

## Leadership Vision

Organizations need effective leadership in order to pursue their strategic vision and to stay competitive in today's global market. This leadership theory is not new. Leadership is a topic that has been studied for many years with a special emphasis over the last fifty years to understand what it is that makes a leader successful compared to ordinary or average leadership performance (Yukl, 2002).

Theorists have studied leadership traits, qualities and styles and have determined that what may work for one situation doesn't necessarily work for all; and what may work in some environments may not work in another (Katzenbach, 1997; Hersey, Blanchard & Johnson, 2001). Leadership is situational and is determined on present-day organizational demands that occur within the organization. Today's leaders are faced with many situations and environmental challenges – having the people to do the job, the resources to complete the job and enough business to fulfill the organization's objectives. This requires leaders to be flexible, to meet the ongoing changes, pressures and barriers they will encounter, and to influence their followers to do the same.

There is agreement among leadership theorists that there is a "leadership vacuum" (Caudron, 2002). Organizations are in need of attracting talent that will duplicate their leadership skills to their followers to ensure the organization has a solid base of guidance and direction. This leadership deficit calls for not only attracting leadership talent but also a two-fold plan for developing and establishing a leadership framework that generates leaders, and creating a culture that supports and promotes leadership success (Caudron, 2002). For this article the emphasis will consist of three parts. First, what constitutes a leadership framework; second, what are the qualities of distinguished leaders in comparison to the framework; and third, a vision for authentic leadership for future leadership development. To begin the discussion the following reviews components of leadership attributes, characteristics, and theories.

### LEADERSHIP THEORIES

Theorists have varied in what style of leadership best suits the pursuit of an effective leader within an organization. Early theorists such as Stogdill (1948) suggested that leadership traits such as personality, intelligence and physical appearance were the primary consideration for identifying emerging leaders. Extensive research on leadership traits identified personality as well as specific managerial traits that personified [leadership effectiveness](#). "There is considerable depth coverage of some prominent theories like the Hershey and Blanchard Situational Leadership, Fiedler's Contingency Theory, House and Mitchell Path-Goal Theory, Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory, and

Bernard Bass's pioneering seminal work on Transformational Leadership" (Madhok, 2007, p. 92). From all the thought leaders perspectives on leadership there is a pattern as to what constitutes an effective leader: 1) interactively getting things done through others; and 2) mutually accomplishing goals by influencing others in an ethical manner (Storr, 2004). Leaders that understand and act with integrity and ethics are more likely to succeed in their endeavors by engaging the hearts and minds of their followers to not only follow under their direction but to also become leaders themselves through ethical choices and decision making.

## **ETHICAL FRAMEWORK COMPONENTS**

What is it that makes one leader an ethical leader where another leader may not be perceived as ethical? Parker & Lawton (1998) clarify an ethical leader as one that is not only aware of a framework or principles for acting ethically, but also integrates the framework into their daily actions. Parry & Proctor-Thomson (2002) suggest that an ethical leader is referred to as being an "authentic transformational leader". The term transformational leadership is a style of leadership where "followers trust, admire and respect their leader, and are consequently motivated to do more than they were originally expected to do" (Parry & Proctor-Thomson, 2002, p. 75). This means that an unethical leader may believe or understand ethical principles but does not follow through by aligning what they understand with what they do - resulting in an unethical behavior. Parry & Proctor-Thomson distinguish unethical leadership with ethical leadership by "the intention of the leader, rather than the outward demonstration of behavior" (p. 92). The following leadership qualities are proposed as an ethical framework for leaders to follow in order to align their knowledge, behaviors, attitudes and interactions with others to become an "authentic leader".

### ***Looks Inwardly and Leads Outwardly***

Knowing oneself is a primary quality to becoming an "authentic leader". The term authentic refers to being aware of the characteristics that are positive as well as the characteristics that a leader struggles to overcome, manage or handle. These struggles or barriers to leadership are the dark side of leadership (McIntosh & Rima, 2007). "Many leaders are not aware of the dark side of their personalities and the personal dysfunctions that drive them" (McIntosh & Rima, 2007, p. 14). When a leader is willing to look inwardly, they become vulnerable and uncover the qualities that may impact their ability or inability to lead. When leaders look from within they take a first step of integrating an ethical framework by becoming more self-aware, understanding how to self-regulate their impulses and uncovering what drives them to achieve (Goleman, 2004).

