

EXECUTIVE SUMMARIES

On Leadership

Could It Be As Simple As Listening

Talking and listening are pretty fundamental to leadership but this article argues that listening is more powerful than speaking and allows for effective talking, relating and acting. It also explores how methods of dialogue can help executive teams and senior management groups work better together, solve tough problems or respond creatively to new challenges.

Driving Miss Crazy

Senior managers are always “driving” things such as performance or profits. But when it comes to the need for creativity “driving” doesn’t cut it – just as you cannot command people to collaborate, you can’t drive creativity and innovation. Maybe creativity has more to do with “letting go”. This could be important because it really takes only two or three bright, intuitive ideas by an individual to build an entire lifetime career.

Leaders Need to Go Fishing

Many senior managers can get inspired to do their leadership differently, to change their organisations for the better and to be creative about their problems, but over time they can feel beaten down by resistance and the system. Change takes organisation. Leadership work and Strategy work sit very well together, but neither seems to flourish and bear lasting fruit without the other.

Mindfulness and Letting Go

If you experiment with paying attention to how well you pay attention many of us will notice that our attention is regularly captured or scattered – not open and not focused. By becoming more mindful leaders can develop a stronger relationship with reality and start to let go of habitual and ineffective reactions to people and situations.

The Secret Life of Organisations

Workplaces can often seem difficult for working well together because our organisational relationships and dynamics accrue a history, become systemised and take on a secret life of their own. On the surface it is all “mate” and “g’day” and “going forward”, but underneath there may be many unhelpful dynamics. Effective leadership needs to bring this to the surface and build more healthy relationships.

The Big and Small of Leadership

Most of us have at least fragments of a theory which guides our leadership actions. This article argues that there is nothing as practical as a good theory, but many of our “working theories” are incomplete, misleading or less than fully useful. At the same time we do not want to get too grandiose about this leadership stuff because we can miss the hundreds of leadership moments which present themselves to us each day.

The Relational Dilemma of Leadership

“Master and Commander” leadership or long distance leadership denies a basic truth – we are influential through connectedness.

True Self and Leadership

One of the tricks of leadership is to be yourself. Many managers struggle with this proposition. Yet when the masks are dropped and senior managers let go of some of the identity stuff, it turns out that many have a high level of creativity and intuitiveness, a deep and inspiring purpose that sits behind their everyday work, and to be fundamentally decent human beings.

Being a Leader

What you do as a business leader is very important. How you do things as a business leader is critical. But if you are looking for the new frontier in leadership thinking or the latest edge in leadership practice it may lie in the domain of Being.

Sleeping With the Enemy Stress

Could stress be both the friend and enemy of leaders? Stress undermines the effectiveness and well being of many senior managers, and yet stress and anxiety may be an unavoidable companion of real leadership, learning and change. How can we reconcile these two propositions?

Leadership on Purpose

Surely corporate and societal leadership can't be just about mobilizing lots of people for any old carnage? Surely it can't be leading change no matter what the change? Surely it can't be just a great performance no matter what the means? It is more complex and difficult if we include values and morality in our description of leadership, but it cannot be avoided entirely.

The Seven Sources of Power for Effective Leaders

Using power to move others towards achievement of valuable outcomes is a central action of leadership. In this article I explore seven very different sources of power for leaders.

Strategic Approaches to Leadership

In this article I describe seven different kinds of leadership challenges which lie along the adaptation continuum from surviving to thriving. A strategic approach to leadership involves not only identifying the core adaptive issues, but also involves framing the challenge in the most appropriate and powerful way. The advantage of framing our strategic leadership challenges more precisely is that it can help us focus on the priority leadership actions to take and help guide us in sequencing our interventions.

Leadership is Emotional

Many senior managers seem to believe that management and emotions do not mix. Some even believe that emotions are dangerous. In this article I argue that leadership is inherently emotional. Emotions help us to connect and they are far more motivating than mere ideas. I suggest some mindful processes for leaders to become more accepting and skilful around emotions.

Leadership that Transforms – Part 1

In this article I explore the three kinds of transformations that effective leadership can help individuals and organisations to achieve. The first kind is a shift in how individuals and groups experience the world, others and themselves which leads to lots of new possibilities and opportunities for action. The second kind of transformation is what results from that action, which is major and significant change for individuals and organizations. And the third kind, much loved by shareholders, is innovation in processes, systems and technologies which leads to large scale business and organizational changes. The article asks the question: How do leaders bring about transformations in others? It also includes a terrific letter from a past participant of our senior leadership program which illustrates some aspects of the nature of transformation and leadership.

Changing Habits – Why Nuns Are Faster Than Us (Part 1)

To be more effective and fulfilled as leaders we may need to discard some habitual ways of thinking, acting and being which are not working so well and develop some new habits that work better. It is the advice we give all managers at the end of our senior leadership programs. It is very simple, so why is it so hard?

Changing Habits – The 3Ps (Part 2)

Persistence is important for changing habits but if persistence was enough to ensure that we would persist at leadership changes, there would be no need for this article. Unfortunately it is not, and so there is! At the end of our senior leadership programs we encourage managers to let go of any habitual ways of thinking, acting or being which don't work so well and to create new leadership habits which work better. Part 1 of this article examined how that is easier said than done. In this article I explore the 3Ps which can help us to achieve our aspirations and commitments.

On Learning Leadership

Attfluence or Doing Leadership Differently

This article examines some of the key frameworks, methods and insights which are explored on the Mt Eliza Senior Leadership Program.

Teaching Mindfulness and Leadership

This article examines some of our early experiences and lessons in introducing the practice of mindfulness to our leadership programs.

The Contribution of Otto Scharmer's Theory U

This article examines some of the key insights from Otto Scharmer's Theory U and how they relate to and extend our own approaches to leadership development.

Change Leadership Diagnostic

This article explains the Change Leadership Diagnostic and Dialogue Framework which we have developed for working inside corporations and organisations.

Leading Mindfully at Work

Written in conjunction with Amanda Sinclair, this article examines both the theoretical and practical possibilities which emerge from applying mindfulness to our leadership work.

Aboriginal Leadership Program

This article examines lessons to emerge from engaging in a one year leadership development initiative with Aboriginal Leaders from the Shepparton community.

What Impact Does Our Leadership Development Have?

This article examines the long term impact of our leadership interventions in both corporations and in open programs. It draws on interviews conducted with senior managers from a major corporation two years after participating in one of our leadership programs.

Exercising Leadership

This article explores some of the lessons drawn from participating in a Leadership Master Class with Ron Heifetz and Marty Linsky at Harvard University.