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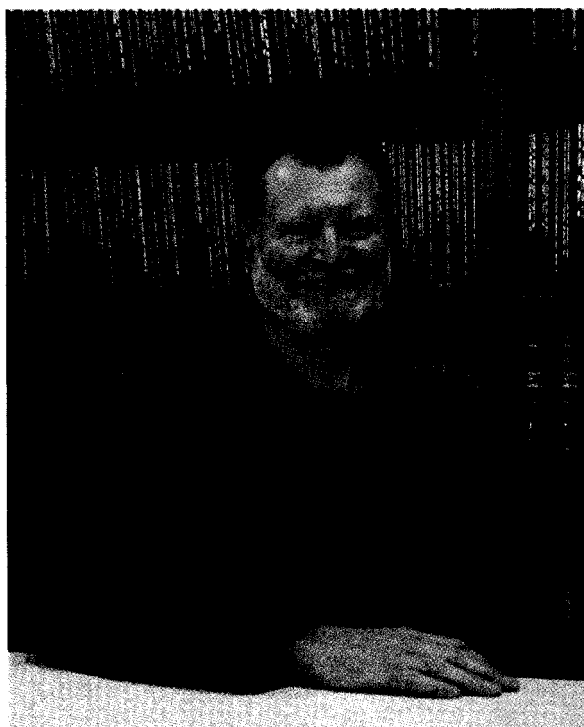
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## We Want the Best

BY

J. PATRICK MURPHY, C.M., PH.D.



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*Courtesy of The Hay-Vincentian Leadership Project*

Not long ago the wife of one of our workers came to see a member of our human resources staff. She was puzzled about her husband's behavior. He no longer yelled at the kids, she said, and asked everyone what they wanted to do on the weekends. He wasn't his usual, grumpy, autocratic self. The woman was worried. What, she wondered, were we doing to her husband? We realized that as Semco changed for the better, he had, too<sup>1</sup>

I interviewed a prospective faculty member for the Public Services Graduate Program at DePaul University a while back. He is Chinese but used a Christian name. As is my custom as Director of the Program, I asked the mission question. "Vincent," (I was already pre-disposed to him because of the name), "as you read our mission statement how does it make sense for you personally?" His response was along these lines, "You are the only institution that has spoken to me about anything international — and it is very important to me to be involved in a program that has an international dimension. Also, I became a Christian four years ago — I am Lutheran. Since then I have made it my personal mission to do something for the children who are forced to work in factories in China." I thought: hooked and matched. This Chinese Vincent of today had the same values as our Parisian Vincent — and matched up to our DePaul values as well.

On other occasions I asked the mission question and got responses of "I have no problem with it," or "that's a nice mission." In *A People Adrift*, New York Times Religion Editor Peter Steinfels reports how he asked provosts, deans and presidents how the Catholic mission played a critical role in hiring — how it actually took place. "Oh, I interviewed every candidate for a position," the reply would come. "I have them read the mission statement and I ask them if they are comfortable with that."<sup>2</sup> It was a leading question — candidates know the desired answer and they easily provide it. Consider, however, what one manager said in the *In Search of Excellence* video when talking about hiring people at Apple and showing them a prototype of the MacIntosh computer, "If they said, 'that's a nice computer,' we didn't

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<sup>1</sup> Ricardo Semler, *Maverick, The Success Story Behind the World's Most Unusual Workplace* (New York: Time Warner, 1993), 7-8.

<sup>2</sup> Peter Steinfels, *A People Adrift* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003), 157.

want them. We wanted their eyes to light up and sirens to go off!" I want eyes to pop when candidates talk about our mission. When they do we should hire them.

We hired a well-qualified instructor a few years ago. He had terrific degrees, research agenda and teaching credentials. He eventually left us. He went off to another institution, taught in a business school where he could make more money, and landed where he will do very well in his academic career. He did not have our values even though he met or exceeded our other qualifications. We hired a good academic but the wrong person and squandered several years learning our lesson.

Steinfelds reminds us that "the religious character of colleges and universities will be determined by the faculty. Faculty members stay longer than students or administrators.... The future of Catholic identity in higher education is inescapably linked to hiring practices."<sup>3</sup> The sports analogy of "acquiring the best athlete available" is common in faculty hiring, I believe. Too often we believe our job is to hire the best qualified candidate available — avoiding the burden of hiring for mission. In my experience, the best hires we have made have been of ordinary people, well qualified in all crucial dimensions, but people who personally connect their own values to ours. First we must make our values clear; we will never be able to help them — or ourselves — perceive the match of personal and corporate values if we do not.

