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Leadership and What Matters Most

By Bill Treasurer



Bill Treasurer

Imagine you were presented with an opportunity to speak in front of an audience of leaders who were just starting out on their leadership journey. You'll get to share your experience and advice for helping the leaders to maximize their influence and effectiveness. You only have an hour, including time for questions, so you'll need to limit your advice to presenting three leadership essentials. That's right, just three key leadership pointers. What advice would you share?

This is exactly the challenge – and opportunity – that I was faced with when I was invited by The University of Tampa to speak at its annual Leadership Summit, hosted by Sykes College of Business TECO Energy Center for Leadership. Over the course of the last 30 years, I've been fortunate to have worked with thousands of leaders who successfully navigated through the challenges new leaders face. The lessons that they've taught me have found their way into my leadership books, including my newest, *Leadership Two Words at a Time: Simple Truths for Leading Complicated People*.

What follows are the three leadership essentials that I shared during my talk, each with a two-word header. Before sharing the three essentials, it's useful to consider the plight that new leaders often face.

The Plight of New Leaders

Most new leaders are wholly unprepared for the unique challenges of transitioning into their first leadership role. Getting promoted into a leadership role is often the reward for delivering exceptional individual performance. A high-potential person gets noticed for working harder and producing more than their peers and gets

tapped to lead a team. But very few new leaders are given training to equip them with the foundational skills necessary for effectively leading others. Instead, new leaders often strain to figure things out with minimal support.

Complicating the plight of new leaders is the fact that, unlike when you were an individual contributor, you are now responsible for the output and performance of people, and people can be petty, selfish, unreliable, hyper-sensitive and whiny. Grown-ups can act like big babies. Not all the time, mind you, but definitely when they don't get their way, and, certainly, more than should be expected of adults. Too often the biggest inhibitor of great results isn't lack of resources or a clear plan, it's the idiosyncratic personalities of team members clashing with one another or pulling in different directions. Given these challenges, at least initially, it is common for new leaders to flounder as they face the job's complexities and contend with complicated people.

Three Leadership Essentials

A lot of common leadership advice focuses on helping individuals become leaders. But becoming a leader is entirely different than successfully enduring in a leadership role. The three essentials I shared with the budding leaders at The University of Tampa were focused on helping them be successful in a leadership role for the duration of their leadership tenure. I'm confident these essentials can help you at whatever stage you may be on your leadership journey.

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Leadership and What Matters Most

No. 1: Cultivate Composure

Nobody likes to be led by a short-fused hot-head. Emotions are powerful things, and you'll do a lot of damage to the people you're leading if you don't have any control over yours. That's not to say you need to be an automaton. Passion is a powerful leadership ingredient, and people want to follow passionate leaders. But when passion turns into uncontrolled anger, people will become afraid of you, tiptoeing around you for fear of setting you off.

There are a lot of stressors at work. Your bosses will be pressuring you for larger and better results. Your direct reports will be pleading for greater responsibility, higher compensation and developmental feedback. And your family will want more of your time. Faced with such mounting pressures, some days you'll feel like even the tiniest trigger will set you off. Cultivating composure involves a daily practice of getting centered so you can keep your emotions under your control, instead of the other way around.

Try this: ease your way into your day. Instead of chugging a gallon of coffee and wolfing down a breakfast burrito, take a moment to tune up your mind. Start with 5 minutes of silence. Listen to what's going on in your surroundings. Enjoy some stillness. Then read a single page from a daily reflection book (there are a bunch of them out there). The idea is to take hold of some sanity so that when the crazy starts at work, you're not all caught up in it.

No. 2: Build Trust

Talk to enough leaders and you're bound to hear them tell you that the key to business and leadership success is relationships. As a leader you've got to have strong relationships with your direct reports, customers and key stakeholders, vendors and subcontractors, and a whole host of other people. It makes no difference whether you're an introvert or have more of an engineering

kind of mind, you cannot afford to ignore relationship-building. And that means you have to become skilled at building trust.

Start by considering what erodes trust; lying or shading the truth, unkept promises and broken commitments, speaking bad about others behind their backs, being temperamental or intimidating, etc. Take inventory of when you've done some of those things and the impact it had on people around you. Being distrustful or untrustworthy always has a steep cost.

