

Leadership Update

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Special points of interest:

A parent abuses a child—whether by word or action—very often "for your own good"—because they confuse what they want and need with what is best for the child.

Some leaders never grow out of this.

Follower Abuse

Last quarter's almost throw-away comment on follower abuse has attracted some attention and a number of people have asked me to elaborate on the concept.

Given that this is an election year in Australia it is probably an apt time to consider how we the people—ordinary followers—often seem to be treated by our leaders in business, politics, religion, education, and other areas of life.

Abraham Lincoln once said: *"You can fool all the people some of the time, and some of the people all the time, but you cannot fool all the people all the time."* It seems this is all too often forgotten by those in positions of trust—"leaders" of

one sort or another.

In Australian politics, Prime Minister **John Howard** seems to think that we will forget the fooling he did in relation to children overboard, weapons of mass destruction, and other scare-mongering tactics he has used to retain power. At the same time, aspiring prime minister, **Kevin Rudd** and the Labor Party, seem to think that we will forget the past relationship Labor has had with destructive trade union policies and practices or the economic mismanagement that still occurs in some Labor controlled States.

In religion, the Catholic Archbishop of Sydney seems to think that in getting educators to agree to

teach only those things that are sanctioned by the Church, we will all forget that, no matter what the Pope may agree to, the Church is not always right in its edicts—think about such people such as Galileo. Similarly those Muslim clerics advocating extremist activities need to remember that the Koran also teaches tolerance and respect.

Examples from the commercial and other worlds could also be quoted.

Follower abuse occurs whenever leaders are involved in manipulation that directly or indirectly furthers their own agenda rather than creating the best possible environment for everyone.

Confused Agendas

Of course, follower abuse depends very much on the point from which it is viewed. Like child abuse, if it is believed by the leader that his or her action is in the best interest of followers, then, in their mind,

abuse has not occurred regardless of the impact their actions have on the followers.

This arises for the same reason as does child abuse. A parent abuses a child—

whether by word or action—very often "for your own good"—because they confuse what they want and need with what is best for the child.

Some leaders never grow out of this.

Strategy, capabilities, customers, competitive advantage

In the creation of an environment in which everyone can succeed—deliberately setting people up for success rather than success being a random variable—there are 4 key aspects that leaders must consider.

The first of these is strategy and that involves a clear understanding and enunciation of an organisation's vision. Strategy sets out, in very broad brush terms, how this vision is to be realised.

The second is capabilities. What capabilities—economic, physical and human—does the organisation have now and what capabilities will it need as it moves to implement its strategy.

Third comes customers—who exactly is the organisation targeting? And, from that, falls out competitive advantage—just why would these people decide to go with one organisation rather than another?

It seems to me that many Australian

“leaders”—at least in the political, religious, and social arenas—seem to forget these basics.

When will those aspiring to political control of Australia enunciate their vision for Australia in, say 20 years? When will they tell us what they are doing to harness the existing and develop the new capabilities necessary for the attaining of this vision? When will they give us a valid (as opposed to one based on fear) reason for choosing their brand as opposed to that of their competitors?

International “Leadership”?

Internationally things seem to be going from “very bad” to “even worse”.

The situation in the Middle East seems to have no solution without significant backdowns by major players. Like it or not, Hamas did win the elections in Gaza and the West Bank and, if we seriously believe in democracy, then we must accept that they are the legitimate government. However this requires courage from the USA, the UN, and Europe as well as compro-

mise from Israel. I seriously doubt whether Israel can have the security to which it is entitled and which it sees as a major issue until Hamas, despite all its shortcomings and violence, is brought directly to the negotiation table and its elected legitimacy is recognised.

The situation in Iraq is also a disaster. Napoleon and Hitler both discovered that logistics—the supply of their troops—ultimately determined suc-

cess against Russia (or the USSR) and it was logistics that brought about their defeat. The British occupation of Philadelphia in the American War of Independence had the same lesson. Cannot the USA learn from its own history?

As I made clear in *Leaders: diamonds or cubic zirconia* “diamond leaders know when to admit they have made a mistake and then seek to correct it.

We need “diamond leaders” at the international level.

“International Leadership”!

On Wednesday June 7, Australia's SBS TV station ran a program, “Dateline”, which showed two great examples of leadership.

The first of these was interviews with both Ian Paisley and Gerry Adams in Northern Ireland. Here two people who were once sworn enemies discussed how and why they were now

able to work together and bring about a peaceful situation after 40 years of “The Troubles”.

