



## The Art and Heart of Leadership

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After considering various topics to write about in this newsletter, I decided upon leadership. Probably because we are going through a crisis now. The whole world is going through a crisis. Generally, when things are fairly calm, leadership does not tend to become an issue of focus. When things are going reasonably well most leaders are considered to be doing fairly okay in their roles as leaders. It is when a crisis strikes that we get to see who the real leaders are. When things are going well you can get away with being a fairly average or possibly even mediocre leader. When things are going really badly, your ability to lead (not manage – lead) will come under the spotlight.

There are many books that have been written on leadership and I am not going to cover the aspects of leadership in general. I really want to make just three points which I think are really important, and are often completely neglected in thinking about leadership, because a lot of the discussion about leadership is about technical issues.

### **1. To be a great leader you need to lead yourself first.**

If you are going to be good at leading others, particularly through difficult times, then you have to lead yourself first. That means you need to be very cognisant of how you think, feel, and act and how this in turn affects those you lead. You need a considerable level of self-awareness and it needs to be ever-increasing. To lead is not to manage. To lead is not to dictate. To lead is to get followers to want to follow you. To lead is to inspire people to follow your vision. You simply cannot do this unless you are someone people look up to, people admire, and people respect. You need to have your own house in order first. You do not inspire people by losing your cool and reacting in inappropriate ways. So you need to know how you react under different circumstances, and you need to make sure you are speaking and acting in ways that encourage people to want to follow you. This is really hard to do. It is much harder to do than it seems. And if you get it wrong, it's very hard to undo. To be a great

leader you must know yourself very well. You must know how you respond under pressure. You must know how you respond to being provoked. You must know how you respond to criticism, and you must make sure you manage your responses to reflect what you stand for.

## **2. You lead by the heart**

You do not inspire other people by shouting at them. You do not inspire other people by issuing endless orders and decrees. You do not inspire people with regulations. No matter what anyone says, people do things because of emotion. Emotion comes from the word "motion". For anything to happen, you need to engage people's hearts. You lead people by understanding them. You lead people by knowing what they most want and desire. You lead people by showing them that you get them. When people think you care, when people think you have taken the time to understand their lives and their needs, they will do a lot for you. They will listen to you. They will follow you.

## **3. Leaders are dealers in hope.**

Too often they tend to have the opposite effect. Often leaders make their followers feel like there is no hope, even when that is not their intention., Sometimes the leader themselves, is part of the reason there is no hope. If you want to create hope amongst your followers, you need a vision. People are lost without a vision. In a crisis often the status quo changes. Often what was familiar is pulled away from under your feet like a rug leaving you struggling to remain stable and easily thrown off balance. People need something to hold onto when the rug of certainty and security has been pulled away from under their feet. People need something new to guide them. They need a new vision to give them hope and a sense of a future. No matter what they may be going through, leaders need to be able to create a vision, communicate that vision effectively, and get people behind the vision. And to do that you need to be very good at connecting with your people.

Leadership is not just about what you know. It is also about who you are.

*" Leadership is not so much about techniques and methods as it is about opening the heart. Leadership is about inspiration of oneself and others. Great leadership is about human experiences, not processes." ~ Lance Secretan*

If you are a leader, what sort of a leader are you? How are you doing at this moment, right now?