



# talking about...

March 2010

... *designing better relationships for better outcomes*

## Leadership and Stickability

*"There is a profound difference between information and meaning."*

... Warren Bennis (b. 1925) US educator, futurologist, advisor & writer

In our work, leadership is generally defined as *"managing what could be"* and effective leadership as the creation of *"willing followers"*. In other words, more effective leadership involves the engagement of people rather than the control of them. What makes the concept of leadership as *"engaging"* rather than *"controlling"* more valuable? The simple answer lies in the amount of energy that followers will invest if they do so willingly rather than through compulsion. As a result, these willing followers will generally be more focused and give more of their discretionary time towards the desired vision and outcomes.

If leaders are to create willing followers then, at some level, they have to start with a certain premise. This premise is that, as leaders, they are not controlling an organisational machine rather they are creating a community. A community where people feel they belong and are not simply connected to each other because of where they work. Willing followers want to part of something that matters to them and they see their community and its vision and direction as a means of creating a positive difference in that domain. Willing followers need to have meaning and direction such that they feel that sense of belonging. That is not to say that everyone in an organisation will feel or even want to have that sense of community but the more people who feel they belong, the greater the energy towards achieving the organisation's goals.

So the challenge for highly effective leaders is to create community. The first stage in addressing this challenge lies in creating shared meaning within the organisation, for without meaning any direction or activity will not make shared and coherent sense. Hence creating shared and compelling meaning is the place for leaders to begin.

In his book, *"The Tipping Point"*, Malcolm Gladwell referred to an idea he calls *"the stickiness factor"*, which is a unique quality that compels a phenomenon to *"stick"* in the minds of people and influence their future behavior. When we look at creating community, we must look at what might be the compelling ideas for that community and what is their *"stickability"*. In the WordWeb dictionary, *"stickability"* is defined as *"enduring strength and energy"*. In other words, these ideas not only have to be compelling, they also need to hang around.

This is not a new idea. Many people have been using the idea of stickability for a long time. For example, politicians, people in advertising and marketing, and those in public relations use stickiness all the time. They do so by creating a simple theme and repeating and repeating and repeating it. They want to connect people to the theme such that it sticks. This presents an opportunity for leaders who want to create community. Develop a clear theme for the community and make it stick.

*"Search for meaning, eat, sleep. Search for meaning, eat, sleep. Die, search for meaning, search for meaning, search for meaning."*

... Doug Horton

## Heaven's Here on Earth

*In the spirit of community and meaning, this month I would like to share with you some words from a Tracy Chapman song, "Heaven's Here on Earth"; A song that had a big impact on me. Enjoy!*

You can look to the stars in search of the answers  
Look for God and life on distant planets  
Have your faith in the ever after  
While each of us holds inside the map to the labyrinth  
And heaven's here on earth

We are the spirit the collective conscience  
We create the pain and the suffering and the beauty in this world  
Heaven's here on earth

In our faith in humankind  
In our respect for what is earthly  
In our unfaltering belief in peace and love and understanding

I've seen and met angels wearing the disguise  
Of ordinary people leading ordinary lives  
Filled with love, compassion, forgiveness and sacrifice

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Heaven's in our hearts

In our faith in humankind  
In our respect for what is earthly  
In our unfaltering belief in peace and love and understanding

Look around  
Believe in what you see  
The kingdom is at hand  
The promised land is at your feet  
We can and will become what we aspire to be  
If Heaven's here on earth

If we have faith in humankind  
And respect for what is earthly  
And an unfaltering belief that truth is divinity  
And heaven's here on earth

I've seen spirits  
I've met angels  
I've touched creations beautiful and wondrous  
I've been places where I question all I think I know  
But I believe, I believe, I believe this could be heaven

We are born inside the gates with the power to create life  
And to take it away  
The world is our temple  
The world is our church  
Heaven's here on earth

If we have faith in humankind  
And respect for what is earthly  
And an unfaltering belief  
In peace and love and understanding  
This could be heaven here on earth

Heaven's in our heart

***"There is a crack in everything, that's how the light gets in."***  
... Leonard Cohen (b. 1934) Canadian singer & songwriter

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