

ETHICS FOR PROSPERITY

Being Whole

In the post 9/11 era and amidst the current business ethics crisis, it is no longer possible to fake credibility. Trust is now a function of a person's and an organization's true ethics. To be believable is no longer advertising and public relations. People nowadays demand substance. The sooner executives get this message, and the more promptly they understand that this in fact has always been a human axiom, the quicker will our economic prosperity return to a DOW of eleven thousand.

Today's executives are required to be whole persons and create companies that are whole. Excesses in one area -- such as ruthless reliance the facts and the numbers exclusively -- and neglect in another -- such as ignorantly minimizing the emotional catastrophes that accompany downsizing and M & As -- predict an enterprise's Wall Street ruin. Being razor sharp strategically -- as was Enron, but lacking the common courage to put wild risks into cool perspective -- cascaded a company from the crowning jewel of opulence to the dark abyss of bankruptcy. Refusing to be whole is the recipe for meltdown.

Incomplete human beings, skewed in their personal development, become defective managers. To survive in today's ethics breakdown requires executives who mobilize their full human potential.

Answers lie in courageous decisions -- to be authentically *openminded*, to make self-transcending *commitments*, and to be responsible to help co-create a *communal culture*. That is ethics in action!

Specifically, how does one do this? How can you increase real profits with true ethics?

Attitudes

In a hotel in New York, everywhere is written "Attitude is Everything." It's words. No one feels it. This truth is neither understood nor executed. The true leader sees this yardstick as a human value, a form of love and service, and not as a PR gimmick. As the former, it works in business. As a latter, it is a fraud that alienates.

If a tree is dying, don't just prune it but examine the soil. If a building is tilting, don't just analyze the steel beams but check the foundations. If aspirin does not lower the fever, take X-rays and blood samples. And if a business is failing examine the leadership attitudes for lack of ethical excellence and ethical greatness.

Authentic leaders teach messages to their people which transform the company culture.

Authentic leaders help awaken these attitudes in their people.

All leadership attitudes are needed. All leadership attitudes are ethical values. One alone will not do. Attitudes precede techniques. How-tos without right attitudes are empty mechanical gestures. Computers do not lead people. If that should ever happen, civilization will be finished, humanity will have disappeared, and there no longer is anything left to lead!

What then are the foundational ethical attitudes that make for leadership authenticity? They are four so-called Leadership Diamond® attitudes: *Freedom, Principle, Realism, and Grand Strategy.*

1. Freedom Is the Foundation.

The foundation of all successful leadership is the full-bodied understanding and application of the fact that as human beings we are free. We are born with free will, we have free will, we can never relinquish our free will. Until our dying day will we have free will. Free will is a clear experience. Free will makes ethics possible. We don't know where free will comes from. Free will is the source of our power and the origin of our anxiety. We may not know exactly what free will is nor precisely where it comes from, but we do know that it is overwhelmingly our deepest truth as persons, as human beings. And the most profound act our Country asks of us is that we be prepared to give our sacred lives for the preservation of our Nation's freedom! Usual leadership theory tell us how to influence people's thoughts and people's feelings. And leadership coaching is to help leaders convince personnel to *think* and to *feel* in ways helpful to a business' bottom line: *think* of the mission of the company and *feel* loyal and joyful towards the company. What is missing, however, and grossly so, in fact, critically, is the *will*.

We believe that workers think and feel, have ideas and emotions. But that is not enough. We have in modern times ignored the much more fundamental reality of a third phenomenon in the soul, in addition to thoughts and feelings, and that is the *will*, the *will* that is *free*. And without a clear understanding of free will, and the expertise to talk lucidly about free will to the people for whom you are responsible, leadership is a desiccated recipe.

Leadership is to *know, learn, and teach the ascending ladder of freedom, free will, consequences, responsibility, ownership, accountability, and ultimately choosing accountability for the sake of both financial necessity and existential honor.*

Here, in the inner zone of freedom and free will, lies the bedrock of your health -- of your body, of your loves, and of your pocketbook. As leader, you are a secular apostle preaching the power of freedom. This is the true and final meaning of ethics in business.

2. Leaders Choose Principle

Leaders freely choose to live by principle. The famous eighteenth century German ethicist Immanuel Kant wrote "Two things fill the mind with ever-increasing wonder and awe, the more often and the more intensely the mind of thought is drawn to them: the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me."

The moral law within me! Don't we all sense it, if we hold still and listen in the silence? We all have a conscience. It draws us like a magnet to principle. It is never selfish. We do not know where it comes from, although we may have diverse theories. Human beings surprisingly tend to agree about what it says. Conscience and the moral law have a mysterious draw on us, a strange claim. We can, because of, it distinguish good from evil, right from wrong, ought from ought not. It is in some inexplicable way related importantly to respect, pride, dignity, and self-esteem.

