

Leadership instalments

You must follow well to lead well.

By Dan Gaynor

ANARCHY HAS NO PLACE IN EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP and yet a great many leaders unwittingly create more chaos than they realize. The conditions arise most often when we are directed to do something we don't personally agree with – the boss makes a choice we would not have made in his place and we are asked to carry out the directive with our team.

These differences, when they arise, are important tests for the leadership team. So how should we deal with them? Go ahead and share your thoughts and ideas with your boss, you should. If he or she is a good boss, your opinion will be valued and considered. Advocate passionately and honesty for your point of view but then, when you've had your say, and provided it's not a genuine question of morality, fully support the direction you receive as you carry it to your team. You would expect the same from those you are leading. If you cannot do this, the time has come to leave, especially if this becomes a pattern. Anything else invites dysfunction, chaos and eventually conflict for you and those you lead.

In his book, *Shake Hands With The Devil*, Lieutenant General Roméo Dallaire poignantly described his thought process at the height of the FLQ crisis of 1970, when civil war threatened to break out across Canada, many years before he led the UN mission to Rwanda. As a young lieutenant with forty-one soldiers under his command he was forced to consider his loyalty to his family and his home province against that of his commitment to his country. Dallaire wrote, "If I gave the order to shoot, I could not let my men sense the slightest shiver of doubt in my belief in the rightness of that order. Any uncertainty on my part would communicate itself to my men; any hesitation on their part could result in chaos and innocent casualties. In a nanosecond I had to be able to set aside deep personal loyalties and put the mission first. I spent many hours wrestling this issue before I could put aside my loyalty to my roots and wholeheartedly embrace my loyalty to my nation. I had to connect to a deeper commitment, past

friendship, kinship or ethnicity, to absolutely believe in the rightness and justice of my path." (1)

Wow! Thankfully, you probably won't face the kind of choice Dallaire faced but you will face your own challenges. At some point, if it has not already happened, you too will be called to lead a mission that could create divided loyalties. Like Dallaire, you must resolve these questions and "wholeheartedly embrace" your mission or you too create innocent casualties. The men and women you lead will hesitate or falter if they sense your hesitation or disagreement. They will be caught between their loyalty to you and the larger organization and divided loyalties don't work for anyone. This inevitably creates chaos and puts you and your team in the path of danger. Accepting the mission leads to job satisfaction and productivity. If you really cannot resolve a serious question about a mission it may well be time to leave. Remaining in command and resisting direction will create pain for everyone involved, including the very people you are trying to protect.

Most leaders are on both sides of the relationship – they are leaders



and followers. In our leadership roles it's important to help our teams understand that while we value their thinking they must be able to accept direction when a decision is made, or both job satisfaction and productivity suffer. As followers, it's just as important for us to walk the talk with the men and women we report to.

(1)Dallaire, Roméo A. with Brent Beardsley, *Shake hands with the devil: the failure of humanity in Rwanda*, Random House Canada. Toronto. 2003.

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Dan Gaynor can be contacted at:

tel 403.880.1780

email dan@gaynorconsulting.com