"Did you know I collect Studebakers?" asked my advisor when I first met him. As a new MBA student at DePaul in the early 1970's I met my assigned academic advisor only to find that he knew less about the curriculum and its requirements than I did. He wanted only to talk about his Studebaker collection; I wanted only to know what course to take. Next, I turned to the departmental secretary and found compassion, wisdom and concern. She became my unofficial advisor for the next two years. She expertly designed a course of study, advised me carefully about the instructors and their strengths and weaknesses. I was able to complete the degree requirements in good order, experience some of the best professors of the time, and generally enjoy my MBA experience. I also learned that there were some extraordinary teachers and at least one administrator giving their very best in an environment that encouraged ordinary people to

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 152.

focus on mission and do their very best. So what happened to the guy with the Studebakers?

“Professor Studebaker,” as I understood it at the time, was the best in his field, personally well-off, yet a poor teacher, unable to connect with students. I was able to avoid his classes and never bothered him again for advising. DePaul’s College of Commerce made the mistake, perhaps, of hiring the best in the field but was unable to get the best out of him.

In the Public Services Graduate Program we tried to hire the best candidate available several times. We lost out to Harvard, a large state research institution, a prestigious think tank and a business school. We have been much more successful, I think, in hiring good people with solid credentials who share our values — and then asking them to give their very best. Ordinary, good people sharing a common mission and values are eager to give their very best. The proof is in the results. The Public Services Program has become the largest of its type in the US and has grown from a locally-unknown program to one that attracts students from coast-to-coast and internationally.

At each monthly faculty meeting we open with “a moment of inspiration” — a moment wherein a faculty member shares a prepared reading or reflection on something that connects with our business of teaching nonprofit professionals. I then schedule ad-hoc reporting on one aspect of our mission — teaching, research or service. I do not tell the faculty that this portion of the meeting is mission-review but I make sure we spend a little time each meeting on our central purpose. After a recent half-day of planning, one of our faculty members drafted this short version of our mission statement. “We educate women and men to be effective public service leaders in the global community guided by the values of St. Vincent de Paul.” It took no compromising, long debates or even any prompting from me or others for him to draft this. It came honestly and spontaneously — and it captures our unique mission nicely. A few days later he sent me an e-mail that said, “I was thinking about revising my ethics course for the fall term and I realized that if we believed in our mission the course should have something specifically from Vincent. What do you suggest?” I have learned to expect this remarkable work and thinking from faculty, but I tell the story here because it is a perfect example of how hiring good people, expecting the best from them and providing them a working environment wherein they can do their best, leads to behavioral manifestations of our mission and values.

It is only slightly interesting that this faculty member is not Catholic. “The truth is that non-Catholics often exhibit such mission-related priorities in their scholarly interests and teaching style to a greater degree than do Catholics.”<sup>4</sup> I depend on it.

What do we learn from business? Is current organizational performance a function of having the best individuals or the best team? Are we presently attracting, retaining and developing all of our current workforce? Are we hiring only the top 5 or 10 percent in our labor market? Are we using all the great ideas already available in our organizations? Why do organizations succeed? Is it because they hire the best people? Or because they get the best out of the people they have? Conventional business school wisdom is that success comes from business strategy: “A sustainable competitive advantage is achieved when a firm or business unit is able to do things that add value for the customer that are difficult for their competitors to either imitate or replicate.”<sup>5</sup> Most organizations look for that sustainable advantage. They ask: What business are we in? How will we compete? The role of senior management, they say, is to set strategy.

Steinfels reminds us, “Although faculty hiring for mission is essential, it is not sufficient. Ultimately, there is in fact no panacea, no silver bullet, no once-and-for-all solution... no one thing will do it, but rather a constant alertness to opportunities, initiatives on many fronts, with some successes, some failures, no quitting.”<sup>6</sup> There can never be any quitting on mission in nonprofit organizations — mission is the heart and soul. Bennis reminds us that greatness starts with superb people.<sup>7</sup>

Henry Mintzberg at McGill University has been a divergent thinker for decades now. In his recent work he takes on MBA programs, claiming that they “...train the wrong people in the wrong ways and with the wrong consequences.”<sup>8</sup> I suggest that we may be falling into the same three traps in hiring for the mission in our institutions — we hire the wrong people, train them in the wrong way (if at all), and

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 156.

