



LEADERSHIP ASSESSMENT &
DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Newsletter of the MLQ Network

Volume 6 Issue 1
February 2004



EXTRACT - FEATURES ARTICLE

Authentic Transformational Leadership



Bernard Bass
Florida, USA

When I first considered the meaning of transformational leadership after reading James McGregor Burns' book "Leadership", I thought that the dynamics could be explained without including the moral uplifting by the transformational leader in Burns' definition. The process of influence was the same: charismatic=inspirational=idealized, intellectually stimulating, and/or individually considerate were the same for transformational and transaction.

However, I finally realized there were differences in the dynamics of the transformational leader who is ethical and the dynamics of the transformational leader who is not. The authentic leader is true to himself or herself and to others. The inauthentic leader deceives self and others. The authentic leader is transformational; the inauthentic leader is pseudo-transformational. Both are charismatic, inspirational and ideally influential but while the authentic transformational leader focuses on universal values and brotherhood, the inauthentic leader emphasizes "our" values as opposed to their values. The former emphasizes the best in people; the latter, the worst. The transformational leader tells people what they need to hear; the pseudo-transformational leader misleads, prevaricates and demonises.

Transformational leaders truly empower their followers; pseudo-transformationals create dependencies.

Transformationals can be trusted; pseudo-transformationals cannot be. Transformationals espouse honesty and integrity; pseudo-transformationals assign blame to others and treat opposition as disloyalty. While the authentic transformationals pursue public interests in alignment with their own or sacrifice their own self.

interests, the "pseudos", the truly transformational articulate the real unmet need of their followers, the pseudos create artificial demands in their followers. The truly transformationals envision attainable futures; the pseudos arouse fantasies. The authentic leaders practice what they preach; the pseudos do not. The pseudos manufacture crises and stretch the truth.

As for intellectual stimulation, while the authentic transformational leaders emphasize the rationality and merit of issues, the pseudo-transformational leaders overweigh authority and underweight reasoning. The true transformationals encourage full examination of issues; the pseudos oversimplify arguments. The transformationals provide logical reasoning; the pseudos use false assumptions. The arguments of transformationals are built on truth, evidence; valid analogies and relevant metaphors; the pseudos build arguments on ignorance, bias, half-truths, false analogies and irrelevant metaphors.

continued over...

Authentic Transformational Leadership continued...

While pseudo-transformational leaders may appear as individually considerate as truly transformational leaders, they shed crocodile tears and are ingratiating; true transformationals are really empathetic and supportive. Transformational leaders show concern for followers' development. Pseudos encourage unrealistic development goals and careers. Transformationals develop followers into leaders; pseudos develop- submissive disciples. Transformationals espouse fairness and human rights. Pseudoes are patronising and condescending.

Finally, true transformational leaders show concern for society and the environment; inauthentic pseudo-transformational leaders publicly talk the same language but actually may be more interested privately in how to exploit society and the environment.

by Distinguished Professor Emeritus Bernard Bass

Florida, USA