Leadership: Art or Science?

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Here I am sitting at a comfortable table loaded heavily with books, with one eye on my typewriter and the other on Licorice the cat, who has a great fondness for carbon paper, and I am telling you that the Emperor Napoleon was a most contemptible person. But should I happen to look out of the window, down upon Seventh Avenue, and should the endless procession of trucks and carts come to a sudden halt, and should I hear the sound of the heavy drums and see the little man on his white horse in his old and much-worn green uniform, then I don't know, but I am afraid that I would leave my books and the kitten and my home and everything else to follow him wherever he cared to lead. My own grandfather did this and Heaven knows he was not born to be a hero. Millions of other people's grandfathers did it. They received no reward, but they expected none. They cheerfully gave legs and arms and lives to serve this foreigner, who took them a thousand miles away from their homes and marched them into a barrage of Russian or English or Spanish or Italian or Austrian cannon and stared quietly into space while they were rolling in the agony of death.

If you ask me for an explanation, I must answer that I have none.
What is Leadership?

• Is Leadership what a leader does?
  – Military leaders: Alexander, Zhenghis Khan, Napoleon......
  – Religious leaders: Buddha, Jesus, Mohammed, Martin Luther......
  – Political leaders: Cromwell, Lenin, Gandhi......
  – Thought Leaders: Plato, Newton, Einstein......

• Is a definition possible?
Study of leadership is only a century old

• Why is it that the issue of leadership has not been explicitly discussed till the last century?
  – Were there not leaders?
  – Was there not leadership?
  – Was there not need for leadership?

• Advent of science changed forms of organization of human endeavour
  – Large Industrial organizations
  – Large Armies and ways of fighting war
  – Large and organized government (Bureaucracy?)
Leadership: some thoughts

• In modern society, leaders are commonplace

• Most have to discharge some leadership role, everyday.

• Every organization has tiers and trees; and therefore leaders and followers

• Most people play the role of leaders and followers at the same time

• Most people are leaders, question is how effectively are they discharging their leadership function
Why Art vs Science?

- Art is subjective, science is objective
- Art is situational, science is universal
- Art is dynamic, science is static
- Art cannot be replicated, science can be
- Where does leadership fit in?
- The best answer perhaps is: It is both
Leadership as science: Decision Making

- A leader has to take decision
- What does decision making involve?
- Every decision involves trade-offs
- Weighing trade-offs
- What is a good decision? One that succeeds?
Leadership as Science
Understanding the Environment

• No industry functions in vacuum
• Banking all the more important
• Economy, social milieus, customs and practices
• Global and geopolitical issues
Leadership as science: Domain Knowledge

- Modern organizations are complex
- Knowledge content of decisions high
- Multidisciplinary nature of functions today
- Frontiers of knowledge expanding
- Knowledge content of banking and finance changing rapidly
Leadership as science
Insight into Group Dynamics

• Elton Mayo & Hawthorne Experiments
• Abraham Maslow & hierarchy of needs
• McGregor: Theory X and Theory Y
• Hertzberg: Hygiene principle
• Ongoing research
Leadership as Art

• Motivation

• Highly subjective
  – Leaders are different: not all can act in the same way
  – Followers are diverse and respond to different strokes in different ways
  – Cultures are different, expected behavior norms vary
Leadership as art

- Group Dynamics
- Interpersonal relations and interactions
- Empathy
- Creating trust and confidence
- Knowing your handicaps and overcoming them
Leadership as an art and science
Communication

• Well known scientific facts about communication
  – Clarity
  – Precision
  – Good listening
  – Comprehensibility

• Practice is an art
Leadership as art and science
Fairness and justice

• A leader has to be fair and just
• Principles of fairness and justice are pretty scientific, but practice is an art
• Scientific basis: Principles of natural justice, knowledge of law and facts, equality and equity
• Art of practice:
  – Biases and Prejudices are subjective: Know them
  – Eliminate them as much as possible, at least make amends for them
Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new
nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are
created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation
so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-
field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final
resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is
altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate -- we can not consecrate -- we can not
hallow -- this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have
consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little
note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did
here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work
which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to
be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us -- that from these
honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the
last full measure of devotion -- that we here highly resolve that these dead shall
not have died in vain -- that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of
freedom -- and that government of the people, by the people, for the people,
shall not perish from the earth.
What to do to increase effectiveness as a leader?

• Increase domain knowledge, to be a good leader competence is a must
• Know thyself
• Know about people: particularly your team
• Know your environment
• Train yourself to be fair and just