

Courage and Leadership Choice

I was reading an article in the Harvard Business Review by Rosabeth Moss Kanter in December about courage. She makes the point early in her article that: "To act requires courage. To innovate requires even more courage. Today, courage seems in short supply. What are leaders waiting for?"

It struck me (and her) that, as we go into 2012, courage has never been more relevant and required for us as leaders. These are testing times. There is little respite from the roller coaster that we call our company forecasts and there is little sign of this changing in the immediate future. It seems therefore that our businesses and organisations need to be bold, creative and agile to survive and thrive against a backdrop of rapid change and unprecedented economic uncertainty. The future will simply not equal the past irrespective of what we may like it to resemble.

So, as leaders we have a choice. We can choose a role for ourselves in which we worry and fret about our situation. One in which we blame others for the fact that we do not have the situation that we would like but forgot to create! Or we can choose to accept the situation for what it is and be innovative and courageous to influence and create the future of those we lead and our organisations.

A victim mentality is a flawed space from which to lead either yourself or others, but many of us make this choice when it is actually within us to be so much more. When playing the victim, how well are you leading yourself? And what is the impact on those whom you are leading and trying to influence when you play this role?

In coaching many Senior Executives, I understand that one of their greatest challenges, perhaps the greatest, is to lead themselves through these unpredictable days and avoid the temptation of making the choice to take on the victim role. Sometimes this role may look like the easy option but ultimately it's a short term fix and this feel good factor wears off. The challenges don't go away and then when there is nobody else left to blame we come back to ourselves and what we can do to change

the way that we are leading ourselves. As Moss-Kanter also points out, "courage makes change possible." If we really want to effect a change it's always best to start with ourselves. What are we responsible for? How can we change our attitude and approach to influence the situation and get a different result? What can we learn

from what is happening and how can we use that learning to grow and develop ourselves and others around us to face up to the challenge and create something new?

Looking in the mirror like this and changing behaviours requires courage.

Continued..

Courage and Leadership Choice: John Frost examines the importance of courage in leadership roles and the choice between using this courage or adopting the role of the victim.

Thought Leaders: John Frost looks at The exclusive biography of Steve Jobs by Walter Isaacson.

What makes a good leader?: Karen Frost reflects on how communication helps makes a good leader .

Thought Leaders: Karen Frost reviews *Are They on the Right Bus: The 55-Minute Guide to Talent Management* by Ro Gorell.

Using the right tool for the job - team development surveys: David Cooper and John Frost discuss Team Development Surveys and how important it is to select the right tool to support your team.

On the Couch: Tony Homden answers a query on how to deal with constant changes in an organisation.

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Recently, a colleague of mine, Jeff, said to one of the Executive Leadership teams that we were working with "if you are not getting what you want, you are probably getting what you deserve." It was the perfect comment for that moment. It allowed them to stop and think about their leadership of the organisation, the responsibilities they had to change themselves and role model what they expected from the rest of the organisation if they wanted to effect change.

Nelson Mandela had a choice to do nothing and to take on the role of victim. How different would the recent history of South Africa be if he had not had the courage to change both his own approach and those he led? Steve Jobs is rightly remembered and respected for the product legacy that he helped to create in Apple. We can only speculate as to what might have happened to Apple

"We show some of our greatest leadership when we choose courage over playing the role of the victim."

if he had chosen to remain playing the victim (as he appears to have done initially when he was ousted from Apple) and not channelled his energy into positively re-invigorating the organisation's people and products.

We show some of our greatest leadership when we choose courage over playing the role of the victim. How many opportunities do you have right now to show a different type of leadership by choosing to make the courageous decisions? Taking ownership requires courage. It takes courage to be honest with yourself about what you are responsible for in the current situation rather than blaming others. It takes courage to choose a different course of action by facing up to some of your fears and overcome them rather than blaming others for the fact that you have them in the first place. And it takes courage to lead others in a way that enables them to develop and grow - through feedback and managing their performance - rather than blaming them when they don't live up to your expectations.

We all have the opportunity to demonstrate our courage every day at home and at work. It is demonstrated in the way that we lead ourselves and the choices that we make. And, it is understood by others in the leadership legacy that we leave with them.

As Rosabeth Moss Kanter says in her article, "Courage does not imply the absence of fear. Heroes are scared to death but act anyway." We are who we choose to be. Nobody else can or does make that choice for us.

So who will you choose to be in 2012?

By John Frost , Managing Director
Values Based Leadership

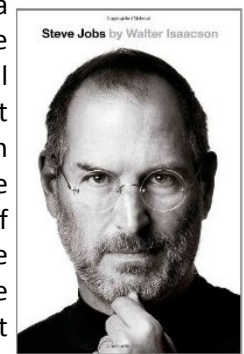
Courage in the C Suite by Rosabeth Moss Kanter appears in the December 2011 edition of *The Harvard Business Review*.



