

Leadership Update Second Quarter 2010

“Third Generation Leadership” – “3G Leadership” or “Leadership v3.0”

The world today is vastly different from that of the world of the 1940’s when I was born.

When I was born World War II was in full swing (even if the USA had not yet become involved) and the concept of duty and respect for authority was dominant. Families were disrupted when fathers, brothers, and sons went off to fight and, for many, this disruption was exacerbated by the death or permanent disability arising from military action. Very few people in Australia, NZ, the UK and allied countries questioned the “rightness” of the military action and almost everyone was prepared to endure whatever occurred because they saw this as part and parcel of their duty.

After the War things remained pretty much the same. Children were largely to be seen but not heard – it was not a question of whether they were loved and cared for – it was simply a fact that they were at the lower end of the pecking order. In the workforce, women who had willingly moved into various types of employment largely accepted that they should return to being housewives and allow their menfolk to again be the prime income earners. At the same time, men returning from military service largely accepted a hierarchical structure in which preference was given to longevity of service and status in society.

We lived in a world in which **First Generation Leadership** dominated.

In this world obedience to rules and regulations and to those in authority or of a “superior” social stratum was expected and followed. The dominant leadership behaviour was command and control and there was a strong disciplinarian ethos in which corporal punishment of children (whether or not of your own family) was at least tolerated and the price of disobedience in the workplace could be dismissal. To question an instruction or statement from an elder or other authority figure was generally actively discouraged and very often brought about punishment for the questioner. “Just do it” was very often the ethos.

Recent studies in neuroscience enable us to recognise that this world of **First Generation Leadership** is one in which the brain’s locus of control is centred in the basic (or “reptilian”) and limbic areas of our brain – what we call “the red zone”.

During the 1950’s things started to change – very slowly - but change none-the-less. At my secondary school most teachers still emphasised strong discipline backed up by the cane but one or two stand out as men who sought to get students involved in their learning and who never had to resort to punishing students.

By the 1960’s the groundswell had grown and those in authority were horrified at the “sex, drugs and rock and roll” culture that emerged in so many places. At the same time management researchers were producing data which suggested that a different approach would be more effective in obtaining desired organisational results. The emphasis moved towards compliance with rewards for those who complied and the withholding of rewards (or the provision of other punishments) from those who failed to comply.

By the 1970s **Second Generation Leadership** was alive and thriving.

Re-creating leaders and organisations



Douglas G Long

PO Box 459,
Lindfield,
NSW 2070,
AUSTRALIA

Phone:

Int + 61 - (0)412 029 754

Fax:

Int + 61 - (0)2- 9487 6249

E-mail:

douglas@dglong.com

Web:

<http://www.dglong.com>

In this world the leader emphasised responsibility and experience and sought to obtain and retain people who wanted to perform. Respect was expected by the leader and the leader reciprocated by demonstrating respect to those who conformed to the requisite standards. Communication still tended to be one-way (from the leader) and open upward questioning was discouraged.

Recent studies in neuroscience enable us to recognise that this world of **Second Generation Leadership** was one in which the brain's locus of control shifted between the basic (or "reptilian") and limbic areas of our brain – what we call "the red zone" and the limbic and cortical areas of our brain – what we call "the blue zone". It is also one in which, under pressure, almost invariably the red zone became dominant.

It is from these two worlds that today's leaders over the age of 40 have come as their schooling and early work experiences were based on these approaches. Accordingly **Second Generation Leadership** is today's dominant worldview in business, schools and society at large.

During the 1980's cracks started to appear in this **Second Generation Leadership** approach. The catalyst for change was, first, the personal computer and, second, the emergence of the internet. Of recent years with the rise of social media the cracks have grown and enlarged – sometimes to gaping chasms. The reason for this relates to the easy access to and rapid dissemination of knowledge and information of all sorts. No longer can those with power easily withhold information for prolonged periods and errors in fact and judgment can be rapidly discovered and disclosed by those who question.

Today we need **Third Generation Leadership** which could also be labelled **3G Leadership** or **Leadership v3.0**.

Third Generation Leadership comes from a brain that has its locus of control firmly in the cortex and neocortex – "the blue zone".

The difference between **Third Generation Leadership** and its predecessors is significant. Whereas Second Generation Leadership was a linear progression from First Generation Leadership and both were primarily red zone orientated, **Third Generation Leadership** makes a step jump.

The different Leadership Generations bring about different approaches to developing leaders.

With First generation Leadership there was no need for leadership training. Because life was controlled by rules and obedience was de rigueur one learned these rules as one progressed up the hierarchy and there was no difficulty in applying them and enforcing them.

Second Generation Leadership was different. With Second Generation Leadership leaders needed to learn how to bring about conformance. Some programs were pretty manipulative but most were genuinely focused on the leader-follower interaction in a positive way. However one thing common to most of these was that they could encourage the use of positive reinforcement (rewards for conformance) to get the desired result. And, as already indicated, although Second Generation Leadership harnessed the cortical zone of the brain, it was still basically a red zone activity as often observed when the leader was under pressure and effectively resorted to a "just do it" approach.

Third Generation Leadership focuses on the brain's locus of control. The emphasis here is to help leaders understand themselves and to learn how they can manage down their red zone while managing up their blue zone.

This is illustrated in a table developed by Andrew Mowat of Group 8 Management:

| Version: | First Generation Leadership (G1 Leadership or Leadership v1.0) | Second Generation Leadership (G2 Leadership or Leadership v2.0) | Third Generation Leadership (3G Leadership or Leadership v3.0) |
|---|---|--|---|
| World View | Obedience | Conformance | Engagement |
| Mind State | Red Zone | Red Zone/Blue Zone | Blue Zone |
| Leader emphasis | Command & Control | Responsibility & Experience | Collaborative, invitational, facilitative |
| Development | Disciplinarian | Expert | Facilitator |
| Professional belief | “Seen & not heard” | “Give me people who want to perform” | “Universal belief in every person” |
| Followers | Behaviour and learning managed by leader | Behaviour and learning partially managed by leader, partially by follower | Behaviour and learning managed by person (self-managing) |
| | Every person today can be engaged by a Leader 3.0, some by a Leader 2.0 and few by a Leader 1.0 | | |
| Respect | Unconditional, 1-way (followers must respect leader) | Conditional, 2-way (followers get leader respect if they do what they are told) | Unconditional, 2-way (leader respects people regardless of behaviour or achievement, followers reciprocate respect) |
| Questions from subordinates (followers to leaders) | Punished | Discouraged | Invited |
| Questions from leaders | For the purpose of making a decision or forming a judgement | For the purpose of solving another’s problems | For questioner to facilitate the other finding their own solution |
| Listening | When listener chooses and for their benefit | For listener to understand the problem | For listener to help other engage with the solution |
| Decision-making | Impulsive, instinctive | Intuitive, experience-based | Multiple viewpoints, analytic, team-based |
| How a leader feels | Superior when others fail | Responsible | Equal |
| Existential Anxiety | Allayed by following the rules (life is predictable) | Allayed by conformance to norms and rules and confidence in learning from experience | Allayed by “I matter to someone” and “I am making a difference” |

“Third Generation Leadership” (“3G Leadership” or “Leadership v3.0”) is truly transformative for the leader, the followers, and the organisation. And it can be learned.

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Contact Me Today

douglas@dglong.com

<http://www.dglong.com>

tel: int + (0)412 029 754

fax: int + 61 (0)2 9487 6249