



CAPITAL

I

LEADERSHIP

LEADERSHIP!

Not lowercase “l” leadership, but capital “L” Leadership! With gusto! Leadership that is raw, but refined at the same time.

Leadership that is on the cutting edge, and contemplative, simultaneously. Leadership that is motivating and engages employees to do almost anything for you. What is it? Can we possess it? Do we even want it? This kind of leadership sounds a bit mysterious. We can’t all be the Brave Heart kind of leaders, can we? Doesn’t research indicate that there are all kinds of leaders and leadership styles: styles effective at different times for different reasons? There is one pervasive myth about leadership that we must dismiss right off; namely, big companies have big star leaders and small companies have managers. This is far from the truth. Whether a business is a massive national or a tiny meteor in the cosmos of staffing services, capital “L” leadership is part of the equation. The size of the organization is irrelevant.

By Tom Kosnik

I'm sure you are familiar with

a classic business model. We have inputs going into an organization, a transformation process within the organization, and outputs coming out. The organizations get paid for successfully executing the internal transformation process. For a staffing company, inputs are open

job orders, the transformation process is fulfilling the open job order, and the outputs are completed job orders.

Within the business model, we have several variables that affect the success of the transformation process. Management is a variable, technology



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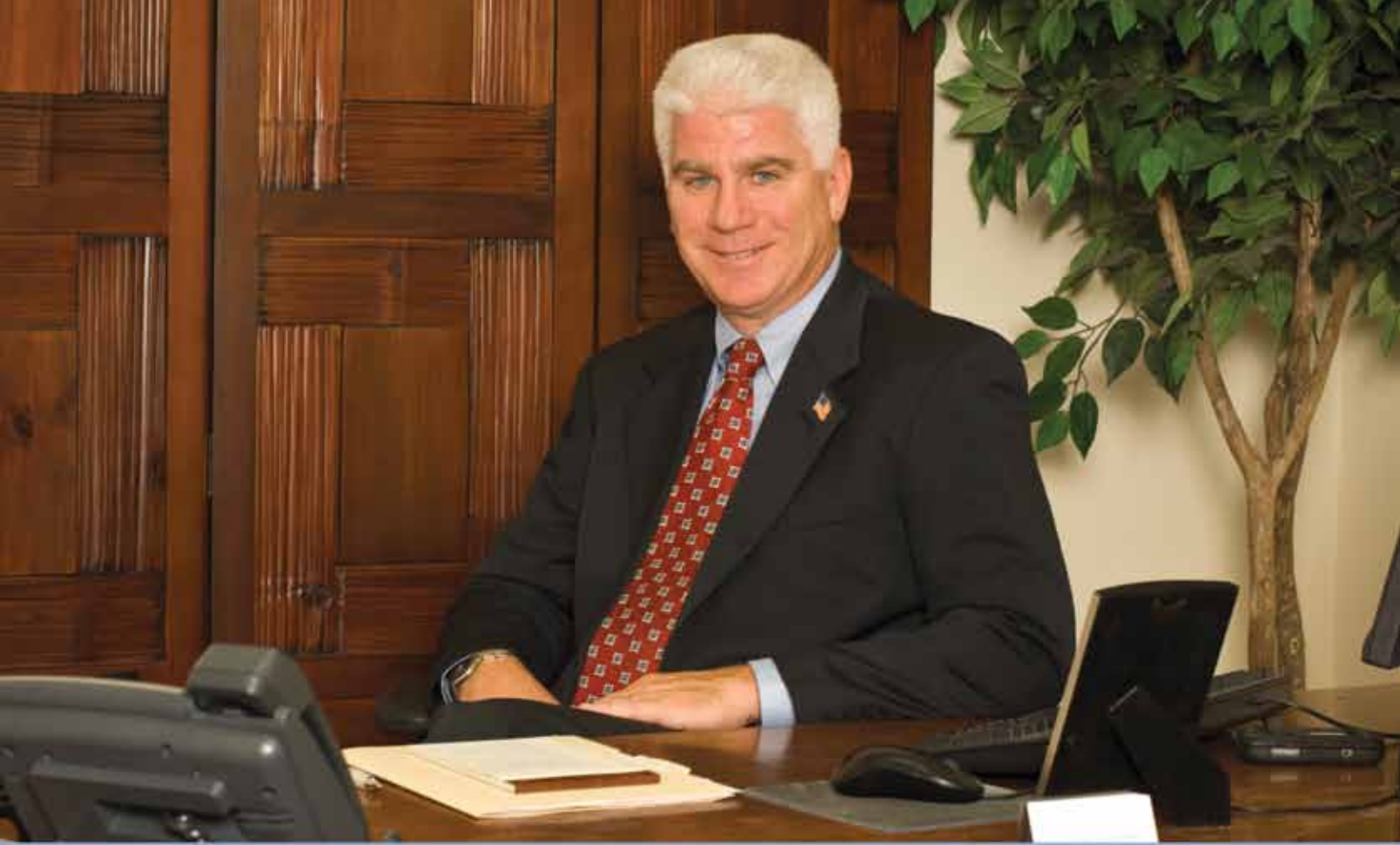
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Regardless of the size of our business, there exists a thirst for capital “L” leadership within our organizations and businesses.

