



Leading Others - Lifting Others to a Higher Level

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PREFACE

In our everyday office affairs, even when we aren't thinking about it, we are involved in some way with the leading of others. It's often referred to as "management" or "selling" or "marketing ourselves", but in some way we all find ourselves doing it. This article is, I suppose, the product of thirty years of working with others and trying to understand just what it is and how it seems to work fine for some of us and less so for others. Why, when put in very similar circumstances of responsibility for leadership, different people get very different results. It's an effort to get the "heart" of the issue. To look behind the surface and try to see just what it is that makes some great leaders and perhaps, just perhaps to give others an opportunity to learn how they can become better, if not great, leaders.

TO LEAD OTHERS

To understand what leadership at any level means, we need to define ourselves first. We must know how we are as individuals, understand where we as people have been and perhaps most important, we must know where we are going. This understanding must happen at its most basic level. We must explore our own value system in great details with brutal honesty, leaving nothing out and sincerely trying not to rationalize the answers to sooth our egos. If we fail to conduct this soul searching with all the integrity possible it becomes a self-defeating step and no good will come of it. **You see, you cannot lead others to higher ground if you are standing in a hole looking up.** To do this it is good to look at our actions, after all, they are the by-product of our real beliefs and emotions about ourselves. We, as human beings cannot function long by doing one thing while we are believing another and sooner or later it becomes an element of self-defeat. How we view ourselves is reflected in the company we keep, the actions we take every day, and the way we treat others. If we doubt our own abilities, we doubt the abilities of others, if we do not respect ourselves, we lack respect for others, if we are fearful of the future, so will those we try to lead be fearful, if we are not good to ourselves, we will not be good to others, if we are selfish and self-serving, then others we try to lead will be like wise. **The way people respond to each of us is a mirror image of our own attitudes and beliefs, make no mistake about this.** We must accept full responsibility for our own behavior. It will be reflected to us in the attitudes and behavior of those we wish to lead. If we want those, we lead to accept risk, challenge, change, growth, and responsibility then we, as leaders must do so and set the example. We, as leaders must lift them up, show the way, stand by them, respect their worth as people, and be as committed and loyal to those we lead, as we want them to be towards us. **As we sow so shall we reap.** These beliefs are on mis constructed as soft and that discipline and good order are sacrificed, it is not so. Self-respect, responsibility, commitment, dedication, accountability, loyalty; all require discipline and good order. The key is, as

leaders, we are charged with instilling in those that we lead these qualities and that we take them to a higher level. Not through fear, intimidation or manipulation, but by our own conduct as leaders do, we truly lead others. What we, as individuals are, in our beliefs and true inner values, is reflected in the people around us and how they respond to us. It is not a perception, it is really this way, for good or bad. **“Unto thine own self be true.”**

Lifting Others to a Higher Level

There are some questions I want to ask you: First. What kind of leader are you? There are two answers I would like you to consider. 1) I'm working on myself 2.) I'm working to get others to be better leaders. If you respond yes to question 1, Congratulations! You understand that working on ourselves is key to our own success. You want to be the best you can and are doing something about it. If you said yes to question one and honestly, no to questions two then you understand that you will only have followers. An example of this is a LeTip chapter where the President does a super job and the Chapter grows and prospers, but the day that he/she is no longer the leader the Chapter declines or faults altogether. Ever seen this happen? I have. One the other hand, if you answered yes to question two and not one, no one will be better leaders! Why? Because you can't lead others to a level where you have not been, its that simple. Ever heard the phrase, “Talks a good game”? If you answered yes to both questions, you're on the right track! The key to be a great leader is to always be striving to improve yourself, lifting yourself to a higher level and at the same time working to help others do the same. This effort has to come from the heart! Others will instinctively know if this effort is genuine or simply self-serving, fraudulent attempt at leadership. Those we wish would follow our lead can sense even when they know nothing about our background, if we've been where we want them to go. We can good ourselves into thinking they don't know and that's a serious mistake. That's why it's essential to always be working on ourselves and our own skills. **The myth that “leaders are born” and that it's not a learned skill is simply a myth!** Don't believe it! You and I can learn if we want to expend the time and effort to do it. The most important question we must ask ourselves is; What is my agenda? To lift others to a higher level of success, really? Lift myself above the people I'm supposed to be **leading**. Think about this carefully. Look at your actions, words and deeds. How do you view those you're leading? The problem with too many people in leadership positions is; their number one goal is to lift themselves above the people they're supposed to be leading. It's a matter of focus. What's yours? If you are a leader that has only followers your organization, no matter what it is, it will only go so far. Why? Because you are the only one doing everything, making all the decisions, initiating everything, etc. It's a great ego trip, but the organization will eventually fail altogether. On the other hand, if you are leading other leaders your organization **will grow beyond your abilities and limitations.**

