

# ENLIGHTENED BUSINESS LEADERSHIP IN AN INTERCONNECTED WORLD

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### **Abstract**

A successful leader needs to demonstrate many important qualities: vision, courage, flexibility, integrity, openness among others. This paper will discuss two leadership qualities that are absolutely essential but not often considered. The first is a high degree of self-awareness. The second is generosity towards those being served.

Self-awareness is closely aligned with self-knowledge. To quote Warren Bennis, a distinguished professor of leadership studies, "A lack of self-knowledge is the most common, everyday source of leadership failure." One important aspect of being self-aware is to know your biases and prejudices. To have the credibility and trust of those you lead, you must be fair and impartial. This paper will discuss common biases and prejudices and offer techniques for overcoming many of these automatic, conditioned responses. Some cultural differences will be noted.

The quality of selfishness, not generosity, is often associated with business leaders. But as Lao Tzu said, "By serving others and being generous, the leader knows abundance." The paper will discuss ways in which a leader can demonstrate generosity and the benefits that accrue from such behavior. A few short case studies and personal experiences are used to illustrate how giving to others results in the giver receiving benefits well in excess of that which was given.

The paper concludes with a short summary and conclusion.

A successful leader needs to articulate and exhibit many qualities; vision, courage, integrity, adaptability and openness are some of the most commonly sought. This paper will discuss two leadership qualities which are absolutely essential – although often overlooked – in today’s increasingly transparent and stakeholder-sensitive environment. The first is a high degree of **self-awareness**. The second is **generosity** towards those with whom the leader interacts.

### SELF-KNOWLEDGE FOR LEADERS

Self-awareness is intimately connected to self-knowledge; I will use these terms interchangeably. To quote Warren Bennis, a distinguished professor of leadership studies, “A lack of self-knowledge is the most common, everyday source of leadership failure.” Self-awareness means, among other things: knowing one’s values, personality traits, needs and desires, negative habits, emotional triggers and strengths and weaknesses. Increasing one’s level of self-knowledge is a life-long process. Self-knowledge helps leaders become more effective in a number of important ways.

By examining the beliefs that prompt their decisions leaders can determine if those beliefs are an accurate depiction of reality or based on distortions and misconceptions. If a particular decision is based on the beliefs of the immature, egotistical part of the personality the resulting action is likely to be self-serving and shortsighted. Such self-aggrandizing behavior will be easily recognized as arrogant and unappealing and generates resentments that impair the leader’s authority. When a leader’s decisions are driven by the mature, wiser part of the personality, the actions that follow are likely to be more constructive and oriented toward the common good.

By understanding their strengths and weaknesses, leaders maximize their strong points and mitigate their weaknesses. As an example, executives good at seeing the big picture but weak on details will need to consult or employ detail-oriented people to counterbalance their limitations. Those basing their decisions primarily on intuitive feelings will have to consult with more reason-based colleagues to ensure they are not overlooking vital factors. Relying solely on one’s strengths may not be appropriate in every situation and may even hamper the leader’s ability to bolster his or her shortcomings.

Leaders need to know how they can best articulate the values and priorities that are most meaningful to them. Determining where their life is focused with regard to Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs – physiological, social and spiritual – provides important information that can assist in their own development and in working with people in the organization that may be concentrating on a different level of need.

Self-knowledge helps leaders determine which leadership style is best suited to their personality and to specific situations. In an increasingly complex and dynamic world, a self-aware leader will adapt, to the extent possible, the style best suited to the circumstances. When their preferred style is inappropriate or ineffective, the best leaders will find others who compliment their approach.

It is also important that the leader know what thoughts and desires motivate their decisions? As Mohandas Gandhi made clear, “The moment there is suspicion about a person's motives, everything he does becomes tainted.” For instance, if the motive behind a decision is to make the

leader or the organization look “good” or superior in some way, the resulting action will likely prove shortsighted and ineffective. Even if the initial results appear positive, there are likely to be unintended consequences. Determining motives often requires looking behind the most obvious provocations for less apparent factors that actually account for the decision.

