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Paying it Forward
Leading with Purpose
with Chief Randy R. Bruegman, (Ret)

Vol. 03

1
LESSONS IN
LEADERSHIP
*REMEMBERING
QUEEN ELIZABETH II*

4
THE BEST LEADERS
ARE THE BEST
LISTENERS

6
CHIEF B'S KEY
LEADERSHIP
TAKEAWAYS



Lessons in Leadership

Remembering Queen Elizabeth II

This past month the world lost one of the most well-known and longest serving leaders in the modern era with the passing of Queen Elizabeth II. She provided a consistent thread of leadership to Great Britain over the course of her 70-year reign, worked with fifteen British Prime Ministers and fourteen U.S. Presidents, and was seen as a unifying force worldwide.

I remember reading the first Christmas address she gave on television, which was given in an assignment while I was attending graduate school many years ago. The topic of discussion was on leadership during times of change. In reading her address, I was struck by her leadership insights into the importance of the value of honoring the heritage and traditions from which we come in times of change; the importance of ethics and morality in both our personal and professional pursuits; the courage needed to stand up and do what is right, no matter the difficulty of the task.

In her address she spoke to the speed of change and its impact on society when she said, “That it is possible for some of you to see me today is just another example of the speed at which things are changing all around us.” She was speaking to a new technology of the time – television – and its impact on society. Great insight for her time, as it is today.

As television brought the world into the homes of millions for the first time in history, many were struggling with change that came with it. Think about the struggles society is experiencing today with all forms of media: the misinformation, fabrications, and personal attacks occurring on an hourly basis, which have created significant turmoil in our society and the need to determine what is factual and what is not. As she stated: “I am not surprised that many people feel lost and unable to decide what to hold on to and what to discard. How to take advantage of the new life without losing the best of the old. The trouble is caused by unthinking people who carelessly throw away ageless ideals as if they were old and outworn machinery.” We see this occurring today throughout society, as people are often attacking the basic



foundational elements of the country, our communities, our organizations, and our families. Like any structure when the foundation is compromised, what happens? The structure fails. That is true for us as individuals, it is true for the organizations we work for, and it is true for our country.

She also noted that when we throw aside our morality in both our personal and work lives, when honesty is counted as foolishness, then self-interest takes over. From a leadership perspective, if self-interest is the driving force behind decisions, then the decisions made will not be for the good of your family, your organization, your local community, or for your country. They will be made to benefit those that

have the power to make those decisions, and not for the good of everyone involved.

The Queen stated in her address that, “At this critical moment in our history we will certainly lose the trust and respect of the world if we just abandon those fundamental principles which guided the men and women who built the greatness of this country.” That statement may be more profound today than when she said it in 1957. Now, many are faced with those challenges and questions every day in their personal and professional lives. The path chosen is yours to decide. Here are a few Leadership Lessons from Queen Elizabeth II that I have observed in helping to make sound leadership decisions:

1. The speed of change can make people and organizations feel at times, lost and uneasy. Take advantage of what change can bring, adapt, but don't discard the ageless ideals that have brought you or your organization to this juncture in the first place.

2. When you look at honesty as being a foolish concept, then self-interest will become the driving force of what you and/or your organization will do. That will ultimately lead to failure. You must lead by example and with integrity.

2. When a country, a person or an organization abandons its foundational principles, it will fail.

4. It takes courage to stand up for everything that is right, true, and honest.

5. It is much easier to hate and destroy than to build and appreciate.

6. Selflessness and courage can withstand the corruption of cynics.

7. Dedication to the service of others will help to define your clear purpose as a leader.

8. Without trust and respect, one cannot achieve greatness.

9. Be authentic.



The Best Leaders are the Best Listeners

When I started moving up through the ranks of the fire and emergency services I found many opportunities to be engaged in more processes, meetings, and committees, that would have department-wide impact. I am sure you find that to be true in your own profession. I thought that if I shared my opinion and insights to the group as much possible, I would have the most influence. I learned over time that was not the case. I quickly found that even though I had an opinion on the topic at hand, opinions are nothing more than a feeling or a personal belief, both which can often be wrong. I found myself to be wrong on many occasions.