It will survive and prosper beyond you and will contribute to lives of others beyond you. What's your goal? Let's consider our imitations for a moment. Where do they come from? Why do I believe I have them? What are they? What can I do about them? First of all, as with all things we need to look at ourselves, look inward and reflect back on ourselves as children, as young adults, our experiences, and our accomplishments and failures. Are we even

willing to do this? For many just making this effort is a major achievement! Until we're willing to do this not much of substance will be attainable. All of us are, in fact, a product of our parents and our world as children. This does not say we cannot or will not become very different people if we choose to be, but rather, it addresses where we have acquired many of our basic beliefs and values, for better or worse. Even when, as adults we have learned that, perhaps some of these beliefs and values are incorrect or flawed, they are a very persistent part of our personality. They have a major impact on how we relate to others, no matter how we might wish to view ourselves. Consider our fear of the unknown. For most, as small children we had an instinctive fear of the darkness, it was natural, and we often could conjure up fantastic fears. As adults most overcome a fear of darkness, but just a tinge of fear remains on a totally dark and stormy night when the lights go out. Fear is inherent in all of us. In relating to people as leaders and as adults this fear translates to self-doubt, self-denial, inaction, indecision or avoidance. As sophisticated and educated as we become, basic beliefs and values will always take center stage when facing the unknown or attempting to do what we've never done.

Our relationships with men and women are a direct result of how we were allowed to relate to our mothers and fathers. These were, after all, the very first people that most of us came in to contact with and as people we acquire most of our basic beliefs and some values during our earliest years between, one and six years of age. So, it's natural for us to simply accept these beliefs as "the way the world is". Even if, as we become adults, we discover this is not exactly true we cannot totally discard the original beliefs. The most important thing to know about ourselves, to start with, is who we are, where did we come from and to know, really, what do I believe about myself? It is critical to understand this because it becomes the way we see others. It's the way we evaluate and measure our relationships and the behavior of others. We are the only "benchmark" we have and that we truly trust, after all, it's really all we know. We measure others by our own internal yardstick, we don't knowingly, deliberately make this judgment it's simply instinctive. What is very important to believe is that we can learn, as adults, if we choose to recognize this aspect of our nature and accept that we are human in this regard, but also that we can modify, adapt, adjust, and understand ourselves. **The number one reason, we as leaders fail is our own insecurity.** There's a story about a memo from the President of a company to his personnel manager, "I want you to find the most aggressive, hardworking, intelligent, young man in my company. When you find him, fire him!". The point is, insecure people will never lead others to a higher level, they don't trust others feel threatened by others unless they are more insecure than they are, and if in a leadership position will do whatever they think necessary to maintain their position at any expense.

Another reason we fail to lead others to a higher level is our own self-image. As I said before, someone in a leadership position cannot lift others to a level which they themselves have never attained. Not only will a person with a low self-esteem not do this, they will in any organizational setting, do that which is necessary to suppress others from attempting to go to a higher level. This is exemplified by a leader that never allows anyone other than himself to make decisions or perhaps a long time employee that resists teaching the "new kid" how to do something in the office and instead can often be heard commenting on the other person's "lack of ability". Our self-

image is often reflected in the way we dress and the way we present ourselves to others. The world may not seem to care, but if our ambition is to lead others, we must carefully confident how we feel about ourselves first and how are we projecting this self-image to others in actions, words, and deeds. By the way, we as human beings have become very skilled at denial, and disguising our self-image, but this doesn't mean it's gone away, nor does it mean we can simply ignore it and it will go away. Know it, understand what it's based on, and deal with it if you want to **grow and achieve great things, especially if you want to lead others.**

Ego! A necessary ingredient, if healthy. Like so many good things in life, too much of a good thing and it becomes self-destructive. An egoist is someone that thinks too much of himself and too little of others. This is a formula for long term failure, perhaps short success, but in the long run much loneliness and disappointment. It's essential to believe in yourself and your abilities provided these are founded on a true and accurate understanding of yourself. The problem with our ego is that it doesn't really care about truth and accuracy! How do I recognize my own ego? Look around and consider the people you associate with or the people you have hired. Hitler always made sure that his drivers were shorter than himself. Are you uncomfortable around those you perceive to be better educated, more financial well off than yourself, more successful than you? Why? How's your ego?