Another area for self-study involves uncovering the basis for the leader’s opinions. Are the opinions automatic responses based on prior conditioning or thoroughly researched, keenly analyzed positions? Every decision has advantages and disadvantages; it is critical that the disadvantages be fully weighed and thoroughly evaluated. Every decision entails uncertainty and varying degrees of risk. Nonetheless, a proper evaluation may reveal that a more risky position is superior when the advantages appear to outweigh the risks. Successful risk-reward analysis often consumes considerable time and resources and may require input from disinterested parties. Raising prices for a company’s products, for example, may result in higher revenue and profits in the short run but may entice new competitors to enter the market which will hurt the company in the longer term. Current shareholders may want to maximize short term profits while impartial consultants would counsel taking the long term view.

Jacques Rogge, President of the International Olympic Committee was honored in February 2011 at the Antwerp Management School in Belgium. Dr. Rogge, an Olympic athlete, surgeon, teacher and sports administrator, has been ranked as one of the top world leaders by Forbes Magazine. At his lecture on global leadership for the Andre Leysen Leadership Chair, he offered a list of “must dos” and “must haves” for excellent leadership. Above all, he said, “a leader must have great self-knowledge and be aware of his or her personal limitations, and this is probably the most difficult trait to have.” (Rogge, 2011)

In other words, the quest for self-knowledge entails discovering all you can about your beliefs, values, priorities and life purpose. This dictum was expressed in slightly different terms by Max De Pree, former CEO of the Herman Miller office furniture company. According to De Pree, “The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality.” (2004) More specifically: which objectives are real and enduring enough to be worthy of one’s time and effort? What goals can make a meaningful difference to a company’s employees, customers, investors, the community it serves and the eco-system upon which we all depend?

One vital but often overlooked aspect of self-awareness is recognizing one’s biases and prejudices. It is amazing how many otherwise self-aware individuals are unconscious of their conditioned responses and how often these influence their behavior. To attain credibility and gain the respect and trust of those they lead, leaders must be fair and impartial. Being seen as trustworthy is critical for leaders who will ask their employees to do challenging and often risky tasks. Edelman's 2011 Trust Barometer®, the firm’s 11th annual survey, measured attitudes about the level of trust in business, government, NGOs and media in 23 countries. Across all institutional categories, 56% of respondents said they trusted the organizations surveyed while 44% said they lacked trust. By country, the results varied considerably. Taken as a whole, trust in the above mentioned institutions was highest in Brazil at 81%, India was 70%, China 61%, the United States 46%, United Kingdom 44% and Russia 41%. Too many people considered their most important institutions as far from reliable. Leaders who minimize their biases and prejudices have a much better chance of improving their followers’ trust. As Lao Tzu counseled, “To act effectively, be aware and unbiased.”

Different cultures tend to exhibit certain biases more than others. (See list of biases below.) In the U.S., for example, individual freedom and personal choice are stressed more than in China where family and group cohesion are more important. Therefore, the Chinese may be more prone to adhere to beliefs espoused by a group they belong to without analyzing the accuracy of the group's belief system. Americans, on the other hand, may be more susceptible to self-serving biases – those that are directed to their personal interests.

In their book, *Born to Believe*, authors Mark Robert Waldman and Andrew Newberg, M.D, state that our beliefs are based on assumptions, generalizations, distortions and misconceptions. (2006) These cognitive biases govern our perceptions of reality – how we understand the world. We need to become conscious of these biases and analyze their accuracy before making decisions. What people perceive how clearly they perceive it and how they process the data after receiving it are all influenced by past experience, education, cultural values and organizational norms. To a certain extent, we all manipulate others to persuade them to embrace our own beliefs. Parents do this with their children, teachers with their students, researchers with their coworkers and spouses with their mates. Unfortunately, we often do this without consciously considering the other person's interests or needs. Dr. Newberg states, “Our brain is calibrated to trust anyone who happens to be a ‘member’ of our group or an authority figure.” (2006:258) With almost every thought incorporating a degree of bias, our beliefs represent a compromise between the way we view the world and the way it really is. Twenty-seven common biases are listed below.

