

Enlightened Leadership

*By leading from the soul, truly enlightened leaders can unleash other people's talents, argues motivational trainer and author, **Shahreen Kamaluddin.***

I believe that our purpose in life is to express our innate talents fully to make this world a better place for ourselves and for posterity. I believe this because our mental, physical, emotional and spiritual make-up has a built-in capacity not just for survival but also for unlimited growth. The desire for greatness lies deep in the heart and soul of every individual. However, not all of us are fully conscious of this desire and its power. The few who are aware and who

consciously seek to express this power unleash infinite possibilities for themselves and others. They make outstanding leaders. The majority, however, wait to be inspired and guided to express their best selves. We need to take note of the magnitude of dormant human potential waiting to be released! This potential is waiting for enlightened leaders to step forward to ignite the spark that will unleash this dynamic creative force for the good of mankind.



What leadership qualities must the enlightened leader have? Where do these qualities spring from? What will be the benefit of such leadership?

A call for new leadership

Our world is in a state of rapid change. Knowledge, machines, strategies and systems are becoming obsolete at an increasingly rapid rate. Businesses bloom or flounder because they are unable to keep pace with overwhelming changes. What is urgently needed is not a leadership that upgrades or replaces machines and systems, but a new leadership that is able to harness dormant creative talent to meet tomorrow's challenges. Our world needs enlightened leaders with abilities to manage not only from the mind but from the heart and soul as well.

Business is about people not statistics

Too often the fundamental relationship between the strategic and the personal side of leadership is not fully understood or appreciated. A look at leadership today reveals that there is still an overemphasis on the mental, intellectual or "strategic" side of business; not enough attention is being paid to the personal side.

Strategic thinking deals with external alliances, product positioning and organisational structure. Strategic leadership tends to focus on guaranteeing bottom-line results, as in increasing sales, maximising profits, and beating the competition. The emphasis is to out-think, out-learn, out-sell and out-perform the competition. It has a functional focus, one without much regard for the human, emotional or personal dimension; people are seen as interchangeable parts.

There is a big difference between a "boss" and a leader. The authoritarian, "boss" leadership, which commands others to carry out instructions, is never effective because it suppresses the human spirit. The leader, on the other hand, leads others to discover their own creative abilities and talents, thereby uplifting the human spirit.

The personal side of leadership concerns the development of the human spirit, motivation, character-building, maturity, will, expressions of power, freedom, meaning, creativity, ethics, values, corporate culture, responsibility, accountability, loyalty, commitment, self-sacrifice, love and genius. Because business is also about people, leadership excellence should be redefined to include interpersonal terms. The foundation of this lies in building strong and meaningful relationships.

The mindless race against time and competition have

caused organisations, corporations and nations to spend unthinkable sums of money on new strategies, new data, new systems and new infrastructures, because it is assumed that human beings will improve if the system changes. What is not understood is that real and lasting personal transformation is a deliberate act of individual will. The willingness to offer one's best comes not from the head, but from the heart and soul of the individual. What is required therefore, is a fresh determination to value the human being, raise the human spirit and allow the soul of the individual to voice their deeper needs.

Without respecting and fulfilling these human needs, it is unrealistic for any leader to expect commitment to excellence, loyalty, courage and genius offered freely from individuals.

The missing link in effective leadership

Most leaders satisfy the criteria of possessing brilliant minds, academic qualifications, technical and professional skills and years of relevant working experience. However, they are found deficient in the area of self-knowledge. They are knowledgeable about the world around them, but know little about themselves and how they function as human beings. Few have paid attention to their own subtler aspects, such as their personality traits and ego. Often, these traits, if left unchecked, will impact adversely on their business decisions, and their relationships at work, at home and in their social environment.

Need for self-knowledge and self-awareness

Leaders need to realise they are not perfect human beings. Like everyone else, they are fallible. What they can do is to invest time to 'know' their own selves so they can manage themselves better. A leader has to be a master of his own self before he can hope to lead others effectively.

Self-knowledge will lead to self-awareness, which is a wonderful quality to possess. It is also a practical skill that can be used in all situations. Self-awareness is the ability to observe and understand one's thoughts, beliefs, emotions, strengths, limitations, values and motives. Self-aware leaders are realistic, neither overly self-critical or naively hopeful. They are honest with themselves about themselves. They are also honest with others and can take responsibility for their mistakes. They practise the "observer" stance and observe themselves in all interactions throughout the day. This gives them an objective view of what and how they are thinking, feeling and acting throughout the day, and who or what is triggering certain responses. Their self-observation guides them to know and



understand all aspects of their selves, resulting in better self-management and ultimately, self-mastery. This self-understanding enables them to react better to other people and other situations.

