



Attitude towards Human Beings: Key to Business Success

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Human resources are a special kind of resource for any organization, and they cannot be meaningfully compared with other resources. When human beings are considered to be just like any other resource, the tendency is to use the human resources as a means to achieve business goals. Nothing could be more destructive of long-term business success than treating human beings as a means to be used. Human beings are not pawns in the game of corporate chess, but they are beings whose dignity is to be respected. Using other human beings to achieve our goals, in any manner whatsoever, is Machiavellian and is the exact opposite of authentic leadership.

The primary difference between power and leadership is that power-holders treat other human beings as things or inanimate objects and use them to achieve their own goals, while leaders treat followers as human beings and aim at achieving followers' goals besides achieving their own goals. Leadership over human beings is exercised when persons with certain motives and purposes mobilize resources to arouse, engage, and satisfy the motives of followers. This is done in order to realize goals mutually held by both leaders and followers. Leadership is inducing followers to act for certain goals that represent the values, wants, needs, aspirations, and expectations of both leaders and followers. Moreover, the genius of leadership lies in the manner in which leaders see and act on their own and their followers' values and motivations. To control things is an act of power, not leadership, for things have no motives. Power wielders may treat people as things. Leaders may not (Burns, 1978, "Leadership," pp. 18-19).

It is often argued that organizational goals are higher in priority and that individual goals should be subordinated to organizational goals. It is sometimes even claimed, perhaps ignorantly, that when individuals join organizations, they accept the organizational goals as their goals. But, no one works for another person's goals. Striving towards achieving one's goals is part of one's motivational process. Hence, goals of human beings are always personal goals only. Goals of individuals in organizations could comprise of money, status, meaningful work, enjoyable social relationships, providing good education for their children, etc. Achieving organizational goals could be a means for achieving one's personal goals, but human beings strive towards only their personal goals. Superior leadership requires addressing the followers' personal goals as well as the leader's own goals or organizational goals, both as equally important ends in themselves. If there is a forced trade-off between the followers' goals and organizational goals, the followers' goals should get a higher priority. Human beings cannot be used as a means, no matter what. Some degree of farsightedness may be needed to comprehend this though. As Swami Vivekananda said (Complete Works, Volume 1, p. 32), "Unselfishness is more paying, only people have not the patience to practice it."

O'Toole (1995, "Leading change: The argument for values-based leadership," p. 37) said: "Contrary to received wisdom, when leaders fail to bring about change, the fault seldom lies in a mistaken choice of how-to manuals. Our review of the Rushmorean approach to leadership prepares us for a different conclusion: leaders fail when they have an inappropriate attitude and philosophy about the relationship between themselves and their followers. Those who do not respect and trust their followers cannot lead them. Conversely, those who succeed at bringing about effective and moral change believe in and act on the inherent dignity of those they lead in particular, in their natural, human capacity to reason."

Burns claimed that moral leadership emerges from, and always returns to, the fundamental wants and needs, aspirations and values, of the followers. It is a kind of leadership that can produce social change that will satisfy the followers' authentic needs. Such leadership is not to be confused with the too common practice of pandering to the base wishes of the lowest common denominator promising whatever the masses think they want, even if that might be inherently evil. Instead, leaders must discern the followers' true interests from their stated desires and learn to address the underlying needs that the followers are unable to articulate. An effective leader must refine the followers' views in a way that transcends the surface noise of pettiness and contradiction. All values-based leaders illuminate their followers' better sides, thereby revealing what is good in them. In the end, the leader's vision becomes their vision because it is built on the foundation of their needs and aspirations. Leaders appeal to the minds and hearts of their followers and the leadership goal is to change the beliefs and behavior of the followers to make them better human beings.