1. **Family bias** – We accept information provided by family and friends without verifying its accuracy.
2. **Authoritarian bias** – We tend to believe people with power and status without checking their sources.
3. **Attractiveness bias** – Taller, more attractive individuals are given greater credence because we seek what is aesthetically pleasing.
4. **Confirmation bias** – We tend to emphasize information that supports our beliefs while ignoring contradictory ideas.
5. **Self-serving bias** – We tend to maintain beliefs that benefit our interests and goals.
6. **In-group bias** – We give preference and benefit of doubt to members of “our group.”
7. **Out-group bias** – We reject or disparage beliefs of people outside “our group.”
8. **Group Consensus bias** - The more other people agree with us, the more likely we will be to assume that our beliefs are true.
9. **Bandwagon bias** – We have a tendency to go along with the belief systems of whatever group we are involved with.
10. **Projection bias** – We often assume, without checking, that other people in our group have similar beliefs, have similar morals, and see the world in similar ways.
11. **Expectancy bias** – When looking for information, or conducting research, we have a propensity to "discover" what we are looking for.
12. **“Magic Number” bias** – The larger and more dramatic a number is, the greater emotional impact it will have, and this, in turn, strengthens our trust in the information being quantified.
13. **Probability bias** – We like to believe that we are luckier than others, and that we can

- beat the odds.
14. **Cause-and-Effect bias** – Our brain is predisposed toward making a causal connection between two events, even when no such connection exists.
  15. **Pleasure bias** – We tend to assume that pleasing experiences reflect greater truths than unpleasant experiences.
  16. **Personification bias** – We prefer to give inanimate objects lifelike qualities. This perceptual and cognitive function gives rise to various superstitious beliefs.
  17. **False-Memory bias** – Our brain tends to retain false memories longer than accurate memories.
  18. **Positive-Memory bias** – When reflecting on the past, we tend to recall events in a more positive and favorable light than they had when they first occurred.
  19. **Logic bias** – We tend to believe arguments that strike us as more logical. We also tend to ignore information that doesn't make sense to us.
  20. **Persuasion bias** – We are more likely to believe someone who is more dramatic and emotional when arguing a particular point of view.
  21. **Primacy bias** – We give more weight to, and remember more easily, names and information that appear at the top of a list.
  22. **Uncertainty bias** – Our brain does not like uncertainty and ambiguity; thus we prefer to believe or disbelieve, rather than remain uncertain.
  23. **Emotional bias** – Strong emotions usually interfere with logic and reason. Anger tends to evoke the belief that we are justified and right; anxiety undermines such a belief; and depression obscures optimistic beliefs.
  24. **Publication bias** – Editors of books, journals, and magazines prefer to publish work that shows positive outcomes, and to exclude work with negative findings. Furthermore, readers assume automatically that anything published is true.
  25. **Perceptual bias** – We assume our perceptions and beliefs reflect objective truths.
  26. **Perseverance bias** – The longer we maintain specific beliefs the more ingrained they become.
  27. **Blind-Spot bias** – Most people fail to recognize how many cognitive biases they actually have, or how often they fall prey to these biases. (Newburg, 2006:253-7)

If leaders are unaware of their biases their judgments are unlikely to be objective. The more thoroughly individuals know themselves and are of their biases the more likely they are to make impartial, objective decisions – an essential attribute of any successful leader. What procedures or techniques can we use to bring our unconscious biases to a more conscious level?

