

LEADERSHIP REFLECTIONS

What Kind of Flower do You Want to Be?

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During my career, I frequently read leadership books and magazines to get ideas on how to lead and/or manage more effectively. After reading, I often concluded, “well that’s common sense.” So, what stands out for me as being common sense in leadership? As you read my reflections, think about leadership metaphorically like gardening. Leadership is about learning and leading from your future (e.g., what flower or plant you want to be). It’s about “**connecting the dots.**”

Leadership is about connecting with others through **collaboration** (e.g., creating blooming opportunities). Leadership requires **perspective**, understanding the source(s) and resources that enable effective decisions (e.g., pruning for growth).

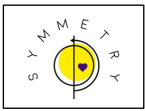
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Leadership is about learning and leading from your future (what flower or plant you want to be). It’s about “**connecting the dots.**” The clearer you are about your destination (i.e., short and long term) the clearer you can be in making choices and decisions along the way. Your daily decisions and choices in terms of how you spend your time and direct your energy enable you to reach your destination. If what you give energy to or spend loads of time on doesn’t enable you to reach your destination, you should ask, “Why am I doing this?” When you think about your destination it should



address goals for personal (self-care and development), career, family, spiritual, community, and friends. Too often I experience leaders feeling defeated and exhausted because they work hard, long hours and yet aren't feeling content and or fulfilled. The question I ask is, "What would fulfillment and contentment look like if you could have it?" Many times, simply answering that question and then reflecting on how much time and energy was given towards their fulfillment, the incongruences become clear. Common sense, right?

Start connecting the dots between how you spend your time and energy to the results you are getting on a day-to-day, week-to-week basis. Then start making adjustments to your calendar and time to start reaping the benefits of what you are pursuing. Don't plant and water tomato seeds expecting to get squash!

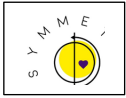
Leadership is about connecting with others - "**collaboration**" (creating blooming opportunities). Collaboration creates space for growth. Diverse ideas and thinking open doors to evolved and new possibilities. My experiences with cohort (group) learning and teamwork provided exponential personal growth and resulted in greater results. Leadership is about activating the power of the team and tapping into people who have insight and are inspired to win. Think about it, outstanding sales results typically are a result of experience and collaboration with the customer. Too often leaders can get so focused on operating traditionally (e.g., within the traditional chain of command, political protocol, meeting the deadline, replicating last years' ideas/plan, relying on personal expertise) that they underestimate the value of getting insight, input, and divergent thinking. Collaboration often makes the difference between good versus great and simply winning versus sustainable winning.

Collaboration is essential to personal and team growth and effectiveness. Collaboration also creates a spirit of engagement and alignment, which can result in increased fellowship. Make room in your greenhouse or garden for more light (new and different ideas and thinking), expansion (evolved thinking) and be prepared for exponential growth.

Leadership requires **perspective**, understanding the source(s) and resources that enable effective decisions (pruning for growth). First, understand you and what impacts your decision-making. Understanding the source of our decision-making has huge implications, according to RIM (Regenerating Images in Memory) technique created by Dr. Deborah Sandella, and releases and regenerates negative emotional memories into positive ones. Dr. Sandella's research asserts:

- Current neuroscience confirms that 95% of decisions are emotional, not left-brain logical.
- Decisions are made by using our subconscious mind filled with a lifetime of experiences, memories, emotions, beliefs, successes, and failures.
- We get stuck in old stories, negative emotional memories, and repeating patterns of behavior.

Also, get to know the key people who have access to critical information and/or resources you need.



Let's look at The Elephant and The Rope Story (author unknown). As my friend was passing the elephants, he suddenly stopped, confused by the fact that these huge creatures were being held by only a small rope tied to their front leg. No chains, no cages. It was obvious that the elephants could, at any time, break away from the ropes they were tied to but for some reason, they did not. My friend saw a trainer nearby and asked why these beautiful, magnificent animals just stood there and made no attempt to get away. "Well," he said, "when they are very young and much smaller, we use the same size rope to tie them and, at that age, it's enough to hold them. As they grow up, they are conditioned to believe they cannot break away. They believe the rope can still hold them, so they never try to break free." My friend was amazed. These animals could at any time break free from their bonds but because they believed they couldn't, they were stuck right where they were.

Like the elephants, how often do we go through life hanging onto a belief that we cannot do something, simply because we failed at it once before? I've learned and experienced that often as leaders we hold back because of old, outdated beliefs that no longer serve us? Do we avoid trying something new because of a limiting belief? We allow someone else's limiting beliefs to hold us back. STOP the self-inflicted limitations and tap into your deeper being.

Learning how to access your internal resources to challenge your old stories takes practice. Since decisions are emotional and we know we need to generate better thinking let's look at some practices to consider. Simply shift your perspective, re-frame a situation, and ask more questions. As a result, you can produce better and/or different solutions. Prune your plants to encourage them to thrive!

Common sense leadership says to know the plant you want to be. Choose to till, plant, and nurture your garden in the right environment for thriving and growing. Start connecting dots, collaborating more, and changing your perspective. Don't underestimate the power you have in creating your future. Lead from the future, not the past! Your attempt to change may fail, but never fail to make an attempt (*The Elephant and The Rope*). Pursue your dreams.