<sup>5</sup> See Charles A. O’Reilly, III, & Jeffrey Pfeffer, *Hidden Value, How Great Companies Achieve Extraordinary Results with Ordinary People* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2000).

<sup>6</sup> Steinfels, *A People Adrift*, 160.

<sup>7</sup> Warren Bennis and Patricia W. Biederman, *Organizing Genius, The Secrets of Creative Collaboration* (Reading, MA: Addison Wesley, 1997), 197.

<sup>8</sup> Henry Mintzberg, *Managers not MBAs* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2004), 6.

end up with the wrong consequences. Mintzberg is right when he says "...managers have to lead better, so that others can know better and therefore act better. They have to bring out the best in other people."<sup>9</sup> Bennis says that "people who can achieve something truly unprecedented have more than enormous talent and intelligence. They have original minds. They see things differently."<sup>10</sup>

T. Shawn Taylor reported in the *Chicago Tribune*, "A lot of corporate managers say it's their people who make them profitable, but a recent survey suggests that bad hiring and promotion practices are costing companies big money. The result: 'We've got the wrong people in the wrong jobs...'"<sup>11</sup> He goes on to say that it is becoming harder and harder to find the best and brightest. I believe we get the wrong people because we look for the wrong people.

Michael Porter — and perhaps common wisdom — tell us that competitive advantage comes from being in the right industry, having economies of scale, being in high tech, being lean — downsizing, and winning the "war for talent." What are the facts? We find no correlation between industry growth rate and the growth rate for individual companies within industry; there is no evidence that size by itself adds value; the fastest growing companies are not in high tech. Downsizing does not increase stock price, productivity, or labor costs. Downsizing does reduce morale among survivors, can endanger quality efforts, and can result in the loss of important knowledge and corporate memory. In addition, it adversely affects innovation.

In waging the war for talent, a common business strategy is to relentlessly pursue and hire only the top 10 percent industry-wide in our labor pool. Yet a McKinsey Study reports that to be successful: give high-potential people more development opportunities; put high-potentials in jobs before they are ready; create a sense of belonging; regularly get rid of the least people; values and culture provide most of the success — 58 percent. Success, therefore, has nothing to do with planning; it has everything to do with execution. Success comes not from strategy but from people. Vincent said it differently, "It is not enough to do good, it must be done well."

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>10</sup> Bennis & Biederman, *Organizing Genius*, 198.

<sup>11</sup> T. Shawn Taylor, "Mismatching workers, jobs a costly mistake," *Chicago Tribune*, Business, July 6, 2004, p. 1.

Competitive advantage comes not from strategy but from execution — and execution comes from people. If we cannot execute our strategy, who cares what our strategy is? Having a strategy is important; executing it is essential.

The question is, do we grow the talent within and retain the top performers we create or do we hire people who have already reached stardom from outside? I suggest we hire good people, develop them into stars and do everything possible to keep and nourish them. First, have a “hire-no-jerks policy.” One of the iron-clad rules for hiring people is to ask the question, “Is this someone I would like?” Stars know that they are only as good as their co-workers and supporting staff. “The first step in winning the war for talent is not to hire stars but to grow them.”<sup>12</sup>

Any Management 101 course will help us focus the issues. What is our strategy? Do we have the right people? Do they have the right skills? Can we motivate them? Are we organized the right way? Do we have the right culture? These are foundational questions and mostly we muddle our way through them as we create our workplaces. Laurie Worrall is Director of the Steans Center for Community Based Service Learning at DePaul University. She says “risk-taking is choosing the right person and getting the best out of her.”

The conventional wisdom for hiring, at least in modern US businesses, is to stress concepts of employability and career resilience; have people sign at-will agreements; buy talent rather than make it; focus on short-term performance and numbers; reduce labor costs by outsourcing using contractors and temps; emphasize money as chief motivator — signing bonuses, stock options, individual incentives, pay for performance; promote wage dispersion rather than wage compression. This results in sending the message to employees that our values (in typical modern organizations) are career resilience, employment at will, lean staffing, periodic downsizing, outsourcing and individual rather than team incentives and rewards. These are not the ways of Vincentian organizations and, besides, there is no evidence whatsoever that they work.

