

Burn!

7 Leadership Myths in Ashes

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Introduction: Torching the 7 Myths of Leadership

Seven myths are torched to make room for *thought leadership*, the driving force of organizational renewal. Leadership is radically refocused on challenging the status quo to promote new directions, having *nothing to do with managing people or performance*.

PART ONE LEADERSHIP REBORN

1. The Leadership of the Outsider

Leadership from outsiders such as Martin Luther King or front-line knowledge workers challenges the status quo. Because they do not manage the people they lead, we finally have a clear way to separate leadership from management.

2. Management Reborn

Managers are not mechanical or controlling. They can empower, coach and inspire people to get things done. Management must be reborn to share the load with leadership.

3. The Sharp Edge of Leadership

Leadership focused on promoting new directions does not manage people. Because it simply challenges the status quo, it is based on the courage of convictions, youthful rebelliousness, not a learned skill set.

4. What Executives Do If Not Lead

Executives are not leaders just by doing a good job but they can add value in other ways, especially by fostering leadership in others.

5. The End of Primitive Leadership

Conventional leadership is paternalistic, based on the image of a protective parent. It is biologically primitive, thanks to our hard-wired habit of lining up in hierarchies. We must stop calling executives leaders. Leadership is an occasional act, not a role.

6. Foster Leadership, Develop Executives

Leadership demands courage which isn't a learned skill. Like creativity it can only be fostered. "Leadership development programs" develop rounded executives, not leaders.

PART TWO MORE MYTHS TO TORCH

7. Kouzes and Posner on Leadership

This popular view of leadership is a confusing jumble of leadership and management notions because it originated in the 1980s when management

was the scapegoat for the failure of the West to cope with the Japanese business invasion.

8. Relationships: Women as Leaders

Are women better leaders than men because of relationship skills? But management, recast as a facilitative activity, requires stronger relationships than leadership. So, how is leadership a relationship?

9. Character and Emotional Intelligence

Everyone in a responsible position needs to be trustworthy, even a lonely lighthouse operator, but leadership recast as challenging the status quo can be shown by people with poor interpersonal skills and zero emotional intelligence.

10. Leading, Selling, Teaching

What is the relationship between leading and selling? What about teaching? What is the role of creativity? Teaching and selling are forms of influence, like leadership, but there are critical differences. Creativity overlaps with leadership, so you can be one, the other or both.

11. Organic or Mechanistic?

The bandwagon to replace mechanistic with organic forms is the same as the move to replace managers with leaders, but businesses have two tasks: to get things done efficiently and create the future, so they need the best of both.

12. Servant Leadership

This idea is plausible in clubs or associations where members have all the rights but not in business where the rights of owners (shareholders) trump those of employees.

13. Leadership With a Postmodern Twist

Postmodernism torches authority, ushering in dispersed leadership. Severed from position, everyone is a leader who has something useful to say, just like in guerrilla warfare.