

BRINGING UP THE LEADER WITHIN

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BACK TO THE FUTURE OF AMERICA'S STRENGTH

We are a nation of pioneers. Our strength is our diversity and our 'can do' attitude. The industrial age was merely a step on our path to achieving our national purpose. However, the impact on us has been the fragmenting of our spirit. We are now at a crossroads, and we must make a decision. Which path are we to take?

We know what we have lost. Yet we do not see clearly what we will gain. We can no longer deny that transforming actions must be taken. Yet it is impossible to go back to past as some urge us to do. We must go back to the past only in order to rediscover our strengths and transform them into our future. The role of a leader is to discover and illuminate our path to the future.

Leadership is now a state of mind, not a position. In this highly interactive age, each of us will find that we will increasingly be in situations that demand the exercise of our innate capability to lead. It is imperative that each of us bring up the leader within. We must all develop our leadership capability to its fullest in order for our organizations and institutions to be transformed.

THE JOURNEY TO EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

The path to leadership is one of personal growth. This path begins with the decision to understand yourself. There are seven steps on the journey to effective leadership in the age of interaction. The seven steps are: understanding who you are, letting go of what you have hold of, knowing your purpose, living in the question, learning the art of barn raising, giving away what you think you possess, and letting the magic happen.

WHO ARE YOU?

Alice, in *Through the Looking Glass*, is confronted by the caterpillar with the question, "Who are you?" We are now confronted with this same question. Making the decision to answer this question is the beginning of the journey to becoming a leader. You must understand what you know and what you don't know about yourself. You must assess your resistance to and tolerance for change, your fears, your preferences, and your skills and abilities. You must discover the chains that bind you to your past that prevent you from understanding who you really are. A conscious decision must be made to break those chains and seek deeper self understanding in order to answer the question, "Who are you?"

LET GO OF WHAT YOU GOT HOLD OF

Once you understand the chains that bind you, you must let go of them. In reality, they are not holding on to you; you are holding on to them. Letting go of what you have hold of frees you to reach for something else. It puts you on the path to interact with new experiences from which you gain more understanding of who you are. Letting go of what you have hold of puts you in the state of mind of being responsible for your own actions and your future.

LEARN YOUR PURPOSE

You learn your purpose through lifelong introspection and interaction with others. Each of us has a purpose. Not all of us understand what our purpose is. Even those of us who think they understand their purpose, probably only have a glimmer of what their true purpose is. The paradox of life is that we must discover what our purpose is, but if we define our purpose too soon, we limit what we can accomplish with our life.

The pioneers heeded the call to "Go west!" And, in following that call many fulfilled their purposes, and together built a nation. Geography is no longer the frontier. The call today is to reintegrate our spirit. You must seek to balance your pursuit of knowledge, the development of your being, and the recognition of your need for generativity.

In the age of interaction, the number of interactions possible is growing at a prodigious rate. It is more important now than ever that you develop the habits of mind that allow you to filter those interactions and choose which ones to be responsive to. Habits of mind are developed from values that you have. Values propel you along the path to discovering your unfolding purpose. As you discover more and more of your purpose, you can decide to change your values allowing you to continue your lifelong process of learning.

LIVE IN THE QUESTION

In the industrial age we learned to analyze a situation, isolate the problem, and administer a quick fix. "Have a headache? Take two aspirin and call me in the morning." In the interactive age, everything is tied to everything else. You must learn systems thinking and that means you must live in the question long enough to understand the relationships important to a systems solution. You must be flexible so that you can be open to what can come.

LEARN THE ART OF BARN RAISING

Barn raising was a tradition of our pioneering culture. A group of people came together to help someone accomplish the task of raising a barn. Individuals applied their skills and talents using the technology they understood, teams were formed to accomplish specific tasks, and a community was developed in the process. When the barn was raised, the community celebrated, and then they each went back to their other work.

This one of the traditions of our past that we need to use in a transformed way in our work and life. The present emphasis on teamwork is not as passing fad. It is a recognition of this basic need in the interactive age to work with and through others.

In the industrial age, we learned to segment tasks and skills. Economies of scale and compartmentalization drove the industrial age development of large organizations in which the purpose of each individual was often lost. Today it is economies of scope and integrative approaches that are important. This is fueled by the development and diffusion of information based technologies. And, it is, as it was in barn raising, the shared purpose that motivates individuals to contribute their energy, skills and abilities.

In this environment, leadership is situational, not positional. In barn raising, many people become leaders depending upon the situation. And, out of the community comes more than the sum of the individual efforts.

You must learn the art of barn raising. This gives you the ability to work with and through others, a necessary step on your journey to becoming a leader.

GIVE IT AWAY

In another paradox of life, the more you try to hold on to something, the more likely you are to lose it. If you operate from a perspective of scarcity, you are likely to hoard resources. Whereas if you view the world as abundant, you become affluent.

You must relentlessly pursue the release of power and control. It is in this manner that the full power of the individuals can be multiplied and the results from a team or organization far exceed expectations. You accomplish this through a process of ennobling, enabling, empowering, and encouraging others.

LET THE MAGIC HAPPEN

This last step to leadership in the interactive age is letting go of the demands of your ego. It does not mean that you must get out of the way. It means that you must become a member of the team and to use your skills and abilities, joining in the shared purpose, to help the team achieve its maximum potential.

MAY YOU LIVE IN INTERESTING TIMES!

The ancient curse is upon us. We do live in interesting times. The basic nature of work is changing for only the third time in history. This new nature of work is the context in which you will lead, and live your life.

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