

Creating Yourself as a Leader

In preparing the curriculum for the Stanford Leadership Academy, I came across the following remarkable poem by John Schaar:

*The future is not a result of choices
among alternative paths offered by the present,
but a place that is created,
first in mind,
next in will, then in activity.*

*The future is not some place we are going to,
but a place we are creating.*

*The paths are not to be discovered, but made,
and the activity of making the future changes
both the maker and the destination.*

While executives and senior managers throughout an organization are called upon daily to demonstrate their leadership skills, few understand the nature of leadership let alone how to develop their own potential in this crucial domain.

Consciously creating a future, that is more than a mere continuation or simple extension of the past, requires taking a fundamental risk: deliberately forming an identity as a leader. Such an identity is not guaranteed through position. I coach many executives thrown in a hierarchy that positions them as leaders but they hold themselves as general managers barely keeping up with day-to-day operations, attending endless meetings and constantly fighting fires.

I suggest the following sobering exercise to you. Take a look at your schedule of meetings for the past two weeks and first, map it against your stated strategic objectives and second, note how much time was devoted to

developing or revisiting strategy. This reality check can be annoying because while you know you “should” be focused on truly leveraged activities you often feel the victim of pressing circumstances that relentlessly soak up your time.

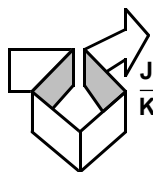
Developing your leadership is a commitment that demands discipline. One concrete step in this direction is to schedule time deliberately to create a vision and on-going design strategy on a daily basis. I recommend spending at least 30 minutes, preferably at the very beginning of your day, in a private, quiet location — away from your regular office — where you force yourself to reflect and write about your leadership.

In particular, to author your new identity you need to address your genuine vision, your core values, and your strategy for fulfillment.

The key here is to make this a *daily* discipline that involves the production of a source document capturing the development of your thinking.

When you are ready, share this evolving document on a regular basis with your people as a conversation starter for designing a future you will all co-create. Listen to this living conversation and allow it to inform your thinking and actions as a leader.

SMART LETTER



James Milojkovic, Ph.D.
KnowledgePassion.com

2516 Greenwich Street
San Francisco, CA 94123
Tel & Fax: (415) 921-4290
milo@KnowledgePassion.com