HUMBLE LEADERSHIP
The Power of Relationships, Openness, and Trust
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Authors

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"The future will reward humility and punish arrogance. Ed and Peter Schein show us both the power and strength of humble leadership. This book is an antidote to arrogance and a practical guide to making the future." - Bob Johansen, Distinguished Fellow, Institute for the Future, and author of *The New Leadership Literacies*

IN THIS ISSUE

SUMMARY

In the workforce, we are constantly reminded, through admin procedures, posters, daily conversation, etc. of what is "appropriate" workplace conversation. What Schien and Shein (2018) propose is to break these "norms" and to actively build more personal relationships with our our followers as a leader. They suggest that once we *personize* and build Level 2 relationships, meaningful and truly open communication can happen.

THE HUMBLE LEADERSHIP SERIES

The Future of Leadership

- Humble Leadership (2018)
  - The Power of Relationships, Openness, and Trust
- Humble Consulting (2016)
  - How to Provide Real Help Faster
- Humble Inquiry (2013)
  - The Gentle Art of Asking Instead of Telling
- Helping (2009)
  - How to Offer, Give, and Receive Help

A NEW APPROACH TO LEADERSHIP

This book introduces a new approach to leadership based more on *personal* relationships than *transactional role* relationships (p. 1).

Where there are more personal relationships, employees flourish. If workplace relationships between leaders and followers remain impersonal, transactional, and based on roles and rules, things such as deception, corruption, abuse of power, and so on, will continue to happen.

WHAT IS LEADERSHIP?

The authors define leadership as "wanting to do something *new* and *better*, and getting others to go along" (p. 2).

What is classified as new and better will not be the same in every unique organization because of the variable contexts, the nature of the task, and cultural values.

The focus will be on the relationships that develop between the leader and the potential followers who are those that perceive that what the emergent leader does as new and better.

LEVELS OF RELATIONSHIP

Level	Description
Level Minus 1	Total impersonal domination and coercion
Level 1	Transactional role and rule-based supervision, service, and most forms of "professional" helping relationships
Level 2	Personal cooperative, trusting relationships as in friendships and in effective teams
Level 3	Emotionally intimate total mutual commitments

WHY WE NEED ANOTHER BOOK ABOUT LEADERSHIP

1. TASK COMPLEXITY IS INCREASING EXPONENTIALLY

Leadership in this context is humbling because it is virtually impossible to accumulate enough knowledge to have all the answers and interdependence and constant change have become a way of life.

2. THE CURRENT MANAGERIAL CULTURE IS MYOPIC, HAS BLIND SPOTS, AND IS OFTEN SELF-DEFEATING

Because of systematic communication failures, the organization is seen as "evil" because employees are viewed as roles and not as a whole.

3. THERE ARE GENERATIONAL CHANGES IN SOCIAL AND WORK VALUES

Changes to organizations such as social responsibility and new cohorts entering the workforce that value meaningful or purposeful work over traditional bonuses and "things" are changing the design of work.

SO HOW IS HUMBLE LEADERSHIP DIFFERENT?

To create the change and make organizations more effective, the relationship between the emergent leader and the followers needs to become more personal and cooperative Level 2 relationship.

Various forms of Humble Leadership have existed throughout history, some examples to follow.

EXAMPLE 1.1. Creating Group Accountability at the Top

An internal board of 11 is accountable as a group and have gotten to know each other personally. Every 3 years, they rotate responsibilities to become familiar with all aspects of the business and this created open dialogue.

EXAMPLE 1.2. Personalizing Hierarchical Relationships

In a new management job, Jerry openly acknowledged that he would need to help of his colleagues, as they knew more about the technical work, and would include them in decisions.

EXAMPLE 1.3. Empowering Managers in a Start-Up

A CEO hired the brightest young computer engineers and would pose a question, he then would sit back and allow them to debate. He never made autocratic decisions because he did not know everything and based decisions on trust and relationships.

EXAMPLE 1.4. Honoring Safety Over Productivity

Reinforcing values such as safety over efficiency on the daily and through Level 2 relationships to uphold their values.

