Leadership Tips & Tools

ACADEMY

The Academy

APRIL 2011

"Courage is one of those big, bold words. It has this image of being something way out there on the edges of human experience. It's commonly associated with superhuman feats. In asking people to reflect on moments of courage, definition and principles emerge. Everyone can recall an experience that required summoning up courage. Courage is not just for heroes after all."

--Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner

The Courage to Lead

We know their work. *The Leadership Challenge, A Leader's Legacy, Encourage the Heart*, and *Credibility* have taught us much about great leadership. Just like many of us these gifted scholars came to leadership through teaching. Together we have walked a similar path and share common values. Noteworthy words about their journeys:

"Jim Kouzes has been thinking about leadership ever since he was one of only a dozen Eagle Scouts to be selected to serve in John F. Kennedy's honor guard when Kennedy was inaugurated President of the United States. Kennedy's inaugural call to action — 'Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.' — inspired Jim to join the Peace Corps, and he taught school in Turkey for two years. That experience made Jim realize that he wanted a career that offered two things: the chance to teach and the opportunity to serve."

"Barry Posner makes each day matter. He is a Professor of Leadership at the Leavey School of Business, Santa Clara University (located in the heart of Silicon Valley), where he served for 12 years as Dean of the School. At Santa Clara, he has received the President's Distinguished Faculty Award, the School's Extraordinary Faculty Award, and several other outstanding teaching and leadership honors."

Teachers at Heart! Perhaps it is this connection to our core business that endears Jim and Barry to us. In their work and lives they manifest the lessons of our teacher-of-teachers, Parker Palmer, author of *The Courage to Teach*. "Good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher." Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner are leaders . . . and teachers.

"Good teachers possess a capacity for connectedness. They are able to weave a complex web of connections among themselves, their subjects, and their students so that students can learn to weave a world for themselves."

--Parker Palmer

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We are Students. Our subject is leadership. Our teachers "possess the capacity for connectedness." Through their lessons we learn that we become leader-teachers weaving our own complex web of connections for our colleagues, communities, and students. We are at once students, leaders, and teachers weaving a fabric of leadership.

"As good teachers weave the fabric that joins them with students and subjects, the heart is the loom on which the threads are tied, the tension is held, the shuttle flies, and the fabric is stretched tight. Small wonder, then, that teaching tugs at the heart, opens the heart, even breaks the heart—and the more one loves teaching, the more heartbreaking it can be. The courage to teach is the courage to keep one's heart open in those very moments when the heart is asked to hold more than it is able so that the teacher and students and subject can be woven into the fabric of community that learning, and living, require."

--Parker Palmer

The Heart is the Loom. Today's post-secondary organizations require leaders with the heart and courage to lead in turbulent times. We face heartbreaking decisions. Our hearts are asked to hold more than they are able. Nonetheless, we endure with the courage to lead and face challenges everyday. We face our work with leadership that weaves a tapestry of values, hope, dreams, and cause beyond ourselves. If the heart is the loom we can weave a fabric of community that serves our students, colleagues, and colleges through our courageous leadership. Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner teach us the way.

You Matter! This is the imperative that best-selling award-winning leadership experts Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner have undertaken in their just-published work. Based on 30 years of research, *The Truth About Leadership* examines ten fundamental enduring truths of great leadership. Regardless of context or circumstances, whether emerging or experienced leaders, Jim and Barry offer time-tested "No-Fads, Heart-of-the-Matter Facts You Need to Know." According to this research these are the fundamental principles that inform and support the practices of exemplary leadership that were true 30 years ago, are true today, and will be true 30 years from now.

Audacious Assumption! The first truth is that YOU Make a Difference. It is the most fundamental truth of all. Before you can lead, you have to believe that you can have a positive impact on others. You have to believe in yourself. That's where it all begins.

"Everything you will ever do as a leader is based on one audacious assumption. It's the assumption that ***you matter****. Before you can lead others, you have to lead yourself and believe that you can have a positive impact on others. You have to believe that your words can inspire and your actions can move others. You have to believe that what you do counts for something. Leadership begins with you."*

--Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner

What Difference? Kouzes and Posner remind us that the question great leaders ask themselves is not, "Will I make a difference?" Rather, the question is, "What difference will I make?" Critical difference! What difference will you make today for your students or organization?

All Leadership is Local! The leader who has the most impact on our day-to-day behavior is our immediate manager/leader and the informal leaders among us, not the CEO. Whether we stay or leave, commit to vision and values, treat others with appreciation and respect, take heart when challenges abound rests with the leaders closest to us. Formal manager or informal leader . . . leadership is local. Credibility is the foundation of that leadership, the second truth.