is a variable, employees are a variable, work tasks are a variable, etc. These variables are all interconnected. Change one and it alters all the other variables and how they function.

Leadership is a variable within the organization that affects the success of the transformation process. The leadership variable exists within every business regardless of the size. Its value to the organization is critical, regardless of the size of the business. There is no 1-to-10 scale when it comes to leadership within an organization or business. Leadership is there; it is an active player on the stage, it is affecting all the other variables within the business, regardless of the size.

Now, we may choose to ignore our responsibility to fulfill this capital “L” leadership within our company; we may choose to mess around with emails all day or waste time on low-impact kinds

of activities, but this has nothing to do with the fact that the leadership variable exists within our company.

★ CLARITY ★

To intuit capital “L” leadership one has to obtain clarity. This is not determining, “What do I want to do in my business?” or answering, “What are our goals for the year?” Clarity that enables leadership to run in your veins is about understanding who you are as a person and mastering the full awareness of your person.

Psychologists tell us that there are two dynamics to a person’s personality. There is an inward-facing side and an outward-facing side. These two dynamics of the same personality can be viewed as opposite sides of the same coin. There is the “real me” and there is the “persona.” The real me is the hard wiring. It is the level of one’s Ego, the extrovert

versus the introvert or the social aspect versus the quiet side. The persona is what one shows the world contingent upon several factors.

Some professionals use the terms the “true” self and the “false” self. The true self is the hard-wired personality while the false self is the facade we show to the world. Using these terms is somewhat awkward, because the persona or, in this example, the false self, is not actually false in the literal sense of the word. The persona is the side of one’s personality that is shown to the world based upon the situation at hand.

When we are children, we simply react to stimulus in our environment. When we reach the age of 10 we begin to develop the capability to establish and maintain relationships. We also begin to become conscious of our identity. When we reach the age of 18 or 20, we are fully into asking ourselves, “Who am I?” Sometimes we experience our real self, our hard-wired self. Sometimes we experience our persona self, our mask to the world. And sometimes we experience these two sides of our personality in conflict with one another, and it is uncomfortable.

For most adults, we learn to live and function between this inward-facing and outward-facing personality of ours. Based on our body of experiences growing up and our ongoing interactions with other people and groups in the world, we learn to behave or respond or act accordingly. Sometimes we respond or act more aggressively while at other times we respond or act more compassionately. And sometimes we act both aggressively and compassionately in the same human encounter.

For most of us, however, we simply unconsciously act or react based on past experience – automatically, so to speak – without thinking. We are actually thinking, but for most of us and for most of the time, we tend to act or react based on historical patterns of functioning between our inward- and outward-facing personalities. Individuals who successfully transition into true leadership roles are highly conscious of acting and reacting between inward-facing and outward-facing personality. These individuals are fully aware.

This self-awareness that leaders possess is what we admire about them. It is why we follow them. These leaders have a stability about themselves that we cannot quite put a finger on. Yes, they are nice people and all, but a lot of people that are nice are not leaders. These individuals who become



Safeguarding the Relationship: A Staffing Firm and VMS Checklist

A monthly column by Dorothy Taylor,
President/CEO of World Wide Specialty Programs

Vendor management systems (VMS) offer staffing firms significant benefits. They provide the staffing firm with access to larger clients, contracts, and opportunities. Staffing firms in turn can tailor their staffing talent pools to match the needs of a wider range of clients. As a result, staffing firms have seen an increase in placement activity and an introduction into major corporations that may not be otherwise possible.

Acting as a repository or source for workforce talent access, a VMS provider serves as a central port for clients to obtain a more focused pool of temporary talent. The benefits for the clients include easier coordination and management of the contingent workforce, and a broader spectrum of staffing talent.

Yet sometimes contractual language can inadvertently transfer risk to your staffing firm, which can create some costly exposures. When clients negotiate with a VMS provider, oftentimes the risks and broader responsibilities are transferred from the client, and passed on to the VMS provider and the staffing firm. Moreover if the contract between you and your VMS provider absolves them from risks associated with client business, that risk may become your staffing firm’s responsibility.

