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Leadership, Inside and Out

by Deirdre McCarthy Gallagher and Joseph Shaffner

Abstract

This article explores leadership, inside and out: a new approach to equip aspiring leaders with the tools to lead creatively, inclusively, and effectively. Leadership, inside and out, transforms emerging leaders into the leaders of the future, positioning them to indelibly impact their own organizations and the state of Maine.

Effective, transformational leadership in Maine is more important than ever. Leadership behavior is often the catalyst for change and is always key to its success or failure (Higgs and Rowland 2005). As Maine confronts the challenge of cultivating a workforce to support its economic growth, the time for change is now. Responding to the state’s low population growth and aging workforce, Glenn Mills, the chief economist of the Maine Department of Labor, stressed that it is crucial to “attract young people to stay and others to relocate here” (MDF/MSCOC 2016: 3). Inextricably linked to realizing this goal are leaders who engage and inspire others to commit to working and living in Maine, which demands a different type of leadership, one that is more about the group than about the individual at the helm. And while imagining a different type of leadership is easy, enacting a different type of leadership takes training and practice. The concept of leadership, inside and out, reflects the powerful and energizing connection between an individual leader and the group. *How* someone leads is as important—if not more so—than who leads.

FACILITATIVE LEADERSHIP

At the heart of leadership, inside and out, is the concept of facilitative leadership, in which leaders are “able to actively engage others so their talents and contributions are fully leveraged” (Cufaude 2005). In facilitative leadership, the leader is not at the front of the room; she is at the table with the team. The success of the organization does not rest solely with the person at the helm, but with the many people throughout an organization who are critical to improvement and implementation. The

facilitative leader encourages input from the group and is open to an examination of strengths and weaknesses. “The old IQ is about how smart you are; the new IQ is about how smart you make your team. If [leaders] take [this] to heart, it will change the way [they] lead” (Bourke and Dillon 2016).

Self-Awareness

Critical to developing a facilitative leadership style is understanding where one is as a leader. The first step, then, is self-reflection and self-awareness. Traditionally, intelligence quotients (IQ) were thought to be the leading indicators of individuals’ capabilities and successes. Research shows that this is not the case; in fact, IQ has a low correlation with successful leaders (Goleman 2005).

Emotional intelligence (EI), sometimes referred to as emotional quotient (EQ), is the capacity for emotion management, self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. A high EI is



the ability to recognize one's emotions and those of others and discern between emotions and feelings. Emotions are more physical in nature; they are the short-term, hard-wired fight-or-flight responses that keep us out of danger. Feelings, which come from the higher-thinking part of the brain, can often be fed by a mixture of emotions and last longer. For example, thinking about a confrontation at work in the past can evoke an emotion of anger and then a feeling of resentment (Goleman 2005).

The ability to recognize and discern the difference between emotions and feelings is the core of self-awareness. This ability guides one's behavior appropriately and allows a person to adjust and manage oneself. This core inside awareness manifests outward; authentic, confident leaders can better assist individual employees and teams to achieve goals and adapt to dynamic environments and challenges. Self-awareness can be taught and improved through learning practices like mindfulness and learning tools. The DISC, Myers-Briggs, Clifton Strength Finders, and the MHS Emotional Intelligence Assessment EQi are tools that help leaders gain a better understanding of themselves and their colleagues—and encourage the same among their teams.

Visioning

Armed with this self-awareness, the next step in inside leadership is visioning where one is as a leader. Leaders may have visions of themselves as effective communicators, in good times and bad, but learn through closer reflection that their strengths as communicators may not shine in times of challenge or change. Our experiences show that many leaders have a tendency to shoulder everything and to bypass the collective intelligence of the group. There may be a predisposition to become the *heroic leader* and save the day, to the detriment of the organization and to the alienation of the group. According to Roger L. Martin, “When leaders assume ‘heroic’ responsibility for making the critical choices facing their organizations, when their reaction to problems is to go it alone, work harder, do more, to be more heroic still, with no collaboration and sharing of the leadership burden, their ‘heroism’ is often their undoing” (Cufaude 2005).