Equally important is how really do treat those that are subordinate to you? Do you have genuine concern and respect for them or is it just an "image" you wish to project? I assure you; you are only deluding yourself if it's simply an image. The fourth quality on my list is personality. It's often said, "people will do business with people they like – all things being equal – they still want to do business with people they like". Let's consider six different personalities **A. The critical personality** – these people never lift anyone up, fact is most of us wish they'd just leave us alone. **B. Condescending people** – someone that's always "talking down to us". We often are forced, by position, to listen to these people but we sure won't hear much of what they are saying. **C. Aloof personalities** – these are folks that view themselves as being disconnected from us – our problems and concerns are not theirs. **D. Argumentative leaders** – no matter what's being discussed, their position is to argue every point. Often, it's intended to show us the error in our thinking and the correctives of theirs (ego). **E. Defensive** – The moment a defensive leader is approached, no matter the nature of the issue, they become immediately defensive in their response. **F. "The Lone Ranger"** – These types not only don't lift anyone up, they tend to push them away, they know all the answers. If, as you read these different personalities, you recognize yourself in some context and you want to lead others and grow yourself you'll need to address the issues. We all, at one time or another exhibit some of these negative qualities in our personalities, with our children, coworkers, subordinates, spouses, and people we know. Do you recognize yourself? What, if any, are your dominant personalities? How should you handle it? Can or will you even address it? What are our priorities in life? Is lifting ourselves and others up together a priority in our life? Some people are simply not interested in lifting each other up to a higher level, maybe themselves, but not others. I suggest that you cannot lift yourself, go to a higher level yourself, achieve or accomplish significant results without others. Michael Jordan, an exceptional basketball player and athlete would not and could not have achieved his level of greatness without the rest of the team. That's life. In our work, our

families, our communities, and our nation or world. Like it or not, we are all in it together and lifting ourselves cannot be done without others.

Can you accept that you can have every right to succeed? If not, why not? Where is it ordained that you are not allowed to have all that you desire or can achieve? I believe each of us is limited only by ourselves and as we believe we are constrained by the world. Not as it is but as we believe it to be. Not as it is, but as we believe it to be.

It is within our basic core values and beliefs about life that we find our limitations. The examples are too numerous to recount of people that have lifted themselves up to a higher level, beyond any circumstances that would dictate they should not have done so. Why not you? For whatever reasons we set limits on ourselves. We constrain our efforts, we limit our vision, we deny our potential for success. In some cases, we not only limit ourselves, but we actually do things to defeat ourselves and to prevent ourselves from reaching success. We rationalize, procrastinate, and ultimately defeat ourselves. As within each of us in the potential for greatness there is also an opposing force for self-destructive behavior. In order to lead others and to lift ourselves up we, each in our own way, must come to terms with ourselves and our own individual beliefs about our self.

What is success? Each of us needs to carefully define it. Come to terms with what that means to us individually and understand exactly what success is to us personally. Remember, we most often judge others by our own value system and our understanding of success if, again defined by who we are, what we believe we are, and what we believe we can be. It is not what someone else gives us or some catchy phrase we heard somewhere. Success is not, for most people a fixed point in the universe. It shifts, moves and most often seems just beyond our finer tips or just around the corner. Just as we think we are about to “achieve success” it slips away or moves just a little further out of reach. Why? Mostly, it’s because we’ve never exactly defined it for ourselves. At times we are positive that it’s that next promotion or a better job or a bigger paycheck or maybe finding that “right person” to spend the rest of our life with. In today’s world some folks think it’s winning the lotto! If I win the big one, for sure I’ll be successful! Yet many have and few, after a short time, consider themselves to be successful. So, what is this thing called success? Generally, I agree with Mr. Webster’s dictionary when trying to define a word, but not so much in this case. He defines it in its simplest form as an outcome or result. Further, in its common meaning, wealth (whatever that is), favor or eminence. I hold that success is like beauty, “in the eye of the beholder”. If, therefore, is necessary for each of us to define it for view of it with no expectations. It is, to know my purpose in life, strive for my maximum potential in whatever I do and as best I can to help others to their own success.

