

LEADERSHIP
FROM THE
INSIDE OUT

*BUILDING YOUR
LEADERSHIP
FOUNDATION*

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About Michael

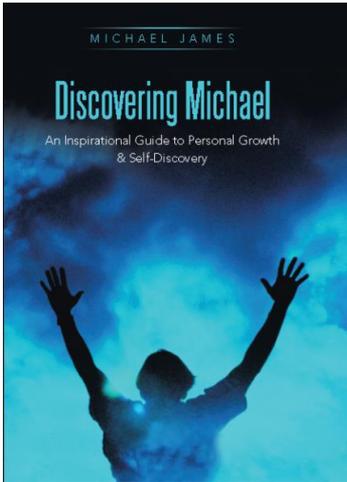
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From a career perspective:



A diverse career with education at the core. Achieved mastery in leading and transforming learning organizations. Instructing Training & Development, Talent Acquisition and Onboarding at UCSD. Noted for ability to orient and streamline training to focus on what is important vs. training for sake of training. Led two training organizations to Training Top 100 national recognition. Well-published in training journals, and speaker at national training conferences. Noted for accomplishing major results through people. www.growthumanpotential.com

From a personal perspective:



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Preamble

As a human being, we confront our choices throughout our life. William Bridges refers to these as Wake Up Calls. Ultimately, we confront our life as we lay on our death-bed, with no more highway in front of our life, but only a rear-view mirror perspective. As a leader, you will evaluate your intentions, actions, and motivations, and you will question whether you lived up to the responsibility and accountability one assumes in these roles. Did you walk people off cliffs, or up mountains? Did you subscribe to values related to ego, selfishness, greed, or external power, or to ones that promoted a greater good for humanity, selflessness, caring, and compassion? These are characteristic of one measure for your ultimate and final performance appraisal, an appraisal of your life!

I am honored to be sharing this message with you. My experiences in confronting death as an Emergency Medical Technician with a volunteer ambulance service, volunteer hospice worker, and volunteer in some of the most extreme situations across the globe created a great deal of consternation and sleepless nights. In retrospect, they actually were a blessing to me, causing me to consider my own death-bed experience, and reflect on the value and meaning of my life. It may sound morbid, but in actuality, it helped me contemplate my life while I had a chance to make a change, before it was too late. Being aware of this provides the most amazing opportunity for considering how you will go forward, the choices you will make, your values and purpose that will be your guiding principles. Because it is the person you see in the mirror that will be your ultimate judge of your life,

Developing your leadership foundation is a life-changing experience. It is nearly impossible to go backwards once you make this go forward with this journey. You will come to understand yourself in ways that are deep and profound, resulting in a similar realization that I shared in my own life's story:

“The benefit of personal growth and self-discovery is that we become better human beings with the strength to endure and carry on, and then we experience something magical when we begin to reach out to others. We discover a feeling that is so rewarding and fulfilling: the fact that we can make a difference. Here is to your willingness to begin with making a difference with yourself!”

Those who are self-aware are much less prone to hurt others intentionally. They recognize that these types of action are due to unhealthy beliefs they formed long ago. Instead, they are more prone to helping others develop their own full potential, resulting in a win-win-win.

For those who make the choice to move forward: thank you. Not only from me, but on behalf of those your life will touch. This is the best investment you can make, and it comes with the greatest return, that of helping yourself and others.

I look forward to meeting you on our journey!

Introduction

Early in my career, I was recognized as a “high-potential”. My manager spoke to me about an opportunity to prepare me for more senior leadership roles. I was delighted to hear this and jumped at the opportunity, which consisted of a two-year development assignment in our Corporate Management Education department. My assignment was to conduct thorough research on the topic of effective leadership, assess myself against what I learned, learn how to develop myself as a leader, and from my learnings and experience, propose a leadership development curriculum for other high-potentials like myself. The intention was to help me become a great leader by first understanding what a great leader was, and then taking a hard look in the mirror to determine what I needed to become one.

