



Raindance

An allegory for personal and business success

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Top Down and Bottom Up Leadership

Each member of the group is unique and integral in the dance.

What its all About

When it is all said and done, the single most important quality for owners and staff in any given enterprise is leadership.

A good leader knows when to lead and when to follow. This is the paradox of effective leadership and our egos betray us as we resist this important truth.

When most of us think of leadership, what comes to mind is what we see in the media, someone in charge of a company, country, or political office. In general, we see people at the top. They dictate what needs to get done and their underlings execute those commands. The result is we get a very narrow view of what it takes to be leader.

Sadly, the aspect we most see on display when it comes to leadership, is that of abuse of power, violation of public trust, or some other scandal by those in "leadership positions."

What we miss from this lopsided exposure to leadership in the media is the fact that leadership is not about power, it's about service. Truth of the matter is "The potential and capacity for effective leadership resides in all of us." We are often called into leadership roles without even realizing we are acting as such.

If you've ever helped a child, elderly person, a neighbor, a family member, or a stranger, without having been asked by another person, you have acted in a leadership capacity.

Although you may not make the six o'clock news for helping a neighbor, or teaching a child to read, you

would be a better example of leadership than the political figure who has just been indicted for corruption or sexual misconduct.

Unfortunately, there are many individuals in positions of leadership who are lousy leaders. The world continues to spin on its axis as the country, company, or family endures them.

The Grey World

The media plays a big part in our bias toward what we deem as acceptable behavior. I'm not just talking about the news. I'm also talking about all of the other programming which includes, dramas, sitcoms, talk shows, game shows, reality TV, video games, etc.

There is no such thing as unbiased media. Fundamentally, it is about getting more viewers. This means that media is driven by an inherent need to provide viewers with what they want to see and ninety nine percent of viewers need to be entertained to some degree or they will flip to another program.

The result of all this is a medium which feeds us characters in situations that are meant to keep us watching. By entertaining us, giving us what we want to see, we are provided with a false sense of reality and it continually blurs the lines between what is right and wrong.

Without going down the rabbit hole about the effects of media on our subconscious minds, suffice it to say that the lack of absolutes when it comes to what is right and wrong makes good leadership ever more elusive to find. Thus, we live in a grey world

If you need further proof of this,

just think about all of sexual abuse stories and the stories of officials who have fallen from their lofty perches.

Good leaders have absolutes. To them it is not a grey world. Neither is it a black and white world. It is a world of colors which neither dilutes nor compromises their values.

What are some of these values?

Here are a few:

- Service
- Truth
- Honor
- Respect for all people
- Accountability
- Empathy
- Sincerity
- Ability to listen
- Restraint
- Tolerance
- Decisiveness
- Appreciation
- Integrity

Along with the emotional baggage and scars that we all have from earlier in our life, we all possess these leadership traits regardless of your job. From the person who mops the floor to the person who sits in the corner office, we ALL have leadership qualities within us.

The Difference

The only difference between you and a great leader is your ability to move beyond your emotional baggage, whatever that may be, and your ability to embrace the values common to great leaders. Notice that the list of values above does not include things like: good looks, expertise, or a college degree.

Leadership is not a skill set. It is a mind set, fueled by a kind and truthful heart. Effective leaders are not endured, they are embraced.



FOCUS

*Bi-directional leadership combines to create a powerful focus.
There is renewed purpose in the dance. Believe it!*

What do you believe?

Your belief system is everything. It will either enable you or disable you. The majority of people live lives of quite despair, imprisoned by their own belief system.

When you allow yourself to move beyond the limitations of emotional wounds, beyond the grip of whatever demons hold you back, abuse, guilt, shame, alcoholism, broken heart, anger, loneliness, drug abuse, etc, you lead yourself into a new reality where you are capable of much more than you think. In this reality you have the power of focus.

Being able to focus yields abundant rewards to you individually and to those you serve, by virtue of your capacity to think and lead in handling any situation or setback. I saw this manifest itself at a restaurant one summer afternoon.

The young man responsible for mopping the floor and cleaning tables was doing just that. As my wife and I sat eating our lunch, I noticed a family of four, a mom and dad and two little girls. They had just paid for their meal and were about to leave the restaurant. All of a sudden the sky opened up and it rained so hard that the family stopped and waited for the deluge to subside. After a moment or two the rain just kept coming. It was a relentless hard pounding rain with no sign of stopping.

I noticed that the young man who was cleaning the table stopped what he was doing and quickly disappeared to the back. A few seconds later he can running out with an umbrella in his hand. I thought he was crazy because even a large umbrella would not do much to protect anyone, much less four

people from the buckets of rain that were coming down.