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<sup>12</sup> Boris Groysberg, Ashish Nanda, and Nitin Nohria, “The Risky Business of Hiring Stars,” *Harvard Business Review* (May 2004): 100.



O'Reilly and Pfeffer suggest that most managers make these six assumptions, even though the evidence to the contrary is overwhelming.

1. People are effort averse.
2. Management and employee interests are not aligned.
3. People are opportunistic (self-interest seeking with guile); they lie.
4. Managers need to design incentive systems to overcome these differences.
5. High-powered incentives (money) are better than low-powered.
6. People work for money and will comply with management to obtain it.

Why do people leave their jobs? The evidence is remarkably clear: people typically leave jobs because of dissatisfaction with their boss, the lack of challenge or the lack of opportunity for advancement. People do not leave simply for money. It is almost impossible to recruit people away from their current jobs if they are happy. People whose personal values match up with mission and organization core values are the happiest workers — if the boss is not incompetent.

A fatal flaw of organizations, suggest O'Reilly and Pfeffer, is treating people as replaceable parts. Most of us believe that people are our greatest asset; in fact, most organizations make this claim. Few of us practice what we preach. Yet people-centered practices are associated with almost twice the productivity and quality as other practices.

At Disney World the casting office (they would never refer to it as an employment office — because each person is a member of the cast and has a role in the production) requires all those seeking employment to view a 12 minute video about Disney mission and values. They believe about 10-15 percent select out of the process at that point — because their values do not match up. Disney executives are very good at knowing what they want in those they hire and even better at making the match. Especially in crises and times of important decision making, they constantly refer back to their founding values asking, "What would Walt do?"

What Would Jesus Do? He accepted people as he found them... and then worked with what he had; he called out the best in them. He had a turn-over rate of 8.5 percent.<sup>13</sup>

What Would Vincent Do? He recruited ordinary people and asked of them extraordinary service. He hired for fit, strong country girls to offer direct service to the poor as Daughters of Charity and wealthy society women as Ladies of Charity to raise money. He sent Vincentian priests throughout Europe and abroad to serve the poor — even before they were ready for the tasks (give high-potential people more opportunities; put them in jobs before they are ready). But he did not abandon them, rather he managed from afar through 30,000 detailed letters (create a sense of belonging, values and culture). Success has nothing to do with planning; it has everything to do with execution.

What would Greenleaf do? Robert K. Greenleaf, author of *Servant Leadership*, said anyone could lead perfect people — if there were any. They do not exist. Parents who try to raise perfect children raise neurotics. Like Jesus, he said, “The servant always accepts and empathizes, always accepts the person, but sometimes refuses to accept some of the person’s effort or performance as good enough.”<sup>14</sup>

O’Reilly and Pfeffer offer several examples of organizations that seem to get it right. Southwest Airlines emphasize values rather than profit, culture based on fun, family, teamwork, initiative and hard work. It uses a culture committee to monitor same, hires for fit, pays lower than average wages for the industry and promotes wage compression. Southwest requires 80 hours a year of training — much of which is oriented toward culture and values, and all provided by insiders. Management shares financial and operational data extensively. Senior managers spend one day per quarter in a front-line position. They seem to have found a way to make values and mission work by getting the most from employees by being clear on mission and creating a structure and environment to foster it.

Men’s Wearhouse has more than \$1 billion in sales and is the leading discount retailer of men’s clothing. Its founder is an ex-hippie; he requires all wardrobe consultants go to Suits U in San Francisco

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<sup>13</sup> We know that Judas voluntarily terminated his position with his employer and immediately found a new position with new employers. He changed careers — short-lived as his new one would be.

<sup>14</sup> Robert K. Greenleaf, *Servant-Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness* (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1977), 21.

for training. He makes sure that they have a night out on the town when they do. People are typically not fired for the first instance of shoplifting; they hire only 12 percent of their workforce as part timers. All promotions are from within. The shrink rate (how much disappears from stock without sales) is a mere .5 percent — which they achieve without electronic security. People feel terrific because their practices are based on their values. Values and culture come first. They hire for fit, enjoy widespread information sharing, rely on team involvement and emphasize quality and non-monetary rewards. Those in charge are leaders not managers.