Thought leaders throughout have come to the conclusion that by looking inwardly a leader is more effective at leading outwardly (Quinn, 1996; Goleman, 2004; Clements & Washburn, 1999). Goldsmith (2000) proposes that "it's

not your form that leads it is your essence” (p. 85). By being internally driven and outwardly focused a leader exudes “an essence” of leadership behaviors and attitudes that may help promote their [leadership skills and abilities](#) to successfully lead themselves and others.

### ***Adaptable and Flexible***

A second quality within an ethical framework consists of being adaptable and flexible to change. When a leader is not flexible to change they spend resources on how to avoid the change instead of redirecting their thoughts and energy as to how they will make the change work within their area of responsibility. This flexibility within a leader aids him or her to overcome his or her fear of change. By becoming more adaptable to unknown situations and surroundings, the leader advances to authentic leadership (Quinn, 1996).

The ability to adapt means to continually learn, to work on improving and growing as an individual, leader and team member. When a leader adapts she contributes to effective working relationships by being able to adjust her style of management, communication approach and leadership methods to those she needs to get results from. This framework component is critical to leadership as Leslie & Velsor (1996) concluded that “the most frequently cited reason for derailment among North American executives is the inability to develop or adapt” (p. 6).

### ***Builds Trust***

An authentic leader is one that engages his followers to believe in him and his purpose. This requires a leader to inspire a shared vision, establish trust and enjoy working with others. Within this framework trust will be defined as behaviors that establish “strong, collaborative relationships” (Leslie & Velsor, 1996). Specifically, an authentic leader is one that is approachable, keeps information confidential, accepts responsibility for his actions and is mutually supportive of everyone – not, just the people that the leader likes. This framework component of trust is an essential element as without it a leader will not be viewed as being ethical or having integrity in their leadership style.

Covey & Merrill (2006) refers to trust as “the hidden variable”. The authors suggest that a leader can have a great strategy or plan of action, but without trust neither will be fulfilled. The quality of trust doesn’t ensure a strategy will work, but without it, the strategy is destined to fail. This hidden variable is so essential to leadership success that “when trust is low, speed goes down and cost goes up – when trust is high, speed goes up and cost goes down” (p. 16).

### ***Communicates With Clarity***

A fourth quality of an ethical framework is the skill of a leader knowing how to communicate with those she leads. Components of communicating clearly include: 1) keeping team members informed; 2) balancing listening and understanding with telling and providing direction; 3) being able to gather input

and suggestions from experts; and 4) communicating decisions based on input and facts with those that will execute the decision (Whitaker & Whitaker, 2008).

Communication involves speaking the language, or style, of others. By slowing down or speeding up the communicator's pace an effective communicator will capture the attention and make a connection with those he or she needs to communicate with. This form of style adjusting involves not only talking but also a balance of listening skills to ensure the message is not only communicated but is the right message. Heifetz (1997) refers to listening as "life saving". Without the skill of listening a leader will not be able to "understand people's stakes, what people value and the losses you're asking them to deal with" (Heifetz, 1997, p. 66).

### ***Builds a Culture of Commitment***

Culture is the glue that keeps an organization together (Robbins, 2005). A culture of commitment is one where members within the organization have ownership to hold the organization together. A leader can look within, build trust and be adaptable, but without the followers being accountable for "their team" and "their culture" the leader will struggle rallying the troops to succeed.

When leaders hold others accountable they instill the expectation that each person is responsible for achieving success. Authentic leaders create leaders that "are better than they are" (Bennis, 2004) and have the desire to be a part of an organization that succeeds. Accountability behaviors include, having tough discussions, clarifying expectations, and professionally letting those within the organization that choose to not contribute understand they are no longer a match for the organization's purpose and mission.

## **FRAMEWORK LIMITATIONS**

This framework is only a guideline of key qualities that will help a leader develop in ethical leadership. As discussed previously by Parry & Proctor-Thomas (2002) if the leader only chooses to display these behaviors and does not intend to really "become" an ethical, authentic leader, the qualities will serve little value.