We seem to understand that we have a duty, a destiny, a task in life -- even though there can be debate about its precise content. It is aroused by words such as "fairness," "justice," "equality," and "liberty." The *Declaration of Independence* and the *Constitution* resonate movingly to something inside that can only be called our conscience.

Unless we respond to that part of our inner, our psychic, our mental equipment -- as powerful as it is also enigmatic, as dramatic as it is also unavoidable -- we skirt the perilous edge that we in fact have thrown away our very life. What horror! Authentic leaders turn back from greed and selfishness, from narcissism and naïve values, to return instead to a serious investigation of the things that matter most, of what is enduring, of what is genuinely worthy, of what is honest, of what is generous, and what feels clean.

True value is not what one person or one sect dictates to the rest of us. True value results from honest and collective examination of who we are, where we come from, and where we are going. The poet Rilke said, "Do not seek answers; live the questions." After 9/11 and the business ethics crises, leaders can no longer avoid this stentorian call to authenticity.

3. Realism Is a Way of Life

Most pervasive in the late nineties has been the ruthlessness of realism, hardly requiring analysis and description. In the US' extreme capitalism we had vastly overdone it. Europe's more socialistic outlook had tried to tone it down. Europe's economies are failing because realism has not been sufficiently emphasized. And the US economy is failing because there realism has been excessively overemphasized. What Aristotle called the Golden Mean has

been missing on both sides of the Atlantic.

Being fully in touch with the real world is the psychological and psychiatric definition of mental health. And yet no person can stand the anxiety of being one hundred percent aware of what is real. It can be as searing as staring directly into the sun.

Realism is more than the numbers: it means you never lie to yourself, you do not deny the truth about yourself. You know that when something hurts, when you get inordinately angry, upset, i.e., enraged, when you turn irrational, it is because you are threatened fundamentally, for you secretly agree with the insult and the indictment. You can no longer let it go and, in fact, as a last resort, you expel this shadow insight about yourself, forcibly and in despair, from the presence of your consciousness. Each person has a site of inferiority. There, when that point is touched, you are sensitive, and there, when reminded, you become virulently defensive. There you say, not that you *think* you are inferior, but there in your depraved image of yourself you say that in fact you *are* inferior! But you keep the secret and get furious at anyone who so much as dares to point it out to you.

Coming to terms with that dark reality, accepting that perception of yourself, is conversely, indeed, the very heart of your strength and your power as a rightful leader of men and women. Once reconciled with your shadow, you can take criticism, fair or unfair, you can tolerate put downs, deserved or not, you can endure defeat, expected or not, and you can survive disgrace and humiliation.

To get there is realism beyond the statistics and strikes right at the core of your emotional intelligence. People with power are both adulated and hated above what is appropriate and beyond of what is reasonable. They can stomach it, even thrive on it and learn from it, and teach others how under such circumstances not only to preserve their dignity but actually to magnify it. For to restore your inner self-respect when logic is against it is to “pull yourself up by your bootstraps.” That is why life confronts us with its tests and furnishes us with their messages.

This is that corner of the soul which receives well its baptism of fire.

Have you passed the test?

4. Grand Strategy Is a Rare Virtue

Little is more clearly the mark of an authentic leader than the commitment to Grand Strategy. We use an exercise that unfailingly enlarges the scope of the executive mind. Take any big news story, the kind that mesmerizes the population -- the War on Terror, Weapons of Mass Destruction, the once envied and lionized CEOs now facing censure and threatened with jail sentences, the Gulf War, an airplane crash, a major Olympic victory, an election

upset, a sensational trial, the impeachment of a President, suicide bombers, and of course 9/11 -- and ask the overwhelming question: *what deep lessons are there for you in how you conduct your business and your life? What messages, what learning, about the things that you control can you derive from an enlarged perspective of this or any other monumental and historic event?* The Gulf War taught us the importance of high technology and the use of overwhelming force. The War on Terror teaches us that worldly inequalities lead to dangerous instabilities affecting everyone. Impeachment teaches us that dubious actions have unexpected and dramatic consequences, and sports victories teach us the power of persistence, commitment, focus, and dedication. You then ask yourself, in your depth, *how does that today apply to me and to my business?*

To do this Grand Strategy exercise with inspiration and creative innovation is indeed an uncommon attribute.

What news item grabs your attention? What does it mean in the larger course of history? What does it teach you about managing your own business?

Actions: Doing Things with Words

You lead through language. Language is all the action you have. But it has power. You engage workers at every opportunity -- passing in the hallway, at the coffee break, the water cooler, lunch, in meetings, and memos -- in what we call ILC or *intelligent leadership conversations*. You talk knowledgeably and authoritatively about free will and responsibility, of principle and conscience, of hard facts and self-knowledge, of grand strategy and innovation, and of greatness and chaos, as the ineradicable structures of the human mind. You talk through stories and through metaphors -- sports, politics, religion, entertainment, adventure, family, career moves -- and relate that to work and company. You let everyone know that "this is how we do business in this organization!"