EXAMPLE 1.5. How a Surgeon Works on Building Trust and Openness

If a team shares a common goal, Level 2 relationships can be built quickly if the leader chooses to build on existing structure and conventions to facilitate a cooperative process.

THE FUTURE NEEDS A NEW CONCEPT, HUMBLE LEADERSHIP, WHICH IS BUILT ON LEVEL 2 RELATIONSHIPS OF OPENNESS AND TRUST (p. 21)

CULTURALLY DEFINED LEVELS OF RELATIONSHIP

WHAT IS A RELATIONSHIP?

TEXTBOOK DEFINITION: Sociologically how people connect with each other.

The authors define a relationship as interactive and based on a set of *mutual expectations* about each other's future behavior as well as past interactions with one another (p.22). A "good relationship" has these aspects:

- Comfort
- Predictable
- Trust
- Consistency
- Symmetrical
- Working towards a similar goal

These are all grounded in culture, as this is where we get our ideas of relationships and what our reactions are to each other (normally manifested in good manners, civility, and tact) based on roles.
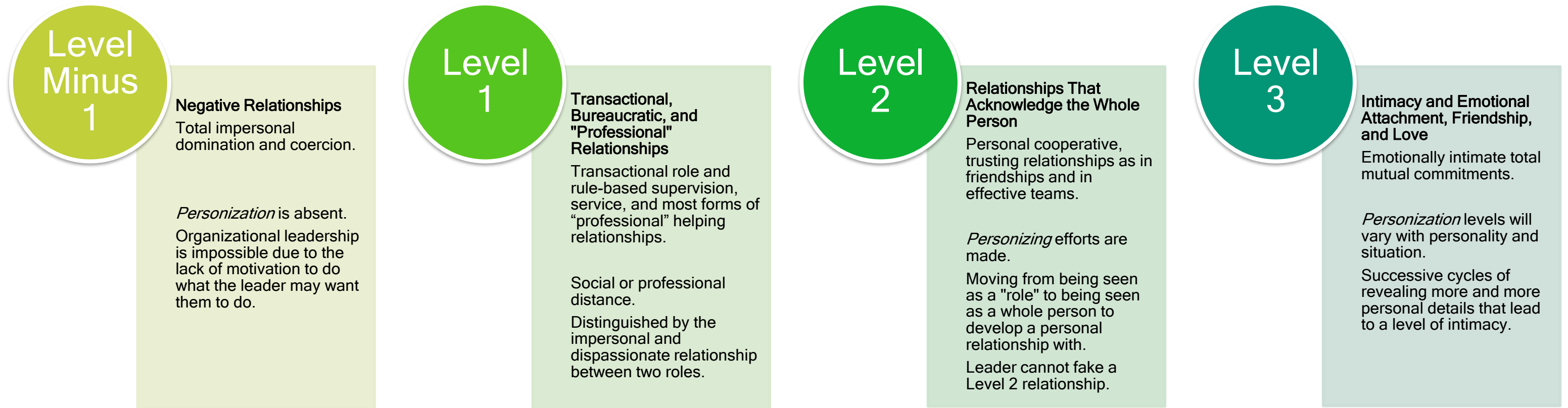
DEGREE OF PERSONIZATION

Personization is the critical differentiator between each of the levels of relationship and is defined as:

> *Personization* is the process of mutually building a working relationship with a fellow employee, teammate, boss, subordinate, or colleague based on trying to see that person as a whole, not just in the role that he or she may occupy at the moment (p. 24).

Personization begins to occur when something personal is shared or asked and implies that one or both people has invested themselves or become vulnerable to the other.

The concept of *personization* is about building relationships to get the job done and to avoid manipulation or lying.

Level Minus 1

Negative Relationships
Total impersonal domination and coercion.

Personization is absent.
Organizational leadership is impossible due to the lack of motivation to do what the leader may want them to do.

