



Invent Your Own Leadership

What and who to trust?

The world has gone information overload. Fake news are upon us.

What and who to trust?

This article goes to say - trust yourself. Accept that somewhere, somebody will always be half an inch ahead of you due to new knowledge, a HBR article, a TED talk, more experience, longer tenure or just simple insight to hold the moral high ground on any topic.

When it comes to leadership we can shower ourselves in good advices, 7 tips to "get left hand to what the right hand thinks" - a full industry lives of the practicing managers - so stop right here, lock out the noise and

Invent Your Own Leadership!

It is a journey of intellectual discovery - war scars and hard earned experiences - which sometimes isn't pretty when putting the mirror on oneself, like: When were you a fully formed adult who could actually take on leadership responsibility and the job functions? When did you know that you wanted to be a leader? What will make you derail - and why? Where does your values start and end? When is your good behaviors good, scrappy - or excellent? What is the authentic you? Why should you want to be led by yourself?

Taking the journey, however, will ultimately be much better for your development than sipping articles and TED-talks constructed in a different world, because you'll have earned the right to call it your own!

First this introduction to the subject, and in end a long list of questions to challenge you - enjoy!

On October 7, 2016 – CBS's 60 minute's focused on artificial intelligence (AI), and IBM's super computer Watson's contribution to medical care.

From North Carolina's Cancer Hospital we learned how teams of doctors and specialists prescribe treatments to patients, and when standard practices are in vain try to find new knowledge and methods to offer patients.

Charlie Rose interviewed the director of the center doctor Ned Sharpless who explained how cancer research centers around the world publish approx. 8,000 research papers daily with new views on/ about cancer treatments. Sharpless conceded that nobody can digest all the new knowledge fast enough to make use of it real time, thus often they were working on data 12-24 months old and potentially of expired worth.

Enter Watson which came pre-loaded with all known data on cancer and treatments, which can read thru all new literature and scan the internet for clues in matters of moments, and which is programmed to search for

abnormalities from – for instance MRI scan pictures – and then suggest (alternate) treatments.

Ned Sharpless explained, “Yes, I was initially very sceptical about Watson, so we introduced it to 1,000 patients in treatment and found that in 99% of the cases its diagnose matched that of doctors – which is assuring both for the human and the machine factor - but for 30% of the patients it suggested relevant, alternate treatments which doctors hadn’t noticed nor considered”.

A touching and remarkable story, I think.
And how does it correlate with leadership?

For one – it is difficult to keep companies healthy. In October 2013 McKinsey¹ showed how economic-profit performance of nearly 3,000 global companies (annual revenue USD 5-24BN) yields were distributed. Divided into 6 quintiles of 500 each, the top tier group generated USD +677 BN, the mid 1,800 companies consolidated USD 29 BN, while the bottom tier destroyed USD -421 BN of value.

Supposedly these corporations did not lack funds to acquire understanding of the best cure for any circumstance they were in, yet the 2,400 chose to implement a plan they hardly intended to implement - status quo or destruction.

Understand that none of these companies were hit by a meteor that destroyed the entire “something” making their failure plausible. It is all human doing. Because in the same industries as the 600 companies destroying value, or the 1,800 hardly making a penny there will be winners too - people who foresaw the macro trends, gathered-analyzed-and-made-sense-of-a-million-data-points and took timely decisions etc.

So, in the name of share-holder value, maybe we should ask Watson to trawl thru all literature on leadership and management, psychology, organizational behaviors, interpersonal practices etc and offer suggestions to current best and future practices on operation of a succesful corporation. Personal biases, blind spots, risk aversion or over-confidence destroys billions of share-holder value despite advice's, practices and sensible decision basis' being easily available.

To me the overload of information is of particular interest. Considering an industry with high barriers of entry must relate to 8,000 new research papers daily the similar number in a loosely regulated field like leadership must be mind-boogling, because;

- Everybody can be opinionated...
- Anybody can claim the high ground on a particular issue because of a newly published HBR article, TED Talk, or a well-intended Simon Sinek quote...
- Anybody can testify to have achieved greater results based on their techniques and processes...
- There is no standards of when good is good in whichever company or industry...
- Everything working seem to be hailed...

It leaves the leadership industry vulnerable to trends and those who speak the loudest. Its practitioners become followers to the monthly new twist, how-to, updated top-10's on any particular issue because there is no jurisdiction to what constitute a gold medal, or the highest order of practice.

Add to it – in a UK 2014 survey 92 of 100 companies conceded failure in practicing leadership programs. Gallup's annual global employee engagement survey stands at about 13% satisfied employees, 87% are un-engaged – so while local numbers may differ – the numbers are not moving dramatically telling you that something in leadership isn't right.

Therefore, to all practicing managers – cut thru the noise, cut thru all the ambiguity about what works, and what doesn't, cut thru who is more right than the other – cut into what you want, and:

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Understand that you will never become current, somehow somebody somewhere will always be half an inch ahead due to new knowledge, practices or standards. Noise disturbs your search for the few highly efficient thinkers. You will never have the full picture in an area overloaded with quick-fixes, contemporary styles, and well-intended amateurs, but you can have your own leadership concept.

