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Are you an Awakened Leader? Going Beyond Situational Leadership

Most of us remember the “Situational Leadership” model -- simply stated as “adjust your leadership style to the people you are working with, and to the situation at hand”. Although this model is still the most robust leadership tool around, some ongoing research at the Center for Creative Leadership suggests that there should be more to our leadership styles than this model prescribes.

An “awakened leader” could be first described as a “situational –plus” leader: He or she, of course, is mindful of the demands of the situation and the needs of colleagues. However, added to this awareness is a further “wakefulness” concerning:

- *Responsibilities beyond the “bottom line”.* The wakeful leaders will realize that there are matters to be considered that go beyond the P& L statement. One of these is ethics: the Enron debacle is just a larger-than-life version of the management of the reputation of the organization. In my coaching work with Citigroup, “high ethical standards” has been placed within the competency factors of top managers, reflecting an increased awareness of the importance of integrity in business practices. Another of these responsibilities, especially for industrial companies, is the environmental impact of their businesses. And beyond this, there are the social implications of doing business, such as those faced by Wal-Mart in a community and fast-food purveyors such as McDonald’s in the eating habits of Americans.

- *Employee development, on and off the job.* The situational leadership model is a developmental one for both leader and follower. However, it frequently ignores the larger developmental aspects that include experiences for employees both inside and outside the organization. A CCL publication says it this way¹: “...shape your [employees’] work and life experiences so that they will provide the opportunities to expand...leadership knowledge and skills”. What do your employees/colleagues need for their growth and development? A transfer to another part of the corporation, or another country’s operations? Do they need to have a classroom development experience away from the daily grind? Or maybe just the freedom (read encouragement) to participate in a Habitat for Humanity or other community project...?

- *Health and well-being preparedness.* “Your body is the vehicle of your leadership style” is a wake-up call issued in many of our programs emphasizing executive wellness. If your body is not functioning at a high-level of performance, your leadership will be sub-optimal, as well. We have recently instituted in many of our contract leadership programs targeted wellness elements, emphasizing the importance of physical well-being. These elements include specific skills, awareness, and behaviors directed toward the betterment of health, and the management and reduction of stress in the workplace. More and more in our business cultures, as demands on our time increase and as life-balance becomes more, we need to be wakeful about the impact of these forces on our bodies. And we need to help our managers and employees to be healthy themselves, and to teach others how to do the same.

The awakened leader is not just an addition to the leadership model. It may be a solid underpinning of a coherent and consistent practice of enlightened leadership for the future.

¹ Cynthia D. McCauley, *Developmental Assignments: Creating Learning Experiences without Changing Jobs*, Center for Creative Leadership, Greensboro, NC., ©2006.

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