



Seeing True to Break Through

Thoughts from Ron Chapman

August 2009

Hello all!

Wow! Last month's tale of my own recent leadership challenges provoked responses from many of you. If you missed it, the full account can be found by clicking on the website link below and going to the newsletter archives.

In short, it was the tale of a mix up with a client that culminated in loss of the contract despite my best efforts to set things right. It also involved wrong doing by the client as well as a trust violation on my part. In the end, I tried to take the highest road available though it was not an easy path.

The dominant themes in the feedback were empathy, which is much appreciated, and indignation that I was forced to accommodate the client's misconduct. As one reader noted in conflicting commentary, "It's so wrong you had to eat crow. Man I hate it when I have to do that."

Therein is the whole point of ego-transcendent leadership. If we are to rise to the greatest level of leadership that may be needed in a circumstance, we simply must find a way to rise above ourselves and our own personal interests. Strangely, subordinating ourselves to something larger or more important will actually better serve the interests of leadership. And yes indeed, we may not like it and it may not come easy. Yet that is precisely the issue: getting over ourselves in order to more effectively lead.

In a recent radio interview on leadership with Tom Cox (download at www.blogtalkradio.com/Tom-on-Leadership.rss), he asked how one goes about ego reduction for leaders. That's the subject we've been talking about all year in these newsletters. More importantly, he asked the always pragmatic question, "Why would we want to do so?" That is the key question isn't it?

The only answer that will suffice is the simple truth of effectiveness. If we desire results, or improvement, or success, we have to find a way to elevate our leadership game.

In order to do so, let's segue briefly to systems theory. The basic premise is that all systems require energy in order to grow. For human systems, whether organizations or individuals, that energy comes as information. If we have permeable boundaries in our minds and hearts, valuable information flows in and

allows development of structure and processes, whether biological, social or institutional. So we need information.

We've covered a great deal of strategy in recent months for our own openness as well as inner awareness. The next step is going to be to collect better information from around us, and to do so in a rigorous fashion. Next month, we'll explore the 360 Degree Evaluation and how to design one for yourself. For those not familiar with the technique, it's a formal means of collecting information about yourself and your leadership from those who surround you ... hence 360 Degrees.

Just a quick comment related to the idea. While everyone agrees evaluation can be very useful, we usually blanch at the thought of being the subject of one. That's pretty normal as human beings; none of us seem to want to volunteer for critique even if well intended. Regardless, that's our immediate next step.

Until next month, nothing but the best ... which could not be otherwise!

Ron

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