You need to dig in, do the intellectual exercise of defining why you truly get up in the morning, what mission you are on, what you stand for, which value guides you, what you want to offer, which standards you will uphold and not accept, which consequence to accept and be applied, etc.

It is a journey of some soul searching. Many can't find the priority for it, and to me it often reflects in people's leadership practices.

This list is potentially very classic I am open to suggestions, and while it may not be even come close to exhaustive, take it as a start:

...What is the purpose of your company for existing - and you for getting up in the morning? - What is your dream? What offers meaning? - Which standards does it entail? - How high do you dare to aim? - What might be a measurement of success? - How can you validate your ability to live up to your purpose? - How can you enhance your standards?

...Which vision and mission is your company pursuing? - What is your personal equal? - How can you know when you are coming to the end of your journey? - Which values guides the company, and you personally? - Where do they start/ stop – and how do you validate if you live up to them? - When is good behavior or performance good? – or terrible, satisfactory, fantastic or over the moon – and who and how can, and should, measure this?

...What do you want to be known for? - As morbid as it may sound, write your own obituary and understand that it is not about your achievements or titles, but how you presented yourself as a person.

...What is the consequence of your behavior and performances – how would you reward yourself and others for compliance and achievements, or below performance? - What level of self-discipline is required, what do you want to stand for?

...Who do you need in your leadership? - Who is your impact team? - What is the strength, depth and quality of your relationships? - Understand yourself – what is your personality, your strengths and liabilities? - How may you derail? - Where do you need support? - How do you perform? - How do you learn? - How do you contribute?

Responding to these broad questions will be a first loose fence around your leadership. We often refer to how founders of Microsoft, Apple, Google, Facebook had little formal training in leadership, yet they made it (as do many in other places) so why shouldn't you? Most isn't fortunate to have life throwing challenges and requirements to expand skills and maturity fast enough to force personal development, but you can invent your own.

To continue:

...Why do you want to be leader in the first place? - How did you decide to pursue the career that you are working in today? - What was a pivotal moment?

...Are you a fully formed adult who can take on leadership as a function and responsibility? - As provocative as it may sound - but how do you know this to a fact and not just a believe or feeling? Why would you want to be led by yourself?

Leadership in your company:

...How do you maintain your and your team's daily motivation and inspiration despite obstacles, push-backs or setbacks?

...How brave are you in fostering creative and innovative thinking within your team? - How are ideas shared and implemented within your organization?

...How do you keep up the speed, maintain effectiveness and customer outlook at all times?

... Which culture does your leadership foster? - How are the culture of the company compliant with your leadership style?

...What are the most important decisions that you face daily as a leader in your organization?

...How does a perfect day look like in your leadership function?

...How do/will you: - Share information - Make sure to understand needs and characteristics of people in your group/ around you? - Get to understand, use and develop their resources and skill? - Control, do follow up? - Set the

example? - Coach or mentor to achieve success? - Design dialogues with people? - Plan, evaluate – and drive consequence of behaviors and performances? - Share leadership and learning? - Delegate?

...Which leadership style do you intend to practice towards stakeholders:
- The employees at large? - Your superior and peers? - Top management?
- Clients? - Suppliers? - Shareholders?

...Which role do you play best? What is your preferred leadership style?

- Collaborator: Empathetic, team-building, talent-spotting, coaching oriented
- Energizer: Charismatic, inspiring, connects emotionally, provides meaning
- Pilot: Strategic, visionary, adroit at managing complexity, open to input, team oriented
- Provider: Action oriented, confident in their path or methodology, loyal to colleagues, driven to provide for others
- Harmonizer: Reliable, quality-driven, execution focused, creates positive and stable environments, inspires loyalty
- Forecaster: Learning oriented, deeply knowledgeable, visionary, cautious in decision making
- Producer: Task focused, results oriented, linear thinker, loyal to tradition
- Composer: Independent, creative, problem solving, decisive, self-reliant

Understand that whoever you are - or want to be - you will cause friction. You are not on a lonely island where everything you do is the work of a genius. In daily life there is consequences to what we think, do, speak and feel - so the question often comes back to; Are you willing to accept confrontations as a mean to stand up for the right things?

But, who should guide to the right behaviour?

... Who do you model yourself on – who can coach? - Who is the people that you considered as role model(s) early in your life? - How and why does this person impact your life? - What traits are you seeking in a mentor and why

Viewed more from the outside:

...What is the biggest challenges facing leaders in company today? - Why?

...What is one characteristic that you believe every leader should possess? - How is your ability on that characteristic?

...What is the one behavior or trait that you have seen derail more leaders' careers?

...How do you identify and work with your blind spots?

And not least:

...What are you doing to ensure you continue to grow and develop as a leader? - What is the strategic thinking you need to acquire? - What should you train on the job? - Who can monitor and guide you? - On which subjects, will you commit to self-learning?

And the list goes on and on...

Please appreciate that every human being has an agenda that you are supposed to tap into and deliver on. It's your responses that offers a sense of your leadership characteristic and potential future success.

Leadership – as life – is a journey of discovery and learning. Decide what you want to do!

Go Invent, I say!

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<http://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/strategy-and-corporate-finance/our-insights/the-strategic-yardstick-you-cant-afford-to-ignore>