

The Leadership Lantern™

Lighting the path of leaders!



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"The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality. The last is to say thank you. In between, the leader is a servant."

~Max DePree,
"Leadership Is an Art"

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Take a Stand and Make a Difference!

Guest Columnist Michael Tey

The recent reflection on leadership in corporations, with high profile lapses in executive judgment, may have caused quite a few of us to be disillusioned about the state of affairs of our current corporate leadership. One could oversimplify and make broad sweeping conclusions about the erosion of ethics, culture, and values that confront us everyday.

Some of us may choose to feel responsible somehow, either by acts of omission, if not commission, in light of these corporate failings. Some may even feel a sense of personal failure for not doing enough, while others may feel a personal sense of vindication and gratitude that it happened to someone else. Perhaps, one could even point to failure in the "system" that rewards short-term gains and an approach to "success" that encourages the ends justifying the means.

However, merely blaming the "system" would be too convenient and perhaps too simplistic. This sense of apathy and abdication further feeds the "its a disease" excuse. I believe each of us have to take a stand and exercise personal commitment to principled leadership and decision-making. Our roles have to include holding ourselves, as well as others who are in roles of leadership, accountable. In a sense, all of us provide situational leadership in whatever capacity on a daily basis. Our obligation therefore has to include creating and sustaining an environment that encourages and rewards principled business dealings.

These principles that guide an organization's norms of behavior have a very practical role to play in encouraging and giving permission to appropriate behaviors, challenging the basis of actions that compromise the overall integrity of leadership. This has often been considered as the "soft" stuff and not worthy of attention. But recent events have shown us that when an organization's culture does not reward principled behavior, but rather a "do whatever it takes" model of business success, there can be broad and dire consequences at any and all levels of the organization.

For any leader, crisis and challenging times afford an opportunity to make a difference and to proactively role model behaviors that are above reproach – in our thinking, actions and decisions so that others may be guided and encouraged by it. It may not be popular or fashionable, but these are the "intangibles" in any organization that ultimately inspires people to do great things, both individually and collectively. The bottom line is that we all can and should make a difference by taking a stand – it's our privilege.



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"You cannot escape the responsibility of tomorrow by evading it today."

~Abraham Lincoln



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