



The Call To Leadership In Turbulent Times

By
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Today's often frantic pace of business, aptly described by many as "permanent whitewater" has never before produced such a need for true leadership. Add to this the fall-out from the current global economic crisis and this need has shifted to an all out clarion call for leaders to rise to a higher level of leadership thinking and action.

Remarkably, this whitewater pace has also produced an unparalleled opportunity for leaders and teams to become more fully engaged and to collectively reap the benefits of good leadership practices. Here in lies perhaps the first shift in leadership thinking that can guide today's leader onto the path to great leadership. To be sure, the multitude of distractions that most leaders face today can and often do inhibit the capacity to see, let alone discover, this opportunity. With the alternative encompassing such outcomes as lost productivity, burn-out and even business failure, it makes good sense for leaders to explore the upside of today's whitewater pace.

Expanding one's thinking to include a broader view of what leadership really means to both the leader and his / her team is another important embarkation point on the journey to great leadership. Napoleon once said that "true leaders are dispensers of hope" Clearly, if there was ever a time when your team needed hope it's now. In fact it's probably safe to say that your team is hungry for hope. After all, the good news deficit at most organizations today is at an all time high. Take the good news deficit test in your world of work. Simply assess the ratio of good news to bad news (rumor mill included) that your employees see, hear or read in a given week. More than likely, the good news deficit in your organization is fairly high too. Good leadership is of course more than this but it's an important consideration as you help your team to discover the opportunity.



Exploring the values connection among your team is a meaningful starting point in the shift from a new level of leadership thinking to a new level of leadership action. In all of my 20+ years as a student of leadership, I have yet to discover a more powerful way of building community and increasing engagement. Simply put, when employees are grounded and guided by shared values, they produce better outcomes and are able to navigate the turbulent waters of change and ambiguity with ease and grace.

Taking the time to examine your leadership thinking and related actions is not just good leadership, it's good business too. As we make our way through the whitewaters of leadership in the 21st century, we may just learn to sail if we honor the huge responsibility of the leadership path. Our teams and our careers are counting on it.

Five more things that you can do now:

1. Initiate a discussion with your team about their view of leadership and what they think are the key characteristics of great leadership. Look for linkage to your leadership strategy.
2. Seek feedback from your team and peer group about the good news deficit at your organization and encourage everyone to share ideas on how to reduce or eliminate the deficit across your team and organization.
3. Seek feedback from a trusted friend / colleague about your leadership blind spots.
4. Incorporate a "values discussion" in your next staff meeting and encourage your team to identify the top 3 shared values of the group.
5. Make a list of all of the things that your team does well and acknowledge each person's contribution to your success.

About David A. O'Brien

David is President of CT based WorkChoice Solutions, a nationally recognized provider of leadership and team effectiveness consulting services. His first book, *The Navigator's Handbook, 101 Leadership Lessons for Work & Life* was released in July 2008 and is available on-line and in bookstores nationwide. His 2nd book, *Tapping Your Leadership Wisdom* is expected in bookstores next year. To learn more, please visit WorkChoice Solutions on line at www.workchoicesolutions.com