Next, identify what factors you consider before you put your trust in others. What criteria do you use to gauge whether or not to trust someone? Identifying the criteria is as simple as completing this sentence, "I will trust you when..."

Trust is one of those give-to-get concepts. Instead of waiting for others to prove themselves, start by focusing on being a trustworthy person. Listen with your full attention and presence. Hold confidences faithfully. Deliver on your commitments. Don't freak out when you don't get your way. Treat everyone with respect, even if they don't reciprocate. If you do all that, there's a good chance that you'll reap the very trust that you've sown.

No. 3: Encourage Courage

One of the reasons building trust is so critically important is that part of your job as a leader is to make people uncomfortable. Let me explain. As a leader you need to help the people who are reporting to you, and the organization you serve, to grow. Yet, people and organizations don't grow in a zone of comfort. They grow, progress, and evolve in a zone of discomfort. The more trust you've built, the more receptive people will be to whatever uncomfortable changes you and the organization you serve require. Virginia "Ginni" Rometty, who served as both executive chairwoman and CEO of IBM, once said, "Comfort and growth don't coexist."

My company, Giant Leap Consulting, is a courage-building consulting firm. Our aim is to drive our fear so that people can get superior

results. Courage is a key business virtue. Courage is what it takes to step up to challenges, offer innovative ideas, and provide candid feedback. One thing my company has learned over time is that encouraging courage isn't about cheering people on, it's about activating people's courage. As it relates to leadership, we propose there are two kinds of leaders: Fillers and Spillers. Fillers are those leaders who activate people's courage by elevating their standards, assigning stretch goals, and holding them accountable to their own potential. In other words, Fillers nudge people out into their discomfort zone so as to help them grow. Spillers, conversely, almost exclusively rely on fear to motivate, ensure compliance and drive results. They aren't really leaders, they're rulers. They use fear to subjugate and control people. By stoking people's fears, Spillers displace people's courage, causing them to be discouraged.

To encourage courage, start by setting compelling and challenging goals. Be sure to make clear connections between each individual's efforts and the goals that their work is furthering. Invest time with each individual, collaborating with them to identify new skills and capabilities that will help them advance both the challenging goals and their careers. Nudge them out into their discomfort zones to ensure their continued growth and development. When they make honest mistakes, don't degrade them. They don't need you to make them feel worse than they likely already do. Instead, help them draw out whatever important lessons the mistake can yield. In other words, encourage courage by drawing on the cultivated composure and built trust that were shared in points 1 and 2.

The good news is, though you may not have been handed a leadership playbook, you're traveling along a path upon which many other leaders before you have progressed. By applying the three leadership essentials I shared in this article, and with the budding leaders at The University of Tampa, your transition into a leadership role will be smooth and your leadership career will be durable...and maybe even a little fun.

About the author:

Bill Treasurer is a bestselling author and founder of Giant Leap Consulting Inc. Treasurer's newest book is *Leadership Two Words at a Time: Simple Truths for Leading Complicated People*, which recently won the Gold Award from the North

American Book Awards. Treasurer's leadership and courage-building workshops have been taught to thousands of leaders across the globe, and his clients include NASA, Accenture, eBay, Saks Fifth Avenue, UBS Bank, Spanx, Walsh

Construction, Lenovo, Southern Company, the Social Security Administration, and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Learn more at: CourageBuilding.com.

Leadership Developed Through Mentorship

By Stanley Gray, CEO and President, Urban League of Hillsborough County

I am not one who believes that there are natural leaders or that people are natural born leaders. I truly believe leadership is developed and learned through a combination of association and study. My aim with this article is to focus on the development of leadership through my associations, such as the ones I had through my mentorship relationships. Mentorship is an excellent leadership development tool because there is an established and validated level of trust from which to develop an individual.

My first mentor was a man who became my father when I was 6 years old. While I do remember our initial meetings and interactions, there was nothing really special or memorable about those interactions as most were with other relatives and in group settings. He was just another adult for me to listen to and treat like any adult who had entered into my life. For me, this changed the day that I was officially adopted. When we left the court, we went to one of his relative's home where I had a broiled hamburger, with mayonnaise, mustard and relish on it. As I had never had such a hamburger, I said to myself that I was going to do whatever my new father said. In retrospect, this was truly my recognition and the importance of the principles of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. For whatever reason, I knew/assumed that my basic needs would always be taken care of.

