THE MACRIS GROUP

From Dean's Desk:

Prologue – Why we are so obsessed with Leadership?

Development Dimensions International (DDI) conducts and publishes its Global Leadership Forecast bi-annually. The below graphic and paragraph have been excerpted from their 2014-2015 Global Leadership Forecast report. This graphic illustrates the overall state of leader-ship. This trend is dis-turbing to us and we have authored several UPDATE articles on the topic. See our those articles at www.themacrisgroup.com.

Quality of Leadership over Three Global Benchmarking Studies

37% 2009   38% 2011   40% 2014

No HR Rating 2009   25% 2011   25% 2014

● Percent of leaders who say the overall quality of their organization's leadership is high

● Percent of HR professionals who view their organization's leaders as high-quality

DDI continues as follows:

"Development Efforts Have Stalled

When compared to our last two fore-casts, the number of leaders who expressed confidence in the overall quality of leader-ship in their organization increased just slight-ly: 40 percent of leaders rated current quality as high (see illustration above). Accord-ing to HR professionals, however, the needle hasn't moved at all. Only one in four organizations evaluated their overall lead-er quality as high, the same percentage as our 2011 forecast.*

Why is leader quality going nowhere fast? Apparently, because leadership development efforts have stalled, despite the fact that it is estimated that some $50 billion a year is being spent on developing leaders worldwide.** As in the last two forecasts, only 37 percent of leaders in the current study rated their organization's leadership development program as effective, indicating no improvement over the past seven years. The overwhelming majority of leaders are still saying they are not satisfied with their organization's development offer-ings. It's no wonder that, with leaders reporting a lack of improvement in their development, we aren't seeing a vast difference in over-all leader quality.

If organizations aren't doing enough to push the needle, then the outlook for the future is even gloomier. Only 15 percent of or-ganizations rated their future bench strength as strong, a slight decrease from our last forecast. Most organizations are not confident that they have the leadership to address current and future needs. So, what can they do to improve? The message from leaders is loud and clear: Organizations need to refocus on improving their development efforts."

* Boatman, J., & Wellins, R.S. (2011), Global Leadership Forecast 2011: Time for a Leadership Revolution, Pittsburgh, PA, Development Dimensions International.

** Kellerman, B. (2012), The End of Leadership, New York, HarperCollins.

How does the DDI Global Leadership Forecast tie in with this the second article on Authentic Leaders? For those who have fol-lowed our writings over the past number of years, we have tried to focus on different aspects of leadership in an attempt to get our readers thinking about scope and breath of effective leadership, along with the vast number of factors involved in actually changing or moving the needle more than what is indicated above. We hope this and our other articles will give you cause to think about leader-ship in your organization and within your span of influence.

Authenticity—Where do we go from here?

Larry Reiter   A. C. Macris

Introduction

We thank those of you who took the time to respond to our last article on Authenticity and leadership – What does it really mean? We received both written and verbal comments that present even more questions. Our intention with UPDATE Newsletter articles is to stimulate thought and dialogue. An example of a few of our com-ments are:

General Comments

Once again you have peeled back the onion skin to learn about what makes good leaders, both in context and authenticity....not any easy learning assignment to say the least but you have used good examples to stimulate the discussion...

It all seemed so clear to me when I first thought about the topic: OF COURSE a leader should be AUTHENTIC on all levels....otherwise she/he is just a puppet, an actor, a FAKER! But then I kept getting deeper into more levels as you raised such good questions and my brain and emotions got activated!

This article was excellent, I'd love to actually discuss it sometime in the future.

About Leaders you've worked for:
He taught me many things about his corporate stewardship and core values, but above all, he mentored me to be honest and frank in disclosing my deliberations on important corporate matters. To never be tempted to exaggerate the truth in order to make a case, nor fail to shy away from telling the truth (as I saw it), in fear of "what others" (meaning hierarchical executives) might think or conclude, or the possible retaliatory actions/intimidations they might impose upon me. I was always to behave "in truth to myself" and my own conscience. This is what the "old wise man of the sea" taught me. He was authentic and a very real leader to me....no other has ever come close.

I've been guided in my career both by leaders who possessed a moral compass and some who I would consider ruthless. I can attest that I learned from both brands of leaders. I have worked on being aware of how my position affects the many people who follow me simply as a result of where they are positioned in the hierarchy. I've determined that it is more rewarding as a leader to see the success in others than to succeed yourself. Maybe the reason is that when you are successful, the confident you have and the joy you live makes you want to share that feeling or place in society.

