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Leadership Philosophy

“The ageless essence of Leadership is to create an alignment of strengths in ways that make a system’s weakness irrelevant” - Peter Drucker

Leadership is a transformational process that is a continuous journey of training, development and growth for both self and community. Transformational leadership involves motivating others to do more than they originally intended, and often even more than they thought possible. The key to this is personal vision- the focus on the greater picture of what could be; creating the picture of the future and empowering others to live into it. Effective leaders move the context to action by repeatedly communicating the vision, providing direction and meaning of goals and objectives, creating the environment for it to occur, and then allowing others to be creative and innovative in execution.

Leaders must be clear in their values and convictions, in order to generate the trust and respect of others. I believe that a pathway to achieving this is for leaders to be continuously in self-reflection of themselves as human beings, always seeking to understand and distinguish the source of personal assumptions, beliefs and actions. From that position of clarity and personal empowerment, effective leaders are continuously reinventing themselves and their lives, are being authentic and responsible, and are providing pathways of freedom and full-self expression for others.

I believe that people do their best work in an appreciative culture where leadership is focused on people's strengths and passions rather than their problems and weaknesses. I encourage Informal Leadership and Appreciative Leadership. I partner with people to identify and use their talents and strengths, especially the ones that bring them a sense of excitement, joy and fulfillment. The leader takes responsibility for creating and sustaining a supportive, healthy environment where leadership is cultivated through responsibility, collaboration, acknowledgement, community success and growth. To cultivate this, the leader must seek a deeper understanding of the culture-shared beliefs, assumptions, values, and norms; and the climate-the shared perceptions of behavior that distinguishes the group or system, and that influences behavior. For me the endgame of Appreciative Leadership is harmony, balance and peace.

A leader that is deeply connected with the system or environment actively embraces diversity as a creative synthesis that leverages and unifies the distinct differences and talents that make each one of us unique. An effective leader never makes assumptions about an individual based on the racial, ethnic, or cultural groups to which he or she appears to belong. They need to exemplify this by being in action on their beliefs by articulating and actively demonstrating through mechanisms, such as, open-environments and policies, and clear communication of what is tolerated and what is not.

In the continuous journey of leadership, I see ongoing development as critical path. The rapid pace of change in our global environment – politically, technologically, economically and socially demands that leaders be actively involved in a continuous learning process. Leadership development is a lifelong process involving education, professional training and experience. Leaders are everywhere-as formal leaders and informal leaders. I embrace the practice of ‘Leaders developing Leaders’. Thus, effective leaders need to be on top of current technologies and practices, be a role-model, and be of service and inspiration to others.

Being of service is a very important role of being a leader. In being of service a leader can experience what it is to be human. It allows them to step outside of themselves, to be continually searching, listening, and experiencing from a different perspective. What must be present is the desire to serve, authenticity and passion, and willingness and openness to grow and heal with others.

The journey of Leadership is therefore exciting and one that is continuously evolving. I invite you to embrace it and be fully engaged in its practice within your own life.

Dr. Marcia Smart is an Author, Inspirational Speaker and Leadership Strategist. Her book, The Hidden Power of Informal Leadership is available at www.informalleadership.com. For discussions go to LinkedIn group Informal Leadership at <http://www.linkedin.com/groups?mostPopular=&gid=2965827>