

# **Leadership In a World Turned Upside-down**

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The elusive qualities of leadership continue to fascinate us as we continue to speculate “are leaders born or made?” Are there specific events that thrust certain people into leadership roles either by personal desire or necessity?

In a rapidly shifting global economic environment that is driven by accelerated technological advances, what type of personal characteristics will prevail for leaders of the new millennium? A first cut response might suggest that leadership will require a “technical guru” who is deeply immersed in the utilization of the latest technology can be an extremely influential leader who plays a major role in shaping the economic landscape for national and international corporations.

Certainly one cannot argue that the ability to shape and influence the world around us are attributes of leaders. That is not the issue. The question remains, “how will leaders of the next century negotiate, influence and shape the future? Today, more than ever before, potential leaders must have a central focus or as Warren Bennis describes it, “a powerful point of view.” To turn an idea into reality may not require the charismatic charm frequently associated with leadership, but rather a humble “imperfect” human being who is very astute in pulling together the human capital required to move a “point of view” forward

The profile of a new leader is very different from the typical corporate leaders of the last century. During the 20<sup>th</sup> Century we desperately wanted leaders who had definite answers or solutions to problems. We tended to form opinions regarding our leaders and then wanted them to provide magic solutions to whatever challenges came our way. When they did not meet our expectations, we faulted them for being ineffective and went in search of someone else who could live up to our expectations. Role distinctions between leader and follower clearly existed and rarely did one shift from one role to the other.

In a diverse global economic environment, leadership will take on a very different meaning and the ability to “follow” at appropriate times during a given project will be a critical aspect for emerging leaders. We are changing and therefore we will gravitate toward different leadership styles. We are no longer searching for someone who has answers to our problems, but rather someone who will facilitate a process whereby we can find our own solutions. We have abandoned our search for heroes with magic solutions and are opting for people who can “get real.” Disillusioned by people and institutions that no longer serve us, we are starting to become comfortable with the notion of “personal empowerment” and are seeking strategic alliances with those that we trust and who share common goals.

As our collective attitudes have changed, so will leadership practices. The most significant shift for leaders of the new millennium will be to abandon seeking power for personal gain, but demonstrate resourcefulness, trustworthiness and persistence for the common good of their constituencies. Personal power will be an added bonus for those that serve others well, but it will not be an end in itself! We have grown up and as a result new leaders must, and will, emerge who can operate in this new context!!!!

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