



DO GOOD BOSSES LEAD OR JUST MANAGE?

By Jeannet Weyers

Thrown into the position of Spiritual Program Coordinator (at Chenrezig Institute in Queensland, Australia), I resorted to my traditional management style of 'point and click' – I point and my staff clicks with whatever activity or project is required. I was soon to learn that management in a Dharma center does not work this way.

A Dharma center is not just an organization; it's a family with its concomitant rivalries and challenges. Working in one presents many unique challenges. Firstly, Center Directors, Spiritual Program Coordinators, etc., are not always appointed on the basis of skill but sometimes on the basis of what we need to learn and develop – things like patience, ethics and so on. Secondly, staff frequently consists of volunteers with corresponding limitations in skills and experience. Clearly, traditional management practices involving control and delegation will not work. A new paradigm is required – leadership versus management.

A manager directs or pushes behavior; a leader inspires and pulls behavior. A leader is a coach versus a director, a facilitator versus teacher, a partner versus a boss. In brief, a leader is an example of what can be achieved. But how to implement this tall order? I scoured my Dharma books and not surprisingly found the solution.

Buddhism, frequently referred to as the religion of lists, provides three qualities that a teacher, or in this case a leader, must have. In the words of Atisha they must be **tamed**, **pacified** and **thoroughly pacified**. Melding this information with my management studies, I inferred that tamed and pacified are the qualities that I must develop and thoroughly pacified related to my interactions with others.

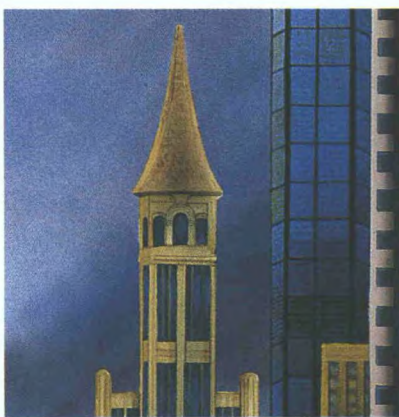
Tamed is the quality of ethical discipline, of overcoming your own negative qualities. These are those thoughts, actions and words that result in harm – the ten non-virtuous actions. Of course! These ten tied in nicely with the management literature, which listed three traits of leaders: self-confidence, honesty/integrity and drive. Self confidence comes from trusting your own judgement, and honesty and integrity and drive

from acting with a view to benefit others: the corner stone of Buddhism – compassion.

Pacified is mental discipline, the ability to control your own mind and subsequently your behavior. In management literature this is called emotional maturity, the ability to act in a beneficial manner according to the requirements of the person and the situation. As Aristotle commented,

Anyone can become angry – that is easy. But to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose and in the right way – this is not easy.

While the Buddhist view eschews anger, the point is that a good leader should be able to exert some control over his or her own mind and behavior for the benefit of others and the organiza-



nization. It was all coming together for me. Working in a Dharma center was an opportunity to directly apply and practice the six perfections: **patience, generosity, ethics, enthusiastic effort, concentration and wisdom**. I had only now to translate this into leadership practice.

Patience, as a leader, is the ability to reflect upon your own and another's behavior with a measure of empathy before engaging in a compassionate response.

Generosity is the giving of not only things, but of your time, attention and

yourself. Patience and generosity are both aspects of supporting leadership behavior, which considers others' wellbeing and personal needs first. This style of leadership, according to the management literature, builds effective interpersonal relationships and results in greater cooperation and support. The third perfection, **ethics**, is the ethical discipline of self-control.

Enthusiastic effort entails a measure of perseverance gained from an understanding of the benefits to be obtained from these practices. Enthusiastic effort, in particular, facili-

tates one of the essential traits of leaders – drive. A leader requires a high degree of effort, motivation and tenacity to attain their vision. Given the unusual work structure of a Dharma center, drive is a necessary requirement for a leader to succeed.

It was all coming together now. Our precious teachers provided us with these appointments to practice the path. Not just on our meditation cushions, not just when we feel like it, but all the time, everyday, with everyone. Now there was only ‘thoroughly pacified’ to address.

