Linking Personal Mastery and Leadership

Peter Senge stated that “personal mastery goes beyond competence and skills…it means approaching one’s life as a creative work, living life from a creative as opposed to a reactive viewpoint.”

The pipeline leadership model of Drotter, Charan and Noel supports this thinking when it suggests that the path to executive or top leadership starts with learning to lead self. The continuous growth trajectory of personal mastery is a discipline based on a number of key principles and practices which may occur in the following order: establishing and living your deep seated values, being driven by personal vision and purpose, and holding creative tension between vision and current reality.

Effective leadership is defined as influence. Successful leaders have learnt to first influence themselves – their lifestyles, their behaviour, their interpersonal associations. Setting positive example becomes a greater reality for leaders who have first mastered themselves. There is never a need for time spent on getting people to buy into their ideas, as the people have already bought into them. The path toward personal mastery is mostly a long, lonely and never ending one. For this reason, many in leadership positions are found lacking when personal mastery assessments are applied. Potential future leaders are surrounded by people that have reached the top rung of their careers without having mastered themselves. This provides very poor illustrations of the leadership ideal and impacts negatively on teams and organisations. Furthermore, it underscores the greater need for the sustaining of a direct link between personal mastery and leadership development processes and programmes.

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