



MOAA | CORNER

THE LANDSCAPE OF LEADERSHIP IS CHANGING

The landscape of leadership has changed completely in the last 25 years — in business, in academia, in politics, in sports, in virtually every aspect of society. When you think about it, it's actually pretty amazing how quickly American organizations have been transformed, in every facet, but especially in the leadership realm.



Stan Johnson

Consider the following leadership scenes on the landscape of leadership: Currently, 12 FORTUNE 500 companies are run by women, and a total of 24 FORTUNE 1000 companies have women in the top job, in industries ranging from engineering to beauty products at world class companies such as Western Union, Wendy's, XEROX, Pepsi, the *New York Times* and Kraft.

But beyond the glass ceiling breakthroughs, the profile of the prototypical leader is essentially non-existent. Companies such as Microsoft, eBay, Dell, Yahoo and Google have transformed the very notion of what a leader looks like. Instead of working their way up the ranks, putting in their time and earning their stripes — in some realms considered the obsolete worldview — these leaders started their companies while lounging in their dorm rooms and built their hobbies into multi-billion dollar mega-corporations, which have completely overtaken companies run by their fathers. Once invincible companies — Bethlehem Steel, Ford, General Motors, AT&T — struggle to compete in today's marketplace.

Recognition of this basic reality, that we now live in a world changing so rapidly, tipping points tipping daily, hourly, in nanoseconds even, is the key to surviving and succeeding in the new landscape of leadership — the three A's: Awareness, Adaptability and Articulation.

First off, awareness of the power of harnessing the strengths of all employees, whatever their differences may be. But beyond a rising level of social awareness of the rich diversity of society, effective leaders are highly aware of the needs of their employees. In their breakthrough book, "First, Break All the Rules — What the World's Greatest Managers Do Differently," authors Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffman of the Gallup Organization offer solutions to better employee satisfaction. Their research shows the importance of having a deeper understanding of employees, and manage accordingly, and more importantly that when managed well, all employees become more productive. You might be surprised how basic, simple and commonsensical these questions are:

- Do I know what is expected of me at work?
- Do I have the materials and equipment I need to do my work correctly?
- At work, do I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day?
- In the last seven days, have I received recognition or praise for doing good work?
- Does my supervisor or someone at work seem to care about me as a person?

- Is there someone at work who encourages my development?
- At work, do my opinions seem to count?
- Does the mission/purpose of my company make me feel my job is important?
- Are my co-workers committed to doing quality work?
- Do I have a best friend at work?
- In the last six months, has someone at work talked to me about my progress?
- This last year, have I had the opportunity at work to learn and grow?

Joining awareness on the path to success is adaptability. In an ever-changing environment, adaptability is key. It is a wise person that adapts themselves to all contingencies; it's the fool who always struggles like a swimmer against the current.

And when you take a job at virtually any size company, it's not unusual to report to someone younger than you are, more educated than you are, more technologically savvy than you are and who likely has more in common with your children than you do.

On the changing landscape of leadership, you're more likely to see flip-flops than wingtips; pony tails than pinstripes, as well as Nerf football, in addition to golf. It's a whole new world of leadership. It's changing globally, generationally, geographically, and the change is here to stay, or more accurately, not to stay. Unfortunately, change — for some strange reason — keeps on changing.

The final leg in the triangle is articulation; of vision, of mission, of expectations and strategic objectives. When we talk about articulation and leadership, the discussion turns to the power of communications and the ability to express a clear vision for the organization, clear objectives and a simple mission which everyone understands. Easier said than done, so to say! But the truth is that the best leaders, who invariably are the best communicators, understand that the secret is simplicity. We just witnessed the power of three simple words to transform a nation into a realm many could never imagine in their lifetimes. Three words any kindergarten child would know — yes we can. The power of that articulation in all its simplicity is priceless, but they never come in \$64,000 words, just those simple ones. John Maxwell, one of America's best known motivational speakers, puts it well: "Educators take something simple and make it complicated. Communicators take something complicated and make it simple." So as you develop a sense of the clarity of your leadership, recognize the power of clear communication and the ability to move people with simple words and a concise vision.

On Tuesday, June 22, as a part of the NACDA Convention in Anaheim, Calif., the MOAA Symposium will address the topic of leadership as it relates to athletics. To view a complete agenda for this year's Symposium, themed "Moving into a Leadership Chair," visit www.moaaweb.com.

Thanks for this article to Stan Johnson, MOAA Executive Director.