Thought Leaders

Steve Jobs - The Exclusive Biography by Walter Isaacson

I read this book after Steve Jobs had passed and found it a fascinating insight into the personality of a man who really can be said to have changed the technological world. The book focuses a lot on the Apple story and, for me at least, there is too much detail on that side as I was looking at it from the aspect of leadership. In that respect I found some of the story quite shocking in terms of the way that Jobs treated people and his apparent lack of resilience and emotional self management at times during his life.



The book is a good insight into the attitudes and behaviours of an extraordinary person. The nature of his personality and his leadership approach would best be described as an emotional rollercoaster for those around him. So perhaps we should just settle on remembering him as a leader for good rather than a good leader! Certainly the millions of us who use Apple products every day would endorse that.

The biography is reasonably well written, if a little long winded, and had the full endorsement of Jobs and his family. The frankness itself is an impressive element to the book. Jobs allegedly wanted his story told honestly, even if his famous "reality distortion field" seems to have recollected some aspects of his story in a different way to the other people who were present!

So, maybe the aim of the biography is not to make a decision on his leadership but just enjoy learning from an extraordinary life.

Reviewed by John Frost

Published by Little, Brown (Oct 2011)

What makes a Good Leader? By Karen Frost



In the recent edition of Director a monthly publication from the Institute of Directors I read with interest an article about what makes a good leader. For me there are many aspects to what makes a good leader and indeed you certainly know how it feels like when you are led by one. But I often wonder what it feels like from the inside and whether leaders know when they are getting it right.

In the article Kevin Murray chairman of Bell Pottinger Group believes the key factor to good leadership is how well business bosses communicate and inspire people – both inside and outside the company – to align them to a cause. Now I am a practical gal and so my question will always be ‘how do you do that’. Murray offers 12 principles to better communicate and inspire which I can see would be a good 12 principles to follow:

1. If you aspire to be a better communicator learn to be yourself more
2. State a compelling mission and a powerful set of values
3. Combine this with a vivid picture of the future, which you communicate relentlessly to change present behaviour
4. Keep employees focuses on the relationships that your organisation depends on for success, and make building trust a priority
5. Make workplace engagement a goal
6. Understand audiences before trying to communicate with them
7. Listen in new ways, and learn to ask the right questions
8. Communicate with a potent point of view
9. Use more stories and anecdotes to inspire the right behaviour
10. Be aware of signals you send beyond your words
11. Prepare properly for public platforms – your reputation is at stake
12. Learn, rehearse, review and improve – strive to be a better communicator

So a starting point could be to take each of the 12 principles and score yourself on each of them. Use a bench mark such as 1= I am not doing it at all and 10= this is one of my signature strengths. To take it a step further ask 2 or 3 people to score you. Peers and direct reports that you have high levels of trust with are the most valuable because they will give you honest feedback.

Once you have your scores, then the first step is to focus on your strengths and keep doing them. When we do

some self evaluation we can often go to the things we do less well and forget about our strengths, hence my recommendation to focus on strengths first. Finally take your 3 lowest scores and think about how you would like to develop these. Using stories and anecdotes to inspire the right behaviour is a relatively easy way to develop your communication skills and one that you can build a repertoire of over time. Other principles like the ones based around presentation skills and techniques might need some additional learning, so take the time to develop these skills.

Bell Pottinger Group is in the communication business so they would always argue that your communication is a key factor to good leadership. However, on reviewing this set of principles and thinking about some of the most charismatic leaders I know, I would say they do follow these principles and they do make a difference in terms of how they engage people in an authentic way to achieve outstanding results.

Thought Leaders

Are They on the Right Bus: The 55-Minute Guide to Talent Management

By Ro Gorell June 2011 in paperback.

This book is dedicated to all the CEOs and non HR people out there who just want to understand what all the fuss is about and what talent management means for them and their organisation. It helps you to understand how to get the best out of your people and understand how sometimes the most well intentioned business practices end up with inappropriate behaviours and consequences.

Ro Gorell challenges some of the traditional thinking around talent management; specifically the way talent is identified, managed and nurtured. This advocates that talent management equals employee engagement which in turn equals human resource management. Period!

For me, I agreed with Ro Gorell’s approach because how you value your people will ultimately determine how little or how much you need to actively manage your talent. You can read this book in less than an hour. It is a good read with some great ideas.

Reviewed by Karen Frost

Published by Verb Publishing LTD (June 2011)

ARE THEY ON THE RIGHT BUS?

THE 55-MINUTE GUIDE TO TALENT MANAGEMENT BY RO GORELL

Using the Right Tool for the Job - Team Development Surveys

By David Cooper and John Frost

I'm a great believer in 'if you need something done correctly, use the right tool for the job'. That is as true for knocking in a nail as it is for using the right survey tool to support teams to be their best.

