

CONNECTED LEADERSHIP, A Note for Further Thought

As I watched the presidential debate for the last election, I began to think about the emotional and personal nature of leadership. People in the U.S., I believe, will vote for the candidate with whom they feel an emotional connection, more than deciding which candidate has the best logical arguments, or the most convincing plan. In an email conversation I had recently with a leadership program alumnus, a general manager in Peru, he expressed that the same phenomenon had happened in spades in his own country, with disastrous results following the election of a charismatic but poorly directed president.

However, that same personal and emotional connection is what drives leadership in our organizations. People follow those they feel close to and identify with, not necessarily those who have the best growth strategy or development plan for employees. If the plan is good and the connection is there, then the organization is well led.

The Center for Creative Leadership has been working in an area they call "connected leadership." Quoting from a White Paper by a speaker at a recent CCL conference: "Sound leadership strategies connect leadership and create and mobilize richly interconnected networks of people doing purposeful, targeted, and strategic work together..." I believe a key to success in leadership development is in raising the level of connection among elements of the organization's followers, not just in focusing on their connection with some charismatic, but always imperfect leader.

Client work in this area is being called *Taking it to the Middle*, which sounds like an appropriate title for connecting leadership downward into the organization. Maybe at some point the work should be titled, *Bringing it down the hierarchy...*

(For a more detailed review of the importance and the specific behaviors associated with Connected Leadership, see the article on our website "Authentic Leadership".)