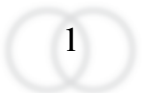




Self and Team Leadership thru Challenging Times

A metaphorical journey
to the top
in
Nepal Himalayas





Introduction

On February 12th 2009, I presented this short program on leadership under pressure to a key management team attending their corporate retreat.

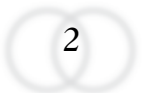
At the end of each presentation such as this, I gift a small Ebook back to the team to anchor some of the important points. I'd say, these notes represent 50% of the material covered.

The metaphore of my trekking experience in Nepal is authentic and totally appropriate. My clients volunteer to be led, they pay me to lead them into danger.

On those treks, entrepreneurs and leaders in their own right are faced, sometimes for the first time in their lives, with the need to place themselves in the leadership of another person. They are challenged to do it and therefore place extreme demands on me to lead. Over 20 years doing this, I've learned many things that work for me for leadership under pressure, in uncertain times.

I hope you enjoy some of the journey here.

Chris Walker - Leadership thru Uncertainty





V.I.P Leadership



The Journey

People pay me to lead them into danger. Three times a year I lead people up into the high Himalaya on a journey to summit two of the highest trekking peaks in the world, Gokyo Re and Kalaphatar. Both above 5,400 meters and within a few KM of Mt Everest. (still more than 2 miles - 3500 meters below the summit of the great mountain.). I've done it 47 times with over 200 people with no loss of life.

I have an MBA a BE and numerous other studies in Zen, Yoga and Eastern arts. I've managed my own multinational business, been married, divorced and gone through the learning curves that come from personal ignorance. But I've learned more about human nature, more about leadership and more about the human spirit in these 47 trips up into the Himalayas than all of that put together.

No workshops, no lectures, no enlightened awakenings sitting with monks, nuns or in caves. This learning came from real life. From helping people hold their vision and unload the baggage in their hearts and minds that holds them (and sometimes their whole family for generations) back.

Mt Everest is really Sagamatha (Indigenous name) and this name means mother Goddess. Maybe that's relevant here.



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Leading People into danger.

There's uncertainty in the future. Even a car ride to the post office has uncertainty. My job is, to paint a real picture of the future (our destination) and demonstrate with facts, that I can deal with most contingencies.

The goodnews and badnews is that I've never met my clients before, so people are extremely demanding. They don't hand me the reigns to lead unless I'm really ready to lead.

So, I believe here that internal marketing is vitally important for a leader. They need to present their credentials, not just their business card but also proof, clear, factual proof that they are worthy of the trust people place in them in regard to the future.

Most, if not all resistance to change in organisations comes from inadequate, unqualified or poorly promoted leadership qualifications.

So, in these highly organic leadership situations I need to be aware that people are measuring my capacity to lead and therefore I need to have the capacity to lead. It's all about my ability to turn chaos to order.



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2 Aspects for a leader

14 people trekking up the side of the valley. A rainstorm comes. It's pitch black. We're spread along the track around 800 meters front to back. There's a shear drop, side tracks. I can't be everywhere, but I have to be. We can't get to where we want to go if people are not happy or at least safe, right where they are now.

There's management - this to me means comfort, safety, happiness, feeling appreciated, valued, the environment, good music, good food, nice smells.

Then, there's tomorrow, where we're going, and how we're going to get from here to there. By linking what people want individually to where I am taking the team, I create a massive motivated team spirit.

I delegate as much of the management as possible and make sure people are comfortable and happy right in the now. Then I focus on the future. Making sure I understand it, have contingencies for it, facts about it. This is the other half of leadership.



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Confidence

Sometimes self confidence can make us blind That's like infatuation or certainty, and that blinds us. However, self confidence is also an essential part of leadership. Who is going to put their life in the hands of someone who is not confident that they can lead people into the future?

Here's what I've come to understand about confidence.

- 1/ The more variables you know you can cope with the more confidence you transmit to others.
- 2/ Hope, enthusiasm, motivation, positive uptalk, hard headed, desperation, over investment can't be trusted.
- 3/ Each day people throw "what if" questions at me to challenge my leadership. That's what healthy people do. If I take that personally, it's devastating. If I take it as a legitimate self created enquiry of "can I really do it or am I bluffing," then there's a healthy team.
- 4/ The more I speak from experience, the more people trust me.
- 5/ I sustain a healthy leadership role by taking the largest helicopter viewpoint of any situation. That simply means I see the danger and the solution, the support and the challenge, the good side and the bad in any circumstance in the future. This really makes me the leader.



