DO WE HAVE A LEADERSHIP PROBLEM?

Whether you work in business, government or the not-for-profit/social enterprise sector, you are dealing with the issues arising from our fast-changing, interconnected world. And, you no doubt hear about, or have a lot to say about the need for more effective leadership.

If you are a manager you may feel you are expected to be politically savvy, bold, empathetic, agile, flexible, firm, empowering of others, and above all authentic!

Most would not argue with the need for articulated leader characteristics and leader development. But the folks at The Center for Creative Leadership (CCL) also propose, we step back and take a different approach.

In a white paper published in 2014, "Making Leadership Happen" by Cynthia McCauley, she proposes: "Instead of putting the entire weight of leadership on individual managers and their capabilities, we think it's important to examine how the whole system is involved in making leadership happen."

CCL looked at the collective — the exchanges between employees and managers, the interactions among peer managers or team members, the quality of relationships throughout the organization and the use of existing systems or processes. Their research concluded that leadership happens in the interactions and exchanges among people with shared work. **"Leadership is a social process"**. And for leadership to happen the interactions and exchanges among people have to yield **Direction, Alignment and Commitment** (DAC).

- **Direction:** Agreement on goals. We agree on what we intend to accomplish together. We understand what success looks like in the group.

- **Alignment:** Coordination of shared work. Although individuals take on different tasks in the group, our combined work fits together.

- **Commitment:** Group trust, motivation, and responsibility. We make the success of the group — not just our individual success — a priority. We take responsibility for the welfare of the group.

If your team isn't getting results, you may think the problem starts with a failure in leadership. But a leadership problem doesn't necessarily mean you have a "leader" problem. Leadership is not just about the people at the top, but is a social process, enabling individuals to work together as a cohesive group to produce collective results.

By assessing where your group stands in the areas of Direction, Alignment and Commitment, you can plan and implement the changes necessary to get better results. To see where your group stands, you may want to answer the 15 questions in the online questionnaire at www.ccl.org/dac.

If you or the group identifies one or more low outcomes, you can begin exploring what factors may be contributing to these deficits.
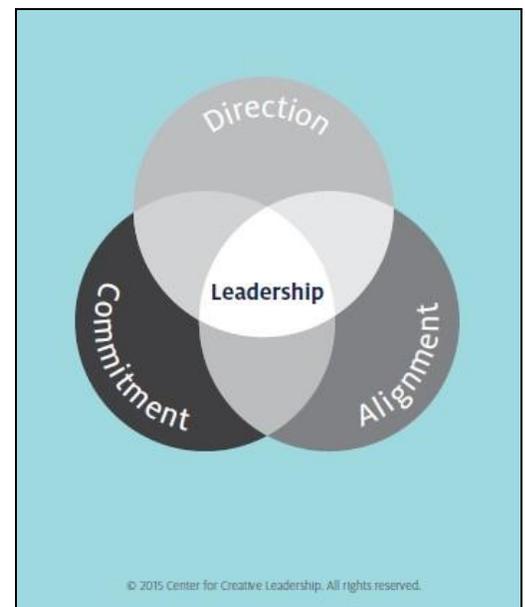
If you score high in all DAC areas but your group is not delivering the outcomes required, remember that although leadership is essential, achieving results is also dependent on other factors such as financial resources, people with the right technical knowledge and skills, appropriate technology, and effective business practices.

Sometimes we can put too much emphasis on leadership or the people at the top, forgetting that leadership is only one ingredient in the recipe for organizational success.

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