In addition, this framework emphasizes the relationship-side of leadership. Leaders must be task-oriented as well to succeed. The intent of focusing on the relationship qualities comes from the premise that most often leaders are promoted based on their technical expertise, so the assumption is that the majority of leaders have a challenge with their "relationship or people skills" rather than their "task, or technical skills".

## **PART II: HISTORICAL LEADERSHIP ANALYSIS**

To determine the application of the proposed leadership framework, two historical leaders have been selected to compare and contrast how their leadership traits and abilities apply to the leadership framework components. In addition, the variable of how each leader was perceived in history will be brought to

this project's discussion and analysis. Two styles of leadership will be discussed, that of a leader that was viewed to be positive and that of a leader that displayed dark leadership attributes. President Ronald Reagan was selected as a leader that is viewed with a positive influence on history and President Richard Nixon was selected as a leader that portrayed the dark side of leadership.

## LEADERSHIP FRAMEWORK COMPARISON

### *Looks Inwardly and Leads Outwardly*

Neither Reagan nor Nixon was known for looking inward to enhance their leadership growth. President Reagan was known for being hard to get to know and deflected internal introspection by using humor and poise (Hayward, 2005). Nixon, on the other hand was known to have inner demons and at one time sought outside therapy for overcoming his insecurities (Schoenberg, 2000). "He suffered from feelings of inadequacy and self-worth (p. 1). "Henry Kissinger once remarked that Nixon was not a happy warrior" (Collins, 2000, p. 50). Unlike Reagan, whom people described as being eternally happy, Nixon visibly showed his "joylessness" and anguish that he had internalized.

Both Presidents had difficult childhoods. Because of their early childhood circumstances each tended to develop walls to avoid looking inwardly. With these observations, the research does not really know what each leader did privately to address their leadership needs. It is possible that introspection was something that each leader did actively practice.

Reagan's ability to lead outwardly was demonstrated through his talent of envisioning a great future. Norquist & Reagan (1997) confirm that one of Reagan's greatest strengths "was his ability to remain in visionary mode" (p. 1). He envisioned a greater America where there would be "lower taxes, less regulation, and smaller government" (p. 2) This vision was one that he appealed to the American people to endorse by asking them to take part in restoring America through a renewed sense of optimism and confidence in the country's military and leadership. "He made Americans believe that his dreams were their dreams" (Norquist & Reagan, 1997, p. 4). This visionary leadership trait empowered him to use his imagination and dreamer tendencies to his advantage by reinventing himself and America.

The downside to being overly visionary was that others criticized Reagan for living "in a world of make-believe" (Hayward, 2005). Staff members felt that Reagan ignored facts and key information if the information was opposing to his point of view. The failures to listen to contradictory points of view lead Reagan to his lack of oversight in the Iran-Contra crises. Nixon was known for leading outwardly by [being a good role model](#). He was poor and rose to the top. As a youth, Nixon was a hard worker, disciplined and ambitious. These leadership talents were put to practice when he served honorably in World War II, and became a Congressman, Senator and Vice President within a period of six years (Schoenberg, 2000). He didn't inspire and influence outwardly when interacting with others; instead, he mastered personal accom-

plishments that others would visibly see.

### ***Adaptable and Flexible***

Reagan's optimistic personality provided him the ability to handle adversity and to be flexible in how situations would be acted upon. Alexander (2004) states that "research has shown that people who are optimistic tend to be better at coping with adversity and better adjusted in life" (p. 2). When situations occurred, Reagan, would listen to the possibilities from this staff, ask questions and then work at collectively coming together with a course of action. He was so optimistic, that when he overused this leadership strength he was thought to be at times "out of touch with the real world" (p. 2). For example, there were situations when Reagan became gullible as he was "easy prey to advisers who told him what he wanted to hear" (Williams, 1994, p. 374). This misuse by others of the President's flexibility resulted in people taking advantage of his easygoing manner.

Nixon on the other hand led with more of a pessimistic manner. In times of crises his pessimism would provide a barrier to his decision making ability (Alexander, 2004). When stressed, he would experience high levels of anxiety and negative thoughts that would cause him to resort to shutting himself in an office with the curtains drawn. After several days to himself, Nixon would then ask a member on his staff to administer his independent decision. Nixon's inability of being able to interact with others when faced with adversity created strenuous work relationships within the White House.

