

Introduction to Enlightened Leadership –

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Just what is an Enlightened Leader?

You've seen the person..... Everyone goes to him/her for advice. They always seem to be cheerful, taking the ups and down of each situation like water flows along a stream. These are the people you go to for the answers to the big issues! They always seem to be able to put out the fires. They know how to apply their creative and intuitive abilities for strategic advantage. They are the Enlightened Leaders.

Over my 20 years as a project manager, I've used the qualities of an Enlightened Leader to empower successful projects, bringing them in on-time and on-budget. How was I able to do this when others around me were having so much trouble? I used my inner light, otherwise known as intuition. When we move from the left brain of data into the right brain of creativity we are enabling imagination. Putting both intuition and imagination to work in the real world of products and services is innovation. These traits are key factors of successful project managers, as well as leaders of all kinds. They not only helped me to be successful, employing them can help you be successful too.

After attending the ARE Institute for Intuitive Studies for several years both on-site and on-line, I earned certifications in intuitive development. This then helped me interpret the world of corporate America in terms of employing one's inner light based on the paradigm I call Enlightened Leadership.

What makes up the Enlightened Leadership Paradigm?

Here are the five facilitators of success that are incorporated in this paradigm:

1. Know who you are (be self-aware)
2. Recognize & use your inner light
3. Self-empowerment & use of power
4. Understand how to capture your inner creativity
5. Communicate with your heart and your head

The following is an example of how not to be an Enlightened Leader!

How Not to be an Enlightened Leader - the Project from Hell

Situation: Working with Michael (PM)

In between positions, I did some temporary project management work for a government organization on a project that turned out to be rather difficult for many reasons, one of them being the manager to whom I reported. The manager's name was Michael and he was supposedly quite seasoned, having been through several complete large life cycle projects; however, I found him to be quite naïve in terms of working with real people. The types of things that he did were alienating to his team, counter-intuitive to gaining any kind of team spirit and certainly none of "us" trusted him to fulfill his stated obligations! In other words, he was a great example of "How now to be an Enlightened Leader".

Here are some of Michael's negative qualities:

1. Workaholic – Michael kept working past his point of effectiveness. On several occasions while I was there (which included a period of seven weeks) he worked all night and often worked very late. Weekends were expected of many members of the team. To me, this represented a lack of balance in his life. Some manifestations of this situation were that people had to tell him what they wrote in an email because his mind couldn't focus on the written word because his brain was so tired. He was suffering from lack of sleep and from stress. When people are stressed, they often can't understand what is said to them. Often times, his eyes would be open, but we could tell that no one was home. It was very sad to watch.
2. Micromanager - Somehow he got the idea that he had to personally take care of everything. Because of his micromanaging attitude, he had a hard time focusing on the larger, actually more important items that his staff wanted him to take care of. He was driving them crazy as no one wants to be watched over.
3. Ineffective –His staff expected him to help them when they needed problems solved. From their perspective, he was very ineffective and so people began to go around him. His staff was very clever and intelligent – the very reason they were hired in the first place – and they figured out how to solve their own problems since he wasn't helping them.
4. Firefighter – He was constantly fighting fires because he didn't read the danger signs that his intuition was sending out to him since his mind couldn't pick up on them. Otherwise, he'd be able to head off problems before they escalated into fires. Unfortunately, firefighters have big egos and they need the recognition that comes with putting out the fires that more intuitive people never experience.
5. Loner - When I talked to Michael, it was a lot about him and all the wonderful things he had done in his life. He wasn't one to talk about his "team", the "cooperation" or the appreciation and gratitude that he had for them". Very much related to the last quality, ego is wrapped up in this one also. He wanted the credit. In the end, it's the team that makes the project successful. Unfortunately, Michael didn't get it.
6. Ungrateful – He never thanked people for their support or their good work. Make them feel like they are just part of the furniture and see how likely they are to keep going when the going gets rough. Why these people stayed in an environment that expected them to work weekends and

late nights was beyond me. It seemed that there were a lot of heroes working there and I believe that they were being taken advantage of. One has to be somewhat self-less to be a true leader. The end result is what's important is not getting the credit, but doing what's necessary to facilitate success.

7. Self-aggrandizing – I found that Michael always had reasons for doing what he did, but it wasn't for the good of the team or for the individual. I do believe he thought he was doing what he did for the good of the project, but I saw him act on his own behalf too many times. There was the time in a meeting with customers where he chastised his own team in order to side with the customer. He did this in an open forum totally embarrassing everyone, probably including the customer. No one wants to see this display of emotions. He should have accepted responsibility for things not going well and then spoken to his team privately. The important leadership quality is "doing the right thing for the right reason"; not just for you, but "for the bigger good of the team, the project and the organization".

What I've described are just the top seven negative qualities, since I could go on. Apparently, this was enough to really drive the team up the wall, since that day they had a meeting and decided to have a "session with Michael". It was that day where he essentially blew his team away. He merely thought that I had something to do with it so rather than deal with his own behavior; he began to act differently towards me, as if the whole affair was my fault. One has to be somewhat self-less to be a true leader. The end result is what's important is not getting the credit, but doing what's necessary to facilitate success.

While Michael was out on vacation for two weeks over the holidays, I immediately made a few adjustments. I asked the program manager for extra support for a team member that needed it during a crunch period so that she didn't have to work all night to complete a key task. I organized the team so that critical deliverables were done on time without my driving them all crazy. I asked for status once a day – no more or less and they responded well. I had faith in them and they responded in kind.

- ✓ Management tried to push me to ask for status more than once a day but I refused saying that these people were adults, they knew the deadlines and I would treat them as such. They all pulled through as I expected them to, whereas Michael always had an attitude of never trusting anyone. He almost gave me the impression that he "just had to do it himself to get it right". I made it a point not to ask for work earlier than really required.
- ✓ In one case, I told a woman that it was ok to provide input the next day rather than for her to stay late that night; she was very happy. She came in fresh the next day and got it all done much faster and better.

It wasn't long before my services, which were temporary any way, were no longer needed. The new project managers came in and it was time for me to live. I was very happy to be getting out of there and felt badly for those that had to stay. It took awhile for me to find another position, but it was one where I was respected and the work environment wasn't as demanding.

Things have a way of working out for the best, at least from my perspective. I wish the best for those I left behind and hope that they find a more Enlightened Leader to guide them.

It's time for Corporate America to move back into balance. I offer my new paradigm of Enlightened Leadership as a way of doing just that.

Joanne Aaronson is a project management professional (PMP), Reiki Master and holds certifications from the ARE Institute for Intuitive Studies. Check her website for upcoming workshops on Enlightened Leadership – Maximizing Creativity via Innovation, Imagination and Intuition at www.empowerchangenow.com