

LEADING WITH RESPONSIBILITY A PSYCHOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

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Organizations are overpopulated with managers who do not have the courage to be leaders because they fear taking risks to do the right thing. Leadership requires the courage to take prudent risks to move self and others in the direction of the appropriate choice. The appropriate choice is one which adds value for all stakeholders, and this now includes the sustainability of our planet. Responsibility, a key element of making the right decision, requires being accountable for one's decisions and proactively taking ownership to resolve problems in the interest of serving others above self. To lead with responsibility requires a high level of psychological maturity.

The author created a four stage model for developing leadership with responsibility based on ego development. The four progressive stages are manipulating, conforming, achieving, and inspiring. In the manipulative stage a leader-manager sees others as controllable objects and uses fear to force selfish outcomes. One level above is the conforming stage in which a manager gives into group pressure to not do the right thing because he or she fears losing the acceptance and sense of belonging in the group. In the achieving stage a manager is perceived as a leader because of their ambitions, accomplishments, status and power; however, his or her self-interested ego and fears prevent him or her from transcending to the higher inspiring stage. In this state, which has been referred to a leadership greatness individuals have resolved their inner conflicts and fears and thus are able be authentic and serve others above their self interests.

An unanswered question however is, why do some individuals choose to move to higher stages of leading with responsibility and what is the process that contributes to the progression. A major challenge for managers is to move from the conforming and achieving stage to the inspiring stage. The author will present a process of facilitating the psychological growth of leading with responsibility. The process involves a two-year leadership development program in which participants receive 360-degree feedback regarding the stages of leading with responsibility to help them increase their self awareness along with individual coaching to enhance their insight. Participants would attend periodic educational courses to learn new behaviors to become more authentic and altruistic. Examples of course topics include catching and owning self-deceptions, developing courage, communicating with candor, and leading upward. Finally in between courses they would practice new leadership behaviors and continue to receive coaching to help develop new leadership habits, which would also help develop an organizational culture that supports inspirational leadership.

Discussion will include the next steps using the model and the process with organizations to determine whether there is a relationship between people who function at the higher psychological development stages (independent variable) and performance (dependent variables).