

# THE 7 TRUTHS OF LIBERATING LEADERSHIP

by Ian A Williams



**In the last issue Ian Williams shared his views about the most common lies in leadership. This month, Ian balances it out with his take on the seven truths behind good leadership, based on his experience as a leader, and as a developer of leaders.**

*In business and life, we are always on the lookout for key information to help us with leadership. I believe is keeping this simple rather than looking for over-complex solutions to relatively simple issues. My passion for good leadership often leads me to observe and reflect on what happens in the workplace for individuals and teams. I listen out for success, quality and enjoyment, and have collected some common threads of successful leadership, which I have summarised as the seven truths of liberating leadership.*

## **1. The focus of leadership comes from the heart**

*While management comes primarily from intellect and thinking, leadership is governed from the heart – using the head of course! Leadership is driven from values and spiritual core, and from real self. Emotional intelligence is also more akin to leadership, while IQ more akin with management thinking. You carry in your heart what drives your head, and carry in your head what drives the heart. Both are important and need exercise. Using both demonstrates balance.*

## **2. The drive for results is often the wrong focus**

*While results and outcomes are essential, the route to reaching them can often be misunderstood. Task focus will keep minds on the goal, but without ‘people-thinking’ a dead horse is being flogged! What really gets results is focus on the individuals and team; people are the route to achieving anything. It seems obvious, so why do so many leaders and managers overlook it constantly. John Adair’s action-centred leadership model demands the need for balance between task, team and individual. This provides the integrity for success.*

## **3. Leadership is a journey, not simply a skill set for the individual and the team**

*The word leadership is derived from an ancient word associated with taking a journey. Ancient people used this work in connection with planning a route over land, or a course across the seas. This implies heading for what was unknown territory, with a mysterious adventure to be had. That required huge vision, imagination and faith. That’s the excitement and terror that leadership can produce.*

## **4. Calm, humble, servant leadership is king**

*When you really think hard about the best leaders you’ve ever known or heard of, who did good things for the planet, a nation, a cause, or just a damn good job, you will find they are all likely to have one thing in common. That is a sense of humility and calm in their leadership. The best leadership role models are likely to be those serving others, and serving their cause. That’s how they get people on board, and that’s how they become loved and respected. It’s a key part of what we now call engagement. Calmness of spirit in a leader promotes trust and confidence in followers. They make leadership look so natural that they create leaders from their followers. Being calm is not always being quiet; good communication is always key but calm leaders are often inspirational in a way that followers think they thought of an idea themselves. The humility of the leader lets them carry on thinking they did!*

## **5. Leadership needs to be simple and common**

*As one of the most sought after qualities in humanity, leadership is a big subject. The Google statistics for leadership, and aspect of it, are vast. It’s so big a subject that people are often baffled by it, and fearful of aspiring to leadership. The good news is that leadership can be very simple, and is for everyone. Many who aspire to leadership forget that they are already leading themselves, and those closest to them. And if they are not, they should be! Leading yourself is the only safe place to practice, and practice makes perfect! Let’s get out of denial, and out of limiting ourselves. Lead yourself as if you were leading someone else – with respect and tolerance. Everyone leading themselves and others (if only by example) makes leadership a very common activity – and so it should be!*

## **6. What people carry with them from childhood and teens is always with them, and surfaces in crisis and pressure**

*Adults are just children who grew up – some more than others. And while we think we left our happy and sad memories and experiences behind, we carry them with us constantly and unconsciously, in who we are, what we do, and how we respond. The best thing we can do with all that stuff is to let go what needs letting go, and face up to what has to stay. And whether it’s happy or sad, or whatever emotion it raises, let’s use it positively in our leadership now. Let’s also recognise that everyone else is carrying stuff too, so give them some room. If you want to be an exceptional leader, and a great human being, take no interest in who people are, and especially if you’d like them to follow you.*

## **7. The heart of one person determines a whole culture**

*This is the responsibility that comes with leadership. Whether a leader of a huge organisation, a few dozen people, your family, or even just yourself, recognise that the heart that drives the blood through your body is the heart that drives your spirit. How you lead your thinking, your responses and your outcomes has a ripple effect on everyone else. So do it all with care. Everyone in an organisation or family has an impact on culture, but the one person at the top – on whom everyone else is focused – will have the biggest stone and make the biggest ripple. The ripple response in responsibility!*

*These seven aspects of leadership are contagious. If you lead an organisation or team, or even yourself, with these characteristics being evident, congratulate yourself for being exceptional, and go all out for continuous improvement. If this doesn't sound like your experience, start work on these aspects now, and look forward to reaping the benefits. Happy people make happy and productive teams.*

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