Simply said, I was my father's project. It was made perfectly clear to me on an on-going basis that there was only one option for my performance whether it was in school, menial jobs or even with household chores-- excellence was the only option. I was to do whatever I did, to the best level that I could do it. While knowing that my efforts could, should and would be judged, I learned that my best effort had to be better than anyone else's. While he was my father, he was more like a mentor, as there was not a lot of loving physical contact such as hugging, kissing or hand holding. His goal was to develop me. The main performance principle that I have even today is whatever I do, I do it well and do it to the best of my talents, abilities and resources so that it will be judged to be the best effort or results of anyone.

My second mentor came about through one of my father's associations. I got a summer job on Capitol Hill as an intern when I was 15 years old. From day one, it was blatantly obvious to me that I stood out for a number of reasons. I was young, I was an African American (A.A.), and I was not a college student as most of my peers who worked for senators were. It did not take long for me to realize that I was not a token to be paraded around and shown off as an illustration of affirmative action. Time has proven over and over again that the senator did not and would not probably ever care what most people thought. I can honestly say

that I learned to emulate that from him. I was given responsibilities and

assignments that while they stretched and made me uncomfortable, they were in fact building on my abilities and experiences. Yet, through my planned and constant one-on-one meetings with the senator and his administrative assistant, it became obvious they were focusing in on my "hows and whys." They both openly talked to me in a direct manner about ethics, attire and financial management through indirect examples. They were the very first people who were not African American that showed care and concern about me and my preparations for life in an open manner. The conversations were in fact two-way. I was asked on a regular basis about my opinions and about my "whys" on a host of topics. I learned how to verbally defend my positions even when they were counter to the senator's.

A strong lesson that I was taught in a focused but indirect manner was one about how poor financial management reflects on your potential opportunities and levels of ascendance. There was a Native American lady who worked in the office, who, like me, was not an obvious fit for continuity.



Stanley Gray

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Leadership Developed Through Mentorship

She had proven administrative skills to assist her with her responsibilities, but her poor financial management pushed her to exile herself from many of the extracurricular opportunities that were available to staff members. The noted extracurricular activities were, in fact, designed for team building. This exposure not only taught me to keep my personal business my business but, the importance of living within ones means.

I kept in touch with the senator until his death. The last time we spoke, which we did at his home, he mixed me up with the Stanley that he went to elementary school with. There was never any doubt that the senator saw me as a person, one worth his efforts to develop. I am proud to be the recipient of his effort and concerns. As my mentor, he kept tabs on my time at the Naval Academy, the United States Marine Corps (USMC) and as a civilian. And yes, I have his concern and initiatives in me today.

I can honestly say that in my time as a Marine officer, I can claim no Marine officer as a mentor until I was a senior captain with eight years of service. I was on all but a few occasions, one

of a few (2 or 3) A.A. officers in the units I was assigned to. However, in most cases, I was the only A.A. officer in my unit in my first 5 years of service. It was obvious to me that I was an outlier because I could not participate in conversations about past events because I was never invited to the events. The events were usually after hours, including on weekends and in the homes of senior officers. As a result of these obvious exclusions, I became functionally paranoid. When I was in a reconnaissance (Recon) unit, I was often asked two questions: Can you swim, and how did you get here (Recon)? Yes, I was the only A.A. officer and one of three A.A.s in the entire battalion. As a Navy-trained scuba diver authorized to wear both a scuba badge and jump wings, as well as being special operations qualified, I found these constant questions offensive. I purposely analyzed and probably over analyzed everything said or done to me to keep my focus and direction going forward.

I learned how important empathy was as a leader from a subordinate Marine who was not in my unit. He was close friends with of one of my Marines who ended up going to prison for killing his girlfriend's husband. As overall background, we had a host of such Marines in the late 70s. In my first two years in the USMC, I had a murderer, rapist, and thief along with a host of

drug abusers. The subject Marine asked me one day, "How was I going to affect him"? He shared that I could only take so much money from him, he still would have food to eat and clothes to wear and a bed to sleep in. His words urged me to define my operational parameters that would have the flexibility to accommodate individuals. I learned that the wider the axis, the more flexible I could be to accommodate the Marines under my responsibility.

