

GOLDBLOCKS, PORCUPINES & CHAMELEONS

– PART 2: THE PORCUPINE LEADER

We have been talking about the “just right” leadership style of being in The Goldilocks Zone.

When the inner core and outer ring are in the Goldilocks Zone, leaders are able to effectively express beliefs and core values, making them easy to follow.

But what happens when the inner core and outer ring lose their “just right” vital connection?

One inevitably overwhelms the other and the leader wanders from the Goldilocks zone. This undermines the leader’s effectiveness, and over time the effectiveness of the organization.

When the inner core overwhelms the outer ring, the result is the porcupine leader.

THE PORCUPINE.

The word porcupine comes from the Middle French meaning “thorny pig.” The porcupine is a rodent with black to brownish-yellow fur and strong, short legs. It lives a solitary life for the most part, though it may den with other porcupines in the winter. Of course the most recognizable feature of the porcupine is its quills. A porcupine may have as many as 30,000 quills on all parts of its body except its stomach. The quills are hairs with barbed tips on the ends. The longest quills are on its rear. While the porcupine is not an aggressive animal, it is dangerous when provoked. When a predator approaches, it will turn its back and raise the longer quills on its rump and lash out with its tail. If the quills hit another animal, they become embedded in its skin. The body heat of the injured animal makes the barbs expand and they become even more deeply embedded. If the quills hit the animal in a vital organ, the wound may prove fatal.

THE PORCUPINE LEADER.

The porcupine leader is so-named for some obvious reasons. They tend to be prickly, unapproachable, and highly defensive.

What’s going on here?

The porcupine leader’s inner core is overpopulated with a wide assortment of non-negotiables—inviolable principles, essential beliefs, dozens of core values and a wide array of convictions, opinions, preferences, stylistic tastes, in fact, most anything and everything—such that it prohibits the proper functioning of the outer ring.

The inner core is so expansive and dominant that it swallows up the outer ring, leaving little if any room for the wise application of timeless principles, new learning, creativity and contextual flexibility.

Minus the attitudes and behaviors that support sustained effectiveness—discerning the needs of individuals, reading the situation, listening to others, revising one’s perspective, and learning new behaviors— the porcupine leader is incapable of responding to the unique demands of a given situation.

If we didn't know better, we might think the porcupine is a person of deep conviction, a "value-driven" leader. This would be a fitting description if, and if is the operative word, the porcupine's expression of values and convictions remained vitally connected to his or her outer core—exercising wisdom and discernment to get a read on the demands of effectiveness in a particular situation. But, losing this connection, the porcupine takes a rigid and defensive posture toward the world. They are not focused on the challenge of making a timely application of timeless principles. Rather, the porcupine is intent on defending their inner core at all costs, and imposing it on the outer world.

WHAT KINDS OF LEADERS DO YOU HAVE IN YOUR LIFE? WHAT KIND OF A LEADER ARE YOU?

Looking ahead.

We will further explore porcupine leaders the next installment and then learn about a chameleons leadership style. I hope you will read along!

Work with us
www.Lead2Transform/Education
info@lead2transform.com