

# MercuriMail

## Empowerment -The Emperor's New Clothes

- Chris Argyris

Who would not want more highly motivated people to scale the 21st Century? As one CEO remarked "No vision, no strategy can be achieved without able and empowered employees." Impressive theories abound on internal motivation, experts teach change management. Executives themselves launch any number of programmes from reengineering to TQM. But little of that works. Reengineering has led to improvements in performance, but it has not produced the number of highly motivated employees needed to ensure consistently high performing organisations.

There has been very little growth in empowerment over the last 30 years. But why that is so remains a riddle. The answer is complex. The change programs and practices we employ, are full of inner contradictions that cripple innovation, motivation and drive. At the same time CEO's subtly undermine empowerment. Managers love empowerment in theory but the command-and-control model is what they trust and know best. For their part, employees are often ambivalent about empowerment- it is great as long as they are not held personally accountable. Thus empowerment is very much like the emperor's new clothes; we praise it loudly in public and ask ourselves privately why we can't see it.

To understand why there has been no transformation, we need to begin with commitment. Commitment is not just a human relations concept. It is an idea that is fundamental to our thinking about economic strategy, financial governance, information technology and operations. Commitment is about generating human energy and activating the human mind. Without it, the implementation of any new idea or new initiative would be seriously compromised. Human beings can commit themselves in two fundamentally different ways: externally and internally. Both are valuable in the workplace, but only internal commitment reinforces empowerment.

## VINTAGE

Implementing and promoting organisational change is usually articulated in four steps: Define vision, define a competitive strategy consistent with the vision, define organisational work processes that will deploy the strategy, define individual job requirement so that employees can carry out processes effectively.

This process makes sense, is rational. Yet the process is so riddled with inner contradictions that change programs that follow end up creating confusion, particularly at the implementation stage. All the steps defined so precisely actually encourage more external rather than internal commitment. Change programs like TQM are successful because they help reduce mistakes or because they help employees embrace best practices. But at the same time, it undermines internal commitment, does not provide the new source of energy that many executives want.

Some recommendations that may help executives think more sensibly about empowerment

- ★ Don't undertake blatantly contradictory programs that are intended to expand internal commitment, but are designed in ways that produce external commitment.
- ★ Understand that empowerment has its limits. It is not a cure-all and should not be evoked needlessly. Once it has been created, do not misuse it. Specify the likely limits of permissible change.
- ★ Realise that internal and external commitment can coexist in organisations and how they do is crucial to the ultimate success of empowerment in the organisation.
- ★ Establish working conditions to increase empowerment in the organisation.
- ★ Calculate factors such as morale, satisfaction, and even commitment into your human relations policies, but do not make them ultimate criteria. They are penultimate. The ultimate goal is performance.
- ★ Help employees understand the choices they make about their own level of commitment.

Empowerment can run contrary to human nature, and be realistic about how to achieve and use it.

- Reprinted from May-June, 1998-Harvard Business Review



## Our Thoughts

Why is  
empowerment  
still *only* talked  
about?  
Find out in  
- VINTAGE

Solve the  
Successor's  
Dilemma through  
- FOCUS

I don't have to be  
a leader to be a  
leader?  
- MUST READ

Reach out into the  
deep realms of  
your being in  
Ravi's - CORE.

Make your choices  
- some  
assumptions you  
can adopt.



# The Successor's Dilemma By Dan Ciampa and Michael Watkins

A well-regarded CEO approaches retirement age. Together the Board and he screen internal candidates but finally a bright star is hired from outside the company - with the assurances that performance will mean ascent to the top in two or three years.

At first the star dazzles. Impressive strategic initiatives yield quick results and he deploys managerial practices that get work done more effectively. The CEO and the Board congratulate themselves on a wise choice. Slowly but surely the star's brilliance begins to dim. His take-charge approach alienates the CEO and senior management and then offends them outright. Soon his initiatives are resisted or even blocked.

The designated successor is frustrated. The CEO is not willing to give up control of what he toiled to build and still the board expects him to post impressive results. The successor himself knows he must make organisational and strategic changes to prepare the company for the time when he will lead it and yet how can he do this without the CEO's or senior management support? If he pushes too hard, he alienates the CEO; if he doesn't push hard enough, his performance won't warrant a promotion to the top spot.