I was confused for a moment when he ran past the family and opened his umbrella. I thought he was going to try and help them. Maybe he had to get home or something, so I thought.

That's when I saw this kid stop at one of the outdoor seating tables. He quickly unfastened one of those huge umbrellas used to shade six to eight people, walked back with it in his hands and signaled to the family to get under it. He led them to their vehicle. They all stood at the passenger side of the minivan as the two little girls got in. Then the mom got in. Next he escorted the dad to the driver's side and waited for him to get in. Then he came back to the restaurant with the humongous umbrella in hand. I could tell it was heavy from the way he carefully walked with it.

My jaw just dropped. I had never seen anyone do anything like this. No one asked him to do it. He just focused on how to serve these customers in the best way he could and he took action.

If I owned a restaurant, I would have offered that kid a job on the spot. I had witnessed an individual who exhibited many of the qualities of a good leader.

Service
Respect for all people
Accountability
Empathy
Tolerance
Decisiveness
Appreciation
Integrity

His focus was not on checking his social media thread, or responding to a text, or what he was going to

do after work. His focus was on doing his best. My guess is that young man will do incredibly well wherever he goes.

The job does not matter. How you see yourself and lead yourself does. Imagine if this example of service was the norm rather than the exception. How far can the business and its people go? How far could you go?

The Fragmentation Virus

We live in a world of increasing fragmentation and short attention spans. We spend hours upon hours hypnotized by scrolling through our Facebook threads and responding to bits of meaningless banter on our social media sites. All of which may make us feel like we are part of the action when in reality we are only part of someone else's distraction.

In the long run 90% of most people's social media interaction is meaningless. The irony here is that what seems like the ultimate freedom to interact with "friends" turns out to be a very real ball and chain which fragments your focus and robs you of your most precious resource, TIME.

If you believe that hours spent in social media banter is time well spent, then it's time to change your belief system. FOMO or Fear of Missing Out is very real and it's deadly.

Your belief system will either sharpen your focus and thrust you ahead to a better place or dull your focus and keep you trapped where you are. Give yourself permission to move beyond your circumstance and self-imposed limits. You have more control than you think. FOMO is the opposite of focus.



Faith

Enabled by sincere effort, this focus leads to greater faith and a growing confidence in oneself and the team.

Oldest, youngest, doesn't matter. Focus leads to a deeper faith in what you are trying to accomplish.

Those little things you do right are the key.

- Attention to protocol, even when you could compromise value and take an easier out.
- Thoughtfulness in how your actions affect those in your circle as well as those outside the circle
- Attention to how your time is being spent (owner mentality)
- Measuring against yourself to be the best performer you can be.
- Looking out for others even if it's not your job.
- Being consciously empathetic even with those with whom you disagree.
- Refraining from self-destructive behavior such as gossip and hearsay
- Asking powerful questions
- Actively listening (This means you are not just hearing what the other person is saying, you are also actively participating in your understanding by any of the following; eye contact, a nod, a smile, a question about what you thought you heard, or even summarizing back to the speaker what you thought they were trying to communicate - to see if you got it right).

These are the little things. This is where much of the powerful magic in personal and business success begins. Notice that these small things do not require a college degree or even a high school education. Anyone can function at a higher level just by doing the little things that leverage into big results. They don't cost you any money or require any special tools, just the focus which only you can provide.

The result of a group's concentrated effort is greater than the sum of

the individual parts.

When you infuse your belief system with that of faith in mission and with those in mission with you, it sets a powerful force into motion which exponentially enhances your chances of personal and business success.

When you focus and do the little things right, it reinforces your faith in yourself and what is possible by virtue of the small victories along the way.

It's a cycle. Those little things lead to greater faith. The greater your faith in mission and those in mission with you, lead to you doing more of the little things right. It's HUGE!

If your inner cynic convinces you that all this is BS, then you condemn yourself to faith in the mediocre. The mediocre is the most plentiful form of BS there is. It's always somebody else's fault you're just the victim. You'll never get anywhere but at least it's not your fault. Congratulations!

For those that want something more and are willing to step out of their comfort zone with a little faith, the rewards are plentiful and it gets easier the more faith you amass as a result of your actions. Even a small victory is still a victory.

