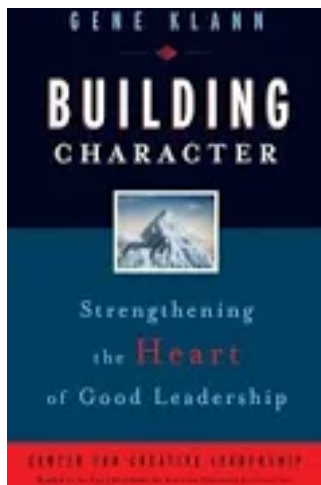By: Mariya Khrystan

"Building Character: Strengthening the Heart of Good Leadership"

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Gene Klann

Gene Klann was a senior member of the training faculty at the Center for Creative Leadership in Greensboro, North Carolina. Prior to joining the Center in 1999, he was the founder and president of Leadership International, an organization specializing in human relations, training, coaching, and management consulting. He also conducted training at the Michigan Leadership Development Institute at Saginaw Valley State University, where he designed and delivered a leadership series for key business and community leaders.

As the personal highlight of his career, Gene took special pride in having commanded a battalion of six hundred paratroopers in Desert Shield and Desert Storm, and in seeing that all six hundred returned to the United States alive.

Introduction to the Book

This book provides information about processes that can be used to develop leadership characteristics in the employees you are working with, as well as being effective for anyone that is taking part in such an endeavour. This book gives practical ways and tools to establish and ensure sound leadership behaviors.

CHAPTER 1

In the first chapter the author encourages readers to think about the best and worst leaders they ever had, and what behaviours defined them. Klann encourages all leaders to always look at their behaviours as that is what is going to define who they truly are. "Over time, most leaders exhibit consistent patterns of leadership behavior. The pattern shapes their reputation (how they are known and perceived by others), is considered a reflection of their character, and largely determines their standing and status with others". Klann mentions that leaders "behaviors that are considered positive and constructive can be attractive and highly influential. The result is greater respect and trust, and stronger emotional connection between such leaders."

In this chapter we are also given a way to differentiate between management and leadership: " management deals with tasks such as planning, designing, directing, controlling, coordinating, and tracking execution. Leadership is about motivating, inspiring, encouraging, and influencing people. We lead people and manage things. Real leaders are effective at leveraging and shaping reality with intangibles such as vision, hope, spirit, morale, emotion, enthusiasm, passion, and soul. Good leaders have positive influencing attributes like courage, caring, self-control, optimism, and communication skills"(Klann, 4).

To lead is to influence. An effective leader possesses the skills and abilities to influence others for the best — prompting, stimulating, motivating, persuading, dissuading, convincing, and encouraging. An effective leader is always thinking, "What impact does my behavior have on others?" "What might others think, feel, or do as a result of what I do?" "Is my behavior effective, ineffective, or neither?" "How can I behave differently to be more influential?"(Klann,5).

CHAPTER 2

The second chapter of this book explores a set of traits that define the leadership behaviors that you and your organization probably want to develop. The five chapters after that lay out a framework for developing leadership character in an organizational context. The author classifies this framework as the "Five E's": example, experience, education, environment, and evaluation.

- **Example**

Example refers to a leader's influence on others through their observation of the leader's behaviors. Within any organization the behaviors of these leaders set the standard for everyone else.

- **Experience**

Experience refers to developing leadership character by exposing leaders to new and challenging leadership work. This can include a variety of assignments, moving to positions with increased or different responsibilities and scope.

- **Education**

Education refers to providing knowledge and training to a leader related to leadership character development.

- **Environment**

Environment is essentially the organizational culture and its value system, both formal and informal, in which a developing leader functions. An organization's environment plays a huge role in either encouraging or impeding the character development of leaders.

