



Head & Heart is a collection of ideas, resources and frameworks to support your personal and professional development in leading yourself, others and organizations.

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From the Editor

Dear Readers,

We'll finish our Head & Heart series this year with "Contrarian Leadership" and I trust you'll find a valuable insight for your continued development as a person and as a leader.

In this issue we'll share with you the cornerstones of contrarian competence, what's essential to develop a contrarian mindset and the risks AND the rewards of being a contrarian.

There are significant "upsides" for successful contrarians, both for our organizations and as a natural and vital part of our self actualizing process as you'll read about on page four.

Being contrarian does not, as many people think, mean to simply take the opposite opinion. It's about sharing a different perspective to bring a deeper dimension and often better results to the situation at hand.

Anyone think to the contrary?

Dan Norenberg

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Thought Leadership

Building Contrarian Competence

"What separates a winner from a loser at the grandmaster level is the willingness to do the unthinkable. A brilliant strategy is, certainly, a matter of intelligence, but intelligence without audaciousness is not enough." – Garry Kasparov

The ability to stand like a rock against the current, to turn against the crowd and in doing so incur the wrath and discomfort from breaking with the mainstream is what distinguishes exceptional leaders from the mediocre masses.

Men and women who stand out in these circumstances, often with great risk to themselves, are the people that we talk about for generations. They are examples of how the contrarian view profoundly influences others and, in turn, transforms the world around them.

Leaders must build relationships and consensus and at times accept decisions where they have a different opinion, yet every leader will be called upon to speak out and act in situations where he or she is the lone voice of dissent.

Nelson Mandela, Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King are contrarian avatars whose voice and actions were so profound that they changed the world we live in today.

While time, place and circumstances certainly influence "contrarian effectiveness", here are four elements to build your contrarian competence:

Push back at mainstream thought, using outside benchmarks from both

inside and outside your industry. Somewhere, somebody had done something remotely similar to what you are proposing. Find those examples and bridge to your "contrarian view".

Anchor your arguments in a sound diagnosis of the situation. Too often people move to solutions without "on boarding others" with a common understanding of the problem. Invest the time to show you clearly understand the situation and this will help people gain trust in you and your contrarian ideas.

Challenge working assumptions of group think. Experts can get too locked into a viewpoint due to too-close-to-the-subject perceptions or working assumptions if nobody challenges them.

Don't destroy others through your contrarian passion – you need people, all kinds of people to change mainstream course and degrading or alienating others won't help your cause. Fight hard and fair for your views and if you aren't successful – put it behind you and move on.

Using your contrarian competence may not make you a grandmaster, but it will help you escape the mundane trap of mediocrity!

Dan Norenberg

Leading Self

The Power of Soul – Lessons From a Contrarian Leader: Nelson Mandela

Your personality is your most important status symbol.

Nelson Mandela, this wise and inspiring example of a contrarian leader, realized the vision of a more united South Africa after being imprisoned for more than 25 years. His bitter experiences did not destroy him but transformed him. He emerged from prison being the “captain of his soul”, unbreakable by whatever circumstances, with a strong belief in a higher good, beyond self and devoted to service to his nation.

Although revenge for decades of racism, apartheid and segregation might have been the natural consequence, he listened to the contrarian voice in his head which reminded him to sacrifice short term satisfaction for long term sustainability.

With this attitude, he convinced the black majority to cooperate with the whites for the sake of a higher common good, a more integrated nation, and to surprise the whites with compassion, with restraint and generosity. Mandela demonstrated what a difference inspirational leadership can make, even in a nation with such a seemingly intractable past as South Africa. Similar to Martin Luther King, he was driven by such strong inner conviction that his “I have a dream” versus “I have a plan” created resonance with a whole nation. People believed and felt what he truly believed in, were inspired by his natural authority and followed and trusted him voluntarily for his compelling vision.



Following this powerful example, business leaders should consider the shift from “I” to “We” and find genuinely new solutions for the good of their organization instead of focusing on satisfying their own egoistic or even narcissistic needs. As your ability to be followed and trusted is determined by your alignment with your authentic self, it might be worthwhile to lean back for a minute and contemplate on the following questions:

Is your work meeting your ego needs or is it feeding your soul? Are you working on deepening your self-connection? Are you the “captain of your soul”? Have you defined your values and do you stick to them? Have you discovered your purpose of leadership and your passions? Do you believe in your unique mission? Do you act accordingly?

Aligning yourself with the power of your soul rather than letting your ego run your show will make your life as a powerful leader much easier. Your inspiring personality will invite your team to cooperate and to make a difference in the world by jointly manifesting powerful outcomes. People trust you when you are genuine and authentic, not an imitation.

You can spend the better part of your career building up your credibility, reliability and authenticity - do yourself a favor and don't let your own self-interest blow it all up.

Point of View

Risk or Opportunity

“An electronic airplane ticket?” Certainly an “adverse” idea to airline staff when first proposed. Not to mention “antagonistic” to air travelers who had grown attached to their tactile tickets. Depending on your point of view, “contrarian” has a positive or negative ring to it. At first sight, a contrarian leadership style would logically be unwelcomed. Most people would certainly prefer an “agreeable” and “harmonious” one – the antonyms.

A leader is chosen or self-appointed to help an organization grow. As anyone who has ever been part of a successful organization knows, change is vital to growth. And yet, people are resistant to change. Reduced job security, loss of status and responsibility, fading career opportunities – fears attached to a threatened status quo.

So what kind of leadership would it take to convince a skeptical staff and customer base to abandon their beloved paper tickets or persuade an entire industry to swap their precious music collection for an invisible one in cyberspace?