We see this happening today throughout society - people take positions and make decisions based upon their views and not factual information. I learned quickly that if I ever wanted to be a good leader, I had to first become a good listener, and that process took time and effort. I discovered listening

increased my ability as a leader to make better decisions. I also found that by letting my team engage in the dialog, at times injecting a comment to keep them focused, that my knowledge level on the topic at hand rose significantly. Here are some things that I have learned along my journey:

Better Knowledge, Better Decisions: The people with the most insight of a problem and the potential fixes to it, are often the people who are actually doing the work. So often in organizations those people are never asked their opinions. If you want to increase the success rate for addressing a problem or creating a new program, get the people involved who are or will be performing the task.

Engagement: If you want to make an impact on your employees and create a work environment of trust, then invite them to the meeting. When you engage your employees in a decision process that helps create the future of your organization, what does that do? It creates buy-in from your staff to make it a success. It will also help make your employees more motivated and committed to their work.



Listening Increases The Team's

Knowledge Level: Those in leadership positions are often removed from the daily activities that are crucial to the organization, and those that are performing the work often have little understanding what is going on in the “C” Suite. When your leadership is built upon being a good listener, you will find opportunities to promote listening sessions with your employees to understand their needs and the challenges they are facing; or the “*ground truth*” of what is happening in the organization, which then helps you to understand the challenges that they are encountering on a daily basis. This also provides an opportunity for you to share the challenges the “*ground truth*” that you are facing in your leadership role. This is a great way to build trust and openness in your organization.

The Importance of Non-Verbal

Communication: Peter Drucker once said, “The most important thing in communication is hearing what isn't said.” Listening for leaders is not only being focused on what is said; it also includes the ability to discern the

intent with which it is said, and the accompanying body language and facial expressions when the person is speaking. A high percentage of communication is non-verbal, so enhancing your own ability to pick up on these cues is extremely important.

“The most important thing in communication is hearing what isn't said.”

Peter Drucker

I have been in many meetings when what a person was saying did not match at all what their facial expression or body language was saying. When that occurs it is extremely hard not to engage with that person and challenge them on that disconnect. At times that may be warranted, but I have found that if you don't engage in confrontational manner, or you follow up with a thoughtful inquiry, sometimes several minutes later you can get the real intent of what the person thinks. For a leader, being able to watch, observe and respond appropriately to these non-verbal communication cues is essential to being a good listener.

Chief B's Key Leadership Takeaways

Having the honor of speaking to great leaders in their profession in **The Leadership Crucible Podcast**, we make notes on the key leadership takeaways that are discussed. Will share those with you in hopes that it help you to reflect on your own leadership style, but also to provide some potential talking points that you can discuss with your team. Doing so is a great way to understand your teams, gain perspective on topics, helps you to gain a deeper understanding of how your individual team members think. It is an excellent way to build you team.

- ✓ Sometimes all your people need is someone who believes in them and asks for their insights into the organization.
- ✓ Once you make the commitment to listen, you'll be surprised at what you hear.

- ✓ If you see leadership as an affair of the head, your leadership will die. It is an affair of the heart.
- ✓ Fall in love with the idea of empowering a group of people to make a change.
- ✓ Lifting up other people is one of the most satisfying things you can do as a leader. You can start by engaging with them.
- ✓ The key to any organization's success is that the people who are working in it feel proud about what they are doing, and with whom they are doing it.
- ✓ The relationship you build with your team along your journey will dictate the success of your organization.
- ✓ Your vision isn't worth much if you have not communicated it throughout your organizations and if you have not engaged and empowered your staff in helping to implement it.



Readers are Leaders

I believe that, to be a good leader, one must be on a continuous quest to gain more knowledge. The leadership benefits of reading are wide-ranging. John Coleman's article in the Harvard Business Review, "For Those Who Want To Lead, Read," highlights that the leadership benefits of reading are wide-ranging. Evidence suggests that reading can improve intelligence and lead to innovation and insight, and, for example, some studies have shown that reading makes you smarter through "a larger vocabulary and more world knowledge in addition to the abstract reasoning skills."

Reading has many benefits, but it is underappreciated as an essential component of leadership development. To that end, we'll provide a few suggested titles for you to consider reading.

The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World
by Ronald A. Heifetz, Alexander Grashow, & Marty Linsky

Listening Leaders: The Ten Golden Rules To Listen, Lead & Succeed
by Lyman K. Steil

The Power of Positive Leadership: How and Why Positive Leaders Transform Teams and Organizations and Change the World
by Jon Gordon

