

THE DRUCKER FOUNDATION

THE

LEADER

OF THE

FUTURE

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Certain themes and concepts tend to repeat themselves in insightful works on leadership.

In essay #16 of The Leader of the Future, Stephen Covey notes that:

“The leader of the future . . . will be one who creates a culture or a value system centered on principles.”

William Plamondon in #28 observes:

“A successful leader understands that an organization is held together by shared values, beliefs and commitments. This is what enables it to rise above cyclical hardships and gives it its tone, fiber, integrity and capacity to endure.” He continues: *“The first step to ensuring that your organization is committed to its core values is to find the right people.”*

Gifford Pinchot, in essay #4, predicts that:

“The organizations of the future will be communities of intrapreneurs. They will be structured from many smaller interacting enterprises, more like the market structure of a free nation than that of a totalitarian system.

The work left for humans involves innovating, seeing things in new ways, and responding to customers by changing the way things are done.”

“[Organizations which are communities] . . . create space for more leaders with inspiring goals and trusted employees guided by community spirit will generally use their freedom to do good rather than harm.”

William Pollard tells us in #24 that the leader is “. . . the role model . . . the risk taker . . . the servant . . . the promoter of others . . . the initiator . . . the giver . . . [and] the listener.” In the same paragraph he tells us that a leader is not the opposite of any of those.

In essay #1 Charles Handy points out that:

“Our models of organization, and the way we talk of them, [have] hardly changed for a century. They [are] thought of as pieces of engineering, flawed pieces, maybe, but capable of perfectibility, precision, full efficiency. The very word management, with its origins in the running of a household or, some say, of army mule trains, implies control backed by power and authority . . . perhaps [that is] why it is a word . . . much disliked by [those who] value [and understand the value of] autonomy . . .”

Handy remarks, *“The newly emerging language of organizations is very different.”* By way of example, he employs terms such as “ad hococracy,” “alliances,” “teams,” and “empowerment” to describe it and notes that: *“The key words are options, not plans; the possible rather than the perfect; involvement instead of obedience.”* Finally, he predicts that *“It will be recognized, at long last, that organizations are communities of individuals, not arrays of human resources.”* My personal prediction is that firms which truly value and understand the value of their

people, and which want to engage and empower those people, will abandon the term “human resources” altogether and adopt another which sends a positive message both to the employee and to the responsibility for employee programs. At RED, since the firm’s inception, we have called that group “Colleague Services.”

The Leader of the Future consists of 32 segments . . . 31 essays by 34 prominent leadership and organizational theorists plus Peter Drucker’s forward. Any effort to summarize or synthesize such a body of work is destined to fail. Drucker comes close in his forward, however, when he notes that the “effective leaders” behave in substantially similar ways:

- They ask “What needs to be done?” [Not] “What do I want?”
- They ask “What can and should I do to make a difference?”
- They continually ask, “What are the organization’s mission and goals?”
- “They [are] extremely tolerant of diversity in people and . . . [do] not look for carbon copies of themselves.”
- “They are not afraid of strength in their associates. They glory in it.”
- And, “one way or another, they submit themselves to the mirror test . . . they make certain that the person they see in the mirror in the morning is the kind of person they want to be, respect, and believe in.”

So what are the themes and concepts which Roberts’ claims emerge repeatedly?

**People, Values & Culture
Values, Culture & People
Culture, People & Values**

Implicitly Drucker’s observations about the behavior of “effective leaders” incorporate those essential elements. Read the best thinkers on leadership and you will find them. List them in any order. They retain their power; they are key.

Of course an organization must make strategic preparations to perform in its competitive arena (preparations, not plans as plans are static). And, of course, an organization must execute for its customers. But, what differentiates a firm from its peers; what carries its executions (and even its strategic thinking) to a higher level; and what gives it the ability not simply to endure but to grow in the face of adversity?

People, Values & Culture
That is [the RED view]

And, it is gratifying to find that view so consistently supported by the most insightful business thinkers.

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W. Roberts
Chairman & CEO



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