

Leadership Update First Quarter 2010

So its 2010!

Over the Christmas-New Year holiday period I, like many other people, have been keeping abreast of news reports and commentaries about what happened in the “noughties” and what will happen in the next few years. Reminiscence and prognostication!

Of course there has been much on “leaders” and on “leadership”.

Its good to reflect on the past and its also good to ponder the future – as the song said in that old movie “South Pacific”, ‘you’ve gotta have a dream, if you don’t have a dream, how you gonna make a dream come true?’ The danger comes when we allow the past to control the present or when we allow the future to take our eyes off the present’s needs and issues. I used to be a cricket umpire and I found that my decisions were most questionable when I allowed negative feedback from an earlier decision to cloud my judgement or when I thought that perhaps a possibly wrong present call might be ameliorated by a future decision.

A critical component of leadership is communication – as a recent researcher, Colin Rymer, noted in his DBA Thesis, unfortunately most of the material available on leadership fails to discuss this in depth – they seem to take it as “a given”. Perhaps that’s why it seems to be so often ignored – it’s a bit like the old saying: ‘there’s nothing as rare as common sense’.

There are two components of communication – giving and receiving information. Most ‘leaders’ are pretty good at the “giving” part – they can be very clear and concise about what they want or expect and how things are to be done. Recently I heard it suggested that at least one leader’s credo is: “be reasonable, do it my way!” It reminded me that, some years ago, the CEO of a very large organisation to which I was consulting, terminated my assignment after I suggested that perhaps there was a different way of dealing with an issue from the way he was nominating.

But, for a real leader, the most critical part of communication is ‘receiving’.

As we all know, receiving information has two key aspects – questioning and listening. Unfortunately our default methods of questioning and listening are often not very helpful from a leadership perspective.

Our default methods of questioning and listening are designed to help us – not the party we are seeking to lead. This is why, even in disciplinary and/or performance issues, we all too often ask leading questions – questions designed to obtain answers that will fit our model rather than providing the information that is really required.

A few years ago I made a mistake (and, yes, I do remember the other one!) However, seriously, I did make a mistake – I decided to ignore my own iden-

Re-creating leaders and organisations



Douglas G Long

PO Box 459,
Lindfield,
NSW 2070,
AUSTRALIA

Phone:

Int + 61 - (0)412 029 754

Fax:

Int + 61 - (0)2- 9487 6249

E-mail:

douglas@dglong.com

Web:

<http://www.dglong.com>

ity and put all my efforts into promoting a new, unknown entity. Feedback I received failed to register – I wasn't really "listening" when people suggested I was on the wrong track because their comments didn't comply with what I wanted reality to be. I largely ignored the past and allowed the future to totally dominate my decision making. As a result I didn't deal adequately with the present – its just as well I wasn't still standing as a cricket umpire!

In October last year, a friend of many years finally got through to me. Matt Church suggested that if I promoted my own professional practice in the areas in which I excel (such as mentoring, training, public speaking) and continue writing, I could have my cake and eat it too – both I and the other entity could achieve desired results. My apologies to others who gave me similar feedback much earlier and to whom I failed to listen!

So, at the start of 2010, what is my learning from 2009? Use my web, blogs, twitter, social networking, and publications to let people know both what I have done and what I can do – an approach of learning from the past and focusing on the future.

And in the present? Well, this new newsletter format is the first obvious one!

I'm now doing different things so that I can obtain different results.

I'll continue to update my web (<http://www.dglong.com>), and, in addition, I've started to blog (<http://douglasglong.blogspot.com>), to again conduct training workshops, (<http://www.dglong.com/workshops.htm>), to twitter (DouglasGLong), and to publish (<http://www.evancarmichael.com/Leadership/5178/summary.php>).

For me, it's all about being a better leader! I'll ask different types of questions. I'll listen in a different way.

As you have entered 2010, what have you learned from 2009? Where is your focus for 2010? What are you doing today that combines both past experience and future focus?

What are you doing to become a better leader?

I'd love to hear from you.

My Next Workshops

ENROL NOW

[Mentoring today](#)

Next workshop, February 16, 2010 in North Sydney

[Recreating Leaders](#)

Next workshop, March 2, 2010 in North Sydney

Full details at <http://www.dglong.com/workshops.htm>

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