What To Do

Work with your VMS to review both the contracts you have in place between you and those that the VMS provider holds with client companies. Look for language that could bring liability to your front door or to that of the VMS provider. Oftentimes the liabilities appear vague until you and your legal representative examine them from all sides of the business relationship.

Discuss with the VMS the risks they typically assume. Understand especially what risks the clients have passed on to the provider and potentially to you and all services the client expects to be performed. If there are services you do not currently provide – most notably, background checks – you will need to be prepared to implement such services to comply with contractual obligations. Most importantly, make note of any risks not covered by your current liability policies, and arrange to make the necessary adjustments on those policies as well.

Once you determine the risks that fall to your company, review those liabilities with your insurance broker or contact **World Wide**. Make sure you put in place the proper insurance protection to cover this new exposure.

VMS providers are an exceptional source of new business for staffing firms because they increase business opportunities and provide another channel of distribution for your services. By building a collaborative relationship, you can both enter into a more transparent, mutually beneficial agreement that ensures neither party takes on the lion’s share of the risks.

For more information on VMS, contact **World Wide Specialty Programs**. We make it our responsibility to educate the staffing industry. If you ever have questions or concerns do not hesitate to call us at **631-390-0900**. We are proud to be an **ASA Corporate Partner**.

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leaders have a presence. It is what we admire about them. It is why we will do almost anything for them. We can trust that they are in a place and a space that we are not. And so we follow them there.

Think back to someone you admired as a leader. When you really reflect on it, you did not want to be just like them. You did not set out to create yourself in their image. It was the mastery of self that got your attention. It was their presence that engaged your total awareness. This is what you wanted: the mastery and presence. It is also why you would do almost anything for this leader. You could trust them, you wanted to please them and you wanted to acquire what they had obtained.

What I am saying is that individuals who emerge into capital “L” leaders are fully aware of the total self. They understand and recognize there are two sides to their personalities. They fully know these two sides of their personalities. They understand that the Ego and persona are not opposites but are intimately connected and work together. They know that they can never fully master these two sides of their personalities, but can, and do, master awareness of their Egos and personas.

This mastery of the awareness of one’s self as a prerequisite for leaders is not a new concept. After interviewing 125 very successful leaders, Bill George, in his book titled *True North: Discover Your Authentic Leadership* (Jossey-Bass, 2007), speaks to the concept of “Authentic Leadership” and how one attempts to obtain such leadership. Specifically addressing the question of why there is no one leadership model, George writes, “Leaders are highly complex human beings, people who have distinctive qualities that cannot be sufficiently described by a list of traits or characteristics.”

A critical error that many would-be leaders make is that they try to model themselves after a particular leadership

style. They try to become a “wannabe” Jack Welch or “little” Steve Jobs. This never works. It actually communicates the direct opposite; namely, that you are not authentic, not comfortable with who you are as a person, that you do not possess mastery of self. You may think that you are sharp enough to convince your employees, but they see right through it. This is the lesson of the fable of the “Emperor’s New Clothes.” You fool yourself into believing your new, royal raiment, but everyone knows you parade in your underwear.

The point is that there is no model. There is no hard-and-fast style of leadership for you. There is no off-the-rack leadership suit to slip into. You are the model. Your stories, your values, your passions, and your motivations are the model. This is the key lesson in George’s book. To become a capital “L” leader, you have to become the “real you.”

After conducting his research, George assessed that these top leaders had an internal compass. The four directions of the compass were “values and principles, motivations, integrated life, and support team.” But, at the center of the compass was “Self-Awareness.” How about that? Successful, authentic leaders were consciously aware of their “real self.” Becoming fully self-aware is a process of asking some very difficult questions, taking the time to answer those questions and then remaining true to those responses. Maybe one of the take-away action items from this article is to pick up Bill George’s book and work through some of the exercises.

★ MEASUREMENTS AND CREATIVITY ★

When it comes to providing leadership, one unique challenge we have in the staffing industry is mediating between metrics and creativity. As a sales-driven industry, we tend to want to get the



Metrics are a good thing. We must have them in order to manage our employees and help them become better at their jobs on a day-to-day basis.



metrics down. A certain number of connects equals a certain number of face-to-face appointments equals a certain number of job orders. The same can be determined on the fulfillment side of the business.

Metrics are a good thing. We must have them in order to manage our employees and help them become better at their jobs on a day-to-day basis. Metrics, however, aren't everything. And when leadership, lowercase "l" or capital "L", is missing from the organization, then metrics take over and our companies become very boring, predictable, and non-engaging places to work.