Level 1

Transactional, Bureaucratic, and "Professional" Relationships
Transactional role and rule-based supervision, service, and most forms of "professional" helping relationships.

Social or professional distance.
Distinguished by the impersonal and dispassionate relationship between two roles.

Level 2

Relationships That Acknowledge the Whole Person
Personal cooperative, trusting relationships as in friendships and in effective teams.

Personizing efforts are made.
Moving from being seen as a "role" to being seen as a whole person to develop a personal relationship with.
Leader cannot fake a Level 2 relationship.

Level 3

Intimacy and Emotional Attachment, Friendship, and Love
Emotionally intimate total mutual commitments.

Personization levels will vary with personality and situation.
Successive cycles of revealing more and more personal details that lead to a level of intimacy.

"EVOLVING THE MANAGERIAL CULTURE FROM LEVEL 1 TO LEVEL 2 IS THE DEFINING TASK FOR HUMBLE LEADERSHIP" (p.36).

HUMBLE LEADERSHIP IN GOVERNANCE: THE SINGAPORE STORY

The approach Singapore takes can be an example of authoritarian dictatorship, however the approach of early leaders such as Lee Kuan Yew, Goh Keng Swee, and their colleagues to build a modern city-state out of the economically declining trends illustrates two points:

1. Humble Leadership is not equivalent to soft or nice
2. Humble Leadership can be passed down through the organization to become a Level 2 culture

WHY IS SINGAPORE AN EXAMPLE OF HUMBLE LEADERSHIP?

Lee and his colleagues had very strong *Level 2 relationships* built during their formative years.

Knowing the complexity of their task (economic survival for Singapore), they needed to create a *trustworthy and corruption-free government*, so companies and investors would consider promoting Singapore's growth.

An economic development board was formed and some of the top executives Singapore had were appointed to this board. The government made *teamwork*, as well as openness, trust, and collaboration, *valued*.

Lee planned, to help *foster this environment*, to *invest in* the education of young and bright Singaporeans. He sent them to some of the best overseas universities, then brought them back for 5 years of service in the government with competitive pay levels.

Lee was not afraid to *admit he needed help* in areas he had little understanding of.

TRANSFORMING A MEDICAL CENTER INTO A LEVEL 2 CULTURE

Seattle's Virginia Mason Medical Center (VM) is a serious 15-year effort by the board, the CEO, and leadership since 2000 to evolve the entire hospital culture toward Level 2 around the overarching value *of doing what is best for the patient*.

WHY IS VM AN EXAMPLE OF HUMBLE LEADERSHIP?

During a time of challenging financial performance, there was great interest to improve the quality of the hospital. So, they developed a *shared vision* of the future and had employees make explicit and reciprocal actions to help the organization progress to this shared vision.

Having a common model with a common vocabulary and standard processes for managing change also enables more rapid *personization*.

Senior executives and board members also needed to commit to ensure there would be *sustainable* change.

The recognition that change cannot be *imposed*, employees needed to *understand, help design, and implement* what was decided.

HUMBLE LEADERSHIP IN THE US MILITARY

The stereotypical relationship often depicted of the military is "obey your commanding officer's orders." However, many stories now coming from the military are ones of teamwork, cooperation across hierarchical boundaries, and empowering troops to make their own on-the-ground decisions.

WHY IS THE US MILITARY AN EXAMPLE OF HUMBLE LEADERSHIP?

EXAMPLE 5.1. Turning Followers into Leaders on a Nuclear Submarine

Captain Marquet published his account of transforming the culture of a nuclear submarine from a demoralized, marginally effective, Level 1 hierarchy to an organization where "everyone was a leader in his or her own area of expertise" (p.61).

EXAMPLE 5.2. The Thunderbirds and "Drafting": How High Performance Depends on Very High Levels of Mutual Trust

Colonel JV Venable wrote a book in which he explains how Air Force Thunderbirds are trained to be able to fly in a tight formation and make use of "drafting" to conserve energy and move faster together through building high trust relationships and "Closing the gaps" between physical or emotional distance.

