

What should we learn from great leaders

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Abstract: *I will try in this article to go over some lessons that can and should we learn from leaders in different fields (sales, politics, sports). Some of these lessons can be translated even in a lifestyle, it can help us all to change our perception of things that we were coming forward as we wanted and we can understand how little effort it takes to change this situation. Some of these leaders didn't had learned how to be successful from school or books but they have qualities like drive, passion, commitment. They have had the courage to go away from what they did before, and gone to something that didn't exist before. They have built bridges to be crossed by them and their followers.*

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Peter Drucker famously stated that “management is doing things right; leadership is doing the right things”¹. Great leaders possess dazzling social intelligence, a zest for change, and above all, vision that allows them to set their sights on the “things” that truly merit attention. Not a bad skill set for the rest of us, either.

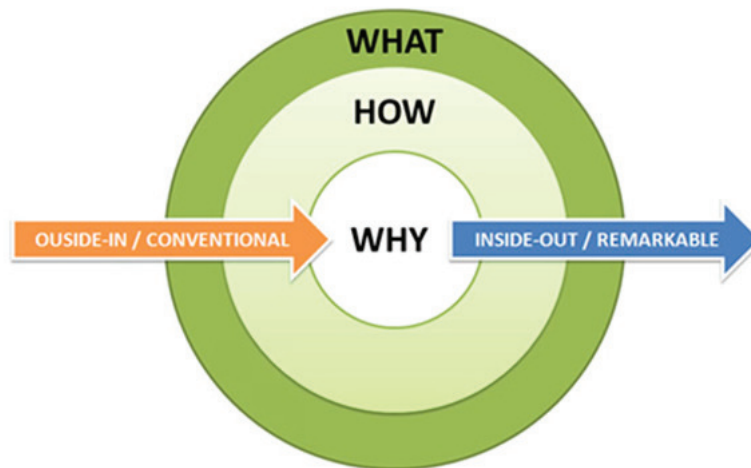
How do people explain when things don’t go as they planned? Or, how do they explain when other people are able to achieve things that seem to defy all of the assumptions? We can take a lot of examples from vary industries and we can find a lot of

¹ Peter F. Drucker, *The Essential Drucker: The Best of Sixty Years of Peter Drucker’s Essential Writings on Management*, Harper Collins Publishers, 2003, p. 268

examples were some companies have managed to become leaders in their industry with the inspiring help of some visionary peoples. In principle, big firms have the same access to the talented work forces, the same agencies or suppliers, the same consultants companies, the same media. Then what is the thing that makes all the difference?

Simon Sinek call’s it the golden circle²: How – in the center, surrounded by “Why”, surrounded by a larger circle, “What” as it appear presented slightly below.

² Simon Sinek, *How great leaders inspire action*, 2010, presentation available at http://www.ted.com/talks/simon_sinek_how_great_leaders_inspire_action



Source: <http://life-engineering.com/how-great-leaders-inspire-action-the-golden-circle/>

This idea can explain why some organizations and/or some leaders are able to inspire when/where others aren’t. In principle, Sinek idea is very simple and he assumes that every person or organization on the planet knows what they do, that’s for sure. Some of them know how they do it, but why they do what they do know very few people

or organizations. By “why” we must understand: Why should anyone care about you and your products or services? What’s your belief? Why does your organization exist? What’s your purpose? What’s your cause?

Ordinary, the most people or organization think, act and communicate from the outside in. It’s a normal thing from the

most points of view. They go from the clearest thing to the fuzziest thing. Instead, the inspired leaders and/or the inspired organizations (regardless of their size or their industry) think, act and communicate from the inside out.

Lets take an example of an usual marketing message from a computer manufacturing company like Apple: "We make great computers. They're beautifully designed, simple to use and user friendly. Want to buy one?". It's uninspiring, but most of us and companies communicate. We say what we do, we say how we are different from the competition or how we are better than them and we expect from the receiver of our message some sort of a behavior, a purchase, a vote or something like that.

Still Apple actually communicates something like this : "Everything we do, we believe in challenging the status quo. We believe in thinking differently. The way we challenge the status quo is by making our products beautifully designed, simple to use and user friendly. We just happen to make great computers. Want to buy one?". Its a totally different message and he makes the differences between a usual company and the leader (inspired) company because in some industries people don't buy what you do but they buy why you do it. The main goal must be to do business with people who believe what you believe and less to do business with everybody who needs what you have.

I have write in an precedent article about Nicolae Malaxa which is considered to be one of the successful businessman in the interwar period and all this because it was a true leader and he was appreciated for his visionary thinking. Leader in the economic development of the country, one of the leading businessmen of the time, a leader of the

industry as a pioneer - the beginning of a "phenomenon", as many have said of everything that Nicolae Malaxa designed, a leading in politics and a leader in relation to his workers.

