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Dave's Notes -- David Mays

98-5-36

LEADING WITHOUT POWER

Max De Pree

Finding Hope in Serving Community

San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1997, 192 pp.

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De Pree draws on his extensive experience with non-profits to provide broad brush-stroke principles for helping organizations achieve their potential. Some of his best thinking is in the form of questions - leaving you to ponder the answers for yourself and your organization. De Pree deals with topics sometimes missing in books on leadership - morality, ethics, character, truth, trust, risk, hope, the elements of a legacy, moral purpose and virtue.

“...the most successful organizations of the Information Age operate not as controlled collections of human resources but as dynamic communities of free people. And in order to mobilize these communities, leaders must know how to lead without power, because free people follow willingly – or not at all.” from the flyleaf

“...not-for-profit organizations are increasingly where people turn to fulfill themselves.”
“My experience in the not-for-profit world leads me to believe that the search for potential – the search that moves many of us to work for love – is surely a matter of morality.” 4-5

Some observable marks to sense whether an organization is becoming a place of realized potential: (11-18)

- open to change, contrary opinion and unsettling ideas
- offer people the opportunity to learn and grow
- offer the gift of challenging work
- sheds its obsolete baggage
Understand the significance of abandonment. “If we’re to take on new projects, new challenges, we must be prepared to abandon the obsolete. ...innovation and renewal are related to our ability to abandon the less important and the unnecessary.” 15
- encourages people to decide what needs to be measured and helps them
Don’t measure only what’s easily measurable. Learn how to measure what’s significant, how to measure matters of the spirit, strategic needs, competence, results, moral purpose. (To measure doesn’t always mean to quantify. 66) 15-16
- heals people with trust and caring and forgetting their mistakes
- provides a good social environment
- celebrates

“Most people who work in the nonprofit world work there for love...” 20

Chapter Two. What’s a Movement? [very interesting]

“A movement is a collective state of mind, a public and common understanding that the future can be created, not simply experienced or endured.” 22

“There is a harmony in relationships and a constructive conflict of ideas. There is a palpable unity as the people there implement their vision. There is a rhythm of innovation and renewal. There’s a sense of urgency - movements are never casual. Alongside the normal tensions of organized life, there is a high level of trust.” 23

“In movements, people tell stories about giants and about failures. They tell stories about relationships and surprises. They tell stories as a way of teaching. They tell stories as a way of preserving and remembering the past. Movements thrive on their stories.” 24

“I don’t know many people who prefer a manual to a myth.” 24

“One of the first things required in movements is spirit-lifting leadership, leadership that enables, enriches, holds the organization accountable, and in the end lets go.” 25

A very important requirement is competence – including competence in relationships. 25

Movements tend to deteriorate into mere organizations. Some signs:

- making trade-offs
- preferring comfort to ambiguity
- looking for control rather than challenge
- trusting job assignments rather than respecting individual gifts 29

Chapter Three: A Context for Service

“The very meanings of words like *truth* and *honesty* and *stealing* and *lie* have grown murky. We see all about us a diminution of personal accountability and moral will. The concepts of diligence, faithfulness, and trust grow dim, concepts that underlie enormous segments of our economic system.” The whole stock market works on trust! 44-5

Chapter Four: What Shall We Measure?

Measurement is essential because

- it’s connected to the way an organization can mature and grow
- it affects whether or not we reach our potential
- it is connected to the concept of renewal and what we will abandon

“An organization is at sea if it doesn’t have a really good idea of what’s going to be measured.” 49

An organization needs to measure certain inputs and certain outputs, including

- How does our performance compare to our plan?, and
- How does our performance compare to our potential? 54

“To measure performance is to gauge a group’s sense of urgency.” 59

“I think about quality as a matter of truth.” 60

“Leaders are walking and talking manuals of behavior.” 62

Chapter Five: The Language of Potential

“Leaders are constantly communicating. ...most of the time their communication is unconscious and unintentional.” 70

“...it’s vitally important that a leader have a self-perception faithful to reality.” 71

Trust can never occur without truth. We must be able to trust leaders to listen and to see. “A leader needs to work very hard at developing the ability to see what’s really going on in an organization.” 80

“Trust is the required subtext behind almost everything leaders say if the language of potential is to have any real meaning or effect.” 82

Three areas of teaching and learning 83

- the technical
- relationships
- improving the context for work

Chapter Six: Service Has Its Roots – in the home. The organization has a responsibility to help workers develop strong families and good home life.

“One of the most serious needs in organizations is to prepare continually for the future. I’d like to suggest that what we do about reestablishing the family is the most significant action we can take to prepare for the future.” 95

Chapter Seven: Attributes of Vital Organizations

- Truth
- Access (to opportunity, medical care, work, a mentor, chance to learn, fruitful relationships, etc.)
- Discipline (and delegation)
- Accountability
- Nourishment for persons
- Authenticity
- Justice
- Respect
- Hope
- Workable Unity
- Tolerance
- Simplicity
- Beauty and Taste
- Fidelity to a Mission

Chapter Eight: Vision

“A group’s vision can come from one person or many people, but leaders constantly explain and elucidate it.” 117

Chapter Nine: Trust

“To maintain it, leaders must continually earn it.” 125

“Trust grows when people see leaders translate their personal integrity into organizational fidelity.” 127

“Trust can be won only slowly; it can be lost in the twinkling of an eye.” 136

Chapter Ten: Why Risk It?

“We can expect the rewards of working toward something larger than ourselves to be wonderfully surprising, sometimes beyond our imaginations.” 143

“In movements the absence of risk becomes a warning signal that something is not right, that the group has stumbled on its way to something it is not now.” 145

Chapter Eleven: The Function of Hope

“...hope is an optimistic sense of the future, but it is also one of the most functional realities of society.” 150

“Unmeasured work is like an unseen painting.” 158

“Sadly a dearth of hope may be the most serious long-term reality in our society today.” 159

“Hope...allows us to cope with the rest of life. Nonprofit organizations more than any other groups in our world build hope, restore hope, exemplify hope.” 161

Chapter Twelve: Elements of a Legacy

“A legacy results from the facts of our behavior that remain in the minds of others, the cumulative informal record of how close we came to the person we intended to be.” 163

“...what we do will always be a consequence of who we have become.” 165

The first level of quality is truth. The second level is our competence in relationships. 161

“Learning competence in relationships comes from family, friends, mentors, idols. It results from observation, conscious and unconscious. It derives from selflessness and real concern and our beliefs about people. It results in civility, love, and devotion to a common good. Nothing guarantees it; no one succeeds without it.” 167

“People write down a strategy and follow it. We *see* a vision and *pursue* it.” 167