

# choice

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## Team Coaching

How to bring about change and transformation with more than one person in the room

Scaling the benefits of coaching

Achieving synergistic results

Creating high-performance teams



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## Why Lead?

Heeding the call to leadership means serving something higher than ourselves

**Bob Dylan sang**, “It may be the Devil, or it may be the Lord, but you’re gonna have to serve somebody.” Dylan was only half right. You’re gonna have to lead somebody, too. It may be an employee, a group of friends, a team, a family, a congregation, or an organization in the community; but eventually everyone gets called upon to stand up and say, “Follow me.”

### “Finding out who we are and what we stand for is the genesis of leadership.”

Having a fancy office or an impressive title does not make you a leader in today’s world. Your ability to lead isn’t based on your capacity to manage, to plan, budget, organize, staff, regulate, relate to, communicate with, support or problem solve. All those are useful management skills, but they are not leadership. Leadership doesn’t come in a job description, with an executive bathroom, or in a box on the organizational chart.

#### The Stake

The discovery of your calling to lead is a profoundly private, intimate, personal experience. A voice deep within says something like: “This must happen!” or “This must stop!”

or “Not on my watch!” or “This is for my family (or my team, or my community or my people or my nation).” Leadership arises from an injunction; an inner knowing; a determination that impels you to take action. This internal commandment is what we call The Stake.

“Make more profits.” “Increase sales.” “Improve productivity.” All these are **not** stakes. They are the

goals of managers. Stakes are not goals or outcomes. They are more foundational. Goals can be measured, achieved and checked off of a to-do list. For a leader the goals are set in order to be true to the stake.

The stake is the orientation of the leader, and later it may become the orientation of those he or she leads. Stakes are the glasses leaders put on to see the world through. They bring into focus what is needed to achieve a world aligned with the stake.

Stakes define your mission on this planet. You may have a personal stake (“I empower everyone I touch to become a world-changing leader!”) which is embedded in the stake that you and your co-leader share for a




particular workshop (“Intimacy and connection open doors to breathless creativity!”). The stakes may also be embedded in the corporate stake of your organization (“Coaches Training Institute is an experientially based, content driven, transformative learning environment!”). Each stake gives resonance and energy to the next.

Here’s how it could sound for another leader: A personal stake (“Everyone I lead feels like he or she is a co-owner of this company!”) embedded in a team stake (“We are redefining the concept of outstanding customer service!”) embedded in a corporate stake (“One phone company, one world!”).

#### The Urge



Leadership, as we see it, begins with the emergence of an urge, arising from the essence of your life purpose and wedded to your stake for this enterprise, in response to a need rising from the field.

The marriage of that internal urge with a sensitive awareness of the environment’s needs leads to action.



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## corporate leadership

It is not enough to set your stake. You must also know who you are. Finding out who we are and what we stand for is the genesis of leadership. Core to effective leadership is the connection the leader has with his or her fundamental strengths, foundational beliefs and core principles.

We need to be free to act. Often that involves painfully removing our dearly beloved self-imposed chains of doubt, fear, blame and other false beliefs. That involves a confrontation with all those rules, roles, fears, judgments and restrictions imposed on our natural sense of right action. Until those are brought to awareness we are

2. A way of contextualizing the moment in terms of a larger vision of the movement and progress of an activity or project;

3. A capacity to positively impact the environment without manipulating it.

Leaders must confront their habit of projecting their own needs or beliefs on the situation. A leader must learn to discover what is the truth of the moment, and what is the truth of their impact on others.

Here we have the essential paradox of leadership. On the one hand you must have a passionately held imperative to take action. But if that injunc-

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not free to act from the center of who we are. Often it is only in failure that we learn what we truly believe. Learning to celebrate failure is a vital step effective leaders need to take.

Once we know who we are and we are free from old barriers, then we can tune in to the world and act to change it.

#### The Needs

How do we set the course for our activity and determine the needs of the group we lead? This is an aspect of leadership which is difficult to put words to. It has to do with the leader's capacity to sense the essential energy of the group and of the environment. One must learn to lead from that awareness, and not just react, contract or impulsively jump in.

It involves three things:

1. A feeling for the timing of an activity or a project;

tion is held too tightly, leadership can easily transform into narcissism, authoritarianism or even despotism. You cannot lead from your ego, yet you must lead from the essential truth of who you are.

On the other side of the paradox lies the need for openness, vulnerability, sensitivity and receptiveness. Without all receptors wide open, how can you determine the extent of your impact, and how can you perceive the next course correction that is needed? Yet you must not sink into oversensitivity, reactivity or moodiness. If you do you will lose sight of the stake and drown in all the circumstances. “It's hard to remember, when you are up to your hips in alligators, that this morning you set out to drain the swamp.”

#### The Skills

In co-active leadership the relationship evolves. In the beginning it

manifests as an inspirational leader guiding enrolled followers. Later it becomes a dance between empowered partners, as the team becomes a group of shared stakeholders. Authority is handed back and forth among the team members, rather than always coming from the top down.

To negotiate this transition requires two leadership skills:

1. Learning to stay in connection with the other, with intense focus and deep openness, no matter what, and
2. Learning to express with full permission and at the same time to temper that expression, taking responsibility for impact as it is occurring. In this dance it is always the job of the leader to recover and re-orient to the shared goal when circumstances or conflict threaten to knock the team off track.

Unfortunately, most leadership training focuses on the surface of leadership: communication skills, time management, brainstorming. It creates goal setting exercises, presents positive reinforcement techniques, and offers performance appraisal tools. This is great management training.

But training to be a leader requires a confrontation with our deepest self-limiting beliefs. This training must repeatedly thrust leaders into situations where they learn from both their failures and their successes. And it must strip them down to their core so they are forced to act spontaneously. Then they must learn how to stay open to their impact, and occasionally to the painful results of their actions. They must repeatedly learn how to correct and to reorient both themselves and the people they lead to the stake.

### The Challenge

What is the most effective way to lead? Researchers (Ken Blanchard among

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them) suggest that a particular style of leadership (task-oriented vs. relationship oriented or directive vs. supportive, for example) may best fit a particular work situation.

ership is needed; a style that is adaptable and flexible enough to adapt to the complexity of this modern world.

Why Lead? Because we must. The kind of leaders needed for these

sion of the team is accomplished. And they change the world.

Dylan was so right. We all want to serve something higher than ourselves. We want a mission that calls on us to become more than we thought we could be. And great leadership can give us that. As Peter Drucker, a pioneer in the study of management, put it, "Leadership is not magnetic personality – that can just as well be a glib tongue. It is not 'making friends and influencing people' – that is flattery. Leadership is lifting a person's vision to high sights, the raising of a person's performance to a higher standard, the building of a personality beyond its normal limitations." •

**“We want a mission that calls on us to become more than we thought we could be.”**

But much of this research is decades old. Today's work setting is global, multicultural, multigenerational and virtual. Job security is a myth. Work is done by transitional project-oriented teams. Organizational charts have become intricate webs of interdependent relationships. We believe a new style of lead-

times are able to take passionate action without becoming attached to the result of those actions. They establish a stake worth devoting one's life energy towards. They always stay attuned to their impact, the energy of the group, and the energy of the larger world. They realign to the stake until the mis-

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