Romanian engineer and entrepreneur, he was one of the most important industrialists in interwar period from Romania, but also a controversial figure because of his political sympathies. Evolution of the Malaxa plants was the most spectacular economic and technological phenomenon in Romania at that time, in less than 20 years, the workshop became an industrial giant, but a very important pillar for the entire Romanian economy in the interwar period.

Nicolae Malaxa had all the qualities to be a good leader. He managed to create a vision and also urged the workers to aspire to that vision. To translate the vision into reality, Nicolae Malaxa appealed to different means to motivate employees and to target systems and processes to increase production. This, offered higher salaries than other factories, social and health assistance, work equipment and lunch services.

Another example of a great leader is Martin Luther King, who in 1963, manage to gather 250.000 people to hear his speech. And in that time, there were no invitations to be made and there was no social media websites to check the date. Dr. King was a visionary. He had a dream bigger than the times in which he lived. That is, after all, what real visionary leaders are all about. His "I Have A Dream" speech brought awareness and humanity to the national consciousness about civil rights in America³.

³ Adam Toren, Leadership Lessons From Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., 2014, available at: <http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/230958>

Dr. King's stance on political activism in a non-violent way made him a natural leader and an inspirational figure. He led a social movement of equality during a time when he wasn't supported by most. In fact, he was threatened and despised by many. But he stayed committed to the vision he held. He wasn't the only great orator, he wasn't the only person to have these ideas, and some of his ideas were even bad. But what he did, was to go around and simply talk about what he believed. "I believe..."

And people who believed what he believed took his cause and told more people. To the point where 250.000 people showed up on the right day to hear him speak.

No one showed up for him. They showed up for themselves, for having the same believe about America and this got them to drive across the country on a bus to stand in the sun to Washington DC in the middle of August.

He believed that there were two kinds of laws in this world, those that are made by a higher power, and those that are made by man. And it's not until those that are made by man are consistent with the laws that are made by the higher power that we will live in a just world. It just so happened that the civil rights movement was the perfect thing to help him bring his cause to life. He gave the "I have a dream" speech, not the "I have a plan" speech.

The leaders who work most effectively, it seems to me, never say "I." And that's not because they have trained themselves not to say "I." They don't think "I." They think "we"; they think "team." They understand that their job is to make the team function. They accept responsibility and don't sidestep it, but "we" must get the credit. This is what

creates trust, what enables you to get the task done.

Another things that we must learn from leaders is that for everithing that we want to achieve we must do all we can to get there. Don't complain. Don't whine. Don't make excuses. Just get out there, and whatever you're doing, do it to the best of your ability. And be sure that you cannot do more than that.

„It's not whether you win or lose, it's how you play the game" said a well known quote. It's like life. Life isn't about the moment at the end or beginning, it's about every step, every moment, doing your best and appreciating every moment, good and bad. Also, we learn much more from the unpleasant "bad" things then we do from the days we are "happy" and content. So even losing games has it's benefits, it can help people see and thus work on their weaknesses.

John Wooden, a famous American basketball player and coach said that „you can lose when you outscore somebody in a game and you can win when you're outscored"⁴ . He felt that way on certain occasions, at various times and he just wanted for his players to be able to hold their head up after a game.

„You should never try to be better than someone else, always learn from others. Never cease trying to be the best you can be. That's under your control." If you make effort to do the best you can regularly, the results will be about what they should be: that's what really matters. Not necessary to what you would want them to be, but they will be about what they should, and only you will know whether you can do that. And

⁴ John Wooden: The difference between winning and succeeding, 2001, available at http://www.ted.com/talks/john_wooden_on_the_difference_between_winning_and_success

that's what I wanted from them more than anything else.

Cervantes said, "The journey is better than the end". Sometimes when you get there, there's almost a letdown. But getting there is the fun/pleasant part. Coach wanted his players to be victors in life and not just on the court, so he treated them as an extended family and emphasized that winning was more than scoring. He wanted for his players to get that self-satisfaction, in knowing that they'd made the effort to do the best of which they are capable.

Indeed, most of his inspiring theories were born from conversations with his father, as a boy on their farm in Indiana. One that sums up his ideology quite well is his often-quoted definition of success: "Success is peace of mind which is a direct result of self-satisfaction in knowing you made the effort to become the best that you are capable of becoming."

Conclusions:

Leaders are required when there is a necessity for change. One of the key competency to bring that change is Influence. A leader can inspire by creating an environment that allows people to optimize toward a vision and a worthy aim.

Inspirational leadership is about honesty, loyalty passion and drive. Its about enabling competition and fairplay among your team. You should continually create paths for your team to succeed and guide them to collective success. Inspiration is caring about growth, development, results and investing time/money/ efforts (in people) to get there.

Leaders should lead by examples, I am a firm believer of this. Leaders should have the capability of pushing their subordinates to the hilt in a manner that it gets only the best out of the subordinates. Leadership is a combination of both art and science.

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