

# **The Spirit of Leadership: Past, Present and Future**

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*Empirical evidence is shared that supports the correlation between having a good management team and corporate profits in publicly traded companies. It is believed that all can be leaders if they are on purpose with passion. The world needs leadership that is on purpose, treats fellow human beings with compassion, dignity, love, caring, and nurturing of their growth and development in being the best they possibly can. A challenge is also made to change oneself and become better aligned with what is necessary for future leaders in our global economy to thrive and survive into the future.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

As employees there are certain topics that hit close to home because we live them, and they make a difference in our lives in some significant way. This is the case with leadership and management and those words are used separately for a reason. Every person is subject to being led or managed at some point in their lives; this is a story about what leadership/management has been about from the early days in industrial America to what is needed in the Global Economy of today and in the future to ensure our long-term interests stay alive in America.

We must ask ourselves some questions in pondering this topic. Some of those might include the following: a). should we change our mental models about how we lead and interact with our peers and our employees based on who we are as leaders? b). Can the workplace be a more enlightened place to be every day, when we as leaders are self-aware? c). Is there a bigger purpose and more meaning in our leadership actions?

### **Leader versus Manager**

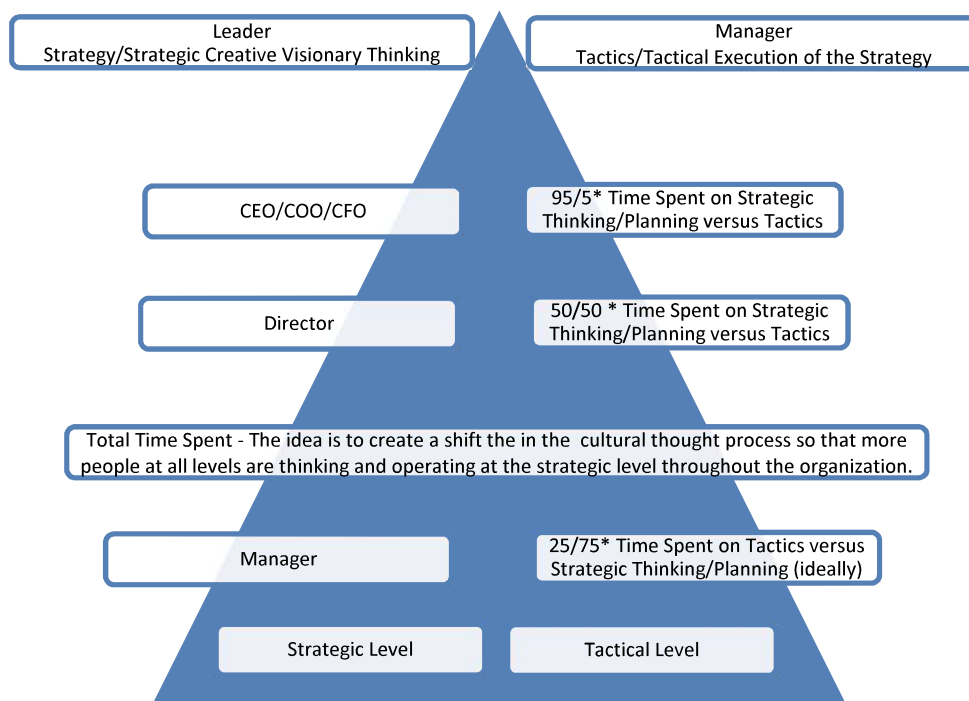
The first question might be a good place to begin this journey. What are mental models and what do our mental models say to us about what leaders and managers are and what they should be doing. This brings up an age-old debate about the difference between the two titles/roles. In the many years this author has been teaching and practicing leadership and management, this is the way it has been explained by the author in classes and seems to make the most sense. There is a difference between the amount of time a leader or a manager spends on thinking and strategizing versus how much time they spend executing someone else's plan. It is akin to the Department of Labor's definition of exempt versus non-exempt workers. (DOL 29 CFR, Part 541, 2004).