Thus the stage is set for the "successor's dilemma" a seemingly intractable set of circumstances that has entangled leaders for as long

as there have been organisations. Indeed the drama of leadership succession is a timeless part of the human condition. From the time of Saul and David and Shakespeare's King Lear. Both the kings found it difficult to let go after choosing someone to succeed them. Modern times reflect similar themes. For the would-be leader it is a time of excitement and promise, the culmination of a hard climb to the top. For the incumbent leader succession is the time to confront the passage of time, the end of a career, and even mortality itself.

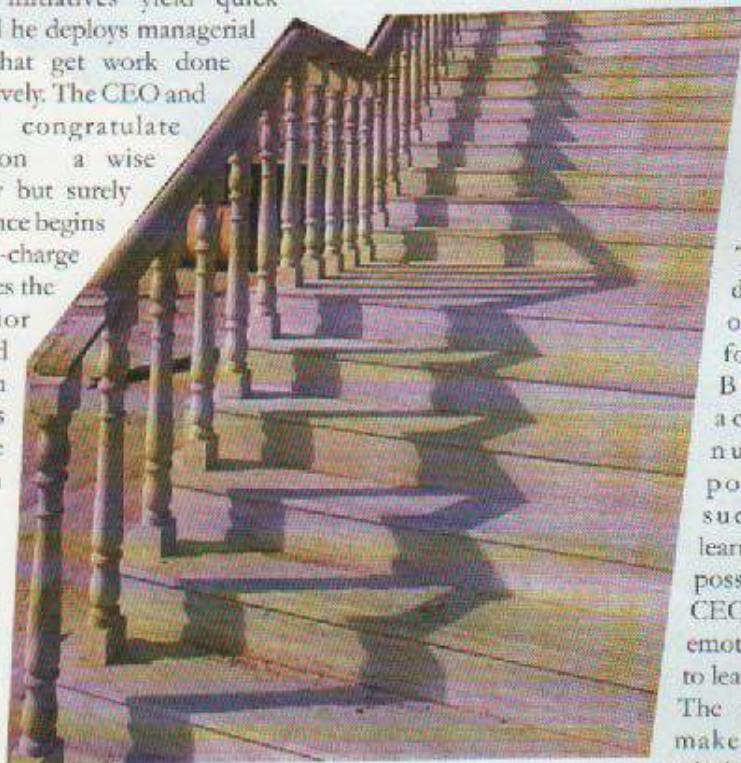
No wonder then the relationship between the two is so fraught with emotion.

The successor's dilemma can be overcome by four practices. Before he accepts the number two position, the successor can learn as much as possible about the CEO and assess his emotional readiness to leave his position. The successor can make it his top priority to maintain

regular communication with the CEO. He can also develop and utilize a balanced personal advice network to help navigate the strategic and personal minefields of the leadership change. And finally, he can stay focussed on the end game - that is on his professional goals, not the emotional traps that surround them.

The poignant and often painful drama of succession is as old as Adam and Eve. As one person rises to new heights, another must fall, or at least step back from the spotlight. Yet leadership transitions can be managed in ways that make success more likely. The successor can prepare for the challenge, work assiduously to create a good relationship with the incumbent leader. He can also draw on the outside help of advisers. In the end, the success or failure of a leadership transition belongs to the successor, and it always will.

Focus





# MUST READ

## Lateral Leadership

Getting Things Done When You Are Not The Boss.

By Roger Fisher and Alan Sharp

Harper Collins, 204 pages Rs.195/-

Negotiation Master, Roger Fisher has done "an encore". Lateral leadership is a simple, practical definitive guide to getting results when you have to work with others.

Fisher and Sharp have described step by step methodology to build up the portfolio of leadership skills you require if you want to get the best out of others- at any level. The entire book is built around three simple ways you could get others working towards better methods.

- To ASK a question that gets others thinking about a collaborative problem and looking for a solution
- To OFFER your own thoughts, and invite others to use them, build on them or correct them.
- To DO something that will serve as a model for better behaviour.

Whatever limits there may be on our official authority, we need to see ourselves as potential leaders. Time and again, we will find that we can change things for the better by using the skills of *lateral leadership*.

The problems and solutions for good collaboration are illustrated very succinctly through stories and contemporary illustrations that will be familiar to most of us. Here is one example.