Inspiring others with a clear and powerful vision, even when contrarian, a leader is in a position to communicate the positive opportunities that await. By encouraging new ideas and communicating through open discussion a leader can foster a team of creative, entrepreneurial individuals that will embrace and drive change.

Contrarian leadership can in fact lead to greater job security, increased status and responsibility and future promotions. So which type of leadership style do you prefer?

Word Watch**Think You Know What Contrarian Means? Au Contraire!**

The origin of the word contrarian is the Latin word *contrarius* meaning "opposed," from *contra* "against". But do we really understand and appreciate how the word is used today? If we did, we might have more contrarians than we do!

A bit of research in an online etymology dictionary certainly helped me. Let me share my version of an example they gave:

If we take the statement "*Empathy is the most important attribute for a leader*" the opposite view is "*leaders do not need empathy at all.*" A contrary view is "*Empathy is not the most important attribute for a leader, decisiveness is*". So we see, the opposite of a statement only takes the most extreme contrary view possible.

Thus "*we should go due east*" has only one opposite, "*we should go due west*" but has **many contraries**, such as "*we should go northeast*" or "*we should go southeast*".

Why is this important?

Being contrarian does not, as many people think, mean to completely disagree with another person or take the opposite opinion. It really means to state your opinion or share a perception that differs from someone else, either partly or totally. Real contrarianism adds richness to dialog because it brings forth the full spectrum of perceptions. Since no two people can ever see the same thing in exactly the same way, that makes us all contrarians!

Michael Couch

Leading Others**Just Ticking Along**

Tomorrow morning you will wake up, brush your teeth and leave the house for the office. You will do what you do every day, lead the team as fitting with the needs of the day and ensure everything keeps ticking along. True? Disagree? Maybe?

In the contrarian world high performance does not just tick along. If you consider every sports team in the world, where a team doesn't challenge itself, introduce new blood and ideas, performance saturates and mediocrity ultimately sets in. Decline in performance will typically end in the culling of the boss. Never is there more evidence of this than at football stadiums where the call for blood often starts with 50,000 fans chanting for the manager's head, and when that happens, his head normally rolls.

Manchester United has been led by Sir Alex Ferguson (70) for over 25 years. His time at Old Trafford has seen him decorated as Premier League Champions 12 times, Champions League winners twice and in total has amassed 39 trophies. His team members have changed, the style of play has been adapted, and by staying one step ahead of his competitors, he keeps on winning. So, how does Sir Alex lead others?

He...

...often adds new excellence, nurtures young talent and moulds all the individuals into a collective group.

...does not delude himself with individuals that do not fit and makes changes no one else would expect.

...leads his team with **varying and appropriate techniques** ranging from an arm around the shoulder to his infamous "hairdryer" treatment for clear under performance.

...actively listens to his support team and decisively decides for the team only once pondering all the facts.

...takes a back seat when delegating autonomy allowing his players to express themselves.



...retains overall responsibility for the success of the team.

Sir Alex Ferguson depicts all the values of a contrarian leader. These values have kept him and his team at the top of the European game for quarter of a century. Nevertheless, if he doesn't continue adapting on Monday morning, and things start to just start tick along, despite his 25 years of success, the Manchester United fans will start chanting for his departure.

Tomorrow morning you will wake up, brush your teeth and leave the house for the office. Will you do what you do every day? Contrarian leaders will do something differently; they will remember the power of 50,000 fans, which will drive them to lead their team to excellence.

Chris Chamberlain

Leading Organizations

The Contrarian

"As much as we try to stand out, we have an inescapable yearning to fit in."
Abraham Maslow

The word contrarian has a real currency in investment banking. The contrarian is the investor who attempts to profit by deviating from conventional wisdom or "the herd." Contrarians zig when everyone else zags!

The desire to look for difference and step aside from the herd is not



easy but for the investment contrarian, the rewards are potentially huge. Being a contrarian in most organizations means that we do have to stand out and make our point cogently. For many, this is painful. To be a true contrarian, we have to train our minds to push our thinking in directions that go against the accepted norm and weigh up our conclusions in the light of how we interpret the perceived reality and how we expect people to react and behave. This is a real skill and it must be accompanied by courage and a restless mind.

Is there any relevance here for leaders of organizations? The restlessness certainly belongs to the entrepreneur.

The paradox here is that the organizational leader is under immense pressure to produce results. They do this, usually, through selecting like-minded leaders and aligning them to a strategic focus. The opposite of the contrarian dynamic!

However, it is important that leaders hear the words of Abraham Maslow. Their challenge, whilst delivering their goals, is to embrace the contrarian mind set as a core competence and learn to zig a bit and encourage others to zig a bit within a culture where, usually, everyone is expected to zag.

Where were the contrarians in the Lehman Brothers' collapse? The 'elephants in the room' were the size of a planet. The very few who spoke up were ignored and even worse, silenced. **It takes a contrarian to appreciate the courage of another contrarian!**

Collusion is rife in our organizations today causing the dire loss of much needed creativity and openness. The contrarian mind set in the leader has a critical role to play in releasing people to be able to make a full autonomous contribution to what they believe is right for their organization.

Ed Norman

Food for Thought

"A rule of thumb with humor; if you worry that you might be going too far, you have already not gone far enough. If everybody laughs, you have failed."

*Christopher Hitchens,
Letters to a Young Contrarian*

Leadership Facts and Figures

26% of new hires fail because they can't accept feedback, 23% because they're unable to understand and manage emotions.

Read more:

<http://hrpeople.monster.com/news/articles/2967-why-new-hires-fail-?page=1>



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