If you want to read a book that will expand your mind when it comes to capital "L" leadership, then pick up *The Art of the Possibility* by Rosamund Zander and Benjamin



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Zander (Penguin Books, 2002). The authors ask: “How do we resolve the conflict between the individual and the collective?” In other words, pertaining to business, how do we move beyond individual performance being separate from corporate performance? How do we move from “me” working at “Sam’s Staffing” getting a weekly paycheck to “I am a part of something that is adding true value in the world and getting paid to be a part of this team?”

The “world of measurement” as the Zanders put it, is not something evil, something to be avoided or stamped out. In fact, we live in and around and through measurements in many areas of our lives. We set financial goals for ourselves in an attempt to live a certain lifestyle and to retire at a certain age. We set personal goals to become better husbands, wives, girlfriends or boyfriends. We set health goals to add years to our life and defy the laws of gravity. In order to know how we are doing with these various goals, we use tools of measurement.

In the world of business, we set revenue goals, gross margin goals, net income goals, employee performance goals, customer acquisition goals, etc. We use measurements to see where we stand against our goals. We use measurements to not reward employees within our organizations for missing goals, and measurements to reward employees for accomplishing their goals. Metrics, measures, adding, subtracting, percentages toward obtaining – the staffing industry is replete with these measures.

The world of measurement according to the Zanders, “assumes that life is about staying alive and making it through, surviving in a world of scarcity and peril.” Living and working in a world of measurements means that we are living and working with an eye to the future. We are, actually, living and working to

obtain, to acquire, to survive. We are living and working toward the future as the world of today passes us by.

The universe of possibility takes us beyond the confines of set measures and into a world of the creative. It is in this world that new and creative ideas emerge within our organizations and within our working relationships. The universe of possibility takes us beyond the thought that an average office does \$3.2 million in annual revenue, and the average sales executive does \$675,000 in annual gross margin. The universe of possibility opens a door for us to start creatively thinking way beyond our average production numbers.

Our metrics help us manage. They set benchmarks for us, but they create an environment that can limit us. Have you ever had the experience of bringing in new employees that have no knowledge of the staffing industry or performance standards, and they blow the numbers out of the water? On the front end, they ask a couple of questions such as, “Why do you do things this way?” “Do we have to recruit this way?” These employees have no preconceived performance notions, no preconceived measures.

When an organization lacks the ability to balance between metrics and creativity (possibility) it becomes limited and constrained. Capital “L” leadership knows how to set goals and adequately measure performance and create a space for the art of the possibility. I’m not talking about those silly “suggestion boxes” I find every now and again. I’m not talking about a “lunch and learn” on how we can recruit better. I am talking about resolving the conflict between the individual and the corporation. I am talking about creating an environment where employees are working in the moment and generating eye-popping results. It can happen.



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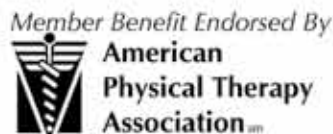
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**This kind of leadership
knows how to bring in
a practice of possibility
in a healthy and productive
manner.**

Think about your firm's approach to training and development. Most of us go about developing new employees as if these new employees were blank slates. The training department's task is to train these hires "into" a certain set of performance-based activities. Some companies even have little tests (measures) at the end of each training module to ensure that the new employees are actually learning.

What if we presumed all new hires had it in them to succeed at either selling or recruiting on their first day of work? And that the training department's task was to get rid of anything that is getting in the way of this new employee mastering the art of selling or recruiting in the staffing industry? How much more engaged do you think these new hires would be in training? Don't over-think it. These new hires would be highly engaged. The training would begin with a positive opinion and intent about this person. The training would be focused on disclosing a mastery of a certain set of skills.

Can a company manage or lead 100% from the realm of possibility?

Of course not – and that is not the point. Capital "L" leadership knows how to balance between metrics and creativity. This kind of leadership knows how to bring in a practice of possibility in a healthy and productive manner. In doing so, employees become engaged. Employees learn how to hit performance measures while at the same time living in the present with customers, candidates and other internal employees.

Capital "L" leadership – don't let it go missing from your company. The Art of the Possibility and True North have several exercises that a budding leader can dig into. Leaders – they grow into the role. Leadership – it is a never-ending process of development. Regardless of the size of your organization, leadership is a variable that has a tremendous impact on the business and the lives of its employees and associates. The sooner you get started, the better. **si**

Tom Kosnik assists staffing companies improving employee performance, corporate revenues and net income profits. More can be learned at www.visus-group.com. Kosnik can be reached at 312-527-2950 or tkosnik@visusgroup.com.

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