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THE QUEST FOR TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND BRAND SINGULARITY

Whether that transformational leader is a person, brand, organization, or nation – I argue that the same blueprint applies to all. A further challenge occurs when trying to widen the net in order to galvanize several streams of leadership and innovation to achieve collective singularity. This article contains some of my musings.

In everyday conversations, the terms Manager and Leader seem to be used interchangeably. Also, over the past thirty years or so the term Transformational has crept into our vocabulary as a concept, which is moving thinking away from economic transactions – towards collaborative and emotional transactions that bring change. So what do these terms mean?

Managers achieve their goals through administrating, coordinating and engineering the effective use of resources - and that includes people. They count value and make it easy for others to complete tasks.

Leaders create value, giving people a confidence a boost and the green light, which will inspire and motivate them to go above and beyond what is expected.

Transformational leaders take their power and influence even further. They pull people with them and nurture a culture where future leaders and managers are made.

In an ideal world we'd like to be all three of these when the call arises - but only a few of us have what it takes. All of them mean being a people person: treading a fine line where you're transferring a blend of your own vision, values, passion, pragmatism, genius, intuition,

assertiveness, and diplomacy - in the hope that it will take seed in others. You don't have to be the best, but people have to buy into you and feel that you make them better.

These for me are the hallmark of a Transformational Leader: A cultural architect, engineer and manager... Unflappable when others lose it... with a mind and wits like Quicksilver... emotional intelligence, magnetism, rhythm, balance, poise and intuition to rival a jazz musician, a football striker, and a stand up comedian...

There's a saying: the nail that sticks out furthest gets hammered down first. Leaders need to be that nail... Willing to put their necks on the line for others... Willing to give things another go, even if it's been done before and all else seems to fail... Willing to tread unmarked land, to create a soon to be well-trodden path... Willing to bring people together... Willing to learn enough about the world around them and to keep learning... Willing to embrace change... Willing to focus on the details that others put to one side... Willing to focus on the bigger picture when others can't see past the details... Willing to surround themselves with those wiser and more talented than them... Willing to hand power to others, sooner rather than later, so that they can continue on their journey... Willing to recognize and admit their limitations...

Willing to let go...

Transformational leadership means a movement away from measuring 'like for like' and putting a value on 'what You like for what I like'. Managers are supposed to be administrators able to accomplish pre-defined goals and objectives, utilizing the resources available; but some of my research finds that managers need to be more than just managers, they need to be leaders too.

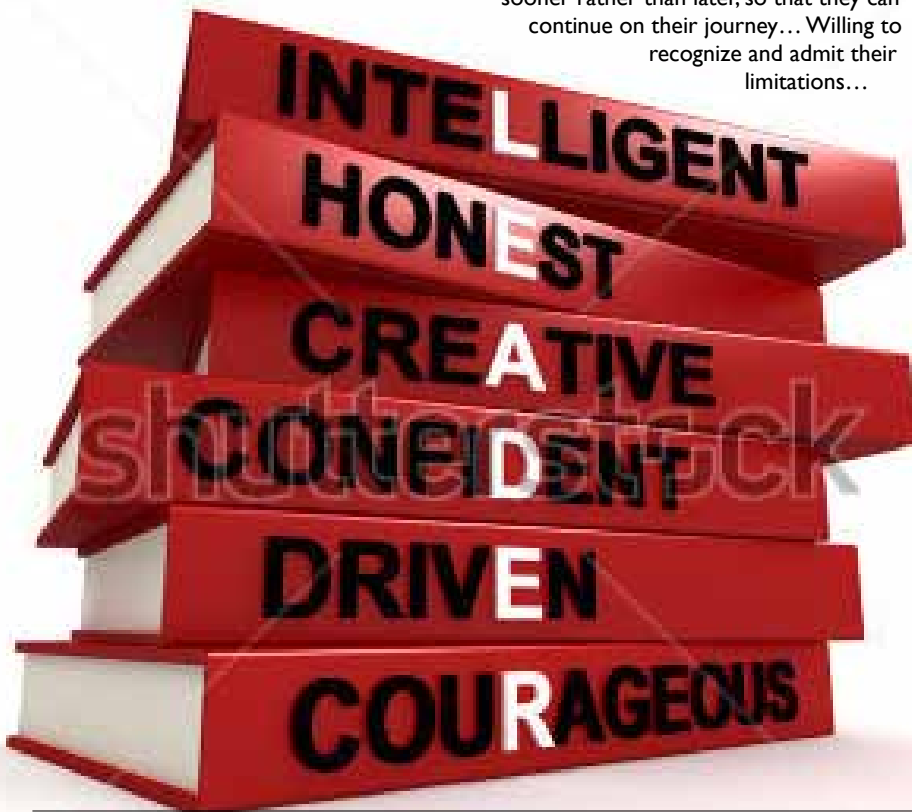
We often talk about businesses having decision makers who make choices and judgment calls. Choices involve comparisons and selections from a number of available alternatives. In contrast, judgments are inferential cognitive processes, where tasks are compared and matched, attributable to some form of scale. Here, individuals and groups draw conclusions about unknown quantities or qualities, based upon the information available.

However, often little is done to distinguish between judgments and choices, with the two terms being used interchangeably. Choices are the norm, but the ability to make judgments on the unknown successfully is a powerful attribute. So managers' focus is on what happened before and what is happening now. Whilst leaders too have their eyes trained on the same things, they also have a third eye looking at things that are currently out of reach, or territories yet to be seen. Transformational leaders are visionaries and futurists able to motivate others, galvanising them around their vision.