Self-aware leaders have no ego. They are secure because they know who they really are. They feel no need to defend their opinions against differing viewpoints. They welcome diverse opinions and diverse personalities around them. They do not feel threatened by anyone or anything. Their creative energies are thus freed to focus on the best results. This confidence comes from being guided by an inner wisdom.

Guidance from inner wisdom and silent power

Enlightened leaders realise that real power cannot be found

Many outstanding leaders practise silent self-reflection and introspection, a practice from their spiritual lives which they bring to their work lives. Some develop this inner awareness through silent prayer, meditation or spending quiet time among the beauties of nature; others grow through a philosophical quest for self-understanding.

outside the self. It cannot be found in a title, designation or any symbols of success. Thus, they are detached from these trimmings, which do not define them. They also realise the folly in seeking dominion over others. Instead, they seek to empower others to express their individual greatness. Enlightened leaders operate from their “soul-selves” and display “soul” qualities such as truth, honesty, integrity, love, compassion, authenticity, spontaneity and joy.

Many outstanding leaders practise silent self-reflection and introspection, a practice from their spiritual lives which they

bring to their work lives. Some develop this inner awareness through silent prayer, meditation or spending quiet time among the beauties of nature; others grow through a philosophical quest for self-understanding.

These activities help to calm them and mitigate their stress. When they are calm and peaceful, they are centred. No external influence can destabilise them. From this internal compass, they are directed in everything they do. Operating from their higher selves, they always make the right decisions in the interest of the highest good for all concerned.

In knowing who they really are, they earn respect and admiration by the way they conduct themselves. They exude a quiet confidence that comes from the soul and touches everyone around them. Guided from within, they always think the right thoughts, say the right words and do the right things.

Developing leadership in others

Leadership is both a mindset as well as a pattern of behaviour. It also translates into a philosophy urging leaders to be a leader in all they do, bringing excellence to all aspects of their life - work, family, self, ecological responsibility, social responsibility and financial strength. Leadership is holistic. It improves all aspects of individual life as well as the world. A contributing leader takes responsibility for the part he plays in contributing to a better world.

Enlightened leaders, by virtue of being who they are, inspire greatness in others thereby developing leaders wherever they are. Such leaders not only know the way, they go the way, and show the way. They have a clear vision and purpose. They devote themselves to what is worthy and noble. As visionaries they are able to see the invisible and therefore do the impossible.

The art of reinvention

No one can predict with absolute certainty what will happen tomorrow. As such, there are two ways we can choose to look at tomorrow's world. One view is that everything is a miracle. The other view is that nothing is a miracle.

In order to face the uncertain future with optimism, we need more people who believe in miracles. No doubt it will

Every leader therefore bears a heavy responsibility to lead others from his best aspect, which is the soul. Guided by "soul" qualities such as love, truth, honesty, integrity and compassion, his leadership empowers others to express their best selves and thus transform the world.

require a revolutionary change in people's thinking, feelings and responses. However, the faith and belief that drives this attitude will automatically unleash the creative talents needed to create miracles.

To adapt to constant change requires great flexibility. Enlightened leaders are always alert and able to respond to change even though it may be sudden, unexpected and unpredictable. They realise that change brings opportunity, growth and progress. Instead of resisting change, enlightened leaders shift into a different gear, anticipate change, and prepare the entire organisation for change.

The winning edge required is the ability to constantly reinvent oneself, an ability to create anew at every opportunity. This means constantly seeking new ideas and improved ways of doing things.

Leading with love and compassion

The ability to lead is in each individual. It lies in his desire to constantly see a better, grander vision and version of himself and to express that in ever-changing ways for the betterment of humanity. Greatness is an intrinsic quality - it is a virtue born from the soul. It ennobles the human spirit, raising it to unknown heights to achieve infinite possibilities.

Every leader therefore bears a heavy responsibility to lead others from his best aspect, which is the soul. Guided by "soul" qualities such as love, truth, honesty, integrity and compassion, his leadership empowers others to express their best selves and thus transform the world.

Stepping into the role of the enlightened leader must surely be an honour and privilege not to be taken lightly. To accept the torch of excellence and to ignite the spark of brilliance that lies in each individual heart and soul must surely be the most rewarding experience that can be offered to anyone. ■

Shahreen Kamaluddin, is Executive Chairman, Personal Empowerment Training & Consulting. Shahreen conducts corporate and public training in the areas of Enlightened Leadership, Strategies for Success, Communications Skills, Personal/ Corporate Image Management and Personal Development. She is also the best-selling author of "Know Yourself - The Truth Will Set You Free" and "You Are What You Believe." To contact her, call 03-23002605/7, e-mail: shahreen@personalempowerment.com.my