Nixon's failure to be adaptable in a leadership role created adverse working relationships. His manner was too serious; he lacked of flexibility and was not able to personally interact with others. For example, when people opposed him he would become vindictive by trying to punish them (Schoenberg, 2000). When upset about an issue "he did not know when to let go" (Schoenberg, p. 5). Even though Nixon exercised self-control of his emotions in most of his daily interactions with others, when he felt attacked he would become rigid, intense and lash out at others by threatening retaliation (Collins, 2000).

### ***Builds Trust***

Reagan's ability to inspire, build and [establish trust](#) is truly what represented his predominant leadership talent. At the time he took office the American people had experienced a forceful, serious tone from former Presidents and they were in need of a leader that would provide hope and encouragement for the future. This was accomplished by Reagan as he truly enjoyed working with people and was known as the eternal optimist.

In addition to optimism, Reagan had a wonderful sense of humor. His humor "allowed him to defuse tense situations and to poke fun at himself - another sign of being comfortable in one's own skin" (Alexander, 2004, p. 2). Reagan's humor provided an avenue for not taking himself so seriously. Through humor and positive intent, Reagan's leadership aura provided the

American people a sense of credibility and authenticity which in turn created a level of trust and familiarity with a president that most had never formally met.

Building trust was not one of Nixon's leadership qualities. He was considered to "be a cold, calculating politician" (Schoenberg, 2000, p. 5). Although he cared deeply for people and was compassionate toward them, his awkwardness and lack of warmth did not establish a foundation of trust that people in America so yearned for. An example of his introverted manner of compassion was in 1968 when as President "he re-appointed a Democrat to the FCC" because he was aware this man needed work and had no other way of meeting his financial obligations (Schoenberg, 2000).

### ***Communicates With Clarity***

Reagan was known as "the great communicator". This phrase was associated with his ability to connect and inspire people to believe in his message rather than the content of his message (Nichols, 2003). Some felt, his charismatic message was "acting" rather than sincerely communicating what he believed. According to Nichols, "he had no desire to use words or images to obscure his meaning" (p. 80). His intent was to be clear by clarifying his ideas of what he felt were the solutions to the challenges Americans faced during his presidency. Reagan himself did not view himself as "a great communicator". He felt he was merely the messenger of great events that came from "the heart of a great nation" (Nichols, 2003, p. 80). This was an example of "one of his most remarkable traits" - modesty (Hayward, 2005). His use of humility created openness for people to interact and connect with him as he didn't want to come across as a know-it-all and take credit for being "the hero" of successful events.

In daily interactions Reagan had a passive style of communication. He was known for being silent, listening, asking questions and then suggesting a proposed solution (Hayward, 2005). Even though he was outwardly gregarious and appeared to have never met a stranger, those that knew him well said he was very difficult to "get close to".

Both Nixon and Reagan were similar communicators in the fact that they were straight shooters. Reagan was often viewed "as a simple, straightforward person" (Hayward, 2005, p. 37). The same descriptors were often said of Nixon. Nixon was referred to as a great debater because he did not hesitate to tell others exactly his position on a subject (Collins, 2000). During times of debate, Nixon was known to come out of his shell and communicate with directness and passion. The overall concern with Nixon's communication style was the fact that it took a passionate subject for him to openly communicate. Overall, on a daily basis he simply did not communicate clearly or often.

### ***Builds a Culture of Commitment***

Elliott Abrams, Reagan's assistant secretary of state for inter American affairs, reveals Reagan continually challenged people and situations to make

things happen and transitioned the impossible to possible (Norquist & Reagan, 1997). Even though he was criticized and ridiculed for not doing what the polls or prominent leaders felt he should do, he persisted to follow through on what he felt was right and encouraged others to do the same. “Reagan never underestimated what might be possible through strong leadership” (p. 4). Alexander (2004) described Reagan’s commitment as being able to “sense an opportunity and seize it” by holding himself accountable and his staff accountable for following through to ensure the situation was acted upon. An example of this level of commitment was the way he handled the tension between the Soviets and the outcome - the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Nixon wasn’t interested in creating a culture of commitment. Collins (2000) describes Nixon as an ambitious leader with a “narcissistic personality that emphasized negativity, envy, rage, entitlement and devalued grief remorse and empathy” (p. 49). Collins continues by stressing that Nixon was so self-centered that he would be more prone to “exploit others” than to work with others toward a common goal. This lack of commitment to teamwork and bringing out the best in others created a fragmented culture where staff members were not willing to help each other succeed.