The book *Born to Believe* describes how people continually misinterpret information and how this leads to reaching different conclusions about reality. The book refers to eight strategies that can be employed to minimize the influence of our biases on our decisions. Lao Tzu succinctly summarized the essence of these techniques when he said, “Learn to see things backward, inside out and upside down.”

1. Become proficient in developing alternative points of view.
2. Do not assume that the other person will think or act like you.
3. Think backward. Instead of thinking about what might happen, put yourself into the future and try to explain how a potential situation could have occurred.

4. Imagine that the belief you are currently holding is wrong, and then develop a scenario to explain how that could be true. This helps you to see the limitations of your own beliefs.
5. Try out the other person's beliefs by actually acting out the role. This helps you avoid seeing the world through the habitual patterns of your own beliefs.
6. Play “devil's advocate” by taking the minority point of view. This helps you see how alternative assumptions make the world look different.
7. Brainstorm. More input improves the output because the first ideas that come to mind are those that reflect old beliefs. New ideas help you to break free of emotional blocks and social norms.
8. Interact with people of different backgrounds and beliefs. (Newburg, 2006:259)

To summarize, self-knowledge is an essential quality for successful leadership. It helps leaders understand their strengths and weaknesses, decide which leadership style best suits their personality, establish values and priorities aligned with their core beliefs, determine when their motives need reexamining, improve their interactions with others and increase the likelihood their decisions will lead to constructive, long lasting benefits.

### **GENEROSITY HAS ITS REWARDS**

*By serving others and being generous, the leader knows abundance. By being selfless, the leader helps others realize themselves. **Lao Tzu***

Giving generously means different things to different people. Maimonides, a twelfth century Jewish scholar, listed eight ways of giving, each progressively more commendable: 1) giving sadly; 2) giving less than needed, but gladly; 3) giving after being asked; 4) giving without being asked; 5) giving without knowing who the recipient is; 6) giving without the recipient knowing who gave; 7) giving with neither the recipient nor giver knowing who the other is; 8) helping the poor become self-reliant by giving them interest free loans, hiring them to work or teaching them a skill or profession. In the section of this paper that discusses various ways business leaders give back to their organization, we will see examples of several types of giving and the benefits that accrue from them.

Understandably, after the recent economic crisis, using the word generosity with respect to business leaders is tantamount to an act of treason. The past decade has been filled with stories of greedy, short-sighted and reckless conduct on the part of many leaders of the business community. Yet leaders who have developed a high level of self-awareness realize they are merely a tiny part in an unending chain; all the links in the chain must be respected and nourished if the economic and ecological systems upon which we depend are to flourish. Being generous is simply an acknowledgement that those who are thriving need to help those who are less well off. As Jeff Immelt, CEO of General Electric said in a December 9, 2009 speech, “Ethically, leaders do share a common responsibility to narrow the gap between the weak and the strong.” Said more succinctly but eloquently, “Our actions must have the purpose of being helpful to others.” (Sharavana, 2011)

### **The Golden Rule**

The Golden Rule (see below), some form of which has been expressed by all cultures for thousands of years, tells us that doing to others what we would want them to do to us, is a fundamental tenet of life. Most people desire abundance in some form – material, emotional, mental or spiritual; shouldn't those who are able help others reach the same goal? Ageless wisdom even gives us a practical reason for giving generously to others: “What you give to others, you give to yourself. Not giving to others deprives you even more than it deprives others. It makes you incapable of receiving what is available for you.” (Pierrakos,1975:2) Generosity, it turns out, is actually in our self-interest. Recognizing this, many business leaders have used the Golden Rule as the principle upon which they have successfully guided their companies.