The leader is more of a thinker and strategist and always is coming up with new visions and strategies to execute on the organization's goals. The manager is more "boots on the ground" and tactical in nature

and is typically found executing on the strategist's plans. Does that mean that the manager is void of the duties that call for judgment and decisions making as part 541 would spell out for us? No, it just means they spend a lot of time making judgments and decisions on how to execute someone else's plan. So here is how this author sees it.

It is based on roles and the organizational chart in the big picture sense. The more time the person in the role spends spend on vision, ideas, creativity, strategic planning, the more they are in a leadership role. The more time they spend making the day to day decisions on who and how the strategy will be executed, the more likely they would be considered a manager. Now does that mean because you are one you cannot be the other? No, you can surely be both but that is often not the case in most organizations. The goal would be to have it more balanced from the top down so that every person in the organization is part time strategist. Much like the diagram below illustrates (figure 1), the line drawn is an example of what a good picture looks like currently. This does not indicate where most organizations currently exist with all of this. What would we like to do ultimately in this scenario? The goal from what this author believes is to create a shift in the mental models and paradigms and treat everyone as if they were important and had something to offer and make them all strategists to one degree or another. This can only help the organization stay competitive and to keep their employees motivated.

**FIGURE 1  
TIME SPENT IN STRATEGIC VERSUS TACTICAL ACTIVITY**



Note: This is an approximation of current time spent in a best-practices based organization based on the concept promoted by this paper. (Forsyth, 2016)

The second question of the three related to being self-aware both as a leader or a manager in what it means to have an enlightened workplace and how that person can matter in making that transition. So, what is self-aware in this case? In many organizations that use many different styles of feedback and training for their managers/leaders there is likely some emphasis on people skills. However, depending on the culture of the organization that information never becomes action oriented or comes to be behavioral change because it might be considered a threat to some who have everything invested in the current way

of doing things in the organization. So just being open minded enough to seek out ways to become more self-aware and to envision what an enlightened workplace might look like is the goal of this paper.

Thirdly, there was a question about purpose and meaning in our work as leaders and managers. When we all begin our careers/journeys into the workplace we might have an excited and fresh perspective about going to work with fresh ideas and a ton of energy. Over the years we run into some good bosses and some not so good bosses and perhaps we even get soured along the way. The heart and soul of the workplace somehow fades away, and we can even fall into sarcasm and despair, perhaps even depression because of the people that run the place. You always have the option of quitting and finding a new boss but what if there was a way to begin to bring meaning and purpose back into the organization and make it a fun place to work? Is that possible? Of course, it is and it begins with self-awareness and a vision of such a place where people flourish and thrive and love coming to work. That is right; the word love was used here. As in most cases of cultural change, it must begin at the top. Find a visionary leader who listens to people and who people want to follow and pay them well to do so. There are many examples of these kinds of leaders in the literature and this author is making the argument that we need to duplicate/create those types of leaders and have them in every organization where people work, eventually around the free world. It is a dream at this point but do all great things begin as someone's dream? Here is the rest of the story.

### **The Spirit of Leadership Past**

The spirit of leadership past takes us back to the days of sweat shops and workplaces where people were basically told to bring their hands and check their brain in at the door. The only ones that were supposed to think about any of it were the top leaders in the big boardroom. No ideas were gathered and there was little to no trust. It was the kind of environment where you went to work and tried to survive the day. It was a very dim situation indeed. If you have studied any kind of business or management over the years you know where that kind of thinking landed those businesses/industries such as the big three auto makers. It was not a pretty place to be and it was discovered that something needed to be done differently to maintain profits. We started to look for better ways to create a more enlightened workplace after early social scientists realized that people like to be recognized for the things that they do and appreciated for their efforts.



