

Volume 10**What I'm hearing**

A friend posed a question to me, "In this new virtual world, how does the role of the leader change?"

What it means

Leading people in situations where information and decisions flow around you as the leader is challenging. It could be creating a blog or an on-line community within a tool like NING to bring people together around a common interest or goal (this is a team). In these situations participation is voluntary.

Seth Godin writes about this in his book Tribes, and says "Great leaders create movements by inspiring the Tribe (i.e. Team) to communicate." Godin's challenge to lead in a tribe is very similar to the servant leadership idea that has been around for a couple of decades. While Godin is writing about a virtual community, it mirrors reasons Peter Drucker often shared that promoted the value of leading in a not for profit situation as a development opportunity for any leader. Leading in situations where people have to want to follow you because they don't have to follow requires a leader to lead differently.

The bottom line is that all teams need leaders. Whether virtual or face to face, teams need goals, guidelines, and overall accountability to be successful. However, leading in a virtual situation will expose people who have to lead through control and direct authority. They will be found out quickly and painfully because their lack of passion around enabling, giving, and listening.

The on-line world is bringing back the servant leader model in another form. The concept is that people will not follow or work as hard for leaders that do not possess the relational capacity to connect with their people. Generation Y/Millennials entering the workforce make this skill even more critical for leaders. If you are interested in exploring the connection read The Servant by James Hunter and Tribes by Seth Godin. In leadership literature there are few new ideas, only new approaches.

What you should do

Make a list of all your leaders (direct reports) and your future leaders (high potentials). Identify 5-6 characteristics/skills you feel are important for leaders to possess at your organization. If building positive relationships with staff at all levels is not on your list then add it. Rate each person versus your leadership criteria using the terms: strength, skilled, weakness, or unsure.

Explore your data by asking these three questions:

- What skill jumps out?
- Is anyone *not* showing strength in building positive relationships?
- How would I be rated?

Looking for a partner to connect this information with your operational or strategic plans for your business? **I can help.** Scott@thetrugroup.com