

EMPOWERING LEADERSHIP

A MAG-SYNERGY PAPER

Welcome to the world of leaders and leadership. This paper is based on the premise that Leadership is an Attitude and not just a Position. It was inspired by my reading of Jim Collins' book, Good to Great Companies - the parallel between people and organizations struck me while going through some of the research findings presented.

What are some of the important characteristics that set apart and distinguish the 'great' leaders from the 'good' leaders?

- a love of self, an appreciation of the self, but a greater love for a cause, an idea, an organization. Love of self is an important pre-requisite for a healthy, mature, and effectively functioning human being. The ability to love and appreciate others can only come when one is able to love and appreciate one's own being. The notion of self-sacrificing love, which deprecates the self, and glorifies others, is unhealthy and not really growth producing in its consequences.

Therefore, a good leader loves himself/herself, but a great leader goes beyond that and experiences a greater love for his/her people, cause and/or organization.

- a deep sense of personal humility was in evidence when most of the leaders were interviewed. They come across as being modest and humble, not very flamboyant and certainly do not wish to come across as being larger-than-life in their interactions with others. It is interesting to note that people associated with these special leaders generally used words like QUIET, GRACIOUS, HUMBLE, MODEST, SHY, when describing their colleagues or bosses.

- Strong-willed and fearless in their resolve to get things done.

This trait of ferocious resolve in making things happen, is another important trait of a great leader. His or her humility should not be mistaken for weakness or lack of resolve! This special individual blends what I would call, extreme personal humility with intense professional will. These self-

effacing individuals display strong resolve to do whatever is needed to make their cause successfully accomplished, or to make their organization great. It is almost as though they are channeling their personal ego away from their individual selves, and funneling all of it into the larger goal of building a great organization.

- They dream of success and are incredibly ambitious - the big difference is that this ambition is not for themselves, it is for the organization that they are striving to build.

- They are willing to postpone personal success and reputation building to a much greater extent than 'ordinary' leaders of companies. Their deepest sense of satisfaction and thrill comes from their organization making a mark in the business field, not from their personal successes or achievements. In fact during interviews with them, they generally felt more comfortable talking about their company and the contributions of various executives, not about themselves. In fact, they would at times deflect discussions about their contributions.

- Another dominant trait noticeable in 'great' leaders, was their propensity for creating and maintaining long-term business relationships, and in making friends out of business relationships. This big divide in one's personal and professional lives which is common and evident in people's lives in general, was not in evidence. They need to enjoy working with people they associate with, and are careful in their choice of business associates.

- Attributing their success to good luck : when things go well, these special individuals give credit to factors outside themselves, other people and situations are cited as reasons for things having gone well. They talk a lot about luck playing a role in their success. Interestingly, at the same time, they never blame bad luck when things seem to go wrong, efforts do not bear fruition, and so on. They are quick to take personal responsibility

for things that seem to go wrong.

- Another important finding of Jim Collins was the sense of strong discipline present in their thought processes and in their actions. When you start doing what you love and enjoy doing , you don't need to apply too much self-discipline in order to do it because you want to do it as often as possible and as well as you possibly can! The challenge however, lies in doing other, less exciting things just as successfully - and this is where we need self-discipline to do what is required. Great leaders bring this self-discipline into play into any and every action that would lead to corporate success. They are able to skillfully define, refine, focus, and schedule specific actions that they have to take to have what they desire.

- Talking about focus, it is important to observe that they do not only focus on what needs to be done, on what to do to achieve successful results - they place as much importance on what not to do, and what to stop doing if success needs to be achieved.

To conclude, the three words that come to my mind whenever I think of great leaders, are Self-confident, Self-effacing, and extremely Company-centric in their thoughts and emotions. Each of us needs to do some introspection and analyze our own leadership styles, and maybe look within to understand whether we want to change some of our traits, if we want to be truly great leaders and builders of successful organizations.