- **Evaluation**

Evaluation is a process by which employees are held accountable - and by which they are encouraged to better themselves - through the use of performance appraisals and decisions regarding merit increases, bonuses, and promotions. By paying close attention to the feedback being given to them, leaders will further develop character.
This chapter also describes five attributes that are remarkably influential in leaders in all organizational sectors — public, private, or nonprofit these examples include:Courage, Caring, Optimism, Self-Control, Communication.In addition, good leader is also being defined in taking responsibility and making decisions,always encouraging employees, joking with them, Making

sure work is fun, telling them the truth and staying open to ideas
and feedback,taking responsibility when they screw up and changing
bad decisions as quickly as possible.

CHAPTER 3

Of the Five E's, personal example is probably the most influential and
effective tool for developing leadership character in others. Humanitarian
Albert Schweitzer went so far as to say,"Examples are not the main thing
in influencing others. It is the only thing". Leading by example means
having a positive influence on others through your own behavior(actions
and attitudes.But your example not only leads, it also develops the
leadership capacity of others who study and imitate you(Klann,49.
Throughout life, people tend to imitate four types of behaviors:
• Behaviors of those in authority and positions of power, or those
who are popular
• Behaviors they see as desirable, successful, or attractive
• Behaviors they respect, esteem, and value
• Behaviors that allow them to go along with the crowd,conform,
and avoid looking different
Leaders must wisely choose how they will behave and then accept the
consequences of that behavior, keeping in mind they will never be able to
please everyone.
Many outstanding and successful leaders have attributed their success to
having followed the example of a role model, mentor, parent, or other
person that they truly respected.
Implicit in developing character through the example of the leader is
that, above all, the leader displays and behaves in a way that has a
positive influence on others. Leaders should exemplify all the traits and
qualities that they want their cadre of leadership to have. As this
chapter is suggesting, your example helps to develop the leadership
potential of those below you. From your patterns of action, your
leadership cadre can see for themselves how important consistent behavior
is, what behaviors are good and have a positive influence, and what
behaviors are bad and do not. In this respect,
setting a positive leadership example is really "the highest form of
leadership" because of its multiplying effect on other leaders.
Certainly, your example carries ten times more power and authority than
any book, lecture, or conversation with a colleague.
Other behaviors that will generally be copied are your behaviors when you
come to and leave work, how you handle time, how you treat people, and
even how you dress.

People will be less likely to follow a leader if they see them looking out only for their personal interests. Leaders whose example will be followed are those who believe in doing good for those they serve(Klann,56).

CHAPTER 4

After example, **experience** is the next best avenue for the character development of leaders. In this context, experience refers to learning from life circumstances, events, and relationships. It is the sum total of all that has happened in the leader's life to date; it is the resulting impact of everything the leader has done or undergone.
Courage, caring, optimism, self-control, and communication can all develop through experience.
A second major value of experience is that it expands a leader's knowledge base, expertise, proficiency, and skill levels. It increases
wisdom, understanding, maturity, resilience, credibility, and confidence.
Experience is also valuable because it improves efficiency, reduces the time needed to accomplish a task, enhances self-esteem, shows the value of having and communicating a vision, and that of goal setting. In addition, experience provides new perspectives on values, priorities, relationships, and success. It is through experiences, both personal and professional, that we clarify and validate our values.

Through experience, you can adjust your behavior to achieve a higher overall impact. This is really the ultimate way of understanding the impact of leadership behaviors in practice.
Learning from experience entails applying new understanding to future situations and relationships. Without application, there really is no learning.

CHAPTER 5

In this chapter the author summarizes best practices in adult education and outlines some more specific leadership character education approaches your organization might take, with behaviors (more than internal thoughts or attitudes) as the focus. Behaviors are the practical focal point of character training for leaders.

Education refers to a more systematic imparting of knowledge: the awareness of, familiarity with, and understanding of a range of information, facts, principles, or points of view. In addition to knowledge itself, education implies insight, enlightenment, and an opening of the mind. Then there is the step of actually applying what one learns. Education may involve practice but is often separate from the actual accomplishment of a particular task. As a form of education, training generally implies the gaining of new knowledge in more direct service of mastering some task or skill.