Now, with such transformational individuals the challenge will always be whether they can fit into the structure of an organisation and maintain an alignment with the corporation's goals and vision.

I often find myself looking at sport for evidence and clues. Recently, when we look at football it's clear that Sir Alex Ferguson was a transformational manager and leader at Manchester United. Not only were they able to win, but he was also able to produce players who have gone on to become managers in their own right. Also, when we compare the performance of the current team this season compared to last, we can see the significance of his contributions.

United won the English Premier League last season, with reigning champions Manchester City 16 points behind with only 15 left to play for. As I write this piece, United are currently in 7th place and 15





points behind the leaders, which perhaps shows that their current manager David Moyes is just that – a manager, but not yet a leader and certainly not transformational. Perhaps now he also regrets replacing Sir Alex's backroom staff so quickly with his own, despite being advised by Sir Alex not to. Gone are the days when 'Fergie' time meant a never say die attitude, and it would appear that time would stand until United scored an equaliser or winner late into extra time.

Similarly, many would have thought that Manchester City replacing Roberto Mancini, with Manuel Pellegrini was a strange move. Mancini took them to the top of the Premiership in 2012, equalling United on points, but beating them on goal difference in injury time of their last game. For once, it seemed that Fergie timing was trumped. Whilst the season is still young, Pellegrini has brought an added dimension to the team's attacking flair, which is striking fear into the hearts of opposition. City are the fastest team ever in Premier League history to reach 100 goals in a season.

If we look at another transformational football figure in José Mourinho, currently back at Chelsea for a second spell after having put previous disagreements to one side, we can see a character who people love or hate - but he's been referred

to by pundits as the only manager in world football who just about guarantees trophies. He is the fastest manager to reach 100 Premier League victories, and he has a nine year unbeaten home league run across four teams. Now he's also a good friend of Fergie, who hand-picked his successor; and Mourinho made it about as obvious as you can publicly that he would have joined United - but the offer was never made.

So, looking at Sir Alex Ferguson, José Mourinho, and let's throw in the late Steve Jobs, co-founder of Apple; we can see patterns emerge that show a slightly darker side. Yes they are intensely competitive, driven, and successful transformational figures; but there is also a fiery, ruthless side to them all that boils over and made them hard to work with. Fergie is famous for his heated words to players in the dressing room that became known as the 'hairdryer treatment'.

Likewise, there are numerous stories recounting Job's own brand of hairdryer moments. Engineers explained to him that they had to reinvent inventing to create the iPod and that it was simply impossible to make it any smaller. Jobs walked over to a fish tank and dropped the iPod into it. When it touched bottom, bubbles began to float to the top.

"Those are air bubbles," he snapped. "That means there's space in there. Make it smaller."

Now this isn't me encouraging you to go around shouting at people, but I do think that being able to harness your passion, and finding a way to shake and make people share that passion of yours is important. The stakes are high when trying to aim for transformational status. If you're successful and others are too, then you are transformational. If you fail, then you're



hated. However, there is a real danger that in trying to be a good manager or leader people play it too safe, or follow formulae that strip them of their unique human spirit.

Transformational leaders seem to be able to preserve that care-free spirit, optimism and selfishness that many of us once had when we were little children. Children are a great inspiration for showing us how you can try, cry and then pick yourself up again – putting things behind you, making friends again, and learning fast. The little things in life matter to children - they fascinate and make them happy.

Finally, here are some suggestions about how we can all improve:

Individual skills and a knowledge of self is vital. Being well-travelled, multi-cultured, well read in the arts and sciences, and having a diverse and deep network of contacts helps. Collectively they should yield and celebrate your own brand of a rich, credible, authentic and inimitable identity and personality.

Get neo-spiritual – there needs to be a higher purpose linked to your actions. What drives you and how do you want to

be remembered? You need to build a legacy, and that takes time. Seek the company of those people and experiences in which you see value – the more diverse the better. For example think about how was possible for a manager like Sir Alex Ferguson to put together a football team time and time again, where 16 and 36 year olds from so many different cultures could work together, with essentially the same job title and win?

Branding and storytelling have to support these activities too; by helping to communicate a collective understanding and meaning that is easy to transmit. The brand and mission are the flag, map and compass. You have to go on the journey and share the experience - then the flag and map gain meaning, significance and value.

But whilst branding is key, who does the branding for you? If you're driving a personal brand agenda then that weakens your leadership. Others have to be doing the brand building for you, of their own volition. You're looking for brand singularity, where you stand as one and it's you that lights the touch paper.

Corporate branding is the central

message. Employer branding lets people be who they want to be, rather than drones who chant the mantra of the corporate brand. Ideally, these help people on a path of creating personal brands that support the main brand messages. If you have real people who talk about real things of relevance at the right time – then it keeps the brand real.

Once you have built this foundation, bottom up, then you can start to humanize the corporate, product and service brands in your portfolio. If there is synergy and the message is compelling and strong enough, then people will join the dots and draw in greater positive associations with seemingly unconnected wider practices, for great effect. Think about the richness of folklore and mythology that are now associated with the strongest global brands, which have become cultural artefacts in their own right.

So, whatever level you're at now, think about taking a journey down that path of transforming your environment and inspiring others to join you; and like a child, whether your successful or not, enjoy the experience for what it is in the short term, and you're sure to grow.

