Walking the Narrow Road of Leadership By Jack Enter (www.jackenter.com)

I. Defining the Themes

   A. **Perception of Self and Others/Reality versus Perception**
   B. **Training/Skills:** "<u>Under pressure</u> – we do not rise to the occasion- **we fall back on our training**- <u>whether good or bad</u>."
   C. **Accountability:** "What you **expect** – you must **inspect**."
   D. **Fear- Fight/Flight:** "The fear of man brings a snare." Solomon

II. Defining the Problem

   A. The <u>majority</u> of managers are rated as inconsistent and ineffective in their ability to **practice** recognized leadership principles in the workplace.
   B. A major source of stress in the workplace is often related to these inconsistent management practices.
   C. As evidence of this leadership failure, agencies often fail to properly manage the three types of employees generally found in the workplace environment. **(See chart)**
   D. Leadership training often has little or no impact in addressing these issues.

III. Causes of the Problem – Why Managers Fail to Make an Impact

Question: Most managers in agencies fail to consistently practice leadership skills because……

   A. **Individual Factors** for Leadership Failure – Emotionally Based Management.

      1. All individuals have a natural tendency to be <u>self-deceived about their behavior</u> – **they do not know they are failing**. Why?
- We associate belief systems with behavior and actions. **The Gap Trap**
- We tend to be naturally blind to our weaknesses. We focus on judging others, not ourselves.
- We are often not held accountable by others. "Ignorance is bliss."
- <u>The Honolulu Questions</u>
"List three weaknesses that affect you? What is wrong with you?"
"What are you doing about these three weaknesses? Be specific".
"Name three people who hold you accountable for these weaknesses? How do they do it?"

      2. Most individuals naturally **"take the path of least resistance"** in dealing with their management responsibilities. Common complaints against managers about selfishness, lack of follow through, failing to confront problems, etc. are

all <u>normal</u> human tendencies. As a result, it is **natural** to fail to practice leadership because **leadership behaviors** (unselfishness, discipline to follow through and deal with issues, etc.) are **abnormal human behaviors.**
"You cannot change human nature (it is always bad)." Lincoln

3. Most individuals have a **natural "fear of men"**, a strong desire for the praise of others and an avoidance of doing things that might bring criticism. They also **fear failure**. These fears will naturally cause them to avoid making difficult but often necessary leadership decisions.

B. **Organizational Factors** behind Leadership Failure

1. Leadership is a **learned behavior and skill**. Poor modeling in the past, a lack of pre-promotion and post-promotion training/mentoring, and an overemphasis on lecture/educational programs do **not** prepare people to be leaders or change others who are ineffective at leadership. <u>Leadership is based on</u> <u>skills – not "beliefs"</u>. Training develops skills – education does not!

2. **Evaluation/accountability systems regarding leadership** are usually poor or nonexistent. Evaluation systems do not generally involve individuals who best know a manager's performance, and ineffective managers are generally not confronted or held accountable for their failures or weaknesses. Good leadership is often not recognized as well.

3. When ineffective managers are prominent in an agency culture – they will often resist attempts by individuals who attempt to practice leadership. **Xenophobia,** emotionally reacting to behavior that is seen as different, is common and to be expected.

IV. Individual Strategies for Becoming More Effective as a Leader.

A. **Mindset One – Taking Ownership for Your Own Behavior** - "I am the Problem". Seek feedback/accountability for your weaknesses/failures. Remember: **Delusional thinking is <u>not</u> self-correcting**.
Strategies: Focus on your own accountability/behavior.
- Checklists
- Subordinate or 360 Evaluations
- "Iron Men/Women Systems"
- Minimize Emotional/Fear of Man Decisions – coopt others to help you do the right thing; <u>Have someone "check you"</u>.

B. **Mindset Two – Understand "the Devil is in the details"** – make sure you structure your <u>follow through</u> regarding what you know are the more critical leadership skills.
Strategies: Write it down/Schedule It
"The weakest ink is more powerful than the strongest memory." Chinese Proverb

C. **Mindset Three – Leadership is Hard**: Learn to <u>Discipline</u> Yourself in regard to Abnormal Leadership Behaviors.
Strategies for "Swimming Upstream":
- **Force yourself** to do what you do not want to do (**Gymnazo**). **"You cannot change human nature – but you can change human action." Lincoln**
- Understand that **motivation comes after obedience**, <u>not</u> before.
- Engage the help of others to reinforce you to practice doing what you know you should do.

D. **Mindset Four – Proactive Communication:** Engage Others
Strategies: Invade the Lives of Others **(MBWA)**
- **Schedule regular/ongoing contact** with staff.
- Engage them, if possible, at **their work area**.
- Learn **attending behaviors** and watch your **nonverbal** behavior.
- Focus on the middle group – the **"reflective employee"**.

E**. Mindset Five – Reinforce the Culture**: Motivate and Confront.
Strategies: Pay Attention to Behavior
- **Encourage** and recognize exemplary behavior. Use verbal, written, and tangible reinforcers – and use **dualism** to remind them of the importance of their mission.
- **Mentor** and deal with marginal employees
- **Show Courage - Confront** problem employees/behavior. We <u>are</u> our brothers' and sisters' keepers.
- Focus on **problem finding**, not problem solving.

V. Agency Strategies for Building a Leadership Culture

A. Rethink **Training** Paradigms
- Skills based training programs
- Pre-promotion training and assignments
- Post-promotion training/mentorship
- Leadership as a group/peer behavior

B. Rethink **Accountability** Paradigms
- Reward good leadership.
- Use specialist "Exception" managers to deal with serious discipline issues.
- Use/enforce effective evaluation of leadership success and failure.

VI. Summary/Applications – How are you going to apply this?
- Get over yourself – you are a 4 whether you realize it or not. You are not a king or a queen – take off the crown and start dealing with the biggest problem in your life – **yourself**. **Pride is the enemy of leadership.**
- The only way you can do that is to get others to hold you accountable to do the right thing – to confront you when you do not, and to affirm you when you do. **Always** have others "check you" on hard decisions/issues. Life and leadership cannot be done by yourself. We need "**seeing eye dogs**" to help us with our blindness.
- Write it down/schedule it – **follow through** is one of the most powerful form of communication and sincerity.
- Discipline yourself to do what you do **not** want to do. **Effort** is another potent form of communication – but have others help you on this. "Self-discipline" is almost impossible.
- Engage/communicate with others – get involved in the lives of others.
- Care enough about people to affirm and to confront them. Be a **mentor** and a friend.

VERY GOOD
5 – 15%

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70 – 90%

?

VERY BAD
5 – 15%

WHAT WE THINK
and SAY
WE "BELIEVE"/"VALUE"
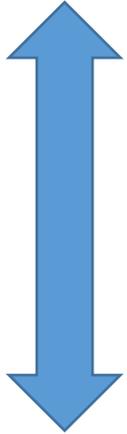
THE GAP
TRAP

WHAT WE DO:
WHAT WE REALLY
BELIEVE/VALUE

"PROFESS"
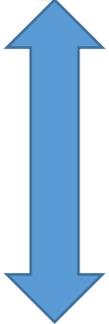
OUR
PERCEPTION
OF HOW WE
ARE DOING

"PRACTICE"

THE
REALITY OF
OUR LIVES