

Your Personal Style of Leadership

Know what it is and how to maximize its potential

7. For the PLEASURE motivated leader, vanity seems to be about the most difficult trait to bring under control

Leadership coach Sakina is preparing for the next coaching session with Henry, the PLEASURE motivated leader. She realizes that Henry is unlikely to be aware that in order to grow further as a leader, after achieving his present successful position in his company, he needs to tackle another typical tendency possessed by PLEASURE motivated individuals, one that is very difficult to overcome. She is glad that Henry seems to be progressing well with his present goal of overcoming the habit to have too many irons in the fire. If that progress is confirmed in the up-coming coaching session, she is confident that he will be in a position to set himself a second important goal.

That goal will deal with vanity. Vanity is hard to overcome because it touches much of the personality of PLEASURE motivated leaders. Such leaders have many talents, including that of teaching, which is why Henry did well in coaching Joe. Yet, Henry could do an even better job of teaching his subordinates if his vanity didn't make him take a paternalistic approach to teaching and coaching. You may remember that Joe resented Henry's use of "Joe, my boy" and similar expressions in the coaching sessions. Sakina had noticed vanity in Henry's demeanor when she met him in the first coaching session. Henry couldn't help using a bragging style of communication when referring to his successful coaching of Joe. It is Sakina's conclusion that humility is definitely not part of Henry's personality.

Sakina is concerned about broaching the subject of vanity with Henry. She feels she needs to make sure not to be too brusque, because the last thing she would want to do is start an argumentative dialogue with Henry. She hates arguments to a fault. She plans to introduce the subject of vanity to Henry by giving the example of Benjamin Franklin who early in life had drawn up a list of thirteen virtues to work on. One of them was humility, and out of the thirteen this was the only virtue he found impossible to develop to his satisfaction. Let's accompany Sakina to the session with Henry.

Henry is in a positive and assertive mood, being very satisfied with the progress he is making in the pursuit of his goal of reducing the number of activities and projects in which he is involved. In his paternalistic style, he greets Sakina with

“hello, my dear coach”. Sakina feels like reprimanding Henry for being paternalistic, but she decides not to let on and to play Henry’s “game” by saying “hello, my good man”. Watching Henry’s reaction closely, Sakina sees him a bit startled in return. It is clear to Sakina that he expected to receive the more deferential greeting that Sakina usually reserves for him. Although Henry did not say anything, his facial expression and the awkward exchange of greetings dampens Sakina’s good mood. She did not want to start the session in this way and she feels uneasy about dealing with Henry’s paternalism and pride right away; she is tempted to postpone this portion of her coaching till the next session. But then she stoically resolves to push ahead as planned.

She reviews with Henry the information he has entered on his goal sheets. She is pleased to see that Henry has done well. She starts to feel more confident about proposing the planned next step to Henry. She congratulates Henry on his excellent performance and encourages him to continue his follow-up actions until the end of the three months period he had set for himself. She expresses her confidence that Henry will succeed with the goal by the deadline.

Sakina then takes a deep breath, musters all her coaching courage, and continues as follows: “Remember, Henry, how in our first session you at first felt like tackling at once all the negative tendencies listed for your type, the PLEASURE motivated type?”

Henry: “Yes, and I can see now the wisdom of going at it gradually. By succeeding with my priority tendency, that of being involved in too many things, I am at the same time reducing some of the other tendencies on the list, just as you said I would.” Sakina is relieved to hear Henry’s reply which to her sounded more conciliatory than she had expected.

Sakina: “Great. Let’s look at the list of tendencies for your type and you tell me which of those other tendencies you feel you are controlling better now: overindulgence in pleasures, vanity, superficiality, dilettantism, indecisiveness, “calculated” generosity”. Henry tells her that he is indulging less in food and drink and that he deals with things in greater depth, putting the finishing touches on more projects. He thinks he is also more decisive. He doesn’t think that “calculated generosity” has ever been much of a problem with him – and he doesn’t mention vanity at all! “That’s typical” Sakina thinks. Although she feels some anxiety about bringing up the subject of vanity, even in the indirect manner she has prepared to do it, she is not going to stop now.

Sakina: “You are doing real well, Henry. I am pleased”. She then opens the folder in which she had placed the Benjamin Franklin document and continues: “I have here some interesting information about an individual whose name

everyone knows and whom I think it is important for you to get to know in greater depth. I say that because this person also belonged to the PLEASURE motivated type, just like you do. He did exceptionally well in life, having been a successful printer, writer, scientist, inventor and statesman. I am of course talking of none other than Benjamin Franklin. Like you, he made a continuous effort to improve his personal balance. He succeeded well, but he felt that there was one tendency with which he had difficulty coping. I would like you to go through the four pages of this autobiographical document while I finish a report that I need to send out urgently. I'll be back in about twenty minutes and I would like you to give me your reaction to Benjamin Franklin's statement about the one virtue that he felt he was unable to develop.