Remember also that education and training need to mesh with the other four "E's", especially experience. At the end of the day, Roger Schank, educator and founder of Cognitive Arts, is probably right that we do not learn by being told, and that for the most part schooling (at least for our purposes) is a waste of time. Learning and schooling, he says, have very little in common. If you want to learn, it is best to go out and experience something. Schank promotes apprenticeships and internships for high school students, which he feels are infinitely better learning experiences than the traditional classroom (Zuckerman, 2004). Together with training, try to give increased and varied responsibilities to all members of your

leadership cadre. The next chapter deals with "E" number four — your organization's environment.

CHAPTER 6

Chapter six looks mainly at organizational values: how they may focus or conflict, and the role in defining and promoting good leadership values. Finally, it talks about building character development into your company's business plan.

Environment here refers mainly to the culture of an organization— its society, collective personality, attitudes, customs, traditions, and outlook. The concept of organizational culture carries with it the idea of an identity, a meaningful unity of ideas, achievements, capabilities, and vision. Metaphorically, culture is the air the organization breathes, the water it drinks, and the ground it walks on. The company culture and way of life are shaped and developed over time by the actions and values of its people.

Functional Homogeneity
The organization should be relatively homogeneous in function. Homogeneity results in a strong corporate identity and uniform values and goals. Agreement on priorities provides a basis for development. The more similar in function the business units are, the easier it will be to reach consensus on the priorities and focus of a developmental initiative.

Creating a Leader
Forming a leadership development initiative requires vision. It takes the commitment of someone who constantly looks for how the company could grow, change, and evolve for the better. It takes a leader who

not only can envision success, but can communicate that vision and follow through with skill and drive. Your organization's culture must absolutely value its people, and in particular its leadership capital.

The company's leaders should create a company culture and value system that supports a viable, long-term leadership character development process.

The same five attributes that underlie good leadership character— courage, caring, optimism, self-control, and communication can also be seen as important basic attributes of an organization's culture.

Each can be promoted and encouraged by the culture, its leaders, and by a character development process for leaders.

CHAPTER 7

One way to prepare yourself for evaluating others is to review your own personal resources in terms of the five leadership attributes — courage, caring, optimism, self-control, and communication. If you yourself are well prepared and able to apply all five, you will be in a position to use evaluation tools effectively. First, it takes courage to evaluate well. Because of a lack of courage some leaders never give developmental feedback or write anything but glowing performance appraisals, and they ignore behaviors that might require discipline. Leaders must also sincerely care about their cadre and their development in order to evaluate well. Behavioral feedback, performance appraisals, and discipline all take time, effort, concentration, and insightful thought.

CHAPTER 8

Decide what you want to be or have achieved by the end, then work back to now and establish a plan that will get you there. How do you want to be remembered at the end of your life? What do you want people to say about your character, pattern of behavior, impact, and overall influence? Try answering that question by writing your own one-sentence character legacy. Then where do you need to start? With perspective and understanding of their past and current behaviors, leaders can adjust those behaviors for greater positive influence and higher overall impact. Leadership character is all about choosing a behavior — words or deeds — and then accepting the consequences of that behavior. When all is said and done, choices really make the

person. That is the essence of leadership character. As animal activist Jane Goodall said, "You cannot get through a single day without having an impact on the world around you. What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make" (Klann,162)

REFERENCE

Klann, G. (2007). *Building Character: Strengthening the Heart of Good Leadership*. Jossey-Bass.

Critical Evaluation of the Book

While reading this book I was definitely able to learn more about what it means to be a good leader. The author gave a good overview about the processes that can be used to develop leadership characteristics not only in the leader himself, but also in the employees you are working with. I also enjoyed that this book was written by someone who was a leader himself, therefore I know for sure that I am learning from an experienced person and not just someone who did not undergo the hardships himself.I also loved that the book was written in a simple language that was easy to understand. With this being said, I recommend reading this book to everyone, as it truly gives you the steps to knowledge of what it means to be a good leader. I appreciate that the author teaches you to not only make people follow your lead, but to be a kind human being that remembers to respect those that work for you as together we are a team and a successful leader is nothing without their team.