



Infect Others

by Bob Whipple, MBA, CPLP

I was recently in a conversation about the importance of spreading leadership development throughout an organization. I believe it is the highest calling for any leader to grow other leaders, hence the name of my company: Leadergrow. This method is not just a random idea but an observation after nearly 50 years in the study and application of leadership development. I am not the only person to have found a connection between great leaders and those who grow other leaders. For example, Tom Peters wrote, "Leaders don't create followers, they create more leaders."

The best leaders have a way of infecting others with the concepts of how to create the right kind of culture for people to rise to their highest level of engagement. As a side benefit, it is when we teach something to other people that we learn it best for ourselves. I learned that lesson long ago in business school.

I was struggling in Macro Economics, but when called upon to help another student who knew even less than I did, my ultimate grade for the course was an "A". Something about becoming a teacher changes the ballgame in terms of our own ability to learn. So, when we catch the virus of leadership development, we are actually helping ourselves as much as the leaders we mentor.

Bob and Gregg Vanourek have a term they use in their outstanding Leadership book, ***Triple Crown Leadership***. In the horse racing industry, they have individuals called "stewards" who monitor the process to ensure integrity. The analogy of "stewards" in organizations is that these people ensure people understand the kind of culture that is desired and work to align the entire team. In a recent radio broadcast, Bob explained that Triple Crown Leaders act as stewards who envision that each person really has two jobs. The first is the functional job of running the business in whatever capacity is evident on the organization chart. The second job is to be a steward of the culture they are trying to build. That means not only being a role model personally, but also being a strong advocate and mentor for others. This practice helps the organization gain momentum, and trust grows quickly.

Stewards not only have a mandate to be the preachers of the gospel of trust, they must be the coaches and enforcers when they see some leaders not living up to the shared values. When a leader has a problem with following the values, he or she needs to go.

Bob tells the story of when he interviewed Ursula Burns, the CEO of Xerox. He was asking her what action they take when individuals do not follow the values. Before he had even finished the question, Ursula said "We fire them." When he asked about the warning process, she repeated, "We fire them." He gave her a third chance to equivocate, and she said, "Bob, you are not hearing me. If we find someone who does not live by our values, we fire the person."

Ed Betof wrote a book ***Leaders as Teachers***, in which he describes the Leadership University at Beckton Dickinson. Rather than hire professional trainers to teach leadership development through the ranks, they called upon the senior leaders to perform this vital task. They noted that the training was much better received, and the skills translated more fully into the developing leaders. They also noted that the senior leaders themselves seemed to benefit from the work. They become more familiar with the breadth of leadership and more cognizant of their own actions in modeling the way.

My personal habit was to find ways to devote 30% of my calendar time to developing and conducting leadership training activities in my role as Division Manager at a Fortune 500 Company. My observation was that it was a better use of my time than tending to the details of the business. There were plenty of experts who were far better and more knowledgeable than me with the various aspects of supply chain, information technology, finance, benefits, maintenance, etc.. My expertise was in creating the right culture, so I spent a great deal of time doing that. It allowed me to have a lot of fun while making a contribution to the lives of others in my organization.

The other side of the equation was that helping to grow other leaders caused me to become a more effective leader myself as well. It is like spreading pixie dust - it really works! In the end you get a lot of dust on yourself, but who cares, it's the right kind of dust!

Bob Whipple, MBA, CPLP, is a consultant, trainer, speaker, and author in the areas of leadership and trust. He is the author of: *The Trust Factor: Advanced Leadership for Professionals*, *Understanding E-Body Language: Building Trust Online*, and *Leading with Trust is Like Sailing Downwind*. Bob has many years as a senior executive with a Fortune 500 Company and with non-profit organizations. For more information, or to bring Bob in to speak at your next event, **contact him at www.Leadergrow.com, bwhipple@leadergrow.com or 585.392.7763**