Color this share with my reasons and practice of my functional paranoia. I learned that as a leader, one has to be concerned with the results more than the acclaim of the accomplishments from yet another unlikely mentor. A senior enlisted Marine, who again was not in my unit, shared some words with me one day. "Sir, don't worry cream always rises to the top, S—t floats but it always dissipates." These words got my attention and stayed with me for life. Prepare hard, work hard and let the chips land where they may land.

My leadership style has most definitely been influenced by individuals who were attracted to me and wanted me to develop be a better person. I have truly been blessed and benefited by my mentors and our associations. As for me, I have used the feelings and lessons that I've learned and felt from others to help others in assisting them with their progress and aspirations.



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Leadership Lessons from the Ancient Egyptians and Discoveries of Their Precious Treasures

By Bella L. Galperin, Senior Associate Director/TECO Energy Center for Leadership; Dana Professor, Management



Bella L. Galperin

It's the oldest archaeological museum in the Middle East and houses the largest collection of Pharaonic antiquities in the world. The Egyptian Museum in Cairo contains many of the world's most remarkable relics. I was fortunate to visit the museum in early January when I presented at the conference of the Africa Academy of Management (AFAM), which has a mission "to foster the general advancement of knowledge and scholarship in the theory and practice of management among African scholars and/or academics interested in management and organization issues in Africa." During our visit to the Egyptian Museum, I was happy to see so many important artifacts, including the Amenhotep III and Tiye Colossal Statue, Statue of Hatshepsut and Khafre Enthroned. But at some point, I noticed it wasn't the artifacts that captured my attention. It was the stories about how they were discovered and what they conveyed about leadership and power in ancient Egypt. I couldn't help but think about how these stories connect to the present and what they tell about being a leader today. Here are three takeaways from my visit.

1. Leaders must embrace unexpected discoveries and adapt quickly to new information.

Coincidence has always played a key role in the field of archaeology (Dashish, 2021). Throughout Egyptian history, there has been several examples where coincidence played a central role in unearthing significant discoveries. The horse of Howard Carter, the discoverer of King Tutankhamun's tomb tripped into a hole, which led to stairs of a tomb where Mentuhotep II's tomb was discovered in 1900. Similarly in 1922, the donkey of a young boy, Hussein Abdel Rasoul, helped archaeologists make the greatest discovery in the 20th century- the unveiling of the tomb of the golden King Tutankhamun (Dashish, 2021).

Unexpected discoveries can be very relevant to leadership in a few ways. First, unexpected discoveries reveal new opportunities. A good leader should be able to recognize and seize on these opportunities to help their organization grow and succeed. Second, when unexpected discoveries occur, a leader must be able to quickly adapt to the new information and adjust their plans and strategies accordingly. A leader who can adapt quickly to new information is more likely to be successful in their role. Third, unexpected discoveries can also spark innovation and creativity within a team or organization. A leader who fosters a culture of innovation and encourages their team to explore new ideas and approaches can often turn unexpected discoveries into significant advantages. For example, the Post-it Note was invented by accident. Spencer Silver, an employee researcher at 3M, was trying to create a stronger adhesive for the aerospace industry. Instead, he ended up being able to create a weak adhesive that could easily be removed without residue. Finally, when unexpected discoveries reveal problems or obstacles, a leader must be able to quickly analyze the situation and develop a plan to address the issue. A good leader can navigate these challenges with ease, inspiring confidence in their team and earning their trust.

2. Leaders must challenge the norms to bring about innovation and have a positive impact.

Hatshepsut, who ruled between 1479-1458 BCE, was the first female ruler of ancient Egypt to reign as a male with the full authority of pharaoh. Hatshepsut's (rhyming with "hot chicken soup" as an easy mnemonic suggested the tour guide) name means, "Foremost of noble women." She began her reign as regent to her stepson, Thutmose III, who would succeed her (Mark, 2016). While ancient Egyptian society provided women with far

more respect than most other societies at the time, it was still

uncommon for a woman to be pharaoh. Hatshepsut was required to spend her reign securing her position and fighting to be seen as a legitimate ruler. Hatshepsut made sure she was portrayed in pictures as a man, with a male body and even a false beard (PBS, 2006). Despite the challenges, Hatshepsut's reign is marked by the construction of a number of magnificent buildings and artwork, the establishment of solid trade relations with foreign nations, the consolidation of economic and military gains of Egypt and being the first known tree specialist in ancient history (World History Edu, 2022).