Remember we talked about leadership at the very beginning? Well, here's where you begin to apply it, on yourself. That's right, I can influence you but ONLY YOU CAN TAKE ACTION. This is what will separate you from 99% of the population. You've heard the cliches before but they are true. "Talk is cheap" and "Your actions speak louder than words"

Yes, you might have to fight with your old bad habits prejudices, learn to listen, stop judging people, stop complaining, stop comparing yourself to others, stop feeling sorry for yourself, stop holding grudges, stop looking for reasons to blame someone, stop looking for ways to get even, refrain from passive aggressive behavior, refrain from self destructive behavior like drugs, smoking and too much alcohol, let go the whatever pride is blocking you from seeing the truth.

For most of us, our list of bad habits and excess personal baggage can be extensive, and they have a way of resurfacing just when you thought you were getting ahead.

Think of your bad habits and personal baggage as demons. They will be easier to shed if you start disassociating them with who you are. They do not define who you are. They may be controlling your ability to get ahead right now, but they do not have the power to define who and what you are. This is where your leadership will play it most important role. And to aid yourself, you must have faith.

Faith in your resolve
 Faith in your merit - you deserve to succeed
 Faith in your ability, whatever that may be, however much or little of it you have
 Faith in those you associate with. (If your friends are giving you grief for trying to improve yourself, find new friends.)
 Faith in mission
 Faith in your teammates
 Faith in what is good and noble
 Faith in the possibility of a better life based on your actions.

Faith is a powerful thing. Use it. Upgrade your belief system. It's like giving yourself a raise.



Outbound Consistency - Internal Flexibility

*Small successes create momentum.
We witness each other's spark with new eyes.*

If you've ever witnessed the transition between crawling baby to walking baby, you've seen the consistency in effort. They seem obsessed with trying to walk and even when they take a tumble, they keep getting up and trying again. What's the matter with them?

They don't know they can fail. They don't care they can fail. They are not concerned with how fast their toddler buddy learned how to walk or feel guilty that they have not yet walked, or that they will never walk, or that they might walk into a tree, nor care that their sibling laughs at them, or offended that "walk" has a silent "l"...

They are simply determined to learn how to walk. As soon as the baby takes one or two steps, he/she doesn't sit down and say "Did it! I'm done." and go back to crawling. It now tries even harder to walk, and it does. Each step a victory in its mission.

If you strip the clutter out of your mind and think like a child, your efforts will create small success that will create your momentum for further successes.

Perhaps it is looking at your job functions from a different perspective now. Look at it with the eyes of child and lead yourself to further discovery by seeing what is possible, not just what is there. Where, how can your service or product be improved. What does the customer want? Perhaps you are so busy doing your job, you've never really noticed what the customer wants. Their needs may have changed since the last time you saw them.

Who is your customer? The enterprise may have an end user, but is your customer someone on the

inside of the enterprise who then serves the end client with the help of what you are providing?

The consistency with which you evaluate your customer's needs and the flexibility with which you meet their demands with a quality service or product is the essence of great customer service.

In other words, don't take the customer for granted, and be flexible as their needs change.

Within the supply chain of your particular business, everyone's function eventually leads to a product or service which customers pay for. Are the links in the chain functioning in harmony or disarray?

Truth of the matter, there is a fine line between harmony and disarray.

Here is a small example:

A manager at a restaurant noticed that many of their tables were wobbly and spotted several customers improvising to try and stabilize their table. He asked one of the cooks, whom he knew was good at wood working, if there was something he might recommend. The cook thought about it and went to Home Depot and purchased a set of cheap wooden shims which he cut down to small sizes. Not a perfect solution but one that could be easily replicated. The manager then slid the shims under each of the wobbly tables.

The shims stayed in place for a few days and some came loose. The bus boy noticed that some of the shims had become loose and made sure to slide them into position if he saw one out of place. Then he developed a practice of touching every table as he walked by to test it as he did his other duties. He developed

wobbly table radar. So now when someone sits at a table, chances are their table will not wobble.

Wobbly table control was not part of anybody's job description yet in this example, three people implemented a solution which may not have solved it completely but did remedy it.

The focus is on outbound consistency of excellence backed by internal flexibility. This is where many improvements to your product or service are born. Do not underestimate the momentum this can generate.

The manager, the cook, and the bus boy each witnessed the spark in each other's eyes. They lifted the quality of the customer experience by their flexibility and ability to see the importance of outbound consistency.

I stopped going to what was once my favorite sushi restaurant because of a minutia of inconsistency. I always loved their sweet iced tea. It was the best I'd ever tasted at a restaurant. It was my favorite restaurant until one day the tea tasted like sweet dirty water. When I asked the waiter he said they had changed the tea. When I asked why, he said management had switched to another brand to cut cost.