Despite challenging industry conditions, Southwest Airlines has been one of the most successful airline carriers precisely because its personnel policies are built around the Golden Rule. The company's executives treat their employees with respect and take care of their needs. As a result, Southwest's leaders expect more – and receive more – from their employees. Employees know the company is looking out for their interests and expect to be held accountable for meeting their leader's high expectations. More specifically, employees are expected to fairly and caringly interact with the customers. Such an attitude assures contented, loyal customers and a prosperous bottom line. It's a business model that only works when employees know their leaders care. (Schwerin, 2005:184)

**Buddhism:** Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful. *Udana-Varga, 5:18, 6th Century BCE*

**Christianity:** Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them. *Matthew 7:12, 1st Century CE*

**Classical Paganism:** May I do to others as I would they should do unto me. *Plato, 4th Century BCE*

**Confucianism:** Do not unto others what you would not have them do to you. *Analects, 15:23, 6th Century BCE*

**Hinduism:** Do naught unto others which would cause you pain if done to you. *Mahabharata 5:1517, 3rd Century BCE*

**Bah'ai:** Lay not on any soul a load which ye would not wish to be laid upon you and desire not for anyone the things you would not desire for yourself. *Baha'u'llah, 19th Century CE*

**Islam:** No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother what he desires for himself. *Muhammad, Sunnab, 6th Century CE*

**Jainism:** In happiness and suffering, in joy and grief, we should regard all creatures as we regard our own self, and should therefore refrain from inflicting upon others such injury as would appear undesirable to us if inflicted upon ourselves. *Lord Mahavir, 24th Tirthankara, 5th Century, BCE*

**Judaism:** What is hateful to you, do not to your fellow man. *Talmud, Shabbat 31a*

**Native American:** Do not condemn your brother until you have walked a mile in his moccasins.  
*Unknown*

**Sikhism:** Don't create enmity with anyone as God is within everyone. *Guru Arjan Devji 259, Guru Granth Shaib*

**Taoism:** Regard your neighbors gain as your own gain and regard your neighbor's loss as your own loss. *Unknown*

**Zoroastrianism:** Do not do unto others all that which is not well for oneself. *Dadistan-I-Dinik, 94:5, 5th Century BCE*

### **Demonstrating Generosity**

There are many ways a leader can demonstrate generosity; below are three pragmatic approaches worthy of emulation.

**Show appreciation for employee effort and offer praise as warranted.** In 2001, shortly after Doug Conant had been hired to be CEO of Campbell Soup Company, the firm had an engagement ratio of 2:1, meaning two employees were enthusiastic about their work for every one who was discontent. The industry gold standard, based on Gallop engagement surveys, was 12:1. The Gallop engagement manager told Conant, "These are the worst results I have ever seen for a Fortune 500 firm." Conant had his work cut out for him. He began making changes to show Campbell's employees that the company's leaders cared about their well-being. He began by improving building security, making the physical facilities more attractive, offering more flexible working hours and creating more consumer-friendly products and packaging. (Conant and Norgaard, 2011:16-17) These steps were significant but Conant soon realized that a strong personal connection with the workforce was needed. To this end, he began sending ten to twenty personal, handwritten, notes each day to thank people for their extra effort, to welcome new employees or to congratulate them for some achievement. These notes were often shared with other employees creating a ripple effect that enlivened the workforce. (Conant and Norgaard, 2011:116) As a result, Campbell's engagement ratio began to rise and by 2010 it had reached the extraordinary level of 17:1. (Conant and Norgaard, 2011:19) Giving back – taking an hour a day out of his busy schedule to write to his employees and redirecting scarce resources for their benefit – paid big dividends. As Conant see it, "Leaders must show that they cared about the employees before they could expect the employees to care about the company's agenda." (Conant and Norgaard, 2011:15)