## ANALYSIS CONCLUSIONS

Reagan was known as a leader that when he came into office he was met head on with challenges and when his term was over he left America as a better place to live. “He left the country far better than he found it (Williams, 1994, p. 369). Although, Reagan’s leadership style matched within the five components of the leadership framework, Shultz’s (1994) evidence shows three major shortcomings or dark side tendencies: 1) little concern or reference to details, facts and data; 2) an inability to select staff members to counteract his leadership weaknesses; and 3) once Reagan made a decision he did not listen to new information or change his mind. With this observation comes the conclusion that although all leaders have gaps in their leadership abilities, the leader that internalizes and represents ethical traits and characteristics with their followers will in the end become known for their leadership accomplishments and contributions.

Nixon, on the other had left office with many Americans questioning his legacy and unsure of his leadership impact on America. Even though Nixon made great leadership contributions and headway in foreign relationships, world peace and unifying the country, the essence of his dark side overruled the impact of his contributions. He was an abnormal leader that accomplished above normal achievements.

The leadership attributes of the two leaders were strikingly similar. They both were ambitious, persistent, determined, knowledgeable and compassionate. The primary leadership difference was in the way each of them acted out these leadership traits. Reagan chose to act out his core values in an outgoing optimistic, positive manner. Nixon resorted to display his core leadership

values in an introverted, skeptical and disjointed manner.

The different leadership outcomes were primarily a result of intent and ego. Nixon came across as a narcissist by primarily completing his objectives based on what would provide him personal gain. Reagan on the other hand was more confident in his leadership talent and abilities and furthered his objectives by what was best for others.

In conclusion, this analysis revealed the impact self-esteem plays as a primary factor in determining which path a leader chooses to take. When a leader feels inadequate and not worthy to succeed, the dark side of leadership may be prone to emerge, especially in times of crises and difficult situations.

### **PART III: PERSONAL LEADERSHIP PLAN**

#### ***Recognize the Dark Side***

The first step to overcoming or managing dark side tendencies is to be in touch and reflect on what characteristics, traits or habits exist that may not contribute to leadership success if these tendencies were to become a habit or emerge into daily actions. This step requires courage, honesty and the willingness to recognize that the dark side itself is not negative. It is only when the dark side is suppressed, ignored and avoided that dark side tendencies may become unproductive (McIntosh & Rima, 2007); Quinn, 1996). Ignoring the dark side or development needs causes a leader to become shallow or withdrawn from understanding his true self.

Wieand (2002) confirms the importance of delving into and understanding self when he states that “when leaders find the courage and humility to identify and break through their own emotional glass ceiling, they can begin to do the same for others” (p. 37). By understanding our own limitations we can become more empathetic of the limitations and needs of others. This understanding of our human side and vulnerability to dark side attributes is a first step to authentic leadership.

#### ***Reinvent Yourself***

Quinn (1996) provides the insight that for authentic leadership to occur the leadership must engage in deep change. The thought leader suggests that leaders create “a new paradigm, a new self” (p. 9). To become a authentic leader of the future requires coming up with commitments to leadership that create a sense of faith by reverting fears into belief. Quinn suggests leaders “know how to get lost in confidence” (p. 12). An example would be taking a journey into the unknown by acting on a personal goal or dream that the leader once felt was unattainable. Upon taking this leap of faith, the level of confidence propels a leader into actions he or she has always dreamed to do but has never had the courage to pursue. This level of deep change creates a new beginning which causes higher levels of thinking, motivation, inspiration and discipline. It is the exercise and stamina of discipline that aids in not reverting back to dark side tendencies.