Reflections: Leadership Authenticity lessons learned

U.S. Navy – One Commanding Officer was insecure. His experience had not been with fast attack submarines and he was assigned to a very sensitive and critical mission. His leadership style was inconsistent on areas of operations. His leadership made the life of his wardroom officers; non-nuclear department heads and division officers somewhat miserable. The nuclear department officers were exempt – he knew the nuclear side of submarining very well. As much as he was a good person, I would not place him in the category of an effective leader. In contrast, another Commanding Officer was completely transparent. He was a particularly intelligent person and a very honest Commanding Officer. He plainly stated to his wardroom officers that there were wartime and peacetime Commanding Officers. While I was young and his comment seemed so obvious at that time, I gave it little thought. Several years later I realized the essence of what he was actually saying. While many in the wardroom respected the CO for his intelligence, I am not sure many believed he was a wartime CO. His realization of the difference was commensurate with his intelligence and has had a significant impact on my thinking on leadership.

In my first job following the Navy, I had the good fortune of working for a person who was quite enlightened in leadership and management concepts, particularly since this was close to 40 years ago. Things that ---employees value today like flex time, initiative leading to higher remuneration and leadership opportunities, and innovative profit sharing plans, were part of the way he ran his company. I learned a tremendous amount about the consulting business there. But, along with all these positive aspects, there was an Achilles heel. I might characterize the vulnerability as inconsistent behavior, and a tendency to be highly volatile and reactive. Which was authentic behavior the enlightened person who was ahead of his time or the volatile tyrant in disguise?

Regarding Authenticity

One of our readers brought up an interesting point; the FAKER comment. That comment is based in the Myers Briggs Personality Profile. The point is straight forward – some people's MBTI profile may be inconsistent with the requirements of their leadership demands. These demands may require a person to move away from their comfort zone and actually do things that are very difficult for them to do (fake the way they really are) not being true to themselves which challenges their authenticity. "Faking" might not be truly what the word denotes. Even a good authentic leader will find themselves in situations where they are not comfortable. To achieve organizational and personal goals, the leader may have to do things differently from what they would naturally do. It could be faking to survive or it might be assuming a different response to move the organization

along, but still driving to achieve the same goals. If it is Jekyll and Hyde behavior, as in the example from above, then authenticity is probably lost. If it is moving out of a comfort zone to keep the organization heading toward stated goals then it may well be an uncomfortable flexibility that is not really a departure from true authenticity.

How does one recognize a real 'Faker' though? A real faker is certainly not authentic. One way is simple, a faker tries to take the attention away from their shortcomings by diverting attention to things they think, the people they are leading, will respond to. What do we mean here? Fakers assume the people they are leading may want to see certain things from them. Like a nice office, coffee machines, artwork on the walls etc. in lieu of their involvement, engagement and leadership. The superficial things have a short half-life. Another way to recognize a real Faker which I learned a long time ago, was; that a faker is one who speaks to an engineer as psychologist and an art collector as a scientist. Once again, camouflaging their shortcomings or lack of authenticity.

Defining authenticity is not easy, particularly as we are using it in this and the preceding article. Who's to say what or who is authentic? As an example, take a restaurant. If it is Italian or Mexican, we tend to judge it as being authentic or not. But, who's to judge?   In this simple example, it is the experience of the diner who has either experienced what they believe to be authentic ethnic food, or one who has the same ethnic background with first-hand experience preparing their ethnic foods. The point here is that authenticity is judged not by the restaurant owner, but by the patrons. This flies in the face of the 'true to oneself theory.'

To complicate the issue even more, looking at the theory of truth to oneself, this leaves a wide range for interpretation. Having worked for authentic leaders (based on observation and interaction) and for leaders who are leaders only because of the position they hold and not because of any ability to lead; we find that it is still very difficult to define, but let's take a shot.

There are leaders who command attention by their personalities and their decisive decision making ability. We have found these to be people who seek input from all levels, who listen to others, but then have the ability to distil that

into sound decisions. These are people who you want to follow, who you want to learn from and who you may not initially agree with but respect the decisions and will carry them out as if they are your own. These are generally leaders who are very clear about their feelings and convictions. But they are also, viewed by their people as trustworthy, consistent, having the best interests of all concerned in mind. These are authentic leaders.