EXAMPLE 5.3. Building Level 2 Joint Accountability Through a Clear Shared Goal: The Polaris Missile Example

Dave was president of the missile systems division and he emphasized *integrity* and *group accountability* frequently. Corrective action was taken when necessary and Dave always took most of the aberrations from outside of his influence.

EXAMPLE 5.4. A Case of and Admiral's Humble Leadership

An admiral, at the time, was in command of a nuclear-powered US Navy aircraft carrier. An incident arose that posed a serious threat to the lives of those on board, or at least caused serious damage and/or loss of a valuable naval aircraft. Instead of reporting the incident and have the subordinate disciplined, the admiral had a one-on-one conversation with the subordinate to discuss the incident and get the truth.

Leaders can choose to personize at any time and at any level to promote central values such as trust and openness.

CONCLUSIONS

Depending on the situation, a hierarchical relationship can be anything from a Level Minus 1 to Level 3, but it *must be at least Level 2* to facilitate trusting, open, psychologically safe relationships when complex tasks are involved, and lives are at stake.

The *culture*, along with the training and expertise, needs to allow and encourage those within the system to *think for themselves* and self-organize in complex situations. The culture also needs to be a Level 2 culture and it is only with those Level 2 relationships that transformation is achieved.

"HUBMLE LEADERSHIP EMPOWERED SINGAPORE'S HEADS OF STATE TO TRANSFORM THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT" (P. 48)

"A CRITICAL PART OF HUMBLE LEADERSHIP IS THE MINDSET, THE INTERPERSONAL AND GROUP INSIGHTS, AND THE GROUP SKILLS THAT LED TO LEVEL 2 RELATIONSHIPS THROUGHOUT THE ORGANIZATION, ALL COMBINING TO MAKE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE VISION A LASTING REALITY" (p. 57)

"HUMBLE LEADERSHIP CREATES AND IS REINFORCED BY LEVEL 2 TEAMING EVEN IN HIGHLY STRUCTURED HIERARCHIES" (P. 78)

WHEN HIERARCHY AND UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES STIFLE HUMBLE LEADERSHIP

There have been three observable obstacles the authors have encountered in relation to Humble Leadership:

1. Managerial cultures resisting newcomers' efforts;
2. Leaders unwittingly undermining their own efforts;
3. New CEO overturning improvement programs that are foundations for Level 2 cultures.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE REASONS HUMBLE LEADERSHIP CAN BE STIFLED?

by regression to Level 1 or by organizational forces to continue with a more transactional management method.

by the organization's inability to adapt once there is a breakdown of Level 2 relationships.

by the preference for Level 1 relationships that reflect a comfort level with tradition.

by the comfort levels of executives with Level 2 relationships in the work environment.

by a lack of financial investments in building relationships and teams from executives.

by balkanization.

Balkanization refers to the polarization and competition between groups and the intense loyalty, and "we/they" thinking within groups.

"HUMBLE LEADERSHIP CAN WORK ANYWHERE IN AN ORGANIZATION BUT IS VULNERABLE TO SENIOR EXECUTIVE LACK OF SUPPORT." (p.99)
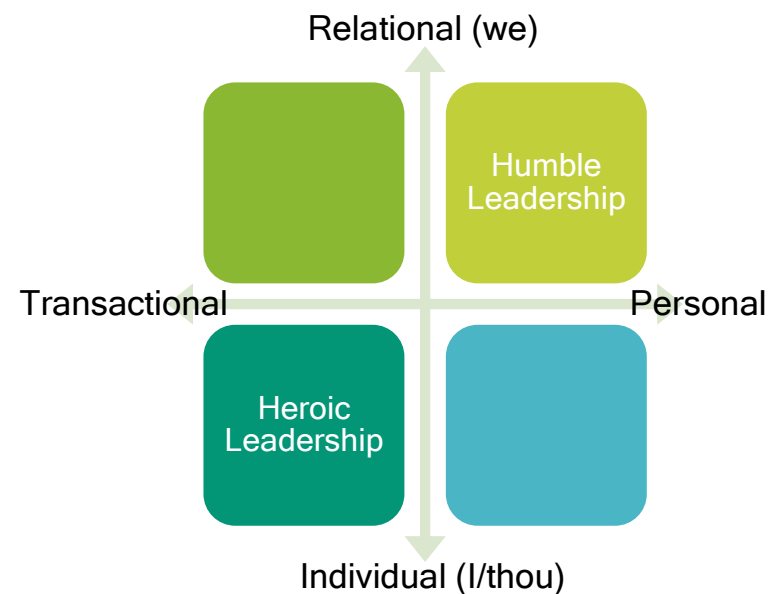
Context over content
Humble Leadership will be even more about context and process and less about content and expertise