There is an old railroad story of an expert being called because a brand new diesel locomotive would not start no matter what the engineer did. The expert arrived, studied the situation and then gave a light tap to the locomotive with a hammer. It started right up. When the railroad asked the expert for a break up of the \$ 1000- bill, the reply was:

- Hitting the locomotive with a hammer	\$10
- Knowing where to hit it	\$ 990

The task of stimulating good cooperation is similar. The precise step you take at the end is a minor part of the cure.

Good collaboration fails because personal skills are limited, we have no clue on what is effective collaboration and we are unable to influence others.

The prescription for all these - lead laterally to avoid the negative consequences of telling others what to do is what this book is all about. The authors elaborate on the five fundamentals of getting things done

- ★ Aim by formulating results to be achieved
- ★ Harness the power of organised thought
- ★ Integrate thinking with doing
- ★ Offer everyone a challenging role
- ★ Express appreciation, offer advice.

There is a story at the end of the book that powerfully brings out the essence of the book's theme "Choose To Help".

A skeptic challenged Rabbi Hillel "Recite the whole Torah, standing on one leg and I will accept the wisdom of your faith". The Rabbi replied, "Do not do anything to others which you would not want done to you. That is Torah. The rest is commentary."

A pleasure to read and a useful tool for mobilizing and energizing others to getting things done, while you give a piece of the jigsaw puzzle.

Happy Introspection!!

## Development of the Core

I am sure many of you would have given a deep thought to the concept of "real giving" which formed the content of development of the core in the last issue.

Real giving is truth and therefore it is true giving. Perhaps it should be rechristened!

This raises the key question that each one asks or needs to ask himself or herself. Who am I and what is my role. What am I expected to do and how am I expected to contribute. What would I like to be known as and what would I like to be remembered as.

The identity of the individual!

Many times the actions we take or the behaviour we demonstrate, is largely related to our own perception of our identity.

This influences our behaviour in a way that we see the behaviour as natural and not influenced by identity. Partly because we are working in such a busy world that we have no time to sit down and find what our identity is.

The key to the development of the core lies in this introspection. We perform different roles, as an Employee, as a Manager, as a Leader, as a Spouse, as a Parent, as a Son or a Daughter, as a Friend, as a Colleague.....

Many of these roles demand, seemingly, different types of approaches and behaviour from us. However, in the different roles we perform and we are expected to perform in a deeper way, there will be common theme or what constitutes the key to these roles being performed and seen, being performed effectively.

This would mean that the identity is common irrespective of the roles that we perform. If we understand this identity and give a conclusion of what our identity is and what it should be, the behaviour demonstrated in different roles is more consistent and more predictable. This sense of clear identity with 'true giving' leads to a sense of fulfilment.

Are we ready in this different quest of defining what our identity is?

- Until next issue.

*Navi*



## We choose our working assumptions. Which ones would you choose?

### Some widely held assumptions

### Some different assumptions you can adopt

Problems are someone else's fault.	Perhaps I can make a difference.
There's not much I can do to change the way others behave.	The easiest way to change behaviour of others is to change my own.
Trying to do something I am not good at is embarrassing.	Everyone learns new skills by trying to do what we are not good at.
Whatever I try probably won't work.	Only by trying will I discover what works.
Some of these ideas are useless.	I can adapt these ideas and find them useful.
I don't have to get involved.	The more involved I become, the fuller the life I lead.
I can get away with looking the other way.	I can choose to help.

- Extract from the book "Lateral Leadership"

## NOTES FROM ALL OVER

"Productivity is being able to do things that you were never able to do before".

- Jim Manzi

"If you do things well, do them better. Be daring, be first, be different, be just."

- Anita Roddick

"You can never over coordinate."

- Cle Cox

"Nothing is more dangerous than an idea when it is the only one you have."

- Emile Chartier

"The problem is not that there are problems. The problem is expecting otherwise and thinking that having problems is a problem."

- Theodore Rubin

"Decisions must be made at the lowest level for the management at the top to retain effectiveness".

- Saxon Tate

"This is what customers pay us for-to sweat all the details so it is easy and pleasant for them to use our computers."

- Steven Jobs

"Leadership is to get men to do what they don't want and like that."

- Harry S. Truman

"A leader is a dealer in hope"

- Napoleon Bonaparte

"A man who is worthy of being a leader of men will never complain about the stupidity of his helpers, the ingratitude of mankind, nor the inappreciation of the public."

- William Boetcker



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