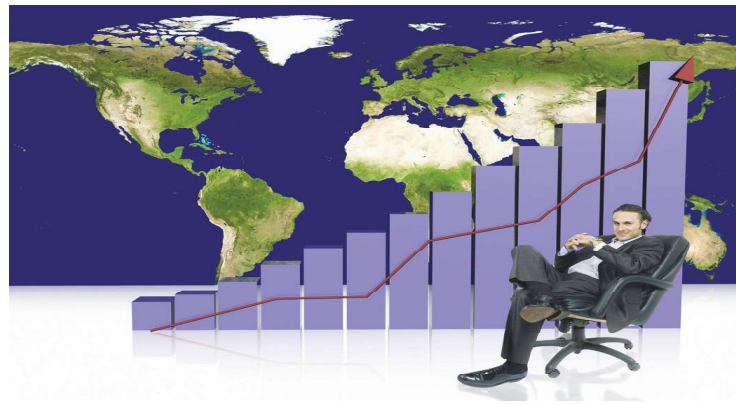
(Microsoft Clipart, 2017)

### **The Spirit of Leadership Present**

So, what has happened and where are we today relative to all this self-awareness and enlightenment in the workplace? Most people would likely agree that the situation has gotten much better than it was in the past; however, it seems rather random and scattered. There are pockets of good and not so good out there and if you happen to end up in an organization where this state of enlightenment is the norm, you are probably good at what you do and extremely lucky as well. If there is a problem with an unenlightened group of leaders that are not doing things to truly support and nurture their people, the good people are the first to leave because they have an opportunity somewhere else always waiting in the wings.

Now, currently we have another type of cloud that has covered many of our organizations and that is a cloud of greed. As one can see almost every day there is another scandal in some organization where a leader or group of leaders become greedy and destroy the organization and the lives of many who have worked so hard to help make it what it was. Now that is anti-enlightenment in the belief of this author.

One of the authors used to work for a company that was in the trucking and distribution business. When the author was hired on and went to the corporate office for orientation, it seemed like nirvana at first. Everyone was nice and supportive, energy and ideas were flowing, trust prevailed throughout, or so it seemed. Then when the author went to work in the day to day grind of the warehouse and the rest of the business, a completely different picture began to form. The leaders (or managers in this case) would hang out in their offices behind their computers and would rarely come out to use the rest room or to go into the meeting room which was five feet away from the office. These people in these offices had no idea what was really going on with their people and did not truly care. When the author went to work for the day in the warehouse and would walk by the warehouse on the way to the desk, there seemed to be a darkness that surrounded the warehouse as if it were void of light. When the author would walk around and try to get to know the people they looked unhappy and disturbed about their work. When asked about their job they said they were there because they were paid a dollar an hour more than other places they might be able to work. So, it goes, “I owe, I owe, so off to work I go”. The author saw that expression/statement on a bumper sticker in traffic once and it is still in the forefront of the mind when these kinds of things are observed. So, the question here is how could corporate be so out of touch with the rest of the operations? This author would argue that the local leaders/managers did not truly believe in any of this and thought of it as silliness and a waste of time. They knew how to smile and say the right things to people at corporate, so they would be left alone to manage their own fiefdom.



(Microsoft Clipart, 2017)  
Can we not do better than this?

### **A Vision of Leadership Spirit in the Future**

What does this vision entail? Is it truly possible to attain? How do we become more self-aware in order to attain this vision? Is it possible to use words like alignment, purpose, being human, caring even loving could be part of the vocabulary in this effort to achieve greatness in leadership and also gain and maintain control over your corporate profits? There is evidence that proves that this is the case. According to Ashley, Allan, Patel and Jayen in their study titled “The Impact of Leadership Characteristics on Corporate Performance”, it was discovered that the

Quality of management is one of the significant attributes identified by the analysis that is related to successful stock return performance. The board of directors should concentrate their efforts on selecting a leader who has the ability and interest in building an outstanding management team. A leader who could communicate an exciting vision can attract highly qualified support people who want the opportunity to participate in accomplishing the vision. Communication and team building skills are essential prerequisites for this type of leader, and the governance board needs to identify potential leaders with these types of skills. (2003; p.16, 3).

