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Standing Out from the Crowd

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Business leaders find knowing themselves better helps them manage others better

By Karen Leland

With the recent rash of business books, executive coaches and management consultants touting the critical importance of becoming an authentic leader, it's no wonder entrepreneurs and executives feel pressured to cultivate the charm and charisma of John F. Kennedy, combined with the strategic smarts of Donald Trump. Sorting out the wheat from the chaff of leadership lore is not an easy task. Dr. Ken Blanchard, world-renowned management guru, says that fundamentally, leadership is a transformational journey that starts with self-leadership.

"If you don't know who you are—your strengths and demons—it's really hard to lead someone else," says Blanchard. "When things go wrong at an organizational leadership level, people are often quick to blame the structure, but half the time, the problem is that you are dealing with people who have skipped step one—self-leadership," he says. What tools are available to help the overwhelmed executive develop this self-leadership? Blanchard says that one of the best is an eight-day residential program called the Hoffman Quadrinity Process.

Head-Heart Connection

Since 1967 more than 70,000 participants worldwide, among them many top business leaders, have participated in the Hoffman Quadrinity Process (HQP). The Process focuses, among other things, on how emotional learning that occurred early in life shapes adult experiences, including career choices and leadership capabilities. One central theme of the HQP is helping the participants integrate the four aspects of self: physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual. This premise has made the Process popular with business leaders, such as Blanchard, who believe that self-knowledge and emotional intelligence are important to both personal satisfaction and leadership style.

Jean Halloran, senior vice president of human resources at Agilent Technologies, says that since taking the HQP she brings more of an integrated self to work, and has a better connection between her heart and her head.

"When I went to the Hoffman Process, I was fifteen years into my career, and most of my success had come from having used my head well," says Halloran. "But when it came to my own feelings, I felt they had no place in the workday. If I

felt hurt, or even jubilant, I worried it might carry me away from the task at hand. Hoffman gave me the tools to welcome all of myself to the party."

As a result, Halloran feels that she is now much more inclined to stop and reflect on why she feels a particular way about a situation, instead of being distressed by it.

"I first and foremost get curious," says Halloran. "I am able to step back from my reactions, consider them and then choose the best path forward," she explains. "I lead much more intentionally now."

Charles "Raz" Ingrasci, president and CEO of the Hoffman Institute Foundation, echoes Halloran's experience and believes that many of the problems in the workplace have a huge emotional component to them.

"Only rarely do people actually identify and act on their real feelings," says Ingrasci. "For example, if a manager feels frustrated because one of his or her staff is late to work three times that week, they will often become angry. But it's much better to identify the frustration underneath, and speak with the employee about that," he says.

In Ingrasci's experience, it is these unconscious reactions that lead to stresses in the workplace. He says that the Process—which utilizes a variety of private and group work exercises, awareness experiences, journaling and guided meditation—is designed to help people get to the source of these unconscious reactions, which in turn makes them more emotionally literate.

This emphasis on emotional learning and developing an integrated sense of self has drawn many leaders in the fields of business and education to the Process. The list of directors and advisors listed on the Hoffman Institute Web site speaks for itself, and includes Blanchard, best-selling author (with Spencer Johnson) of *The One Minute Manager*; Giles H. Bateman, cofounder of Price Club; Dr. Joan Borysenko, cofounder of the Mind/Body Clinic at Harvard University; Stephen Seligman, former CEO of The Learning Annex; and Dr. Michael Ray, professor of Creativity and Innovation at the Stanford University Graduate School of Business.

Blanchard, himself a Hoffman Process graduate, refers to the famous Johari Window model (created by Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham) as a way to explain why he feels the Process has such a powerful impact on helping managers get to know themselves better.

"In the Johari model, there are certain things about yourself that are both known to yourself and are also known to others. This is your public window," explains Blanchard. "Then there are things that are not known to yourself, but are known to others. These are your blind spots."

Blanchard feels that the most effective leaders are those with a very open public window and reduced blind spots. "With the best leaders, what people see is what they get," says Blanchard. "The way to reduce the private window and expand the public one is through disclosure. What Hoffman gets at is that private window. It also helps you push the blinds back through self-observation and feedback."

David McCue, founder of McCue Corporation, the world's number-one-selling line of protective and decorative bumpers for retail counters and checkout areas, says that attending the HQP has greatly enhanced his ability to be an authentic leader. "I have an increased connection with the truth of who I am," says McCue. One example is that prior to the Process, McCue had two senior executives to whom he was adapting and making do. "During the Process, I saw that their nonperformance and lack of cultural fit were one and the same, or at least indivisible," says McCue. "I knew that it wasn't working, and I became proactive and asked them to leave." McCue says that since Hoffman, he can make decisions involving people with a clear intention of integrity and care, but without feeling personally responsible for their feelings as a result of his decision.

Editor's note: Among organizations that have embraced HQP is Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government. Read about their experience online at:

www.incentivemag.com/HQP.