Team surveys can be used to help build a new team, develop an existing team or to support an established team to raise their game even further. The challenge is to select the team development survey that fits the team's context/challenges and will provide them with the insight needed to enable them to make informed development decisions.

Whilst different providers offer a multitude of different products, the following aims to outline the key survey types and where they best fit:

Internal Feedback (feedback from 'us' to 'us')

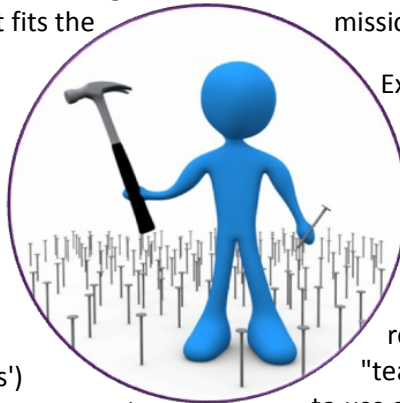
- These surveys are designed to provide the team with a clear picture of how they see and rate themselves in relation to how they work and function together. They are invaluable for helping teams identify and address internal issues that are hindering or blocking them from reaching their full potential and for generating positive ideas for improvement. A good example of an internal team working survey would be VBL's Team Pulse survey which incorporates a range of established team working competencies namely:

- Vision
- Values
- Leadership
- Climate and Culture
- Change
- Emotional Resilience
- Communication
- Performance
- Team Dynamics

External Feedback (feedback from 'them' to 'us') - Internal relationships, roles and team processes are all important, but often teams are ultimately measured by what they achieve against the needs and expectations of key stakeholders from across and even outside the organisation.

External feedback surveys can be used to provide teams with:

- Current performance data.
- Expectations of key stakeholders.
- An external world view of how they are seen by those who potentially impact their effectiveness.
- The outward focus needed to establish a clear mission and purpose.



External feedback questionnaires should be specifically designed to provide feedback against the team's role, deliverables and needs. The most informative and successful approach is to use 'open' qualitative questions where responders are requested to provide feedback for the "team" (not individuals). One approach is to use a SWOT analysis type grid, alternatively the use of key questions such as the following can produce the clarity required:

What are your key expectations of the XYZ team?

- List four words that best describe the XYZ team.
- What do you see as the key roles of the XYZ team?
- List three things that you believe the XYZ team does well.
- List three things that you believe the XYZ team could do better.
- How could the relationship between you / your department and the XYZ team be improved?

So what would you like to understand about your team that will really enhance the team's performance in 2012?

John is the Managing Director of Values Based Leadership



David is a director of Lumus one of VBL's trusted partners who specialise in providing online feedback development tools for individuals, teams and organisations.

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On the Couch

With Tony Homden

I am a newly appointed senior manager within a public health team. I am struggling with the constant changes in the organisation, which is both exhausting and highly challenging. Leading teams through the minefields of transformation, recession and economic meltdown is intensifying that anxiety and making me feel that the challenge is insurmountable.

Making sense of a changing world is difficult at times and many people are struggling to cope at the moment. Staff are programmed by the culture of their organisation and find it difficult to understand what is required of them. People can then fall into habits of self preservation by creating silos around their teams and focussing on what they perceive they need themselves. Becoming inward like this is currently the norm but much of the research suggests that teams/services will perform much more effectively by thinking systemically and embracing all that is going on around them in the "external" world.

As a public sector leader, this has never been more true. If we want to lead people through such great changes, we should be looking at changing the systems

and cultures in place at the moment.

We can do this by taking inspiration from various beliefs and cultures of the past and present. For example, according to ancient Mayan culture, the world is coming to the end of a cycle and civilisations are calling for new ways of working, functioning and living in order to perform better and meet the new challenges.

Organisations can take this approach as an opportunity to make a difference and be creative about how they solve their current challenges and find a way forward that is sustainable and innovative. It could also help satisfy the necessity to cut costs, streamline business and think in lean ways.

As a starting point, Business Coaching can allow leaders and staff time to reflect on what is actually required and new ways of approaching challenges. In my experience, coaching allows time to reflect and accept these understandings and has made a huge difference in the way I approach and tackle my own challenges.

Tony is a trusted coach for VBL and is experienced as both an internal and external coach. His expertise lie in Leadership, Executive and career coaching and he has extensive experience in the public Sector.

Final Thoughts

"Where no change is desired, management will suffice. Where change is needed management (IQ) alone will be found to be lacking and the need for leadership (EQ) will come to the fore'."

John Van Muirik

"We're the only species on the planet to follow unstable pack leaders."

Cesar Millan (Dog Whisperer)

"Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom."

Viktor E. Frankl



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Voice is published four times a year by Values Based Leadership Ltd,
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