During this assignment, I discovered one of the most amazing insights: traditional leadership curriculum was merely training; it had no magic itself. Anyone could attend a training class, but this did not mean such attendees would be good leaders. It was about the person sitting in the training class—her motivation, intention, and willingness to change. It was about his willingness to develop self-awareness, to look for his rough edges, and to prepare himself to take responsibility for leading others. Few seemed to have a motivation other than a checkmark on their development plan. This inspired my own determination to find a better way.

I had my test case—myself, along with loads of research, and a fervent desire to be a great leader. It was this desire that became the differentiator. Otherwise we are simply leading subjects to water, but we cannot make them drink. My leadership journey would be about going within and truly understanding myself, learning how to lead myself first before earning the right to lead others.

Great leadership is about being authentic, earning high levels of trust, respect and credibility in order to engage others to

accomplish great results. It is about recognizing leadership as a responsibility to others, more than a privilege for self, or a way to distinguish oneself from others. It is ultimately about providing those who choose to follow us with the care, support, guidance, and coaching a good parent would provide to their children. It is not judged or measured by the increases we bring to the bottom-line, but instead by the impact we have on our followers to achieve great results. Ultimately it is about the influence we have on others, not self.

Yet we are rewarded for our results, which is what educates us on what great leaders are. So why should you even pay attention to my perception of great leadership? You should not! Instead, let the person you see in the mirror each day be that judge, and if within this image you see joy and happiness, then what motivation would there be to change. It is only when you feel consternation with your choices, hear a tiny voice within express deep and profound questions or dissatisfaction, or see a mask that you no longer want to wear, that YOU will WANT to reconsider.

The research I gathered came from two overarching source groups. First were the stories of great leaders, and the conclusions they made. The conclusions focused primarily on the core characteristics of those leaders. The second group of research I collected fell under the category of “psychology”, which is the study of human behavior. Sources from the first group were the best sellers and more widely read works on this topic. They were inspirational and meaningful, providing real life stories and examples of great leadership behaviors and results. Sources from the second group were much less read, but I found them to be most effective. That is because they provided findings pertaining to the inner workings of people, and why people behave like they do. I wondered why psychology, the study of human behavior, was not incorporated into leadership training. The essence of this material taught me that if I did not like the consequences I was experiencing outside of myself and with my followers, I needed to look at, and then make necessary changes to, what was inside

of myself first.

It was during this period that my personal life was thrown into chaos. A series of seemingly minor changes led to a life-changing event. Little did I know how synchronistic this was, since it led me down a path of personal growth and self-discovery. It was as if my research had prepared me for my own look within. Here, I uncovered the underlying beliefs that were driving my behaviors and negative consequences. I learned cause and effect, a principle so powerful for leaders and for life itself. If I wanted to change the negative consequences I was experiencing (effect), I had to begin with examining what changes needed to be made deep within my belief system (cause). I learned to take responsibility for my actions, and be accountable for the effects.

My look within ended up bringing to light the good, the bad, and the ugly. I learned about the many aspects of self, such as personality characteristics, intelligence, emotional intelligence, values, vision, personal issues, and nature vs. nurture. I discovered the aspects of self that led me to greatness, and those that prevented me from reaching my full potential. Then the process of development began as I adopted new beliefs and supportive behaviors. Consequences were my yardstick to determine my effectiveness, and feedback the tool to keep me honest and focused on continuous improvement. It was about developing a personal vision of self that was consistent with my core values, and understanding my personality characteristics and how to mold these towards greatness. It was about discovering myself, which would allow me to be a better role model for others, and ultimately help them achieve their own greatness. It was a win-win-win. When an employee achieves more of his full potential, he wins in his career and in his self-esteem. The company also wins because of the increased performance level on behalf of the employee. And it does not stop there. Society wins as we solve bigger and more complex problems.