Over the last 20 years Microsoft has grown from two friends in a dorm room to the second most highly capitalized company in the United States. This has occurred not because of luck, money, acquisitions, or personal connections. It has occurred solely because Bill Gates built a company with his own unique management style (In his own image and likeness has he created it...). It has no dress code, provides free soft drinks and coffee, keeps supply rooms open to all and sets no specific working hours — employees choose their own start and stop times (and end up working longer hours than if they punched in). The net effect of these policies is to improve morale and productivity and help people stay focused on their work. Microsoft's management style is its core strength. Gates has been successful by creating an environment that focuses exclusively on what is important.<sup>15</sup>

In Brazil, Ricardo Semler took over his father's stodgy old company and "made it thrive, chiefly by refusing to squander our greatest resource, our people."<sup>16</sup> "And we have had periods of up to fourteen months in which not one worker has left us. We have a backlog of more than 2,000 job applications, hundreds from people who say they would take any job just to be at Semco."<sup>17</sup> How does he do it? He makes entrepreneurs out of employees. Factory workers set their own production quotas, come in on their own time to meet them, redesign products and formulate marketing plans. They set their own salaries and openly discuss all financial information. Management and labor unions together developed courses "to teach everyone, even

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<sup>15</sup> David Thielen, *The 12 Simple Secrets of Microsoft Management* (1999), 1.

<sup>16</sup> Semler, *Maverick*, 7.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

messengers and cleaning people, to read balance sheets and cash flow statements.”<sup>18</sup>

### Communicating Values by Telling Stories

We tell stories. Jesus used parables. Lincoln used stories to convey values and make a point. Vincent wrote 30,000 letters. Greenleaf wrote books. It is through stories that organizational members learn and define the core values of the organization. We develop and build culture and norms based on values.

“The shortest distance between man and God is through a story.”<sup>19</sup> As Kouzes and Posner remind us the Bible is perhaps the best example of storytelling used to shape behaviors and influence cultural norms and personal values.<sup>20</sup> Jesus told stories. When the disciples asked Jesus “Why do you speak to them in parables?” he indicated that (Lincoln called them plain people) people just do not get it otherwise: “I use parables when I speak to them because they look but do not see, they listen but do not hear or understand.”<sup>21</sup>

In the parable of the sower, Jesus challenges us: If you have ears, hear this! He does not refer to our physical ears, but to the power of the heart to listen and to heed the word of God. Implied in Jesus’ challenge is the recognition that if we truly hear his message and recognize his work in us, then we can act on it.<sup>22</sup>

Vincent wrote letters — his followers told stories about him. The amazing thing about organizational stories is that they do not have to be accurate to be effective. (They must convey a truth, genuinely.) To be effective they need only to communicate values that organizational members can understand and share.

John Sexton, president of NYU, says the greatest power of a leader is the ability to tell a story of the usefulness of what you are

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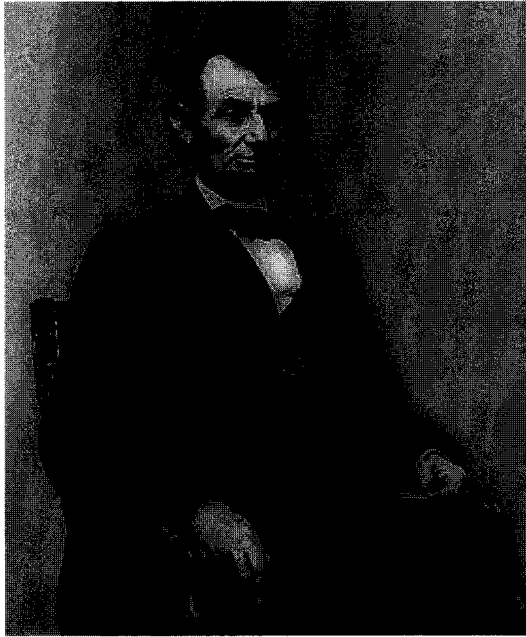
<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>19</sup> Andy Frankel, “A Sacred Pilgrimage: Stories of the Spirit,” *National Storytelling Directory* (Storytelling Foundation International, 1996), 118.

<sup>20</sup> James Kouzes & Barry Posner, *Academic Administrator’s Guide to Exemplary Leadership* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 28.

<sup>21</sup> Mt. 13:13.

<sup>22</sup> Arthur E. Zannoni, *Tell Me Your Story, the Parable of Jesus* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2002), 34.