I would have gladly paid more for my drink. My favorite restaurant instantly became just another sushi place. I frequented it less and less until I stopped going altogether.

Their outbound consistency was compromised because they messed with a standard that seemed insignificant.

Standards live on a one-way street. Lowering them will hurt your future. Standards are everything.



Confidence Grows

*Standards are the music to which we dance.
It's starting to rain.*

It's interesting to see what happens when top down and bottom up leadership start to converge as standards of quality are implemented and enforced. It's like watching a transformation before your very eyes. Things get easier, small victories become more frequent. But one hurdle remains.

One or perhaps a few of your dancers might not like this dance. You should expect this to be the case. Not everyone wants to succeed. Some people are threatened by their own success. They have become so comfortable in their quiet desperation that they cannot change their belief system. At some point you must do each other a service and part ways.

This dance is not for everyone, but anyone can learn the dance.

As new dancers join, confidence continues to grow. Big changes send big signals as the new dancers replace those who wish to dance to a different beat or not at all.

The dance is powerful. All are dancing as one. Clients feel it.

"Something is different about this place." At first, customers get a sense that things are not the same, but for the better. They soon start to analyze their experience.

"Did you notice how friendly the staff is?"

"The server remembered my name!"

"People were smiling and seemed to enjoy their work."

"The place is so clean!"

"The service is amazing and so is their product"

"You've got to check this place out! It's outstanding!"

"I haven't had great customer service like this in a long time!"

And just when you thought things were really getting better, something happens to throw a wrench in your temporary Nirvana. What is surprising though is how easily the fire is put out. That's because you haven't had nearly as many fires recently. Set backs get run over by the forward momentum of the group and the standards that guide them.

Whereas before, a few people were on the lookout for things that might not conform to the group's standards, now everyone's radar is on high alert for anything that does not comply. This growing confidence is a powerful ally.

Confidence is a close relative of Trust. Once confidence permeates throughout the staff as services and products are consistently above average, the customers experience a growing confidence in the staff and overall business. This is because their experience is consistently above their expectation. They now come to expect great service and products. You are now a very tough act to follow.

Customer retention is up. New business increases. What was once reactive chaos is now proactive order amidst potential chaos.

Chaos has more difficulty infiltrating the system because their is a system, it is being implemented consistently, and at the heart of the system are standards by which everyone functions.

There is no debate what to do, when to do it, no interpretation on what is right or wrong, no time wasted reinventing a solution, no confusion as to who does what, no

more trying to solve a symptom because you have addressed the heart of the matter.

Customers' needs have taken center stage in a big way.

Top down and bottom up leadership converge as the enterprise operates at a new level of efficiency. There is less stress all around and productivity is up and such few fires pop up they are no fire at all.

Confidence continues to rise, not simply in the people but in the systems that have been implemented as part of the enterprise.

WARNING: Don't get to comfy.

You need to monitor and maintain excellence as your least common denominator in all you do. Your customers expect it. Your staff expects it and you expect it.

What if it rains too fast for too long?



Deluge

*Success takes on a life of its own.
Abundance becomes the norm. There's beauty
and predictability in this dance of cause and effect.*

Your systems are about to be tested. It's raining but the rain turns into a deluge. What do you do?

Anticipate success and prepare for it. Preparation is different for every business but the elements are same. The key here is prevention. If you know a deluge is coming, plan for it and have your systems ready to go to handle the heavy demand.

Anticipate product depletion, clogged processes due to work load, increased error rates, etc.

If you know the deluge is coming, and it will, take time to minimize the possible effects of stretched resources by having back up plans for possible choke points.

The deluge continues. You realize this may be a new norm for your business. What are your options?

It may be time to add more dancers or a bigger place in which to conduct your dance. Your now faced with expansion options and decisions that may further take you away from the actual dance. But it has got to be addressed or the deluge may drown your company.

Take care to de-silo your enterprise as you grow. As you add more dancers they may break off into groups, however we must all dance to the same music. This require more effort than simply being collaborative. It requires an understanding of things not previously important in your circle of dancers. It requires a bit of overcommunicating and un-assumptive thinking.

How do we achieve this? and what does Jazz have to do with it?

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Cycles
*After the rain.
A new cycle begins.
Whether micro or macro,
we continue to dance
together and as one.*



Bi Products
*Seeds of all types
take root as a result
of the bountiful rain.
We dance together,
we dance as one.*



**The Harvest Creates
New Possibilities**
*We create a future with
endless possibilities.
We are fulfilled as we
dance together and as
we dance as one.*