The rest of this paper is designed to characterize what “quality of management” truly is or perhaps should be. Insights can be gained, and actions can be taken to improve your quality of life and the quality of life of those around you, including your leaders. If they are on the path with you, better yet. How can

you help to influence someone for the betterment of themselves and the rest of the organization even if they do not want to change or be part of it? You can walk the talk and act in ways that are transformational/caring/nurturing/ being a lifelong learner or even a beacon of hope and light for all you encounter. The author argues that these are the qualities that the successful leader of the future will need or need to increase if they possess a sense of this already.

### **Examples from the Field**

These authors have had the great fortune to work with and for many leaders who fit this description. One example was a Vice President who stood almost seven feet tall and had the wisdom, depth, caring, love and insights and who practiced all these characteristics with all the people he interacted with at all levels. He knew who he was, what his passion was and where he needed to plug himself into the equation for maximum effectiveness. He had a magical quality about him and when he stepped into the room; his presence was felt in a positive way. He also was an avid practitioner of transcendental meditation which could have been part of this as well. There have been studies done showing the efficacy of this connection, but this is not the time or place for that. Everyone that worked for him enjoyed doing so and felt like they were at the peak of their current position because he showed them how to maximize their knowledge, skills and abilities as it related to the job in question. When there were meetings where the President and all of his leaders were in the room going over results, this leader in question always had numbers going in the right direction while his peers often did not and did not know why. This story helps to support the previous study cited in this paper in a more anecdotal way.

One more example was a Colonel that one of the authors flew with one time in the Air Force. When he went to sit in the seat and take control of the aircraft, the author observed scars on his wrists as if he tried to cut his wrists at some time in his life. After he got out of the seat and while the author sat with him in the back of the airplane he told his story. He was a prisoner of war in the famous Hanoi Hilton in Vietnam and was there for seven years. He was beaten within inches of his life, he was abused and tortured in almost every way imaginable (the antithesis to what all of this paper is about). What did he get out of all of this experience? He became a different person and treated everyone in his world differently. Unlike many other Colonels or higher-ranking officers in the military, he treated everyone as a person of value and worth and talked with everyone at all levels in the same relative way. One could see his ego was in check and his ability to care and love his fellow human beings was evident. All the torture and trials the man faced turned him into a gentle and kind leader/soul. The questions remain “is this what it takes to come to that realization or perhaps some other disaster to awaken us of is it something we can do proactively?” Once we see the need, we can do anything to get there. The purpose of this paper is to paint the picture of why we need to be doing this now.

Note: The word love is used a lot in this paper. Of course, we are not speaking of anything such as close bonding between couples in an intimate way. We are speaking of love for another soul on this earthly plane. Being a human, the way humans were designed to be (authors’ opinion only).

### **Finding your Passion**

Once you feel it in your heart, you can feel it everywhere in your world and other people will feel it coming from you. This aura will have a positive effect on them whether they like it or not. You being a walking talking role model will have a positive impact all by itself. Some relevant questions might help us explore this in a deeper way. What is better (or will be better) about this world as a result of your work? Think about it for a few minutes. If you cannot resoundingly answer this question with something that is meaningful and on purpose to you and others around you, the search must continue. Here is a visualization exercise shared with us from Michael Gerber (2001) that might help lead you to more insights.

- Vividly picture the day of your funeral.
- What do you want your eulogy to consist of?
- What would your lifetime achievements be?
- What would matter the most at the end of your life?