Portrait of Abraham Lincoln.  
*Public Domain*

doing. The greatest truths in our lives are captured experientially and are expressed in myth or story, marketing or branding. First believe in the story (the experience). It is OK if it is aspirational as long as the story is tendered tightly to the experience. Broadly-internalized myths are offered as invitations not impositions. We should offer them as a current version but be open to engaging discussion. We must also remember the first law of leadership: if you cannot believe in the messenger, you cannot believe in the message.

After Lincoln became president, he often used his skill in telling stories for a purpose rather than for amusement. He communicated stories largely for business, to give a hint or enforce an argument. "They say I tell a great many stories. I reckon I do; but I have learned from long experience that plain people, take them as they run, are more easily influenced through the medium of a broad and humorous illustration than in any other way."<sup>23</sup> Perhaps Lincoln learned from Jesus.

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<sup>23</sup> Donald T. Phillips, *Lincoln on Leadership* (New York: Warner, 1992), 158.

Stephen Denning's goal in the mid 1990's was to get World Bank management and their board to support knowledge management. In his words:

I offered people cogent arguments about the need to gather the knowledge that was scattered through the organization. They didn't listen. I gave PowerPoint presentations that compellingly demonstrated the importance of sharing and leveraging this information. My audiences merely looked dazed. In desperation, I was ready to try almost anything. Then in 1996 I began telling people a story:

'In June of 1995, a health worker in a tiny town in Zambia went to the Web site of the Centers for Disease Control and got the answer to a question about the treatment for malaria. Remember that this was in Zambia, one of the poorest countries in the world, and it happened in a tiny place 600 kilometers from the capital city. But the most striking thing about this picture, at least for us, is that the World Bank isn't in it. Despite our know-how on all kinds of poverty-related issues, that knowledge isn't available to the millions of people who could use it. Imagine if it were. Think what an organization we could become.'

The story worked: "This simple story helped World Bank staff and managers envision a different kind of future for the organization."<sup>24</sup>

Storytelling is a start, but it is not enough. In her 2003 commencement address to the assembled College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at DePaul University, Guinevere Moore said, "Vincent asked himself two key questions, 'What must be done?' and 'What must I do?' ... Today, as we leave DePaul University, we must take these two questions with us." Kouzes and Posner talk about leaders modeling the way. Eduardo Almeida, Director of the St. Vincent de Paul Society in Rio de Janeiro, talks about service leadership and leading by example with energy, conviction and with a sense of urgency. John Sexton, says the most important thing teachers do is to set expectations. "Lead

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<sup>24</sup> Stephen Denning, "Telling Tales," *Harvard Business Review* (May 2004): 122.

your life on the imperative: produce the most good you can. I want to matter to someone around here...."<sup>25</sup>

Laurie Worrall, Director of the Steans Center, is an effective leader because she asked herself, "Where can I do the most good for the most people? The Steans Center is where I put my own values into practice as leader."

Jesus was clear: "Let the greater among you be as the junior, the leader as the servant."<sup>26</sup> And after he washed the disciples feet he told them, "What I just did was to give you an example: as I have done, so you must do."<sup>27</sup>

"A mark of leaders, an attribute that puts them in a position to show the way for others, is that they are better than most at pointing the direction."<sup>28</sup>

In meaningful dialogue the servant as leader submits to a higher perspective, one that can be pivotal to the development of the self in relation to others. Greenleaf addressed this when he stated that the real motive for healing is for one's own healing, not in order to change others, implying the true motive is to serve for one's own service, one's own betterment.<sup>29</sup>

Leaders eliminate fear. At the heart of continuous improvement is employee commitment and participation. Fear is lethal to both. About 75 percent of employees report that fear is a part of their work experience. Mintzberg quotes Sterling Livingston about leadership: "Successful managing," in Livingston's opinion, "is not about one's own success but about fostering success in others."<sup>30</sup> Kouzes and Posner note that good leadership is not a web of technology but a web of people. Leadership is a relationship.<sup>31</sup>

The role of senior management is to manage the values and culture of the organization. The three most recent presidents of DePaul

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<sup>25</sup> John Sexton, NASPAA address, October 2004, Pittsburgh, PA.

<sup>26</sup> Luke 22:26.

<sup>27</sup> John 13:15.

<sup>28</sup> Greenleaf, *Servant-Leadership*, 15.

<sup>29</sup> Shann R. Ferch, *Servant-Leadership, Forgiveness, and Social Justice* (Indianapolis: The Greenleaf Center for Servant-Leadership, 2003), 10.

<sup>30</sup> Mintzberg, *Managers*, 16.