I learned from the many masters on leadership, including Warren Bennis, Tom Peters, Jack Welch, Stephen R. Covey, Ken Blanchard, Peter Drucker, Jim Collins, Dale Carnegie, and Gary

Zukav, along with countless consultants. But mostly, I learned from those who would never gain fame in the way Jack Welch had or Dale Carnegie had, the leaders who actively demonstrated many of these great characteristics, and those who took me under their wings as coaches, mentors, and caring friends. **It was not about the number of leadership books I read or the amount of leadership classes I attended; it was about the gut-wrenching effort I made to change myself so that I could achieve my full potential to role model and influence others to do the same.**

I then realized that I could truly lead others, by helping them recognize their own strengths and development areas so that they could achieve their full potential. Leadership is all about people, helping them become their best selves. Leaders should be honored to be in positions of influence where they can help nudge their employees forward. This sense of satisfaction and fulfillment is unparalleled to any other form of success other than raising a family. Ultimately, great leadership is about one's ability to influence others toward achieving common goals that allow the greater entity (organizations, groups, teams, family) to succeed, *and* to promote the development of their employees to reaching their full potential. We impact the lives of others, and with this comes great responsibility.

The following text is a summary of my key learnings, in a framework I developed through my life-long research and observations. The greatest reward I have gained from applying these concepts is the feeling I have when I am in solitude, reflecting on my life and accomplishments, that I have had a positive influence on others. I also enjoy helping march others up mountains as opposed to off cliffs. A sincere "thank you" from our employees, along with watching them grow and become more successful, is the ultimate reward of a great leader.

Great leaders understand the feeling of being all alone, because the buck does indeed stop with them. Our ultimate challenge is when the seas become rough and others are looking to us for answers. But if we did our jobs well, we would have created an

army of amazing employees, ready and willing to help in any way they can. Our humility would look to them for ideas and suggestions. Our faith in self and others fuels our motivation and provides a setting for our employees to choose to be motivated. And then our intellect and experience would provide us the courage to stand in front of our employees and share the strategy along with the rationale. Then we stand with our employees, sharing both the victories and defeats, and accepting that we are ultimately accountable for what happens.

It is learning from those who have demonstrated this (e.g., Ghandi, Martin Luther King), and the amazing impact they have had because they developed solid foundations of beliefs and purpose. Whether we apply it with our family, work group, or company, we discover others who want to follow our vision and who feel engaged in doing so, which drives engagement and results. Our authenticity helps create elevated levels of trust, respect, and credibility. And when people are willing, on their own initiative, to march up hills with us by their side, we discover the true potential of leadership.

Key Terms

EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP: The ability to turn a vision of a desired future state into reality—with and through the willing cooperation of others, for the betterment of a larger purpose for the organization or area governing over, society, and ultimately, the world. Willing followership is achieved by role modeling the behaviors they expect to see in others, selflessness, setting grand expectations, believing in, appreciating, challenging and growing their employees. To act in an authentic manner so to develop high levels of trust, integrity and credibility. To accept full responsibility and accountability for the results achieved. Operates on the premise that the actual culture demonstrated within their area, is a direct reflection of their leadership style.

EFFECTIVE PERSONAL LEADERSHIP: The ability to apply the basic principles and characteristics of effective leadership to oneself first. The willingness to take that hard look within to become intimately acquainted with and confident in oneself, one's values, beliefs, strengths, weaknesses, and purpose. To continually focus on self to identify development opportunities. To define a personal vision of their purpose and greatness and pursue with courage, conviction, action, and love.

FOUNDATION FOR AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP: The development of strong self-awareness so to be honest with oneself, one's intentions and motivations, combined with a solid understanding of who they are and who they want to be. Defining their purpose with such conviction, that it is evident to others with their behaviors and approaches to challenges. To be true to self. It incorporates three basic elements: 1) Personal Growth and Development, 2) Beliefs and Values, and, 3) Personal Vision.