### *Live Your Core Values*

Organizations in the past have focused on [leadership behaviors and performance](#) as their primary measures for leadership talent. These measures have put organizational and self-imposed pressures on leaders to overly achieve and master the expectations that have been set forth in order to progress up the organizational ladder. These pressures have encouraged leaders to take short cuts or hide development needs in order to be viewed as high performers. Under stress and pressure to perform the potential for the dark side to surface becomes stronger. It is during moments like these that dark side emergence may occur out of desperation because the choice to cover up information or be untruthful is a false perception to survival (Boin & Hart, 2003).

Some theorists suggest that crises, change or stress prompt leaders to turn to the dark side (Alix & Marshall, 2003; Boin & Hart, 2003). The theory is that “crisis and leadership are closely intertwined” (Boin & Hart, 2003, p. 544). With continual change and leadership being closely associated, it is imperative to have identified personal core values to live by. Leading with clear and firm values are not only a priority in day-to-day leadership opportunities but especially during times of crisis and uncertainty.

### *Find a Confidant*

Becoming and “being” an authentic leader is difficult. If it were easy there would be more authentic leaders than dark leaders. Heifetz (1997) suggests the importance of being able to “de-brief with somebody” (p. 63). The author stresses the importance of finding a thinking partner when he states “to think you can be an innovator or a leader without confidants is kind of like thinking that you can survive the winter in New England without a winter coat” (p. 64). A confidant is an individual that will help a leader uncover her blind spots, be candid about areas to improve in and propose suggested actions for enhancing future leadership initiatives. A confidant is not an individual that agrees with a leader’s thinking or tells the leader what she may want to hear.

### *Be You*

Living your core values creates a foundation for being you. In sum, by putting the above personal actions in place a leader will have a high sense of awareness, an understanding of self and a platform of core values in which to integrate into his or her leadership development plan. It is through this level of introspection and honesty that a leader creates commitments and a blue print in which to live and lead by. Staying true to these convictions pre-empts the emergence of dark leadership. Stay true to yourself, being yourself and enjoying life influences the same in those that follow.

## **PERSONAL LEADERSHIP PLAN STRENGTHS**

The above actions were selected based on synthesizing the research from thought leaders that uncovered what attributes apply to authentic leadership and

derail dark leadership. From this research, the ability to look within has resulted in leadership development and follower engagement. Quinn (1996) refers to this process as “deep change”. Goleman (2004) refers to “self-awareness and self-management” as part of a leader’s level of “emotional intelligence”. Kellerman (2004) proposes that by being unaware of the dark side is a failure to guard against dark leadership emergence.

Second, each action plan was determined and written with the premise that for change to occur it must start with the individual. Therefore, the action plans proposed are within a leader’s control as each action plan is written for the leader to implement without having to rely on someone else. Each action plan is proposed to be put in place starting today. Leaders that engage in the proposed action plan will be on their way to leadership enlightenment.

### **PERSONAL LEADERSHIP PLAN LIMITATIONS**

The leadership framework proposed in this paper is limited if the culture in the organization does not support the implementation of the framework components and the leader’s personal leadership plan (Caudron, 2002). Organizations are still in the mode of measuring tasks and activity over results and long-term outcomes. If the authentic leader finds this to be the case they will need to move to an organization that rewards and attracts authentic leaders. By staying part of an organization that has chosen a “slow death” (Quinn, 1996) culture the leader will delay, or even perhaps destroy, their development potential.

Those organizations that are interested in channeling the energy of their leaders to authentic leadership need to spend the resources required to support a strong, ethical leadership foundation. For leaders to become authentic leaders the Top Management Team (TMT) will need to discuss and incorporate into their organizational leadership vision a strategy and opportunities for leaders to curtail their dark side tendencies and extend their authentic leadership abilities. For example, discussions of each member’s dark leadership side, participation in the Johari Window (Boje, 2007.) communication exercises for introspection, and activation of a leadership 360 degree feedback tool are ways to support authentic leadership skills. This forward thinking and TMT support actions of leadership will help ensure the development and retention of authentic leaders within the organization.

Another limitation with the proposed plan is that it is only a start, not a complete plan. The purpose is to get started with pre-empting active dark leadership by engaging in the initial actions proposed in this paper. For dark leadership to truly be pre-empted the leader will need to pursue creating and implementing “their plan” for authentic leadership. Many thought leaders have additional insights on how to develop into an authentic leader. This paper is just a beginning and many more actions are revealed in the research that has been conducted and will be conducted in the future.

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