



Fact Finder

HRA Services, Inc.

November 2005

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Dim and Flaring Lamps

Early in life we see glimpses of power and influence—glimpses of character and strength of mind and heart. We watch innocents trying to prevail and persuade; we watch the schoolyard bully swagger and provoke. We search for meaning and patterns and learning in planned interactions and serendipitous events. All the while we are building skills, learning to read and write, add and subtract, building corporate memory, equipping ourselves to go somewhere and be something. Amid all this activity are group endeavors to promote camaraderie, team spirit, a sense of esprit, a sense of community and communication that produces an incredible sense of unity, of collective pride of achievement, a sense of purposeful accomplishment that at once supersedes and satisfies self.

“Spirit,” according to Webster, relates to “breath, courage, vigor, the soul, life.” Its meaning is “the life principle, especially in man, originally regarded as an animating vapor infused by the breath . . . ,” “the thinking, motivating, feeling part of man.” Somewhere in his reflections on leadership, management, and motivation, Ken Blanchard says that employees tend to check their spirits at the office door. Certainly there is considerable truth and perplexity in that observation. Despite our modern societal tendency to focus on the concrete, the palpable, the objective, the logical, the scientifically verifiable, leadership includes a strong dose of spirit, good or evil. Positive leadership must have the capacity to inspire, to elevate, to motivate, to move others to action. Again consider history’s leaders. They move

well beyond self with the capacity to rally others around a course that they see as meritorious.

They have the capacity to congeal, to articulate, to integrate, to bring into harmony forces and factors that otherwise confuse and debilitate. As we mature, we grow more keenly aware of the power of principle and leadership in shaping critical events, in guiding how the future will unfold, and how our own individual lives affect our fortunes and the direction of the greater world around us. No matter what our pursuit, the impact of leadership looms ever larger as an incalculable dimension in shaping the course of individual lives and human events. Even so, many aspects of leadership seem to remain a mystery. CEO's lament the lack of leaders in their companies to help move the enterprise forward, while they themselves may be a major impediment to leadership development and organizational progress. In discussing key aspects of leadership, General Schwarzkopf observes that leaders must articulate the expectation of leadership from others. Despite the empirical efficacy of this principle, leaders often express such expectations too cautiously, perhaps with the latent fear that passionate, assertive leaders are difficult to manage—together with the concern that the emerging leader they encourage may ultimately not share their own thinking related to where the organization is and where it wants to go.

As in many modern endeavors, we seem to major in minors and focus on the perimeter. The current age has become consumed with expositions on leaders and leadership. Are they born or made? How do you know it when you

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see it? How do they affect others? How do others affect them? Focusing on the perimeter is a necessary defensive tactic when the principal objective is security and protection of the status quo; focusing on the central critical mass is the strategic element where leadership tries to operate—I say “tries” because leadership, when we see it, often appears to be a fleeting, transient phenomenon dependent on situational factors outside the leader’s normal sphere of influence. And yet, well-developed leaders who may wear uniforms or suits or coveralls also wear an invisible mantle that marks them as leaders. Where does that mantle come from? How is it exhibited? Is it real or simply perceived to be real for a time? Is it developed or bestowed?

Observing and coaching leaders for over thirty years, I have again and again seen the power and effectiveness of the leader’s spirituality. The clearest corporate label is “vision,” and yet the leader himself or herself may have great difficulty articulating and communicating what he or she professes to clearly sense and feel in terms of organizational direction and movement. Here is where spirit—“an animating vapor”—springs to life and also where leadership runs the greatest risk of failing if it cannot capture the vapor and convey it as a clear, understandable message that followers can receive and act on. Leadership is a difficult balancing act of heart and mind that when effectively combined generates confidence and above all trust. Leadership is the poetry of personality. It is the inscrutable combination of physical presence, spirituality, knowledge, wisdom, insight, belief and confidence that compels the leader to influence the thoughts, actions, and beliefs of those around him.

The degree to which the leader succeeds in exerting this influence is the real barometer of

the leader’s leadership or power. Like the analysis of great poetry, the analysis of specific leadership often diffuses rather than distills. In dissecting the component parts, we lose the power and harmony of the whole.

Checkout Our New Website

We invite you to visit our recently upgraded website, which reflects the full range of services HRA provides its clients. We hope you will also visit our newsletter library for subjects of interest and topics helpful in meeting your day-to-day leadership challenges and HR needs.

Health Care Costs Impact Pay

Employee health care costs have risen by an average of 12% over the past year, according to a recent survey of chief financial officers, who project another increase of 11.1% over the next 12 months if no changes are made in health care plans.

The survey says companies are considering a number of ways to deal with rising health insurance costs, including asking workers to pay a larger share, lowering wage increases for employees, and slowing down hiring of employees for the upcoming year.

Though a majority of companies appear to support making employees pay a larger share of health care costs, 20% said that doing so would do very little to reduce their company's overall health care burden.

The *HRA Fact Finder* is published by HRA Services, Inc., to keep clients and business associates abreast of developments and trends in human resources and personnel management and is not intended to serve as professional advice on specific personnel and organizational issues.

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