

¹Transforming Corporate Leadership Program

Transforming Followers Into Leaders, and Leaders Into Agents of Change

The subject of leadership has been one of the most studied areas of human activity, and arguably one of the least understood for many centuries. And yet we are confronted each day with the opportunity for leadership. For example you sit through a meeting, watching people avoid the real issues, and decide that you will be the one who puts them on the table. A colleague has just suffered a personal loss leading to an emotional stress, and you decide that you will be there for her to help her cope with the trauma.

It has always been known that leadership is a major differentiating factor in determining the success or otherwise of groups of people, whether they be nations or families. History is replete with examples of how leadership has changed societies. We see Moses leading 3 million people from slavery to nationhood, and for 40 years without an election; Joshua after him as he led the same nation through conquest to their destiny; Joseph many years later emerging from prison to become prime minister, deftly managing the economy of Egypt through a severe famine, and creating the economic model for the then world power; Julius Caesar as emperor in the Roman conquest; Wilson Churchill as war-time Prime Minister in the United Kingdom; Gandhi who never sought political office; Viktor Frankl and Martin Luther King who in their time helped nations and peoples find meaning; Nelson Mandela or Rudy Giuliani who are living change agents in resolving major contradictions or social problems in their time. At the other end of the scale we also see Jim Jones who persuaded his entire congregation to commit suicide. We see the Hitlers and the Pot Pols of this world and in our country we saw Sanni Abacha

¹ Chairman's introductory remarks at a Leadership Seminar facilitated by Dr Myles Munro

But how do these men and women achieve the feats we now remember them for? How did they make the transition from being followers into becoming leaders? What made them so successful in bringing about change, or getting people to act or behave differently? How did they manage to galvanize the energies of people into a single cause – whether for good or for evil?

Not many issues have remained unresolved for as long as leadership, in spite of man's conquest. We know how to fly to the moon and back; the helical structure of DNA was discovered 50 years ago and since then science has made advances in the realm of understanding and unraveling the genetic code, leading to the mapping of the human genome in 23 chapters. The precise chemistry of leadership is hard to figure out, is probably amorphous, and some even think is a mystery. We recognize good leadership when we find one, perhaps because effective leadership is emotionally compelling, and although emotions and moods seem trivial from a business point of view, they have real consequences for getting work done. Indeed the glue that holds people together in a team, and that commits people to an organization, is the emotions they feel. People take emotional cues from the leader, and that is what makes leadership so critical in shaping events and teams.

However, to lead is to live dangerously because when leadership counts, when you lead people through difficult change, you challenge what people hold very dear – their daily habits, tools, loyalties, and ways of thinking – with nothing more to offer perhaps than a possibility. Moreover, leadership often means exceeding the authority you are given to tackle the challenge at hand, because the leader sees something others don't. People push back when you disturb the personal and institutional equilibrium they know, and they resist in all kinds of creative and unexpected ways

that can get you taken out of the game: pushed aside, undermined, or eliminated.

But leadership is worth the risk because the goals extend beyond material gain or personal advancement. Leadership provides meaning in life, and creates purpose. That is why the appointed leaders in organizations are encouraged to subject themselves to two vital checks:

1. Take the mirror test often, to examine their true motivation, or motives for action
2. Ask the question; if people had a choice, would they choose me as their leader

There are many things we know about leadership:

- It's not about position.
- Great leaders have learned through patience and endurance, and other leaders mentored four in every five of them.
- People like to be led. In fact they prefer to be led because leadership is risky
- Leadership is about heads, hearts and hands

There are also many lessons we can learn from nature about leadership. From the pride of lions we learn that the lioness orchestrates every hunting expedition, but chooses to efface herself. From geese we learn that they fly in a V-formation because the lead goose takes on the difficult task of creating an upward draught that lifts the followers as she flaps her wings, and that she gives room for another goose to take this role when she is tired or is no longer able to provide this crucial demand on the leader. From the ant colony we learn the dignity of labour, and the power of single-minded commitment to a single cause.

We have also learned many things about leadership styles, and modern thinking identifies servant leadership as the winning trait. Other researchers look to primal leadership, which enables the leader to connect with his people. We

have tried some of these styles and experienced the frustration of the changing demands, and soon learn that the leader is a tenant of time and context.

The ancient Chinese masters, in teaching the attributes of leadership, likened the leader to the sun. The sun gives away all of its energy for plants to absorb and manufacture their food in a process called photosynthesis. In turn as the plants develop, they grow towards the sun in another process called phototropism. Essentially, they teach that the leaders find fulfillment and are most effective in moderating the response of the followers when they give all of themselves. This seems to be the meeting point of leadership and being a change agent.

One thing we know is that man was made with incredible capacity and tremendous ability when the Almighty God breathed the breath of life into him at creation. This capacity to access supernatural power was emphasized in the directive from the Creator to "multiply and replenish the earth". We often remember the 'multiply' bit, but the more profound is the 'replenish' part. You only replenish what is exhausted or what can be exhausted, and there is enough in us to fulfill this purpose. And if I will quote Dr Munroe, that's why God gave us only raw materials. He put wool on the back of sheep, and cotton in the fruit of a plant.

There are only a few real gurus in the area of leadership, and we have with us for the whole day, a leading light in this field. Dr Myles Munroe is President of the International Third World Leaders Association, an NGO affiliated to the United Nations. He has worked with the leading corporations around the world, helping them to transform their businesses and their people.

His presentation today will explore how middle and senior executives can successfully address the difficult issues, necessary to achieve and sustain superior performance. The

objective today is to share on the true virtues of leadership, and learn from the master the transformational power of dynamic leadership. Dr Munroe has been described as a motivational speaker, but I believe he should rather be described as one who helps create leaders who are change agents, and who create other leaders.

Bunmi Oni
Seminar Chairman
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