<sup>31</sup> Kouzes and Posner, *Guide to Exemplary Leadership*, 2.

University had three distinct approaches to leadership. Fr. Cortelyou (1967-81) led with his heart. Fr. Richardson (1982-94) led with his head. Fr. Minogue (1994-2004) led through technology, growth and change. These three very different men engaged the organization in unique but life-giving ways. Each leadership style is quintessentially Vincentian; each leader had extraordinary results.

Vincent's basic assumption was to trust in the providence of God. During Fr. Richardson's tenure as president, he referred to providence so often that it was almost a running joke among administrators — that we did not know what we were doing because "We were relying on the providence of God." It was a good way to explain our successes in a theological, teaching way. In vision terms, "It is only in hindsight, if the venture succeeds, that its founders appear to have had vision."<sup>32</sup>

Jeanne O'Laughlin, president of Barry University, Miami, Florida, (until July 2004) had the idea that women in Catholic colleges throughout Latin American were under-prepared for the task before them. She raised \$25,000 to try her idea of bringing them together at Barry for a two-week seminar as the first step in creating a Master in Higher Education Administration degree for Latin America. She was flooded with applications. The seminar was a success; now she has to figure out how to make it into a degree program for this poor population. She relies on providence. Success has nothing to do with planning; it has everything to do with execution. Something must be done, what must I do?

Henry Mintzberg tells us that the skill we should be teaching our MBA students is the skill to synthesize — not analyze. Denning notes that analysis drives executive thinking. "Yet this strength is also a weakness. Analysis might excite the mind, but it hardly offers a route to the heart. And that's where we must go if we are to motivate people not only to take action but to do so with energy and enthusiasm."<sup>33</sup>

Good organizations ask: What are our basic principles? What do we believe in? Do we design management principles (and strategies) that reflect our values? Do we use these values to build core capabilities — what can we do better than our competitors? Value-based organizations focus less on following a clear strategy than on building a rich, engaging purpose. They focus less on structure and

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<sup>32</sup> Robert Heller, *Roads to Success* (N.Y.: Dorling Kindersley, 2001), 208.

<sup>33</sup> Denning, "Telling Tales," 123.



more on effective management processes. They are less concerned with controlling employees' behavior than with developing their capabilities. It can only start at the top.

### Lessons for Leaders

- First get our house in order. Vincent said, "There is great charity, but it is badly organized."<sup>34</sup>
- Like Blues Brothers Jake and Elwood, we believe we are on a mission from God. Having a common mission and vision gives meaning to the work of everyone. "Great work is its own reward."<sup>35</sup>
- Create a culture of values; tell organizational stories to communicate values and mission. Leaders must create environments where good people can excel.
- Every great group has a strong leader. Bennis tells us that people working together as equals make great groups. But there is always "one person who acts as maestro, organizing the genius of the others."<sup>36</sup>
- Match people to mission and values. This starts at the top — Mary Pat Hay says that the selection of trustees is key, "What is it they hold in trust if not our values?"<sup>37</sup> But it reaches down to the lowest levels of organizations, even part-time employees.
- Grow from within. Build a web of people. Set high expectations.
- Hire no jerks. Enough said.
- Model the way. Vincent was always generous, he was "always the first to give."<sup>38</sup> Kouzes and Posner remind us, "...leadership begins with something that grabs hold of you and won't let go"<sup>39</sup> and "You cannot lead through someone else's values, someone else's words."<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> *Like a Great Fire* (Strasbourg: Editions du Signe, 1995), 17.

<sup>35</sup> Bennis & Biederman, *Organizing Genius*, 215.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 199.

<sup>37</sup> Mary Pat Hay, Speech given at Lake Geneva, August 2003.

<sup>38</sup> Louis Abelly, *The Life of the Venerable Servant of God: Vincent de Paul*, 3 Volumes (New York, New City Press, 1993), 1:188.

<sup>39</sup> Kouzes and Posner, *Guide to Exemplary Leadership*, 23.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

- Ask, if something must be done, what must I do?

Bill Hay tells this story of his career at DePaul University — first earning a degree here, then teaching and finally becoming a trustee. But he learned virtually nothing of Vincent until he made an eye-popping trip to Paris and walked in Vincent's footsteps and discovered the great man Vincent was. His response was, "I don't want any student ever to attend DePaul without knowing about Vincent." We have great work before us; we must get the best from our people.