Thoroughly pacified encompasses the practices of both concentration and wisdom. The perfection of **concentration** is necessary to develop self-awareness, which results in the ability to read others’ feelings and behaviors. Concentration entails examining your own mind, understanding its nature and function. While concentration is usually understood as meditation, ideally this self-awareness is present throughout all our activities. A self-aware leader is able to examine his or her own and others’ motivations and communicate appropriately and effectively. Included in this is the ability to communicate via non-verbal channels. Self-aware leaders are in tune with their behaviors as well as their minds. This awareness enables them to ensure that their words are congruent with their actions. A congruent verbal and non-verbal message builds trust and respect and enhances a leader’s ability to motivate, influence and achieve goals.

Ideally, the perfection of concentration results in ‘conscious unconscious competence’ or what is often referred to as meta-cognition. This is the ability to perform unconsciously but with an awareness of the process. In Buddhism this would be the one who watches. This characteristic raises the leader’s competence by enabling them to think before they act and hence to continuously improve.

All that was required now was **wisdom**. Wisdom is the ability to see things as they are, not as we wish or project them to be. An effective leader must be able to integrate self and other-awareness to determine a follower’s readiness levels and needs. According to Hersey Blanchard’s Situational Leadership Theory, competent leaders need to be able to evaluate their followers and adopt a leadership style to suit. The table above depicts four situational leadership styles. Telling (S1) is a directive style. This style has high directive and low supportive behavior and is appropriate for followers with low task readiness, due to limited ability, training or insecurity. Selling (S2) provides high directive and high supportive behavior. This style uses some direction but also seeks input. Participating (S3) has low directive and high supportive behavior. This style supports the growth and development of others. Delegating (S4) provides little direction and little support. At this level employees take personal responsibility for their work and is suited to those with good ability, skill and confidence.

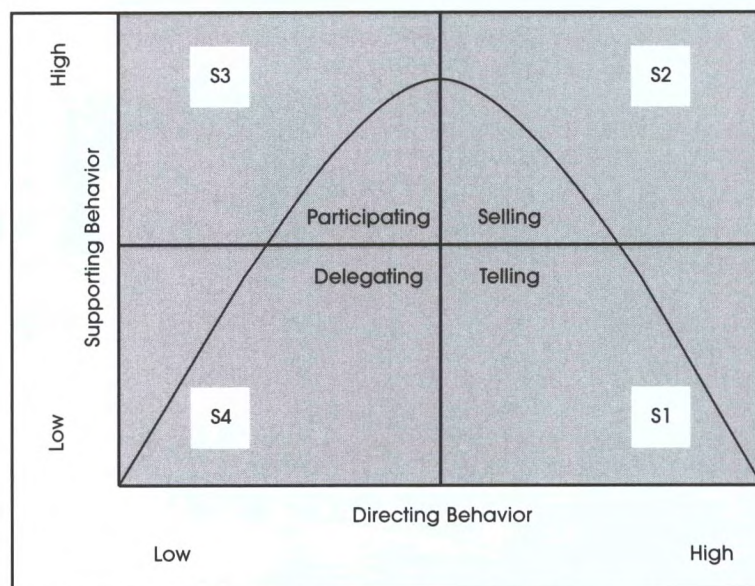


Table: Hersey Blanchard Situational Leadership Theory (adapted from Daft, 1999, p. 100)

Research conducted in Australia indicated that 83% of managers perceived they had only one of these leadership styles. None of the managers found they could accommodate all four styles. In this study, this deficiency led to low morale and frustration on behalf of the managers. These findings underscore the necessity of a truly competent leader to be elastic, to fit the people and the situation as required, in short, to be elastic.

Elasticity requires both concentration and wisdom. Concentration increases the leader’s self-awareness to enable them to be more in tune with their followers. A degree of wisdom then enables leaders to choose the most appropriate style for their followers’ needs.

Dharma centers’ appointments are not competency based and are therefore highly unique. Working at a Dharma center is as much about developing your own practice as about assisting others in theirs. It is my wish that this synthesis of leadership and Dharma can assist all Center Directors, Spiritual Program Coordinators and other staff to view their roles as ‘Compassion in Action.’ Through our work in Dharma centers may we attain enlightenment in order to benefit all sentient beings. We should also remember the kindness of our precious teachers to provide us with this unique opportunity. What clever beings they are. ☸

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