**Provide employees with ample training and development opportunities.** In other words, treat employees as assets to be enriched rather than liabilities to be slashed. Too often business leaders, in their drive to improve short-term financial results, cut personnel costs to the bone. By contrast, Pantaloon, India's largest and fastest growing retailer, gives six weeks of training to new recruits who have frontline jobs. In addition, according to Kishore Biyani, Pantaloon's CEO, "We run a program in the organization which everyone has to go through, called 'design management' which basically trains people to use both sides of the brain," both "the visual and esthetic side and the logical rational."(Cappelli, Singh, Singh and Useem, 2010:72) In their book, *The India Way*, the authors interviewed numerous business leaders in India about their personnel policies. Number two in importance, after transforming their organizations, was creating

development opportunities for their employees and enriching their lives. B. Muthuraman of Tata Steel told the authors his intent was “To make people happy. That’s it!” Such an approach may hinder short-term profits but a firm that gives generously to its employees creates an environment where workers will voluntarily protect the interests of the company. In other words, they’ll act in the company’s interest even when no one is monitoring them. (Cappelli et al., 2010:79) Pantaloon Retail has won the International Retailer of the Year at the US-based National Retail Federation convention in New York and Emerging Retailer of the Year award at the World Retail Congress held in Barcelona.

**Care for the environment and give back to the community.** People like to work for companies that are socially responsible. It makes them feel better about themselves and more enthusiastic about spending time away from friends and family. Visy Industries is one of the largest privately-owned paper recycling and packaging companies in the world. They are headquartered in Melbourne Australia and employ thousands of people in Australia, New Zealand, Europe and the United States. Their slogan, “harvesting the urban forest” is descriptive of their focus; sustainable development that helps others maximize their natural resources and minimize damage to the environment. Visy takes a long-term view when it comes to promoting sustainability. They have an educational program for local school children aimed at developing a society-wide penchant for recycling. Upon receiving the United Nations Association of Australia Award for its environmental best practices, Visy’s then CEO, Harry Debney said: “Visy’s commitment to environmental best practices is integral to the business’ day-to-day functions – it’s something we’re passionate about and which forms an important part of our decision making on everyday issues and all major projects.” In addition to its environmental contributions, Visy donates three percent of its worldwide pretax profits to various charities. Former Visy Chairman Richard Pratt has been quoted as saying, “It’s amazing, the more money we give away, the more money the company makes. Generosity works. (Schwerin, 2005:225-6)

### **The Metaphysics of Generosity**

*By serving others and being generous, the leader knows abundance. By being selfless, the leader helps others realize themselves. **Lao Tzu***

We have seen that generosity is more than an altruistic approach to life; it is a pragmatic one as well. But why is the act of giving a prerequisite for receiving the riches of the universe? In the next section we will start with an easily understood explanation of this phenomenon and then move to more complex, metaphysical accounts with some scientific examples sandwiched in between.

From a straightforward, practical point of view, it is easy to observe that a container full to the brim is unable to receive; there is simply no more room. Only when partially or fully emptied – some portion given away – is the container able to receive. Since people are full to the brim with “stuff” – physical substances, emotional reactions, mental meanderings – something must be released, in essence given up, before more can be taken in.

For a more scientific explanation we turn to biology. Cells, according to biologist and bestselling author, Bruce Lipton, Ph.D., are human beings in miniature; they can teach us a great deal about the mechanics of life. (2005: 27) Each nucleus-containing cell possesses the functional equivalent of a nervous, digestive, respiratory, excretory, endocrine, skeletal, circulatory, reproductive and immune system. Each cell is an intelligent entity that can survive on its own;

every cell is capable of adapting to its environment. To exhibit “intelligent” behavior, cells need a functioning membrane with both receptor (awareness) and effector (action) proteins. These protein complexes are the fundamental units of cellular intelligence. The interaction between the cell’s behavior-producing proteins and environmental signals takes place within the cell’s membrane. The membrane receives stimuli and then begins the appropriate, life-sustaining cellular responses. (Lipton, 2005:128) Every protein in our body is a physical/electromagnetic complement to something in the environment. Since our bodies are made out of protein, by definition, we are made in the image of the environment, that environment being the Universe or the creative source of life. (Lipton, 2005:188) At the cellular level, the process of evolution is primarily one of maximizing the number of units of “intelligence” which are the membrane’s receptor/effector proteins. (Lipton, 2005:87) At the level of body, mind and spirit, the corresponding evolution is the process of ascension to higher awareness.