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Turning Up

We know where we are going. Maybe we can't even see it. But we know it. Then we have to handle the process of getting to it. Enjoyably.

Every step is important. If we are thinking "Oh, I hate this steep bit," the probability of error and lost team harmony grows exponentially. People start wanting to get to the future before they finish in the now.

That's a bad habit. Because they get to the top and then they are still unhappy about where they are. Typically, these people, the "destination syndrome" fall.

There are some tricks to being here in the moment.

1/ Appreciation - There's two sides to everything, appreciate the good news and find the benefit of the bad news.

2 Posture

3/ Breath

4/ Intensity - not too much or too little - call this pressure.

5/ All senses are active - in nature this is easy.

6/ Mind Balance.





V.I.P Leadership



Holding on by letting Go - Vision

I've discovered up here in the mountains that everything in life is a balance of support and challenge.

As a leader, I can't gain trust or loyalty or expect people to prepare themselves properly for the future if I dish up half truth.

My V.I.P begins by really painting a total picture of the future. I describe the upside to everyone, and the potential challenges they need to prepare for. Support and challenge.

By doing this I create a clear, balanced perspective of the future. No infatuations.

Then, it's time to let go of it. So, like a business leader, we establish the mission, create the vision, set the goals and then determine the sub goals, then we create the daily habits, then the hourly habits and then the moment by moment behaviours that will get us there. We end up focussed on every breath, every step in a certain way.

Then we're in the moment, connected to the future, living and working 100% in the zone, right here but going there.





V.I.P Leadership



Inspiration - No surprises

Human nature is little understood science. Western leadership models measure the ego and imply what should or should not be done. Eastern models often exclude real life situations. So, I respect the purpose of those models, but prefer to understand human nature just as I understand nature. They must, by inference obey the same laws.

My awareness of human nature is therefore:

- 1/ There's two sides to everyone, public and private.
- 2/ Everyone has support and challenge in equal doses.
- 3/ Disharmony is a warning sign before catastrophe.
- 4/ People of common beliefs gather together for safety
- 5/ People are meant to grow at the border of chaos and order
- 6/ People will only be led by leaders who can handle greater levels of chaos and move it to order than themselves.
- 7/ People are totally controlled by their beliefs.
- 8/ All areas of a persons life are affected by all areas of a persons life.
- 9/ Appreciation builds - depreciation destroys





V.I.P Leadership



Peaks and Troughs

Emotionally we have peaks and troughs. But in actual fact, we're always climbing toward the summit.

Just like some people challenge us, and others support us. But these emotional perspectives are erroneous and lead to bad decisions. or unnecessary ones.

There is always a balance of Support and Challenge. Which means when we think we're down, we're also up and when we think we're up, we're also down.

I've discovered up here in the mountains that everything in life is a balance of support and challenge and that only emotion can try to witness this in any other way. Emotion makes people go up with the support and down with the challenge. This is the average life. But as a leader, I can't gain trust or loyalty or expect people to prepare themselves properly for the future if I dish up half truth. Positive thinking is a great state of mind, but, it does not exist in a healthy way if there's a blind sidedness to the downside. These are the two aspects that need to be balanced in visioning the future.



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Being Real

We rise to the level of our own incompetence. Trying to be in control all the time means that we can't witness this important part of being a leader.

When it all gets too much for leaders, they often decide to reduce the workload or change their circumstances. This is a great missed opportunity because nature destroys things that don't fulfill their purpose in life. Our purpose is to grow, expand and take more and more and more responsibility.

But how can we do this and maintain our quality of life? The answer is *evolveyabastard*.... Excuse the Aussie slang, but what it means is leaders need a mantra that goes something like this.

HOW DO I DO MORE, DO IT BETTER - IN LESS TIME?

So, begin by asking what do I do that I don't need to do?
Then, ask, What do I do that someone else could do?
Then ask, How could I do what I do faster?





V.I.P Leadership



Hard work is bad Management

If you are still emailing on the weekend you are a bad manager.

If you need to work more than 6 hours a day to get your job done, you're a terrible manager.

If you are not adding workload to your job description, or at least expanding your responsibility everyday, you're killing yourself slowly.

If you're thinking of running away because things aren't how you like them, then you're going to sabotage your relationship.

Think about these facts I gathered from Entrepreneurs I have worked with. I have millions of them.

1/ Best meetings take 10 minutes

(the four hour work week - Tim Ferris)

2/ Unbalanced information is rubbish

(chris walker - Laws of nature for better business)

3/ Buying decisions are made in 7 seconds.