Cultural heterogeneity
Humble Leadership will have to cope with tribalism and build relationships unbound by unconscious biases

Distributed power
Humble Leadership will have to challenge individual abuse of power

Mass customization
Humble Leadership can help groups become more agile and collaborative to tailor leadership to employees and customers

Dynamic organizational design
Humble Leadership will have to perpetually reconsider how to organize relationships and workgroups in a global mobile world

Virtual presence
Humble Leadership will involve being both physically present and virtually present as organizations become more globally distributed

THE HUMBLE LEADERSHIP MODELS

THE LEADER PERSPECTIVE

Relational (we)

| | Humble Leadership |
Transactional ———————————— Personal

| Heroic Leadership | |

Individual (I/thou)

THE ORGANIZATION PERSPECTIVE

Living Systems Model (relationships)

| | Adaptation: Shifting Resources |
Hierarchical ———————————— Self-managed

| Competition: Dividing Resources | |

Machine Model (roles)
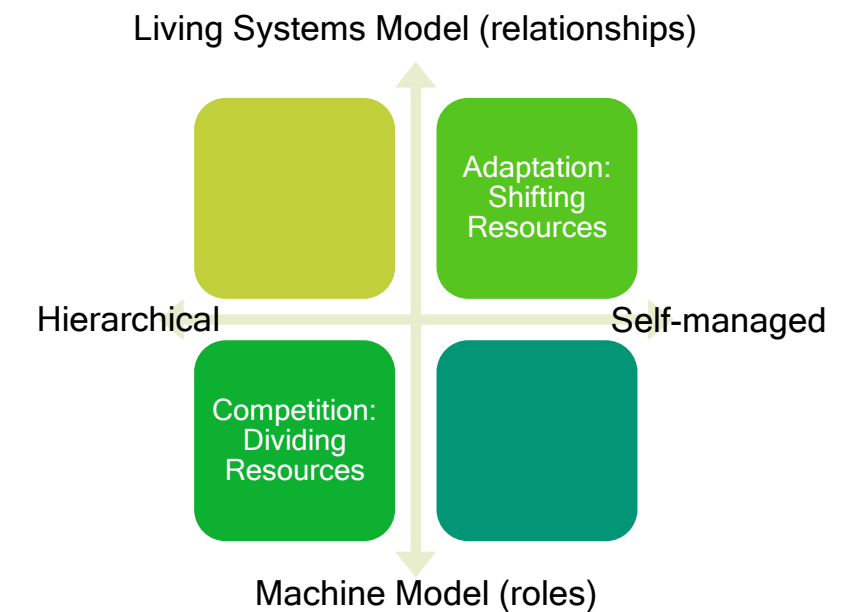
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HUMBLE LEADERSHIP REQUIRES REINFORCING THE "SOFT STUFF"

When the focus is on interpersonal relationships inside organizations, it is inevitable that group dynamics will become the critical variable in determining optimal task outcomes. The future demands that we evolve technical rationality into *socio*-technical rationality. Learning to think in interpersonal and group process terms becomes a foundational building block of Humble Leadership.

FOCUS ON GROUP PROCESS AND EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

What is known today as organization development (OD) grew out of action research and experiential learning. These early experimentations with sensitivity training where managers and facilitators working together learned how *systematic analysis of group process was needed* to make sense of the events that occurred in and between groups within an organization.