Henry reads with interest how Benjamin Franklin described temperance, silence, order, resolution, frugality, industry, sincerity, justice, moderation, cleanliness, tranquility, chastity, and humility. It doesn't take Henry long to realize that it was humility that Benjamin Franklin felt he had never achieved. His high pride stood in the way: "Even if I could conceive that I had completely overcome it, I should probably be proud of my humility." Henry guesses that Sakina thinks he also needs to make an effort to overcome his pride. He can't recall pride as being part of the list of tendencies of his classic type. He checks the documents that he brought to the session and realizes that Sakina is referring to vanity. Vanity being excessive pride, Henry never thought it applied to him. In fact, he realizes that he totally overlooked the word in the list. It was as if the word wasn't there.

Sakina returns and Henry immediately states: "I guess it's vanity you are referring to, but I would be surprised if it applied to me because I totally ignored that word in the list".

Sakina's concern about having to argue with Henry resurfaces. She again has to muster her courage to continue on the planned coaching path: "As a coach, the way I need to look at the question is this: did you overlook the word vanity because it doesn't apply to you, or did you ignore it because you are in subconscious denial?"

Henry, surprised at Sakina's directness, yet mindful of his own reaction out of respect for Sakina's professionalism: "I see. I must say again, this comes as somewhat a surprise. I am not sure I totally understand how pride is reflected in my behavior. However, I know how professional you are, so I think I need to listen to your explanations as my coach, and perhaps to an illustrative example or two."

Sakina gives a sigh of relief. At this point she had expected a more defensive posture from Henry. She now feels at ease to review with Henry his reactions in

various situations where his pride had stood out, including the greeting episode at the start of the present session, his self-satisfaction when he mentioned the results of his coaching of Joe, his paternalistic tendency with his staff as reflected in the work situations he had related to Sakina, and the various times he had braggingly pointed out to her his successes at work.

To make a long story short, at the end of the coaching session, both Sakina and Henry are extremely satisfied with its outcome. Henry takes with him a new goal he is very motivated to work toward. He feels that he indeed had been in denial about his pride and vanity and he is convinced that by controlling this obviously unfavorable tendency in his leadership behavior he will gain an important extra edge in effectiveness as a leader.

As in the case of his first leadership behavior goal, Henry succeeds with his second goal almost beyond Sakina's expectations. He quickly learns to give credit to his team rather than taking credit for himself. His leadership effectiveness and his reputation at the firm keep increasing rapidly. He still plays at winning, but he now wins more easily because it is the others that are made to shine by Henry. His image as a leader keeps growing and Henry soon rises to the position of President. He is now an outstanding leader, and never before in the company's history had a President known as much employee commitment and involvement as Henry was able to create.

As for Sakina, the HAPPINESS motivated leader and coach, her coaching sessions with Henry made her realize that the fear of her type, the fear of emotional conflict, was much more consequential in her life than she had thought. She is aware that her fear of emotional conflict causes her to experience far too much stress, both during coaching sessions and when preparing for them. She reflects on the truth that knowledge in itself is nothing, that it is understanding which is required, and that understanding starts with understanding oneself. She always believed that she knew herself well; after all, she is very knowledgeable about human types. But it has become clear to her that true understanding of self doesn't come from the head, i.e. it is not theoretical or intellectual. Real understanding of self comes from being fully aware of one's habits, from consciously experiencing them, and from going through the struggle of bringing the undesirable habits under control. Sakina concludes that she has failed to do so in the past and that the time has come for her to get some leadership coaching for herself.

She doesn't have to look far for a competent coach. Sashenka, who is very knowledgeable about human types and who has much experience in leadership coaching, has already told Sakina jokingly "you should test my worth as a coach before deciding that I am good at it". Sashenka had made that remark following

Sakina's compliments to Sashenka about her excellent understanding of human types and her outstanding reputation as a human relations expert. Sashenka has attended all of Sakina's conferences at the Leadership Conference Series, and the two of them have been meeting regularly to review their mutual experiences on both the research level and on the level of practical application of their knowledge. Sakina decides not to call Sashenka to-day, as she prefers to sleep on the idea in order to make sure it's the right way to go.

Find out in next month's installment about the outcome of Sakina's intention to work actively on her personal evolution. You know by now that being an expert in human types she would only select a leadership coach who belongs to the type that is most suitable for coaching Sakina's own type. In other words, she would select the classic type that follows hers in the flow between types. What classic type would that be? If you're so inclined you can find out right now by reviewing the description of the type that follows Sakina's in the list of types provided in the first installment of this series (July 2006 issue of this Newsletter).

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