(blink - Malcolm Gladwell)

4/ You don't need to work for money

(Why We Want You to be Rich: Donald Trump and Robert Kiyosaki)



V.I.P Leadership



Purpose

I've watched people approach the mountains of Nepal bringing their process from home. Some attack the mountain like it's an obstacle they need to beat (some women who work in male dominated environments do this in Nepal) - I've seen some people sit at the bottom of a hill like a donkey, and wait for me to "motivate" them up the hill. (some public servants do this). I've taken entrepreneurs who, in the midst of a rain storm, head off and leave everyone because they can't be bothered with the slow ones holding them back (everyone arrives at the top eventually) - and I've seen people lose it, get it back, lose it, get it back, lose it, get it back - and the next minute, go through the same.

We can make life so hard when we don't have a really good reason why we do what we do? Trying to win approval doesn't work. Trying to beat your own standards doesn't work. Trying to prove to someone that you're better than them, doesn't work. Trying to win the affection of someone by making their life comfortable doesn't work.

I think you need a bloody big reason for doing anything, a reason bigger than you. A purpose bigger than self.



V.I.P Leadership



Old heads on Young Shoulders

I'm 57 this year. Lucky for me, due to my lifestyle and these 47 trips to this high altitude low oxygen purity, I have the biological age of a 34 year old (except for my sunburnt nose) and a few wrinkles where tight muscles once were.

If I took what I now know, and stuck it on my head when I was 20, I'd probably be in a very different place. Or would I? Certainly if I knew then, what I know now, I would have caused much less pain to people but I doubt that any of my life experience would have been different. It would just have been with different people in different places.

Wisdom in leadership does not change the experience of it. Wisdom just changes location. Whether you're a genius or like me, a person who learns by banging into brick walls, life and leadership and love is a blend of support and challenge, uppers and downers, orders and chaos.

After 35 years of spiritual and personal development I can honestly say, that my life ups and downs have continued unabated without a molecule of change for that whole time. But now, what has changed is that I'm not surprised each time it happens. Chaos and order are my two best friends and I welcome them both with open arms, equally.



V.I.P Leadership



Prepare - Prepare - Prepare

In 1987, before half the current world's population was born, I did an ice climbing course in New Zealand. I hired a guide, climbed a mountain and puked in my new sleeping bag. Being a healthy ego centric male, I blamed the mountain guide, went down, hired another one, and a helicopter to take us up above the ice fall.

It was here that I learned that we are in life wherever we are because that's where we're meant to be. WE're never given a challenge we can't handle. Unless that is, our ego kicks in and we hire a helicopter to take us to places we should never be.

This day, after leaving the helicopter I learned that the body and the mind were highly interconnected. Trying to go to the toilet for bad case of stomach cramps (fear) was challenged by the reaction of my sphincter which, in the cold and precarious position on this mountain remained as tightly shut as a bank vault on a Sunday night.

Leadership is like this. Reach out, learn new skills, prepare in advance but don't get too far ahead of yourself. (ego)



V.I.P Leadership



Realistic Expectations - No Surprises

On my first trip to Nepal, age 32, carrying a too heavy pack, oblivious to the dangers, frustrated that my ankle was sore, and in a rush to get from point A to point B. I slipped and fell down the side of a hill. Alone, I crawled with my pack back up to the path and found my knee almost unmovable.

Now, when I go to Nepal, I see many me's. People filled with enthusiasm, coffee and determination, who are about to learn about nature, being in the now, turning up in the moment and more.

I see myself in my clients too. I remember my first time, and now they in theirs. Sort of in a bubble and unaware of the big issues, variables, contingencies. Unaware of the 5 kgs of medical gear in my assistants pack. Unaware of the radio contact we're making about weather and conditions up ahead.

This, I believe is what qualifies me to lead, and ultimately, what engenders that unspoken trust people have. They simply feel my confidence that I really can, take them to the top. It's a fact.



V.I.P Leadership



Leaders Metal .. Courage to choose...

On a cold, dark and misty Himalayan morning the smell of coffee brewed by our sherpa team wafted into our sleeping bags. It was 3.00am and time to begin the 3-4 hour trek to the summit of Gokyo Re, our original and final destination.

Dave was coughing. He's kept us awake most of the night. Not that we'd all expected to sleep all that much anyway. Dave was not going to make it. He would never confess it. He had so much invested in this trip. But, he was unprepared for the challenge. Just getting to this last night's altitude was a remarkable achievement. We simply had to leave him behind.

