



talking about...

May 2010

... designing better relationships for better outcomes

Pacing and Leading

"There is no necessary connection between the desire to lead and the ability to lead, and even less the ability to lead somewhere that will be to the advantage of the led."

... Bergen Evans (1904 - 1978) US lexicographer and educator

Last month, we posed a number of questions about leading and managing others. One of those questions was "If you were leading me, where would you see yourself physically located in relation to me – above me, behind me, beside me, in front of me, beneath me (or a combination)?" This question forms the basis of our newsletter this month.

When we have asked people this question in the past, we have largely got one of two responses – in front or beside. Although the majority of people have indicated that they see leadership as being in front of the followers, it is interesting and, to some degree, telling that others said "beside". You may recall that we hold the view that effective leadership means **creating and maintaining willing followers**. We also indicated that this means that leaders are in front of their followers.

We would like to further distinguish this idea in a way that incorporates the concept that leaders are alternatively in front and beside those they lead. One of the most critical aspects of being an effective leader is to be given the authority to lead by those who are to be led. Although some of this authority can be attributed to positional (or collective) authority, this is not the complete story. The community will ultimately decide who their leaders are to be if they are to follow willingly. For a group of people to see someone as having the right to lead them, they must also see that this person is somehow connected to the group. Therefore, it is important that leaders know when to be seen as "part of the community" and when to be seen as "leading the community". We have borrowed a term from NLP (Neuro-Linguistic Programming) to describe this – "pacing and leading".

Let us look at the political domain for some examples. For politicians, pacing shows up in the form of listening tours, and kissing babies and so on. These activities are designed to show the electorate that our politicians are human, part of our community and that they listen to us and care for our concerns. On the other hand, leading relates to the declarations and decisions they make, particularly when they are out of step with the community. Indeed, it could be argued that decisions based largely on opinion polls are more an act of pacing (or even following) than leading.

It is important for those who want to be effective leaders to do both. They have to be seen as part a community as well as leading it. The key is working out the balance.

"Adopt the pace of nature: her secret is patience."

... Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803 - 1882) US philosopher, poet and essayist

Wisdom of the Avatars

Following our last newsletter, Pat Grove sent me this gem ... thanks Pat.

Three avatars are discussing how to protect the secrets of mankind.

The first one says, *"Let's bury them in the deepest sea."*

"No", say the others, *"Man could discover them there with modern equipment."*

The second avatar says, *"Let's hide them on the highest mountain."*

"No", say the others, *"Man will find a way to climb that mountain and discover them."*

The third one says, *"I know, let's hide them inside man. He would never think of looking there."*

"To the dull mind all nature is leaden. To the illumined mind the whole world burns and sparkles with light."

... Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803 - 1882) US philosopher, poet and essayist

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