



Leadership Concepts Series – 2010

**** Common-Sense Guidelines for Successful Organizations ****

Leadership Concept #2

The Leader and the Led

Responsible Leadership and the Contract

Leadership is, in truth, a value-neutral skill. As we have discussed before, self-seeking scoundrels can be just dandy leaders. They're probably not the kinds of people you want to hang out with, though. Most people that aspire to leadership are driven to be responsible and positive, as well as effective. This Concept is about the responsibility and accountability of leaders.

I had intended to leave this note until the end of the Leadership Series. But I received so many emails asking about the "light side of the Force," I thought I'd better address it sooner. Since it was originally intended as a wrap-up, it has a bit of a "lecturing" tone and not as many light notes as some of the series.

Frankly, this *Leadership Concept* is speaking to those of us that aspire to lead. For those who enjoy leadership, there is nothing like it in the human experience. Being an effective leader creates a feeling unlike any other. Whether it is command of a squadron or a department store, it provides a glorious and heady feeling of control and, if you are truly a dedicated leader, involves some loss of self. You and your organization become, in a sense, one entity. Herman Wouk stated it well in his book, *The Caine Mutiny*:

. . . Willie experienced the strange sensations of the first days of a new captain: a shrinking of his personal identity, and a stretching out of his nerve ends to all the spaces of the ship. He was less free than before. He developed the apprehensive listening ears of a young mother; the ears listened in his sleep; he never quite slept, not the way he had before.

Leadership is a joy, a burden, and a responsibility. Read on.

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In this series, we'll look at the concepts and elements of leadership and the attributes of leaders. The series will be sent in twelve individual papers over about 8 weeks. As always, you can find all of the Concepts at the Agovia website.

The Leader and the Led Responsible Leadership and the Contract

Active
Management Pillar
Applicability



Leadership comes in many shapes and sizes. However, the most admired and effective in our humanistic age of instant communications and world-class successes and failures is built around responsibility, constructive positive actions, *and* is results-driven. It is also characterized by a relationship between the Leader and the Led that can be imagined in the terms of a contract. Like all contracts, it is based on a value exchange. Each party is required to provide certain things and each party is provided with certain benefits. The effectiveness of the contract is grounded on the integrity of the promise and the ability to deliver. Those who are led must believe in those who presume to lead.

The Leader

It is the responsibility of the leader to:

- **Understand the Role:** A leader is not a bystander. The leader is visible and, especially in tough times, cannot be on vacation or otherwise MIA. If it works or doesn't work, the leader is the lion or the gobbler. Either way, you stand up and take responsibility. If you win you get respect. If you lose you get . . . respect (huh!)
- **Cause Success:** It's that simple. If the organization does not succeed while you are at the helm, step aside. Do it before someone else tells you to. If you are the leader, your organization must succeed.
- **Cut through the Cr*p:** You must be able to distill muddy issues down to the essence of success. A leader knows that small victories can be your biggest enemy. Focusing on a tangential win at the expense of fundamental issues can leave you with sparkling brass on a sunken ship.
- **Control (and guide) their Organization and their Staff:** Repeat after me, "We are an accountable team. We are an accountable team. We are an accountable TEAM. We are. . ." Your team needs to be at work, be visible, know the current business state of their function (intimately), and be accountable for results. (It's 2:30 Friday afternoon in August. Could you shoot a cannonball through the executive suite without hurting anyone?)
- **Fundamentals:** Basically, it's your job to do what is necessary to ensure the success of your organization.

In return the leader gets:

- Freedom of action
- Lots of control
- Usually the best pay check
- The gratification of succeeding
- The support of their staff and organization
- To be the boss

The Led

It is the responsibility of the led to:

- **Support:** The leader and the organization
- **Accommodate:** Relinquish some freedom of action

In return the Led get:

- **Success:** To be part of a successful team
- **A Job:** AKA: not “*RIF-ed*”
- **Survival:** An organization that survives and thrives.

So. The value exchange is complete. The leader has flexibility, power, and freedom of action. In exchange, he or she leads us to success.

. . . and when it goes sideways?

Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?

Plato asked Socrates that question. Juvenal crafted it into a poem in his Satires. Lisa Simpson asked Homer:

Who will protect us against the protectors?

We invest tremendous power and discretion in our leaders. We trust them to use it in a professional and ethical way to achieve the goals with which they have been chartered. Much like the police have the option of using necessary force to protect the public and themselves and you trust your auto mechanic to only fix the things that need fixing. If the leader is not performing or abuses the trust of an organization, who is guarding us against the guardian? If an executive is selling stock while cooking the books. If an executive is taking home bonuses while his company is failing (spelled: B-A-I-L-O-U-T). If a President is abusing the power of his office. Who steps in?

In our corporate system, our justice system, and our political system, we have tools and mechanisms designed specifically to allow both leadership and provide oversight. All corporations have Boards of Directors who are legally mandated with assuring responsible management of companies. Politically, we have the separation of powers and the universal franchise. The Board of Directors will act to change management before a company goes down. We, the citizens, can vote the rascals out of office. In the end, however, the Guardians who watch the Guardians must understand their roles, take them seriously, and be willing to do their duty. The toolkit exists if we are willing to use it.

About Agovia

Agovia Consulting has one aim:

*To facilitate your success
Through management consulting
And management skills development*

We focus on small-to-medium sized organizations. Businesses, nonprofits, schools. We work mostly with organizations that need all the rigor and capability of large businesses but don't have the deep pockets to pay hundreds of thousands a year to consultants. You need to plan. You need to execute. You need to be operationally sound. But you don't need to drill a hole in the bottom of your bank account to do that.

Agovia is your partner in crafting common-sense plans, execution governance, and management practices that are laser-focused and, by design, create your results and your success. We help you solve your problems today and help assure your success tomorrow through management practices built on outcomes, results, and achievement.

Managing to Success

Success requires the alignment and coordination of many factors. Enterprises must be competent, not only in elements of their core mission, they must also have the ability to create and maintain the management infrastructure that surrounds and supports that mission.

What We Do

Agovia is a management consulting firm. It's what we do. Picture us a management fitness coach. We help you develop and strengthen the skills you need to succeed. We have provided consultation and solutions to multiple industries including: Information Technology, Insurance, Universities, and Homeless Services. We bring you the support, advice, and driving facilitation that allow you to stop "planning" and start getting results.

Services

- ❖ **The Rapid Planning System – Tools, Training, Portfolio Management**
- ❖ **Identity Development (Mission & Vision)**
- ❖ **Team Effectiveness Coaching**
- ❖ **Strategic and Tactical Planning**
- ❖ **Planning and Governance Training**
- ❖ **Organization Turn-Around**
- ❖ **Retreat Facilitation**
- ❖ **Runaway Project Services**
- ❖ **Problem Solving – A Cultural Effective Approach**
- ❖ **Conflict Resolution**
- ❖ **Team/Function Start-Up**

Trust yourself

You are the expert in your business. The challenges are often nuts & bolts issues: organization, clear vision, discipline, management infrastructure, and communication. Sometimes you just need a catalyst.

We listen. We pay attention. We work with you.