Taking the time to understand one's own personal and professional visions can help a leader understand where the perceptions and reality of leadership don't align. This creates an opportunity to map the steps to alignment. If this is where I am now, and this is where I want to be, then what do I need to do to get there?

CONNECTING INSIDE AND OUT

Understanding oneself and one's vision is a critical step in one's leadership journey. But this is only a starting point for the facilitative leader, who now must transfer the lessons learned to influence, inspire, and empower the team. This is where the synergy between leadership, inside and out, is realized. Inside-out leaders do not operate in a vacuum, pontificating from on high about promising management ideas. Effective leaders connect with their team and inspire them to engage in the leadership journey. Outside leadership connects the dots, encompassing the ideals of facilitative leadership through work on skills to influence and inspire. Driving this focus is understanding that when a leader is informed by the voices and perspectives of those he is leading, then the sense of ownership for the organization's success is shared.

Communication

Communication is at the core of this effort to expedite shared ownership of success. Facilitative leaders engage with employees to understand what they value. They ask open-ended questions and use active listening skills to draw a picture of what is important to those they lead, what success looks like, and how to create and seize opportunities to achieve that success. They also elicit input to create a common vision and, through the process, build “a coalition among...[employees] to support that vision” (Salacuse 2006). They take the time to understand how to achieve and sustain that vision. Effective leaders determine what needs to happen and who needs to be empowered to turn ideas into action; they ensure responsibility and accountability so that solutions and changes are sustained.

Conflict Competence

Complementing the communication focus are skills of messaging, inclusive practice, and conflict competence, all of which strengthen the outside leadership efforts. Effective leaders practice the tools to both receive and send messages. These leaders model communication skills that foster inclusive practices and thus inspire employees to willingly join the leadership journey. A leader who is conflict competent recognizes the opportunity in dissension. Conflict is a symptom that something is wrong. Getting to the heart of that, rather than avoiding it, can inspire change. The process of open dialogue strengthens the organization. This is an effort

the reaps dividends: “Too often we don’t realise the knowledge and potential that we have within the team or group of people....In many cases the insight and knowledge of how to solve a problem or identify an innovative way forward is there in the organisation” (Apex Leadership 2013).

CONCLUSION

The inside-and-out approach is holistic, with the self-awareness and visioning setting the stage for a look at how to transfer leadership abilities, inclinations, and skills to tangibly influence and make an impact in an organization. “Experienced managers know that, when it comes to leading people, authority has its limits” (Salacuse 2006). The challenge for Maine leaders is to move beyond authority to retain and attract employees. Engaging employees in paving the path to organizational success—as opposed to telling them what they need to do to achieve that organizational success—can provide the buy-in to motivate and build a workforce.

The comprehensive annual Gallup Q12 Employee Engagement Survey consistently shows people do not leave their organizations, they leave their bosses. Approximately 100 million Americans hold full-time jobs; about 30 percent of whom are engaged, 16 percent are actively disengaged, and 51 percent are neither engaged nor disengaged (Gallup 2017). “These figures indicate an American leadership philosophy that simply doesn’t work anymore” (Gallup 2017: 2). The cost of ineffective leaders is widespread, in terms of employee morale, productivity, and longevity. The less-tangible cost rests with those disengaged employees, who show up to do their jobs, but may not commit to do their jobs. Leadership, inside and out, aims to alter these numbers, which is critical to maintaining and growing Maine’s workforce.

We must imbue leaders in a unique *inside-out* way that builds on Maine’s unique environment. Equipping leaders with these new skills will inspire the commitment of leaders to intentionally pave a new path of sustainable improvement. Times have changed. Maine has changed. Leadership approaches must change along with them. The new model of leadership, inside and out, makes that possible. 🐟

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