



The Leadership Project

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Are leadership and management the same?

Leadership is often equated with management. The difference is that leadership can incorporate management techniques but like a ship in troubled waters, a leader cannot take a linear (management) route to his final destiny but has to react skilfully to the push and pull of the weather. A leader would involve more than just his or her mind but also the heart, the emotions, the intuition, traits that cannot be rationally explained but are so crucial in dealing with uncertainty. To become a leader or show leadership qualities requires a life-long passion for people and a willingness to learn, reflect about one's thoughts and actions and also put one's ideas into action.

Management on the other hand requires skills to steer the ship from A to B effectively and efficiently and apply the relevant techniques from clear communication and instructions, good listening and thinking skills, fast (re)-action, introduction of experiences in dealing with similar situations and other typical management ideas.

The question is often asked can you be a good manager and a bad leader? One answer is that there can be good managers who fulfil their objectives such as reaching production targets, staying within budget and fulfilling their job description according to the expectations of their superiors or shareholders. But their success can often only be achieved at the expense of their staff or their own health. Managers who do not listen to their inner voice telling them to treat their staff with respect and who are taking care of themselves can face a burn-out and risk losing their key staff. Does that mean all of us have to become leaders? No, not necessarily, we can develop leadership skills and can show leadership in a team or in other situations. Are leaders born or made? Can one learn to be a leader? We believe yes. Leadership as a function can be learnt and nurtured.

Different leadership approaches

We therefore speak about different types of leadership. We particularly leave out Hero leadership which was the only known up to modern times (Napoleon, Caesar, Friedrich the Great and all the other 'Greats'). These have been replaced by social, spiritual and political leaders known for their special people skills and tireless engagement for other people

(Mother Theresa, Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela or Rosa Parks who led the Alabama Bus boycott against racial discrimination on buses in 1955). Leadership can emerge in certain situations with people taking on a leadership role, there is servant leadership or action-oriented leadership to name a few.

Values in leadership

All these leadership approaches require values. We take on different approaches in defining such values. Viktor Frankl, the psychotherapist who survived two Nazi concentration camps and presented his experiences in his famous book 'Man's Search for meaning' maintains that values are being developed in the course of life and especially in the face of suffering. How could he have survived the horrors of Auschwitz without strong values which allowed him to think about beauty, his family members, possible future events such giving lectures to his students and endure the cruelty of the situation.

Others speak of universal values which form the basis of the world's religions. They can also be found in

ancient texts such as Lao-tse's 81 verses on how to live your life wisely written almost 2500 years ago.

In the leadership project we will identify our own personal values and then attempt to develop a joint set of values within the group. This can be done for any group especially if a common value set is not obvious.

Unlocking leadership potential

There is a process of unlocking leadership potential and this leadership project will be testing some of the leadership approaches. In our course we try to create awareness for the world and the present challenges, allow for reflection about one's own thinking and action (or non-action) and strengthen one's own physical, mental and emotional capacity to deal with the daily challenges. In our experience Chinese exercises such as Tai Chi or Qi Gong have been the most widely accepted mindfulness exercises in an international context, since they do not belong to a particular religion. But other mindfulness exercises will also be presented such as guided and walking meditation. The idea behind such exercises is to do them regularly to have a long lasting positive effect and assist in the demands of daily life.

Participating in change

However, awareness of what is going on around us is not enough in our leadership training. We need to participate in the change we want to see in the world. That means we need to instil new thinking since as Einstein said: 'Problems cannot be solved with the same mind-set that created them'. Leadership training therefore has to find the lever or open up a crack in the armour of participants and move them towards new thinking.

Lastly, change projects (also called prototypes) are being developed to test new ideas in action. This requires some time and this particular course will only touch on the importance of such change projects. Students will be able to explore different aspects of their lives for example where they see themselves in ten years' time and what will make them happy. Some of the findings will be different from what they expected. Furthermore, getting to know wise women and men who have walked this earth before them will assist them in shaping their own thinking, feeling and action.

We believe that leaders need to make a difference in this uncertain world full of seemingly insoluble dilemmas. Especially in the field of social innovation new thinking and action is needed. What is new in this leadership approach is the use of intuition and empathy in the process of own reflection to actively contribute to the changes in the world.

There will be a certificate of attendance for each learner which can be added to the life orientation portfolio.



Thilo Thormeyer has been practising in the field of leadership training for years. He has worked with government funded projects from Germany and is presently participating in an advanced logo therapy course with the Viktor Frankl Institute of South Africa and UNISA.