Is it what you are doing right NOW? (p. 34)

Thinking about your funeral and what might be said about your life surely has a way of making us think deeply about what we are doing what else might we be doing to leave a better legacy. Many famous people such as Presidents of countries think about this, what is different about us and the things we leave behind for future generations? Are you passionate and charismatic about this mission? Passion, purpose and charisma are necessary components and important to allow your spirit of leadership to shine through. Take the passion test by going to Janet and Chris Attwood's web site to see what resonates with you that you know to be true. There will be other web sources shared in this paper as well that can guide you to finding your true passion and purpose.

1. This is the link for the passion text by Attwood (2014): (<http://www.thepassiontest.com#sthash.ovyhIXhC.dpuf>)
2. There is another similar web link and similar exercises from Tina Su (2013) you can go through, maybe try them both and compare. (<http://thinksimplenow.com/happiness/life-on-purpose-15-questions-to-discover-your-personal-mission/>)

### **Transforming Followers into Leaders**

Do you have the spirit of leadership needed for the future? *Within every follower is an undiscovered leader* (Monroe, 2005). Monroe proposed that "the following principles are critical to your capturing the spirit of leadership for yourself and encouraging that spirit in others. All have to do with *attitude*.

- The growth and development of people is the highest calling of true leadership.
- True leaders work for the benefit of others and not for personal gain.
- The most important lesson of leadership is self-development.
- Don't ever say again, "It's too late for me to change." It is never too late to make a change.
- Not all change is improvement, but without change, there can be no improvement.
- It's not what you are that holds you back. It's what you are *not* that holds you back.
- The one who influences others to lead or to become leaders is a leader without limitations.
- People tend to become what the most important people in their lives think they will become. You can literally change people's lives by your attitude and expectations of them.
- Successful people-developers make the right assumptions about people. Our assumptions will determine how successful we are in developing leadership in others.
- We can't hope for things that we're not currently working on. You will become only what you are becoming right now" (pp. 286-287).

As you read through this list, what do you think and feel about your spirit and leadership? Is there room to grow? Ask yourself what kind of actions can I take, and steps can I follow to become more of a leader of the future where spirit, love, compassion, understanding, being transformational, caring, nurturing, and being a beacon of hope and light for all is how one operates on a day to day basis? The true essence of all of this is changing your mind about how you want to present yourself to the world (unless you already do all this of course). The world needs a lot of truly great transformational leaders in all types of situations and organizations and you should be asking yourself whether you want to be part of the transformation or part of the status quo which is leading us nowhere as a global entity (author's opinion only). It requires a shift in the way we think about and approach challenges every day in our lives. Remember back a few pages ago when the empirical case was made connecting the practices of management to the stock price increases in publicly traded companies? Well they are typically the toughest critics and opponents of all of this because it takes time and money to get there as well as change and many of them are comfortable and happy with the way things are. Whether the ship is heading for the next iceberg is not even on the radar as people in charge are comfortable and consciously as well as unconsciously avoid and deny problems even exist (generality of course).

## CONCLUSION

In the end, researchers noted in this paper believe that purpose and passion are two of the key essentials needed to find and maintain the true spirit of leadership. It can mean a lot of different things to different people however, the way in which we treat and deal with others to enhance them and bring out their best is the true litmus test on spirit here. Charisma comes naturally from within when one feels strongly about something and has passion for the cause. So where are you on this journey? Engage in the self-awareness exercises presented in this paper and figure out what this means to you. Does it always mean you will align with all of the money in the world or the highest position in the organization where you wield power and control, not necessarily; if it does, use it wisely for the good of the globe and its inhabitants as described here? All of this might lead to a place you might not have thought of as of yet. If so, go there and create joy for all you work with. It could put you into many differing types of situations where your leadership, charisma and passion will truly shine through and you will be successful in differing ways. So as was asked earlier in the visualization exercise, what do you want to be said in the eulogy at your funeral? Do you want to leave behind a legacy that leaves people in a better place than when you came into the picture on this planet or does it matter at all? It is totally up to you to change yourself and thus change the world around you, one person and one situation at a time.

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