GROUP GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Group performance depends very much on how the groups are created and the norms that are evolved around psychological safety for all members. How well the group works reflects the kinds of relationships that are fostered in the initial group meeting, which this is often ignored by leadership in favor of special leadership skills rather than skills required to make group members feel psychologically safe.

MAKING GROUP DYNAMICS A CENTRAL LEADERSHIP RESPONSIBILITY

When proposing Humble Leadership, the concepts and vocabulary around:

- Group building;
- Group maintenance;
- Group development; and;
- Internal and external group relations,

Help the humble leader highlight how group members play many adaptive roles at different stages of group development and that group boundaries will shift unpredictably as organizational work will shape shift.

One of The Biggest Organizational Problems

- How to get different divisions, product groups, or geographic units to work together.
- Through labs, the authors found that:
  - Co-creation
  - Focusing on building relationships
  - *Personization*
- All these helped but the most powerful tool was making groups aware of the group proceses and making that visible

The Humble Leader

- The humble leader needs to be aware of:
  - members' needs to develop their identity in the group;
  - to learn how they can contribute, and;
  - most important, to develop understanding and acceptance of the others in the group

Personizing in challenging, living in a transactional role-bound world of work is easier. We must give it up because we will not be able to get the job done without *personizing* and building effective cooperation and team building.

The Abilene Paradox

- The very real distinction between *task* leaders and *relational* leaders needs to be remembered.
- Humble leaders need to be aware of how easy it is for a group to slip into collectively doing what in fact no one wanted to do because no one felt the complete psychological safety to speak up.
- Humble Leadership involves skills and experience to know when and how to intervene.

"THE ESSENCE OF HUMBLE LEADERSHIP IS MAINTAINING ACUTE FOCUS ON INTERPERSONAL AND GROUP DYNAMICS." (p.129)

PERSONIZING: BUILDING LEVEL 2 RELATIONSHIPS

Human adults know how to build Level 2 relationships, however the opportunity to develop these Level 2 relationships at work.

The authors believe that Humble Leadership requires a certain kind of mindset, certain attitudes toward working with others, and skills in working with groups. The learning process in each of these domains consists of three parts:

1. Some focused *reading and reflecting*

2. *Homework* at your desk designing work relationships

3. *Enhancement of behavioral skills* throug fieldwork and experiential learning - by yourself or with others

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO DEVELOP AND ENHANCE ONE-ON-ONE RELATIONSHHIPS AT WORK?

PART 1. READING AND REFLECTING

READING

Other bodies of work that have been published and are related to the subject of Humble Leadership. Examples of research and conceptual models that reflect emphasis on group process and the dynamics of complex systems to pursue:

The Human Side of Enterprise (1960) by Douglas McGregor	Sensemaking in Organizations (1995) by Karl Weick	The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (1959) by Erving Goffman	The Fifth Discipline (1990) by Peter Senge
Theory U (2009) by Otto Scharmer	Dialogue and the Art of Thinking Together (1999) by Bill Isaacs	Teaming (2012) by Amy Edmondson	Transforming Relationships for High Performance (2016) by Jody Gittell
	Yes to the Mess (2012) by Frank Barrett	Reinventing Organizations (2014) by Frederic Laloux	

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Taking a break from work to reflect on previous work experiences that "were successful." However, focusing heavily on the working relationships in these moments and paying special attention to whether *personization* was involved.

PART 2. HOMEWORK AT YOUR DESK: ANALYZING YOUR PRESENT RELATIONSHIPS AND PLANNING FOR FUTURE RELATIONSHIPS

Analyzing your own current work relationships and networks from a relational point of view is necessary to get a sense of what the different levels mean in your organization and where you might wish to do more *personizing*.

Some examples:

Creating a job role map and indentifying Level of relationship with each person.	Choose a person from work with whom you want to build a Level 2 relationship, and prepare a list of what you can do, ask, or reveal to start that process.

