

## **Chapter 14 - Teaser**

### **Instinctive Leadership**

We instinctively know how to lead if we allow ourselves.

While no two leaders are exactly the same and each will vary their style and method, all individuals leading by instinct explore the distance between where they've been and where they're going. Some approach leadership based on their strength or the strength of the team, others on their previous organization's culture or the culture that was established when they got there. They inherit systems and struggles that in no way resemble the vision and mandate that they are most passionate about. They must then decide, who stays and who goes?

If you can't instinctively discern how to balance your past experience with your present opportunity and future success, then you're automatically limited in your leadership. Your gifting and opportunity can bring you into a new arena that your skill sets might be able to manage but not maximize. With these new opportunities, your mentality is influenced not by where you're going but more aptly where you've been. But surely you see the danger in such an approach. A new suit doesn't change the old man! A new hairdo won't transform the woman beneath the bangs!

You can't function on the next level if you still have the old style of leadership. Many people move into a new opportunity, but they have the past mentality and soon they find that they are having experiences that poison the fresh chance with old contaminates. You can't revamp a department if you yourself carry the methodology of where you were and not where you are.

As my business involvement beyond the pulpit grew, so did my struggles to lead in these new endeavors. Suddenly I was hiring staff, maintaining a for-profit entity, and developing people around new goals. Unfortunately, while I had the corporate structure of a business for my enterprise, I still had pastoral tendencies. I had to learn to distinguish ministry from management and potlucks from portfolios. The Sunday school classroom is not the boardroom!

You can't reform the organization if its leader communicates old messages and ideas by virtue of language and habits from the past. A new logo is nice, a new brand is wonderful, but if the old culture persists you are destined for self-sabotage.

### **Instinctive Leadership Styles**

Our instincts inform the way we've learned to lead. Obviously, our personalities, professional abilities, and social skills contribute to this leadership style that's been developing within us. Most business gurus and leadership experts usually categorize leaders by the way they handle conflict, by the extent they involve others in the decision-making process, and by the priorities that guide their actions. If you want to harness your instincts to lead as effectively as possible, then you need to identify your own natural or default approach to leadership.

From what I've learned about myself, I tend toward what I call a consultative style of leadership. This leader instinctively listens to feedback from his team, studies past and current data, and reflects on research and trends. He or she will ultimately make a decision but not without consulting all available influences to ascertain a course of action that is collaborative. This instinctive leader will ultimately make his own decision but shies away from un-researched conclusions.

Other leadership styles and the instincts that form their basis can be just as effective, depending on the unique strengths of the individual leader. Each different style may also have various blind spots that can sometimes threaten a leader's ability to remain self-aware and vulnerable. Let's consider a few and see if you can identify the one that describes your present instinctive style.

**Autocratic style** tends toward the propensity of making decisions independent of input. This leader instinctively already knows what they want to do. They are decisive and accept full responsibility for their decisions. These autocratic leaders may factor in other variables but ultimately trust their own hunches and instinctive decisions in leading the organization. They are not easily deterred by the opinions of others and provide a predictable kind of security by their sovereignty.

Leaders with a **chaotic style** bring the team together and empower them to resolve the conflict while distancing himself from the issue at hand. These leaders

instinctively bring the right people together but don't always know how to focus their abilities. He develops and empowers those he leads to either form a committee or struggle through the issue to the best of their ability, and then he implements what they decide after the debate has resided.

**The democratic style leader instinctively presides** based on the majority's opinions. This leadership style puts issues to a vote and feels comforted by the decision being based on the will of the team. This style often gains buy-in from the team as members feel their voices are reflected in the decision. This leader may persuade his staff to view the issues from a variety of angles, eager to have them think through every possible solution and contingency. Above it all, he desires team unity and wants everyone connected to the decision-making process on a daily basis.

**Laissez-faire style** managers serve as mentors and have great motivational skills. They instinctively inspire the team toward excellence but often detach themselves from the actual decision-making processes. They try to hire the best people and then trust them with doing what they were hired to do as well as advancing the organization and its mission. These leaders focus on areas of innovation and future advancement since they have set up their team to handle the present problems.

Leaders in the **persuasive style** make the decision but will spend a great deal of time convincing and persuading the team that what he has already decided is the best route to take. This leader is a great motivator and uses his or her charm and charisma to assist in creating cohesive teamwork. He instinctively needs the approval of his team and wants them to stand by his decisions and understand why he made them, even if they don't agree.

Though I am instinctively the consultative style leader, I understand the value of choosing a team that has a contribution worth considering. I also understand the value of various styles of leadership and have learned that a strong sense of everyone's strengths and weaknesses helps me to determine best-case scenarios, similar to the way a carpenter chooses a tool for the present kind of job he's tackling.

Strong, effective leaders will possess aspects of all these styles and have the discernment to know which will eradicate the problem as well as maximize advancement. They will be well attuned to their instincts so that they can choose the right tool for the

job at hand. They know you can't simply be one-dimensional. You must adapt to the prerequisites of any given situation, and having a wide array of options at your disposal increases your confidence, wisdom, and ability to remain calm.

Leadership has never been a one-size fits all endeavor, and instinctive leadership cannot be reduced to a simple formula or a series of steps. It boils down to an awareness of your instincts, a willingness to trust what they tell you most of the time, and courageously stepping forward to take responsibility. If you want to develop into a more instinctive leader, I encourage you to look for opportunities around you. Ignore the ones outside your areas of passionate interest and invest in the ones already alive within you.

Look for individuals who model this kind of instinctive leadership in your field and ask them to mentor you. Watch what they do as much as you listen to their counsel. Continue growing in self-awareness and advancing in understanding of what makes you get out of bed in the morning. Step up, step out, and lead on!