

How to Live an Enlightened Leadership Life

Think about it, much of what we do in life calls for some sort of leadership. And the quality of our leadership is important whether we're fulfilling a leadership role at work, home, place of worship or in volunteer activities.

For years, I'd been looking for a magic bullet to enable people to improve their leadership capabilities. Now, I think I've finally found one. It's a straightforward set of principles and a method to document your own wisdom while accessing a new and deeper awareness of what it takes for you to achieve and sustain leadership greatness.

What I've learned is our strengths are drawn from our own beliefs or motivating values, (what we care about that drives how we go about doing things in life.) But, those same strengths have the potential to turn into weaknesses if they are our sole focus. And, that makes us vulnerable and can compromise our effectiveness over time.

The magic bullet: It's about tapping the power of the "and." This is an ability to see and act from two very different motivating values simultaneously. This bigger picture changes how you see and think, and, it gives you more options in dealing with the complex challenges you face as a leader.

While some of us were fortunate enough to be endowed with this exceptional ability to see multiple and contradictory viewpoints, the rest of us are more apt to fall prey to our own strong, singular instincts about what we see as the "right" way to do things.

That's the beauty of the method I use called Polarity Management®, it provides an easy way to make visible and accessible what may have been hidden in the past.

Here's a personal example:

Consider the values pair of Candor and Tact. As a leader, I am strongly motivated by my belief in Candor. Because I value Candor, I am to the point with people and they always know where I stand. There are no surprises or hidden agendas. I see that is very positive so I am completely Candid.

As a matter of fact, I am so completely Candid that I don't pay any attention to something very different, yet needed, and that is the use of Tact. Without Tact, I run the risk of becoming "brutally honest." This lack of Tact on my part diminishes my effectiveness by angering others or hurting their feelings. So what I need to do is be both Candid and Tactful – and recognize I need to have an on-going balance.

To develop a powerful game plan, you start with the understanding and appreciation for your own motivational value and then expand your awareness to the existence of an Interdependent Value.

Once you raise your awareness, you are able to see a more complete picture of how to handle those chronic leadership situations rather than allowing your strengths to become your weaknesses.

You shine a light on your blind spots by seeing both values in the interdependent pair. Most likely, these blind spots are what have been keeping you back, maybe even causing you to repeat the same leadership mistakes over and over. As the light is shone, many leaders experience a "flash of the obvious" when the missing interdependent value is revealed.

What's key is the ability to see a more complete picture of yourself, keep the two values in balance over time, and know when to shift your emphasis from one value to the other. That on-going shift is what creates synergy and lifts you to a higher level of awareness and performance you might never have imagined.

Margaret Seidler, a nationally-recognized speaker, is an organization development consultant, master trainer and author. Her interest in helping other professionals become more effective leaders began in the early 1990s, when she recognized the need to improve her own leadership skills. Her consulting practice focuses on creating higher organization performance by helping people manage the complexities of organizational life through self-awareness and self-management.

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