PART 3. ENHANCEMENT OF BEHAVIORAL SKILLS

You already know how to personize in our social and personal activities, but you may never have used them in the work setting. It all begins through conversation and you will need to decide whether you ask personal questions or revealing something personal.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO DEVELOP INSIGHT INTO GROUP PROCESS AND DEVELOPING THE NECESSESARY LEADERSHIP SKILLS?

DEVELOPING INSIGHT INTO GROUP PROCESS

For this, you may need to find workshops in which you get direct personal experience as a participant. Here are three suggested organizations that provide such experiential workshops:

- National Training Laboratories, www.ntl.org
- Presencing Institute, https://www.presencing.org/#/programs/marketplace/category/foundation_programs
- Society for Organizational Learning, https://www.solonline.org/foundations-for-leadership-2018/

Interest in group dynamics is slowly building, the important criterion in choosing a workshop is that it is experiential.

SUMMARY

Humble Leadership is, in the end, about evolving from Level 1 transactional culture to *personized* Level 2 culture.

LEVEL 1

- The person in charge needs to be in control, even if that puts contraints on autonomy and creativity and may stifle engagement and commitment

- Focus on getting the organization design and structure right.

- Work is accomplished by individuals doing their assigned jobs properly.

- Every task/project needs an individual in charge who is accountable for success.

- Get it done, fast, and get it done in whatever way works.

- Build a network for personal advantage.

- Maintain professional distance.

LEVEL 2

- The person in charge needs to be a convener/director who encourages autonomy and creativity, even if that limits control of the details but may build enthusiasm and commitment.

- Focus on creating viable and effective relationships and group processes between the structural elements.

- Work is accomplished by groups who learn together to perform as an ensemble.

- Every task/project needs a director whose function is to build synergy and make the group accountable for its success.

- Get it done in a way that builds agility, repeatability, and learning capacity for the next challenge.

- Build agile, flexible relationships within and across networks.

- Encourage openness and trust.

HUMBLE LEADERSHIP

THE POWER OF RELATIONSHIPS, OPENNESS, AND TRUST

"HUMBLE LEADERSHIP MEANS ACCEPTING VULNERABILITY AND BUIDLING RESILIENCY THROUGH LEVEL 2 RELATIONSHIPS." (P.144)

CRITIQUE

CRITICAL EVALUATION OF *HUMBLE LEADERSHIP*

I have seen my share of transactional role-based leaders in my professional life and I don't believe any of them attempted to make a Level 2 relationship with me. Not to say that they did not like me as a person or did not know about certain aspects of my personal life, but because of "red tape." The idea that is so engrained in our organizational culture that it is "wrong" or "unprofessional" to ask and reveal personal aspects coming from a boss or supervisor. One thing that was stressed was that lack of support from executives can stifle Humble Leadership, yet this no solution or potential solutions were explored.

However, as an employee, I also made no attempts to *personize* my bosses either. In my opinion, while it may be important for the leader to take the initiative to begin *personization*, it cannot be a one-way street. *Personizing* the leader, I believe, would also have positive affects for the follower though this is not explored in this book. This would especially be valuable for aspiring leaders, as these skills could potentially be developed before becoming a formal leader.

SUBJECTS

LCSH: Leadership. | Organizational behavior. | Trust.

REFERENCE

Schein, E.H. & Schein P.A. (2018). *Humble leadership: the power of relationships, openness, and trust*. Oakland, CA : Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

As a follower, have you experienced a humble leader?	As a follower, have you experienced a Level 2 relationship with a leader?	As a follower, has a leader used *personization* and you believed it to be genuine?	As a follower, what kind of benefits from Humble Leadership can you foresee in your organization?	As a follower, what kind of personal impacts from Humble Leadership can you foresee?
As a leader, have you experienced using Humble Leadership skills?	As a leader, have you experienced a Level 2 relationship with a follower?	As a leader, have you used *personization* as a useful leadership skill?	As a leader, what kind of benefits from Humble Leadership can you foresee in your organization?	As a leader, what are some limitations of Humble Leadership?

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