Success is a goal, a vision, something we strive to achieve. It’s not a fixed point in time or space. It is the striving for it that is success. A battle well fought. An effort well made. An interesting observation about success is that simply being busy about life is not success, but rather what have I accomplished? What are the results of my activities? Have I achieved anything at all? Success means having direction, knowing where you’re going! No one can go someplace if they haven’t the foggiest idea where that place becomes useless to you. There are lots of map makes

on the speaking circuits these days, problem is that they can't tell you where you're going only how to get there. Very few, if anybody can tell any of us where it is, we want to be. The folks are looking for "success" in something, be it their personal life or professional. The problem is they don't know what that success is and only they can define it. Drawing the map, once you know where you're going is fairly easy and there's lots of help available. Trick is you've got to know the destination. Sometimes we buy into someone else's idea of success, but unless we internalize it, make it our own destination, that won't work either, so back to square one. By the way, buying into someone else's destination, definition of success, might take you on one long trip down the wrong road, so be careful what you ask for. It's best to make your own decisions, try it, take responsibility for your own destination, its ok to change direction, take another less traveled road, use your own compass, who knows what great things lay in store for you!

Want to know if you're succeeding? Ask yourself "am I growing?" As a person, in my professional, in my life? I recall a story I read years ago about an old lady that was asked if she felt her life had been a success, with many children and gran children and many accomplishments along the way to her credit, she simply responded, "Life's not about the destination being achieved, it's about the journey made". So? Are you still growing? It's not about arriving some place, it's about the way we made the trip! Perhaps we should concentrate on the road right in front of us, the next turn. It's important to have a vision of the trip and the destination but focus on the road in front of us today and maybe take a moment to stop and smell the flowers or watch a sunset, it'll make the journey more enjoyable and life a little sweeter.

Ever heard the term "self-made made"? Interesting concept. Trouble is, in truth there's no such thing. No one goes through life without influencing others in some way, for better or worse. By my definition, success, true success, requires that I have a positive influence for good, in my life for someone else. I don't have to know about it, I simple must strive to accomplish it.

Another element of a good leader is the ability to recognize the potential in others, even if they don't, themselves recognize it for leadership. We as leaders need to look for the "gifts" that others around us have. We need to observe the temperament of others; it gives us insight to their potential for leadership. Passion! Who around us has a passion for what they do? What has this person done that has been effective? How do they do what is asked of them? Do we as leaders, give followers the opportunity to show us what they can be and do? What do they take joy in doing? Do we as leaders provide the opportunity, the setting for others to show us these things?

As leaders there are four basic elements that need to be present for any of us to lift another to a higher level and to enable that person to become a leader. **A. Respect.** Does this person respect you? You will not be able to life someone up that doesn't respect you. No one will go on a journey with someone they don't respect, it's that simple. **B. Position.** We need to be in a position of authority in order to give someone permission to become a leader of others. If we are not in a position of respected authority, saw we're a friend, we can encourage, but we cannot give permission. If we want others to become leaders, we have to give them permission to lead and

encourage them, recognize them often, show respect towards them always, especially in front of those we want them to lead. Don't just give them the position. Give them all that comes with it. Respect, recognition, responsibility, authority, and above all else encouragement.

None of us are or will always be successful in lifting others to a higher level, creating others. There are some reasons for this. Generally, we won't be able to lift someone with whom we have little or nothing in common. It's a communication thing. They in their own field or expertise, may rise to a position of leadership, but it will be difficult for us to be the one to accomplish it if at all. Our relationship with others, by virtue of position, education, occupation, or authority over them, all may be factors which will affect our ability to lift someone to a higher level. Commitment. If and we do all the time, we are trying to train and lift up a leader in our organization we must make a real commitment to this person. We must communicate our experience, our knowledge, and our best efforts to this person. We accept this as an ongoing effort. There will be failings and disappointments along the way, yet we remain committed to this person's success, we accept this without excuses on our part. It is, after all, an element of our own success, as well as theirs that we undertake this effort.

HOW DO I LIFT OTHERS TO A HIGHER LEVEL?

I. LIVE ON A HIGHER LEVEL YOURSELF

You can't take anyone where you haven't been.

II. SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE OF A HIGHER LEVEL WITH OTHERS

Give them a vision of where they can go with an air of excitement

Give them permission to go there too!

Share success with them always!

III. TELL THEM YOU WILL GO WITH THEM

Not only can they do this, but you will lead them there!

Expect them to achieve excellence!

Take the risk of leading others

Help get rid of "baggage" that holds them back

IV. TOGETHER THEY WILL HAVE SUCCESS IN THEIR LIFE!

Lead them with a "Passion"

Give them your passion for their own!