It is hard to know how the interaction between cells and “the environment” is initiated but this reciprocal interplay is essential to sustaining life. While individual cells have intelligence and consciousness, it is of a lower order than the multi-celled organism that is our physical body. Primitive organisms have less developed nervous systems; they rely on preprogrammed instincts. Humans, on the other hand are endowed with a greater capacity to acquire and assimilate new knowledge; their growth is more dependent on learning than on reflexive instincts. (Lipton, 2005:160) One of the things humans have to learn is that in order to receive the riches of the universe – spiritual guidance, protection, connections, healings etc. – they must first be willing to risk giving away that which they value. They must trust the universe to provide what they need before they can begin to receive the material and spiritual gifts that are available to all who contribute to life.

Giving and receiving are a continuous flow; one cannot exist without the other. When distrustful, fearful hoarding inhibits the person from entering into the flow of life, the process of giving and receiving stops and the grace to which we are all entitled cannot penetrate the personality. Sadguru Sri Sharavana describes this process as follows, “Divine Grace is like the flow of a river: it flows consistently in one direction. If you go in the opposite direction, you must be prepared to face the consequences.”

Every attitude, every mental and emotional condition creates chain reactions and circles – either benign or vicious ones, based on the truth or error of the belief, attitude or behavior. If we believe in an impoverished world we hoard our gifts, talents and everything we possess materially and spiritually. We separate ourselves from the riches that surround us; receiving is, therefore, impossible. By contrast, once a giving attitude is established, our inner and outer riches are continually replaced in a never-ending stream of offerings. The more we give the more we are capable of receiving; the more we receive the more we can give. It is then that giving and receiving become one. (Pierrakos, 1978:3)

The epitome of a leader who places giving above other considerations is one who follows the principles of servant-leadership, a term coined by Robert K. Greenleaf in 1970. At the time, Greenleaf was a human resource executive with AT&T. Servant-leaders follow the “service model” which is all about selfless giving. (Trompenaars and Voerman, 2010:15) Specifically, servant-leaders are concerned with helping employees realize their full potential as human beings, not just as employees. They are also intent on creating a better world, not just a better company. (Trompenaars and Voerman, 2010:9) Servant-leadership is more than a lofty ideal. In the past few years as many as six of the top ten companies in Fortune’s 100 Best Companies to

Work For in America practice the principles of servant-leadership. Giving truly does beget receiving.

On a personal level, my wife and I have witnessed the unfolding of a benign circle of grace in our lives. Shortly after my first book, *Conscious Capitalism*, was published in China, we had the opportunity to provide funding to establish two Socially Responsible Business Centers, one at a University in Tianjin and the other at a University in Soochow. We quickly saw the potential value of these Centers and didn't think twice about providing the money. We had no idea if or how our seed money would blossom into meaningful projects with tangible results. And we certainly had no idea that our contribution would be reciprocated many times over nor the amount and variety of appreciation we would receive. On a material level we have been treated like royalty whenever we return to the Universities and have often been given valuable gifts to take home with us. On a social level we have been thrilled with the numerous connections that have developed and have been blessed with many new life-long friendships. And on a spiritual level we received wonderful inspiration that aided our teaching and writing as well as guidance on how best to focus our work whenever we have returned to China. We have received much more than we have given.

This paper has discussed two qualities – **self-knowledge** and **generosity** – leaders need if their organizations are to achieve their potential. The policies of three companies showed the benefits they derived from being generous to employees, the community and the environment. Visy's approach to giving back was concentrated on the sustainability of natural resources and making monetary contributions to the community. Campbell Soup's approach was to show their employees that management cared about their well-being. Pantaloon spent considerable time and money to train and develop their employees. All three businesses derived a variety of benefits from being generous to their stakeholders. A commitment to grand ideals leads to grand results. What could be better than that?

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