A leaders job is the safety of the team for the future and it takes a deep commitment to that future to let go someone who is just going to put the rest in danger.

Dave's a mate of mine. It made it harder. He was so angry, but the decision was mine. I had a contract to make my decisions around safety, final. 7 of us went to the summit that day, Dave and his wife and his 5 children now thank me for the courage to make the hard choice. I think this part of leadership stinks and is totally underestimated as I've found it to be the most important aspect of sustained success.



V.I.P Leadership



Never React

Step Back into Emptiness

Step Back into Stillness

Step into Neutral

Then act wisely

Balance exists - Everywhere.

Remember the Great TRuths are always simple

Someone to love
Something to do
Something to look forward to...



V.I.P Leadership



When things go wrong - Coaching others through personal challenge

When a person loses presence

And therefore happiness, they seek it in one or all of the four substitutes

1/ Food and Substance

2/ Spirituality

3/ Greed

4/ Sexuality.

The addiction to these four substitutes for personal presence is evidence that mistakes, energy waste, emotional trauma, distraction and danger are imminent. They appear as early warning signs for an individual and their leader. One cannot trust the safety of that person, or, their role in the team. They have evidence that they are not showing up, not concentrating and therefore, they need to either deal with the core issue (not go on a diet) or step away from their responsibilities. A leader's job includes sorting this out.



V.I.P Leadership



Live, Work and Love

Up here in the Himalayas, there's thousands of monks. Young, old, weak, strong monks. Some have had their testicals burned with electrical wires, or their eyes or tongues cut. They climbed through the mountains to escape from persecution in Tibet.

They are always laughing. Even in meditation they laugh. Over dinner they laugh. Life is tough but laughed, inner laughter, is easy.

There's one thing you never hear a monk do. You never hear them complain about too much to do. The love life and so whatever they do, they love doing it. Away from families, freezing monasteries, minimal food. They smile.

They also cry, and get mad, and feel things. But not for long. They never complain, just change the way they see things. It's called appreciation. No matter what, there's always a chance to be thankful.

If a monk comes to enlightenment the head monk calls him aside and says, Ok, now that you've reached that level, it's time to go somewhere that challenges you. Complacency in a monastery is as dangerous to the ego as it is at work.



V.I.P Leadership



The path

Down the end of the winding path, there lies, something amazing, waiting for you.

Another winding path.

Then, when you get to the end of that winding path, waiting for you to arrive, is another winding path.

If you are expecting a straight path at the end of your winding path, you are going to have too much tension in your mind. You'll be angry because you think something is wrong.

If you think there's a resting place with no winding path at the end of your winding path, you are going to push yourself so hard in order to get there, then find you've burned out before your time.

In Nepal, we walk as fast as our breath will allow. No faster, and we know, over the hill is another hill. So, we like to enjoy this part of the path because then we become part of life, nature rather than a tourist rushing past on the way to the next rushing past...



V.I.P Leadership



Change one thing, change all

I learned about FIT during my MBA. They were strong on the idea that there are strategies that marry with cultures and org structures.

In Nepal I learned that they were overspecialised in their insight because the trillology - trinitiy - triad applies to everything.

Body, mind, spirit.
Vision, Inspiration, Purpose
Earth, Wind, Fire
etc

If you change your strategy in your company, please change your structure and culture. And if you change your strategy again change your strategy, structure and culture.

Once culture took a year, structure took a week or so, and strategy took a weekend retreat to change - Leaders were always battling to implement change. Now, with my help and VIP Culture can change as fast as strategy.





V.I.P Leadership



Conclusion

From business suit to mountain gear in 24 hours. The clothes may change but the man inside is me.

On my first trip to Nepal I climbed a mountain thinking that I'd transform myself. I reached the top and after admiring the view for 3 minutes started to be me again. You have no idea how much pain that caused. I really wanted to leave me behind.

25 years later now, and if I have to leave me behind to do something, I'll refuse. Am I a different man? Not at all.

Am I a different leader, yes I am. Simply I use V.I.P

Vision - To know where I am going

Inspiration - To live the habits that create the vision

Purpose - to get beyond self obsession and make you the most important VIP in my day.

Make others feel like VIP's and you'll suddenly find that sitting on top of a mountain in Nepal, or sitting in the car in a traffic jam in Sydney CBD, you'll find your GURU ...

Gee - yoU - aRe - yoU