The second of these was interviews with Israeli and Palestinian “Combatants for Peace”—a group of combat veterans—who have come to see the futility of the current situation and who are working together to im-

prove understandings and to try and find a peaceful solution to the current problem.

These people are what I would characterise as true international leaders—people who move above the current situation and seek a new way forward.

Monochrome or multicolour?

I have written before about the concept of Spiral Dynamics. An important point made by both Don Beck and Chris Cowan—authors of the book of the same name—is that most people take a monochrome view of life. They see that most people fluctuate through a range of monochromatic world views over the course of any one day. They may take a legalistic “one best way” in their religious perspectives; they may take a “family first” approach in societal matters; they might

take a “might is right” approach when driving their SUV, etc.

Unfortunately this monochrome view dominates too many world affairs—George Bush takes a monochrome view when he condemns the ‘insurgents’ in Iraq and Afghanistan for doing no more than the various resistance movements did against Germany in the Second World War—use every means possible to rid their countries of hated invaders. Al Qaeda do exactly the same from their per-

spective. Similarly those opposing stem cell research take a monochrome view of the ethical and moral aspects of such activities.

Beck and Cowan point out that we cannot solve today’s problems from a limited world view—trying to do so ensures that today’s solutions are tomorrow’s problems. We need to move to a more inclusive framework if problems are to be solved.

That is what the SBS Dateline program portrayed. Multicolour leadership!

Open or Closed?

Beck and Cowan point out that movement through the various monochrome to multicolour perspectives happens because a person comes to realise that their current world view is not enabling them to solve problems—its almost as though things seem to be going through a continuous loop. At that point they face the challenge to change their world view—to seek a different way of thinking.

When this challenge arises, people either accept it (they are ‘open’); they may be prepared to consider it (they are ‘arrested’), or they rebuff it (they are ‘closed’).

For many years Paisley and Adams as well as the Israeli and Palestinians in Combatants for Peace were in the ‘closed’ situation.

Today they are ‘open’ and solutions

become possible.

I look at George Bush and the other leaders involved in the invasion and occupation of Iraq, Afghanistan, the Palestinian Territories, Darfur, and other areas of turmoil and I see people who are ‘closed’. The result is chaos.

The role of true leaders is to continue to work with those caught in the gamma trap to help them find a way forward.

Moving from “Closed” to “Open”

This movement from “closed” to “open” cannot be pushed or engineered. It must occur naturally—and it can!

Paisley, Adams, and the Combatants for Peace are evidence of this. Those like me who are old enough to remember Paisley as the firebrand who

seemed to want nothing less than the total annihilation of any group that failed to agree with him, cannot help but be impressed by the transformation that has occurred.

Beck and Cowan talk of the ‘gamma trap’ in which people can see no way out of the current situation and so they

perpetuate current behaviour even though it is obviously destructive. I believe Paisley was in that trap for a while. I believe many world “leaders” are in it today.

The role of true leaders is to continue to work with those caught in the gamma trap to help them find a way forward.

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“Vision” and “Communication”

Which brings us back to the issues of vision and communication.

If we are to create an environment in which “closed leaders” can make the transition to “open” then we have an obligation to set forth a positive vision and to communicate this in a way that they can understand and buy in to it.

Unfortunately most of the visions today for the middle east and other world hotspots seem to be “negative visions” - they talk about withdrawing troops etc without offering a positive alternative. Again, as Beck and Cowan make clear, getting rid of something is not the same as getting what you want. If you doubt this, consider Iraq. The coalition of the willing got rid of Sad-

dam Hussein but rather than stability and democracy they have got instability and have turned Iraq into “terrorist central”.

This is the dilemma facing all of us who want peace throughout the world. We can see what is wrong with the current situation: we know what is causing the instability and violence: we know that interventionist foreign policies are doomed to failure: we know that keeping troops in Iraq and Afghanistan is exacerbating the situation. But what have we got to put in their place?

The change in Combatants for Peace came because of their own first-hand experiences. The change in Paisley

and Adams came as a result of all parties talking with each other. Through such talks it becomes possible to develop a joint vision and then to become partners in realising this vision. Once the leaders start to live this vision then communication takes place in a way that the waverers can understand and start to accept. This is happening in Northern Ireland.

Rather than invoking sanctions; rather than refusing to accept the result of democratic elections; rather than focusing on what keeps everyone apart; rather than demonizing those with whom we disagree; we need to find ways of meeting face to face, slowly developing trust, and jointly find paths forward. This is the challenge for all leaders.