Leadership Development

Journal Three – Table of Contents

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If you are pursuing the “Pass” route you are to write about **TWO (2)** items from each section (each from a different unit). If you are pursuing the “Honours” route you are to write about **THREE (3)** items from each section (each from a different unit).

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# A – 12 Ways to Better Team Building

I think my current employer could use a lesson in #9 (encourage play time). The office environment is a cubicle farm where you can hear every mouse click all the way across the room. People are afraid to even take a phone call because everyone can hear everyone else’s conversation. Because of this, there is no sense of working on a team. I actually have no idea what other team members are working on or if they are even doing anything at all.

Doing some group activities could be a good way to ease the tension. It doesn’t have to be the usual lame fall-backwards-so-someone-can-catch-you thing, even something like a weekly lunch at a restaurant would work well. Just to let people get to know each other.

# A – Man’s Search for Meaning

I liked this article because it was all about the link between mental and physical health. It seems likely to me that a healthy mind is a requirement for a truly healthy body. The mind is a part of the body and controls the vast majority of what is happening.

Take for example, clinical depression. The symptoms of depression can include headaches, fatigue, digestion problems, insomnia, loss of appetite and slowed movement among a lot of other things. The ones I’ve listed are all symptoms that we typically associate with physical diseases; yet in this case they are caused by a mental disease.

Also consider how we often treat mental and physical diseases in similar ways. We use a large variety of chemicals and therapy to help treat individuals in both cases.

To get back to the article, I think what was happening to the prisoners that lost hope and meaning was that the brain stopped the body from living. Since the brain is in control of just about everything, it makes sense that the brain would be able to just shut everything off like that.

# B – Cesar Chavez

The thing that strikes me most is Cesar uses the same kind of language that Martin Luther King used. Cesar uses specific examples and places to draw the attention of the crowd.

With the opening few paragraphs describing the bus vs train accident, Cesar lays out his motivation. He then continues to describe the terrible situation the Hispanics are in. This is a pretty good way to get an audience’s attention. No doubt the majority of them would have been personally affected.

It seems to me like Cesar Chavez would like to accomplish his vision by showing his people that they are more powerful than they think. He does this by reminding his audience that they do have rights, that there a huge number of them, that they have support outside the community and that they are not to blame for the current situation. He reminds the people of their collective power in order to give hope for the future if they rally together. Chavez also makes his audience feel powerful by cutting down his opponents and making them seem weak.

Similarly to King, Chavez makes use of repetition to drive home his point. He returns to topics several times throughout his speech to remind the audience of all the problems they face.

He also uses repetition in his paragraph structure. “We didn’t poison the land. We didn’t… We didn’t… etc”. Even without having heard the speech I can hear a Hispanic voice in my head placing a heavy emphasis on the “We”.

# B – A Question of Leadership

As a quick side note, I like that this article is short and to the point. Too many of these articles have rambled on for pages about irrelevant story telling; but this one gets it right.

There are also some very good suggestions in this article. The most interesting is to let all the members of the group speak before the leader. But it should probably be clarified that the leader of the group isn’t always the person with the most power (aka the manager or CEO or whatever). Sometimes get into leadership positions because of attributes other than their leadership ability. This can mean that the “natural” (for lack of a better word) leader of the group might be the subordinate of the group’s manager. In which case that person should speak after the rest of the group has had their turn.

The reason I think this is a great way to prevent group think is that people will sometimes have a tendency to just follow the person they perceive to be the leader instead of building ideas of their own. By withholding their thoughts, the leader of the group will allow people to present their ideas freely.

The other part of this article that I liked is the requirement for criteria by which to judge a decision. How could we ever know if a decision is correct without a way to judge it? By using a clear set of criteria, we can objectify our decisions instead of running around in an endless subjective debate.

Criteria can also be used to highlight and reinforce the goals. For example, if your goal is to increase the user awareness of a feature of your software; you might set one of the criteria to be that the solution can’t hide the feature from users who are already using that feature.