Then there are other leaders who may not be as dynamic and may not have that charisma. However, they can be as effective. These leaders have the support of their organizations and achieve goals. Sometimes they are outside their comfort zones but they still build effective teams. Do they have to "fake" some things on occasion – probably but that does not make them inauthentic. We are not all gifted with the charisma that some dynamic leaders have. Sometimes we must move out of our comfort zones to keep an organization moving forward. The key is maintaining personal integrity and the value system we discussed in our first article. A leader can force him/herself out of a comfort zone to act in different ways, but as long as they can maintain their personal integrity and values they stay authentic leaders.

There is then a third group who are in leadership positions, but who have no real leadership skills. They tend toward being dictators who instill no confidence or trust in their employees. When things go wrong, and they do frequently, scapegoats are generally found and the blame quickly assigned to others for the failures. This type of organization can quickly become dysfunctional and trust erodes in the leader and among the others in the organization. We have witnessed instances where executive management or a board of directors fails to recognize the true problems and allows the dysfunction to build and allows the mantra "off with their heads" to reign until they realize, generally too late, that the only head that needs to be gone is the leader. It then takes a long time for a new leader to rebuild trust and function in such an organization.

Mounting questions
We suspected that as we drilled into the issue of authenticity and leadership we would find there to be more questions than answers. We see this as our charge here, in hopes we may be able to eventually arrive at some algorithm or paradigm that might point us in a direction to make a change. At this point the questions mount.

- Can authenticity be taught or even learned?
- How might one actually teach authenticity?
- Does it take practice to achieve authenticity in leadership?
- How would one know if they are making progress or can one even achieve an end point?
- Is there an end point?
- What are the measures along this journey?

As we have said before, the dilemma for a leader is that she cannot be all things to all people, which begs the question: can a leader be authentic at all? Maybe that's why the current thinking defaults to being 'true to oneself'. A default alternative is the concept of 'values', despite the fact that people are motivated or guided by a multitude of different values, yet objectively can see inconsistencies, double standards and conflict within a set of values. Referent Power, as we discussed in our last article, where leaders consistently apply a set of values and goals, results in respect from subordinates, whether the subordinates like or dislike the leader as a person. The issue is not whether employees or followers share the same values, but rather the leader's commitment to consistent application of their (and/or the organization's) values. Now, let's look at a current news story about Kim Davis, the county clerk from Kentucky who would not issue marriage licenses to gay couples. We use this example to illustrate a point. Was she being true to herself? Is she authentic? Was her behavior that of an authentic person who stood by her beliefs? It would seem so. But, if she really was true to herself, and felt she could not perform the job she was hired for, should she have resigned? Here again we may deal with a person (in this case **not** a leader – to illustrate the point) or leader who must "fake it" where he or she are not comfortable personally with what is required but they are doing what is necessary to fulfill their job requirement or to move the organization toward common goals.

Think about the things that challenge leaders and their leadership. Politicians are a unique and interesting group. Despite efforts to establish ethics guidelines and codes of conduct, it's the inconsistencies between their talk and their actions. This inconsistency is highly visible and recognizable and when they try to sweep it under the rug, it usually comes back to bite them, followed by the apologies. How many times have you wondered why high profile people say and do what they say and do? With all their advisors and speech writers and staffers, one would think there should be someone who is overseeing whether their 'guy or gal' is speaking consistently or from different sides of their mouth. So can authenticity be taught and

learned? Are politicians a different breed of people? Should they be? We would like your take on this.

Along with that, how might one actually teach authenticity – is a set of principles or guidelines, a review of ones values? Again, your thoughts? One of the premises we cover in our leadership classes is achieving mastery in a field/profession it takes approximately 10,000 hours of practice (from Malcolm Gadwell's book *Outliers*). Particularly in the context of our discussion of faking it until you make it. Now, how might one practice their authenticity? We have a few thoughts, such as self-checking and self-assessment. Mentoring along with objective feedback is another, but for any of these approaches to be truly effective the person who is being mentored must recognize the need and want to make changes. Does that become an authenticity issue – might the new person in fact not be true to themselves by virtue of going through the process? Finally, the last two questions above are equally difficult to deal with. At this point we certainly don't have our thoughts solidified, but we see this important enough to continue the dialogue.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we feel as though we are in a bit of a never ending spiral on this issue, which further reinforces our feeling that the existing authenticity thinking is narrow, because any expansion beyond the current thinking presents far too many variables and dynamics to simply deal with in any kind of traditional fashion. But, the key point here is we believe that authenticity in leadership is real and can yield significant improvements in the functioning and effectiveness of a leader which parlays into a better work environment, which in turn can be measured with an improved business result. Stand by and we once again ask and welcome your comments and thoughts on authenticity in leadership.