

Leadership 2000 and Beyond: A Holistic Perspective



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As the year 2010 winds down, we come to reflect on a number of events and situations that have happened in the past in order to improve our future. As business or organizational leaders, our thoughts turn to ways we can improve either the bottom line and/or the organizational efficiency/effectiveness of our company. The one area that leaders tend to generally ignore is the other attributes that are important elements of our lives. Work-related activities tend to dominate our whole existence as we strive to achieve new pinnacles in our careers and business situation. The problem with placing all of our focus on work is that we tend to place less emphasis on the other important elements that also helps in defining us as individuals.

I, for one, will openly admit that work is an extremely important component of my life. However, I have also come to learn that without the right balance in my outside-of-work life, other elements of my existence are likely to be adversely affected. If one is to examine our individual makeup, we note that there are various dimensions to our life that make us who we are. These dimensions include work, family/friends, social activities, physical/mental health, and spiritual well-being. Picture these elements as spokes in a wheel. When one of the spokes is misaligned and is weakened in comparison to the other spokes, the wheel tends to wobble to the point where you might actually crash. In order to make sure that your spokes are well-aligned, one must place some effort in maintaining the integrity of all spokes, so that the wheel runs smoothly. Well, this analogy lends itself very well to the central thesis of this article... to be an effective leader; one must ensure that the appropriate amount of maintenance and care is dedicated to all five (5) elements of life in order to ensure that our journey to success is not a bumpy or wobbly one.

Personally, I have found that the best leaders whom I have had the pleasure of working with have been individuals who, in fact, do have a very balanced life. In many instances, these individuals feed their soul with a solid spiritual life (be it through meditation, prayer or simply volunteering). They fulfill their social life by partaking in social gatherings or attending theatre, family functions, etc. On the mental/physical health element, they regularly set time aside to actively participate in a team/individual sport, to undergo a massage, to take a walk, to eat healthy and to take breaks during stressful time. On the family/friends dimension, these same individuals are frequently

surrounded by people who are important to them, such as parents, siblings and other close acquaintances. They get a great deal of satisfaction and enjoyment from being surrounded by their family and friends. Lastly, on the work front, these individuals work to their full potential during their entire work day. One could reasonably argue that these leaders can achieve their full potential at work because they have reached fulfilment on all dimensions of their life. The truly successful leader is one who can manage every dimension of his/her life in a balanced manner.

We often see workaholics depriving themselves of time to enjoy other aspects of life. They are prepared to sacrifice their family/friend time for work. They will allow their work time to interfere with their physical and mental need for exercise and stress-free activities. They will forgo their social life outside of work for the sake of completing tasks and responsibilities that they perceive as needing immediate completion. Their spiritual life is practically non-existent because they define themselves in accordance with their role, rank and function at work. One cannot sustain a life without balance in the long run – something usually has to give and in many instances, it's the individual's mental health. I recently came across an interesting article written by a former self-confessed workaholic, who had experienced a fairly long bout of deep clinical depression. His experience with clinical depression made him re-evaluate his life. He found that his life was missing a lot of the things that create a more holistic life. He definitely found himself trapped in a vortex focused on work only. His life outside of work was quasi non-existent. As a result of this experience, this individual underwent a substantial transformation – he became a motivational speaker who advocates the achievement of balance in one's life. His target audience is usually made up of executives and senior management personnel.

As a firm, we announced a couple months ago that we had forged an affiliation with Leadership Management International (LMI) Inc. The LMI philosophy hinges on the principles discussed herein – success is achieved by maintaining a balance approach in the various aspects of one's life. Too much attention to one dimension can lead to an unsteady ride on the road to success. We have adopted this philosophy as part of our practice. It is our view that in order to successfully meet the needs of our clients, we must have our own sense of balance. As part of the LMI organization, we assist members of the organization achieve their full work potential while maintaining a sense of balance on the other important aspects of their lives.

Without balance, an inevitable collision course with one's desire to achieve may derail dreams and aspirations for personal continuous improvement and success.