Hatshepsut's determination and confidence helped her challenge the norms to bring about positive change. Hatshepsut was a woman who ruled in a male-dominated society, but she did not let the status quo discourage her from achieving her goals to lead ancient Egypt and later to be known as one of the great builders of the era. Hatshepsut was a "constructive deviant" of her time. While workplace deviance is generally viewed as negative and can harm organizational performance (e.g. theft and sabotage), there may be some instances where it can have a positive impact. Constructive deviance is defined as voluntary behavior that violates significant norms with the intent of improving the well-being of an organization, its members, or both (Galperin, 2012). A leader who challenges the status quo or takes risks may be considered deviant in some contexts, but this behavior can also lead to innovation and positive change within an organization. Hatshepsut was known for her innovative ideas and projects.

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She commissioned the construction of a number of impressive structures, such as the Temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahri, which was considered one of the greatest architectural achievements of ancient Egypt.

3. Leaders must focus on the task but also lead with the heart.

The statue often referred to as “Khafre Enthroned” is one of the most significant and iconic surviving sculptures from ancient Egypt (Newman, 2023). The statue portrays the Fourth Dynasty (ca. 2500 BCE) pharaoh Khafre slightly larger-than-life and seated upon a lion-pawed throne. The sides of the throne are decorated with the *sema-tawy* (translated as “Uniter of the Two Lands”) hieroglyph, meant to represent the king’s duty to literally “bind” the constituent parts of Egypt together under one authority. With a sense of calmness, Pharaoh Khafre sits atop with a right clenched fist and a left opened hand. Some believe the clenched fist symbolizes power, control, and might, while the opened hand symbolizes kindness.

The Khafre Enthroned statue and the symbolism of his hands reminded me of the two main distinct behavioral roles of leaders that were defined by Ohio State Leadership Studies (Stogdill, 1950): (1) Initiating structure or task-oriented leadership expresses the degree to which the leader focuses on goal achievement; and, (2) Consideration or relationship-oriented leadership focuses on the degree to which the leader shows concern and respect for his/her followers. Which leadership style is the best for your team? It depends. Effective leaders must adapt their leadership style to the situation (Wharton Online, 2023). For example, an authoritative leader works best when the leader is competent to take charge and the followers already have the tools needed to do effective work. While an empathetic leader

focuses on creating strong emotional bonds with the team. Empathetic leadership can be effective when little direction is needed from the leader and the team will benefit most from space and independence.

As in the ancient Egyptian times, in general, when both task-oriented leadership goes hand in hand with relationship-oriented leadership, the magic will happen. More recently, a webinar by McKinsey & Company (2021), however, stresses that we must change the way we lead in a post pandemic world and highlights the importance of providing team members with support at an emotional level. Leaders should focus on being kind, thankful and positive. Similarly, a recent Harvard Business Review article outlines several leadership paradoxes for the post-pandemic era which highlights that leaders need new skills during post-pandemic times. For example, leaders must be humble heroes, great listeners, and champions of inclusivity, while willing to make bold decisions. They must also be tech-savvy humanists and implement new technologies, while understanding and caring for their people (Leinwand, Mani & Sheppard, 2021). Just as the times of ancient Egypt, leaders today need to remember the symbolism of leading with a clenched fist and open hand. As the pharaohs of the past, leaders today need to possess a “brave powerful heart(s)” in taking decisions and commands (Mohamed, Kandil & El-Din Zaki, 2019).

All in all, my visit to the Egyptian Museum not only taught me about Egyptian culture but also reinforced three leadership lessons from the ancient Egyptians and discoveries of their precious treasures relevant

to today’s business context: (1) Leaders must embrace unexpected discoveries and adapt quickly to new information; (2) Leaders must challenge the norms to bring about innovation and have a positive impact; and, (3) Leaders must focus on the task but also lead with the heart. As stated so eloquently in an 1849 epigram by Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr, a French critic, journalist, and novelist in the January 1849, “Plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose” translated as, “the more it changes, the more it’s the same thing.”



Statue of King Khafre

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