LEADERSHIP FROM A “FOLLOWERSHIP” PERSPECTIVE

This is a drill!

Ira Chaleff, in his wonderful book *The Courageous Follower*, focuses on the importance of the “followership” role as being essential to the leader’s success – and the follower’s happiness. As such, a critical aspect of effect leadership is to understand and nurture effective followers. It is important to note that the term “follower” has a pejorative ring to it – so others and we reject that role. Leader sounds so much more noble—one that makes our parents proud of our lot in life. But in point-of-fact, most of us are followers most of the time. Leadership is very episodic. Yet again, leaders are *made* by excellent followers. Therefore, we would do well to focus some on what are the “field markings” of an effective follower.

Powerful followers:

- Understand their power and how to use it
- Understand leadership and the attritive forces against it
- The seductiveness of the power of leadership

A brief listing of the general powers of a follower are as follows:

- The power of purpose, the strength that comes from commitment to the common good;
- The power of knowledge, the possession of skills and resources the organization and its leadership value and do not want to lose;
- The power of personal history, a record of successes and unassailable contributions to the leader and the organization;
- The power of faith in self, belief in our observations and intentions, in our integrity and commitment;
- The power to speak the truth, as we see it, to the leadership;
- The power to set a standard that influences others, to model values and behavior for the leader and group members;
- The power to choose how to react in a situation regardless of what is done or threatened by others;
- The power to follow or not follow in a given direction;
- The power of relationships, of networks of people who know and trust us;
- The power to communicate through a variety of channels;
- The power to organize others of like mind;
- The power to withdraw support if leadership’s actions violate our values.
Therefore, the five dimensions of courageous followers are:

1. The courage to assume responsibility.
2. The courage to serve a leader.
3. The courage to challenge the leader.
4. The courage to participate in a transformation process.
5. The courage to leave the effort.

Persons who intend to engage in “courageous acts” are probably suicidal. The act of courage hopefully is one ascribed by others to an act that was done because the actor had, in so far as she understood, no choice.

Leadership, as well as followership, has components of passion. This makes it difficult, for it is not just something that you can dismiss. However, something to constantly monitor, is when you feel that the organization has lost its passion about its Mission. So, what are the questions?

- Does the organization’s sense of purpose need renewing?
- Have we personally lost touch with the shared purpose and vision of the organization?
- What is our own vision of fulfillment?
- How does our current role allow us to achieve this?
- How does our current role position us to achieve even greater fulfillment in the future?
- Are frustrations in accomplishing our current role blocking our passion?
- Are relationship issues with the leader or other group members blocking our passion?
- Are we ready for more responsibility and do we need to make this readiness known?