Incomprehensible and Conflicting Demands! We've got 'em! Our ultimate success as a leader depends on how well we know ourselves, what we value, and why we value it. "Values drive commitment," is Kouzes and Posner's third truth about leadership. Values are our critical guidance system . . . an essential internal GPS for post-secondary leaders who meet daily with many incomprehensible and conflicting demands.

Imagine Exciting Futures! Focusing on the future sets great leaders apart. "The capacity to imagine and articulate exciting future possibilities is a defining competence of leaders." Spend more time in the future! Lead a visioning session with your team, spend time reflecting on the future, read about the future, talk to others about the future, and listen to students as they share their hopeful futures. In the end, a forward-looking, positive leader is the only one who can make a positive difference.

Leadership is a Team Sport! You can't do it alone. We all need to work on our relationships. "Leadership is a relationship." High-quality relationships don't happen spontaneously. They require hard work, dedication, and leadership. Our role and responsibility as leaders is to promote connection, collaboration, confidence and competence. "Leadership is a shared responsibility. You need others and they need you. You're all in this together."

Trust Rules! Trust is the social glue that holds relationships, teams, and organizations together. "Trust rules your personal credibility. Trust rules your ability to get things done. Trust rules your team's cohesiveness. Trust rules your organization's innovativeness and performance."

Challenge is the Crucible for Greatness! Okay, enough about challenges making us stronger. How about a few "easy days"? The truth about great leadership is that "challenging times are a catalyst for revealing the truth about our leadership!" Challenges test us. As Jim Kouzes says, "Challenges introduce us to ourselves."

" What we have before us are some breathtaking opportunities disguised as insoluble problems."

--John Gardner

Go First! **"**You either lead by example or you don't lead at all," point out Kouzes and Posner. "Every leader we count as exemplary, models their values with their actions." When in a tough spot, do you ever say to your self, "What would _____ do?" You have a mental model. That's a leader. You fill that role for others, too.

"Leaders have only two tools at their disposal: what they say and how they act. What they say might be interesting, but how they act is always crucial."

--Alan Deutschman

Leading and Learning! "The best leaders are the best learners." Leaders are constantly learning. Kouzes and Posner claim learning as the master skill of great leaders.

"How would your day be different if you organized your time, energy, and resources primarily around the objective of learning, instead of around performance? For many people, their daily activities—what they do and how they go about doing it—would be dramatically changed . . .

"As I begin to consciously shift to filtering everything through a learning lens, I find both dramatic and subtle differences in the way I do things and how I spend my time. With a 'get things done' lens, I'll leave a voice-mail; with a learning lens, I'll seek a real-time phone call during which I can ask questions and learn from conversation."

--Jim Collins

An Affair of the Heart! "Love is the motivation that energizes leaders to give so much for others." Sounds a bit soft, fuzzy, and emotional. Right? Wrong! "Positive emotion creates positive energy which is especially important in challenging times," argue Kouzes and Posner. When the news from the state or provincial government is worrisome, and often downright scary, it's pretty easy to become negative. When growing needs and demands are met with budget cuts, it hurts! That's because we care, live our calling, and put our hearts in our leadership.

The Truth! These are enduring truths about leadership. We can gain mastery over the art and science of leadership by understanding them and attending to them in our workplace and everyday life. Get a copy of *The Truth about Leadership*. You will find yourself in the pages of this latest book by our colleagues Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner.

The Truth About YOU! Leadership is a living, breathing part of each of us and our actions. To face today's challenges in post-secondary education we need to be willing to look deeply into the soul of our leadership; know ourselves and why we lead; challenge our current thinking patterns, perceptions and behaviors; build communities at the ready; learn, love and lead out of passion and purpose for our students, colleagues, campuses, and communities."

"The heart is a place where intellect and emotion and spirit and will converge in the human self."

--Parker Palmer

Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner teach us how to live out our leadership full of heart and courage. This is the truth about our leadership in post-secondary education.

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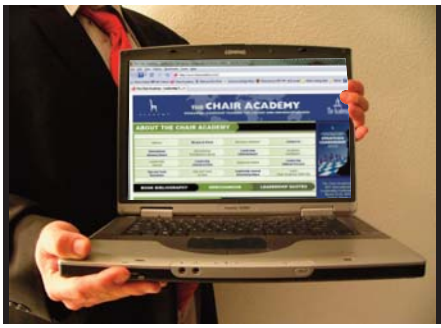

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