in their ability to achieve the goal. Energy, excitement, and enthusiasm are all stimulated by written plans of action.

The written plans contain these 5 essential elements;

- i. The goal, written in a clear and concise manner
- ii. A deadline or target date for the achievement of the goal
- iii. A summary of benefits to be gained and losses to be avoided as a result of achieving the goal
- iv. A summary of possible obstacles to achievement, along with written strategies for overcoming these roadblocks
- v. A step by step plan for the achievement process

Exemplary leaders use written and specific goals to develop a keen sense of balance in themselves and the members of their team. The pathway to this uniqueness sense of balance is the road to becoming a Total Person. The six key areas of life are;

- ✓ Family
- ✓ Financial
- ✓ Mental
- ✓ Physical
- ✓ Social
- ✓ Spiritual

No one-regardless of lifestyle or status-can be considered a Total Person unless he or she has developed significant goals for each of these six areas of life. The neglect of any one of the six areas leads to the abandonment of Total Person status. The essential element of lasting success personally and in a leadership position, is balance.<sup>10</sup>

**3. Creating desire and passion:** The third ingredient of leadership bridge involves the development of sincere desire among you and your team members to achieve personal and organisational goals. A burning passion for achievement marks the difference between a real goal and a mere wish. Desire on the other hand, puts action into plans you have made. Without desire strong enough to produce action, you and your team will achieve little, no matter how worthy the goal nor how workable the plan you have devised. Truly successful leaders know the key to developing innate potential for success lies in developing a passionate desire for the development of that potential in themselves and in the members of their as well. Defined and refined, the goals and challenges you accept will naturally create a passion and desire for success that will not be denied. Passion and desire are essential elements for any individual regardless of status or stature because they represent the ability to marshal human energy and potential and direct it toward maximum result and creates good. Passion and desire cause undaunted enthusiasm and sureness of course. They enable us to move forward, regardless of the personal sacrifice required or the challenge involved.

**Seven Hall marks of Desire and Passion:**

- I. Desire and passion are two qualities that combine to transform average executives and managers into highly effective leaders, energised to keep working when problems cause other leaders to give up in disgust.
- II. Armed with desire and passion, highly effective leaders make commitments while others make half hearted promises.
- III. Desire and passion equip highly effective leaders with the judgement and courage to say “yes” or “no” at the appropriate time; those who lack desire and passion say “may be” at the wrong times and for the wrong reasons.
- IV. Desire and passion allow highly effective leaders to say, “I am good but not as good as I ought to be and will be.” Leaders who lack desire and passion say, “I’m no worse than a lot of others.”
- V. Desire and passion in team members will bring respect for their leaders; lack of desire and passion can only breed resentment.
- VI. Desire and passion instil in highly effective leaders a strong sense of personal responsibility for more than themselves; those without desire and passion typically ask, “What’s in it for me?”
- VII. Desire and passion are qualities to be highly prized by anyone who would become a highly effective leader. Desire and passion make success easier to attain and enhance the excitement of moving along the journey toward achievement.

**The five steps to develop desire and passion;**

- I. First, strive to gain self knowledge. Examine your innermost being. Get to know yourself, your abilities, your potential, and your needs.
- II. Second, make sure that the goals you set, the targets you pursue, and the rewards you desire are personally meaningful.
- III. Third, work to find wisdom and knowledge in those who are in a position to advice you. Respect their insight, their special expertise, and their superior years of experience.
- IV. Fourth, visualise your success. Nothing increases desire and passion for achievement like controlled and directed visualisation.
- V. Fifth, be willing to work harder than you've ever worked before. Work efficiently. Work long hours. Work willingly. No goal exerts enough power to produce desire and passion unless you are willing to invest much of your time and effort in bringing it to fruition.<sup>11</sup>

**4. Developing confidence and trust:**

The fourth ingredient of leadership bridge is your and your team members' ability to develop supreme confidence in yourselves and in your ability to achieve. For great leaders, nothing offers greater confidence than possession clear –cut knowledge of planned actions and the order in which they should be taken. Highly effective leaders, on the other hand, understand that the process of achievement relies on altering basic attitudes and habits of thinking. Elbert Hubbard notes that, "It is fine to have ability, but the ability to discover ability in others is the true test." Confidence and faith in their own ability to innovate, develop, persevere, and succeed are key ingredients in the success journey of any highly effective individual. But the leadership of others implies a wider application of confidence and trust as both of these key attitudes must be extended to encompass and empower those who contribute to the overall success of the organisation.

"This may be a networked world, but virtual trust is an illusion. Trust develops when we get to know each other. There is no substitute for spending time with people face to face."<sup>12</sup>

As you develop your leadership role, make every effort to offer trust to virtually every member of your organisation. Trust is the key to personal empowerment; if you withhold it, you hamper that individual's ability to grow and develop personally. If you have a legion of team members waiting to do something until you give them explicit instructions, you waste both your time and the potential of the team. The best leaders develop trust in their team members by tapping into the attitudes and values of each individual. This is the key to nurturing commitment and accountability in the goal directed team. How your team members view their work produces a significant impact on long-term productivity and offers you important feedback about their ability to perform to your expectations.

***"Trust men and they will be true to you. Trust them greatly and they will show themselves great."-Ralph Waldo Emerson***

**5. Fostering Commitment and responsibility:**

The fifth ingredient of the leadership bridge is the development of a sincere commitment to follow through on your plan regardless of obstacles, criticism, or circumstances, and in spite of what others say, think, or do. This last leadership ingredient sets you apart from the mediocre

multitudes of leaders and managers who yield to the pressure of society, the desire for acceptance, and the temptation to conform.

***The four elements of persistence.*** The desire to succeed and the commitment to reach significant goals combine to create persistence. Persistence makes the difference over time between winning and losing, between success and failure, and is comprised of these four key elements;

- a) Raw determination, which is refusal to give up, to quit, or to be defeated.
- b) Patience to willingly keep at a job, task, or goal despite temporary setbacks and encroaching difficulties.
- c) A justifiable sense of pride for using more of your full potential for success.
- d) A willingness to take appropriate risks in order to ensure the achievement of a goal.

In conclusion to excel in leadership, Great leaders, Warren Bennis claims, are people who are 'being themselves' with character and integrity.<sup>13</sup>

In their book *Credibility* Kouzes and Posner outline six disciplines that leaders should work at continually to maintain their integrity and credibility.<sup>14</sup>

Discover yourself. Take time to think through what you believe, looking at your life and actions to see what kind of values are reflected by your behaviours and attitudes.

Appreciate your constituents. Focus your attention on your people, understand them as they are.

Affirm shared values. Leaders are responsible for articulating, modelling and reinforcing both vision and values in the life of the communities they seek to lead.

Develop capacity. Kouzes and Posner want to see everyone growing into levels of maturity that allow them to lead out of deeply embedded values and compelling visions.

Serve a Purpose. It focuses on the shared vision and empowers people to make a contribution to that vision.

Sustain hope. As people of vision and people of character, leaders keep hope alive. They have the courage to live out their vision and to strive to live out their values, and they encourage others to do the same.

"Leadership is a relationship-a relationship in which one person seeks to influence the thoughts, behaviours, beliefs or values of another person."<sup>15</sup>

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