Leading change does not depend on circumstances, but rather it depends on the attitudes and values of the leaders. In complex settings, effective leadership will entail the dimensions of vision, trust, listening, authenticity, integrity, hope, and especially, addressing the true needs of the followers. Without these factors, the likelihood of overcoming the ever-present resistance to change is minimal. If this is correct, what is required to guide effective change is not contingency theory but, rather, a new philosophy of leadership that is always and at all times focused on enlisting the hearts and minds of followers through inclusion and participation. Such a philosophy must be rooted in the most fundamental of moral principles respect for people. In this realm of morality, there are no contingencies. Values-based leadership, by definition, cannot be situational or contingent.

Evidence indicates that leaders who understand why change is resisted and are willing to make the personal investment required to overcome that resistance are likely to achieve the goals they seek. Leaders overcome the chronic and inevitable pattern of resistance in only one-way by building an alternative system of belief and allowing others to adopt it as their own. That is the essence of values-based leadership. Value-based leadership is an attitude about people, philosophy, and process. To overcome the resistance to change, one must be willing, for starters, to change oneself.

The following are some characteristics of values-based leadership:

1. **Integrity.** Leadership requires integrity. Integrity has two aspects. Firstly, it is synonymous with truth telling or honesty. A true leader must behave with integrity in this sense by being an honest individual, someone whose words and deeds are consistent. Secondly, the leader needs that related type of integrity that has to do with the integration of one's personality. Integrity in this sense refers to the much-admired trait of wholeness or completeness that is achieved by people who have healthy self-confidence and self-esteem. People with integrity know who they are. Their self-esteem allows them to esteem and respect others. Such leaders' ease with themselves allows others to esteem and respect them. In spite of odds, they never lose sight of their goals or compromise on their principles. They are simultaneously principled and pragmatic. The long-term courses they adopt are based on what is morally right. They are pragmatic- they maybe willing to lose out on some immediate issue but would not be distracted from the ultimate objective. Successful completion of one's short-term mission is not the clearest sign of effective leadership, but lifelong consistency of high moral purpose is.
2. **Vision.** Values-based leadership is based on an inspiring vision. The only course for the leader is to build a vision that followers are

able to adopt as their own because it is their own. In the end, the leader's vision becomes the vision of the followers because it is built on their needs and aspirations.

3. **Trust.** Values-based leaders inspire trust and hope in their followers, who in turn become encouraged to serve, sacrifice, persevere, and lead change. They win the loyalty of their followers through deeds and by example. The trust in the leaders also grows if the leaders' manifest integrity, willingness to serve, and respect for followers.
4. **Listening.** Values-based leaders listen to their followers because they respect them and because they honestly believe that the welfare of followers is the end of leadership. While values-based leaders listen to the opinion of the people they serve, they are not prisoners of others' opinions.
5. **Respect for followers.** The sine qua non of morality is respect for people. Effective leadership of change usually begins with commitment by leaders to the moral principle of respect for followers. Those who succeed in bringing about effective and moral change believe in and act on the inherent dignity of those they lead in particular, in their natural, human capacity to reason. In bringing about change, these leaders include the people affected in the change process. All human beings have certain inalienable rights; particularly everyone is entitled to be treated with respect and as ends and not means.
6. **Clear thinking.** The leaders are clear about their own beliefs. They have thought through their assumptions about human nature. They listen to the needs, ideas, and aspirations of their followers, and then, within the context of their well-developed systems of belief, respond to these appropriately.
7. **Inclusion.** Values-based leadership requires full inclusion of followers. Inclusive leaders enable others to lead by sharing information, by fostering a sense of community, and by creating a consistent system of rewards, structure, process, and communication. They are committed to a principle of opportunity, giving all followers the chance to contribute to the organization (O'Toole, pp. 9-34).

Values-based leadership is the best prescription for long-term business success. Values-based leaders believe in the principles of liberty, equality, and natural justice. They bring about change by pursuing moral ends that their followers would ultimately adopt as their own, ends that are derived from the real needs of followers. The standard of excellence for a values-based leader is to lead change both morally and effectively. Values-based leadership is founded on an inviolable moral principle that followers are human beings who are not to be used as means, but whose dignity is to be respected. 🌟