But we should be careful that we aren’t setting criteria that are too strict or that are impossible to meet. Assuming that our goal is to land on the moon, we shouldn’t set a criteria that it has to cost less than $10. But we should maybe set a criteria that cost has to be minimal. In other words, it’s a good idea to avoid setting hard values but a good idea to use criteria as guidelines.

# C – The Grapes of Wrath

I’m having a hard time finding the relevance of this article to team building. When we get to the story, the families already know their roles and already have their goals set. Wouldn’t it be more useful to know how the roles and teams came about? Knowing that the families have established a routine isn’t very interesting to me. Everyone has routines.

# C – Pygmalion

The thing that I found most interesting about this is kind of tangentially related. During the discussion of the third PTC question, Yvonne had asked about the goals from Eliza’s perspective. I hadn’t even considered the goals that Eliza might have had when answering the question.

Feminists often talk about “consciousness raising” and this is the sort of thing they are referring to. I had completely missed that the question could be considered from both sides and automatically went with my instincts without thinking. It’s not really a huge deal I think, but it’s something to be aware of.

# D – Remember the Titans

The coach in this movie is kind of extreme, even by professional football standards. There is just no way that a high school football coach would get away with waking kids up at 3 am for a jog. Especially when bringing the coach in was controversial to begin with.

I think I understand what he is trying to do though. By putting the kids through this crazy training; he is trying to get the two races to realize that they are in a shared struggle. When people are in a shared struggle it often makes the most sense to put differences aside and work towards the common goal. In this case, the common goal is to win football games.

I suppose that if you see other people fighting the same problems you are fighting, you might see that the other people aren’t so different. Maybe that’s what the coach was trying to accomplish by being such a hard-ass? All physical training helps too obviously but team sports require teams to work together.

# D – Thirteen Days

I think the biggest danger being portrayed here is groupthink. Filling a room with people who agree with each other isn’t a great thing to do if you are looking for options. All you will get are variations on a theme or just agreement on the first thing that pops up.

I think we can all sympathize with the one lone person advocating something that the rest of the room disagrees with. It takes a lot of bravery to go against the consensus and stick with what you know is right.

# E – Ball Exercise

The thing that sticks out to me is how people are more excited when someone is willing to take a risk and is willing to fail. When someone would walk the ball into the box, it was almost disappointing that the person wasn’t willing to try throwing the ball. The same goal was accomplished whether the person threw the ball or not, but people were happier to watch someone throw the ball and miss than to walk it in. Which got me thinking, is the way we accomplish a goal just as important as accomplishing the goal?

For example, nobody (obvious Western bias here) remembers Ghandi for what he did, we remember him for how he did it. We remember Ghandi for his peaceful protests, refusal to act violently and his ability to inspire others to follow him. Yet if you ask someone what Ghandi actually accomplished, I doubt many people would be able to tell you.

# E – Nine Dots

I basically agree that sometimes unconventional solutions are needed. This puzzle reminds me of another similar puzzle with the same layout of 9 dots. You have to connect each dot in a x with a box around it without lifting the pen off the paper and without connecting the same 2 dots twice. Similarly, the trick is to realize that the rules don’t say you can’t go outside the box and make an arch between 2 corners.

The trick to these puzzle games is often found in what is left out of the rules. At no point did the rules state that you have to stay in the square; this was intentionally left out.

Maybe our brains create the limitations because the end of the dots seems like the end of the puzzle? Maybe it’s just a lack of imagination? I’m not really sure.

# F – Hayder – Vision and Meaning

During the discussion on the “you never achieve your vision” question, Hayder had agreed with Vaughan where I disagreed. Hayder was saying that you can achieve your goals but you can’t achieve your vision. I don’t see the reason for a distinction between goals and vision. To me, a vision is just a goal with a picture frame around it.

# F – John – Huckeberry Finn

During the PTC discussion for the “socially-charged words” question, John mentioned about how Huck was talking about “stealing” instead of “liberating” or “freeing”. I just thought that was a really good point and one that I hadn’t thought about. It’s a great piece of subtle language that shows how blacks were viewed as a piece of property to be owned.