

HOW TO LEAD IN THAT “JUST RIGHT” RELATIONSHIP: THE GOLDILOCKS LEADER

If you have been following our series on Goldilocks, Porcupines and Chameleons, you will be happy to note that we will fully discuss The Goldilocks Leader in this issue! Attending to the Goldilocks, “just right” relationship between one’s inner core and outer ring may be one of the most important and challenging aspects of organizational leadership. This final installment in this series explores how leaders can stay in the Goldilocks zone and highlights the benefits to their organization.

PORCUPINE-PROOF YOUR LEADERSHIP.

Goldilocks leaders “porcupine proof” their leadership by monitoring the inner core to insure that it is the right size and stays vitally connected to the outer ring. This means rigorously evaluating what is allowed to take up residence in one’s inner core—personal opinions and hobbyhorses, stylistic considerations and tactics must be kept out. Opinions and perspectives that do not pass the test of indispensability—they are essential, critical to one’s identity, purpose and mission—are denied space. These belong in the outer ring.

When the inner core is the right size and in right relationships to the outer ring, it infuses the leader’s attitudes, decisions and actions with appropriate flexibility, but without compromising the non-negotiables—timeless principles, essential beliefs, core values and deeply held convictions.

CHAMELEON-PROOF YOUR LEADERSHIP.

Goldilocks leaders “chameleon proof” their leadership by monitoring the outer ring to insure that it is the right size and stays vitally connected to the inner core. This means rigorously evaluating if the outer ring manifests patterns of attitude and behavior that reflect the non-negotiable commitments of the inner core, and in fact put these principles, beliefs, values and convictions to work in effectively engaging diverse people and unique circumstances in a changing world. Expediency for the sake of ease, change for change’s sake, cutting ethical corners, “going along to get along,” and moral relativism find no place in the repertoire of the leader’s outer ring.

When the outer ring is the right size and in right relationship to the inner core, it infuses the leader’s attitudes, decisions and actions with moral conviction, but without becoming detached from real time, real world considerations rendering the leader ineffective.

THE GOLDILOCKS LEADER.

Goldilocks leaders reject the porcupine’s judgmental either-or as well as the chameleon’s casual whatever. When a leader maintains this “just right” stance, it unleashes a remarkable blend of qualities critical to sustained effectiveness. The Goldilocks leader manifests a rare mix of deep conviction and situational flexibility, unswerving commitment to principle and unusual insight into the needs and necessities of the moment.

They are disciplined and creative, sure of themselves and respectful of others, value driven and open to new learning. They manifest a gentle conviction.

They are passionate without being prickly, confident without being dogmatic and strong without being hard.

They are flexible without being overly accommodating, effective in the moment without compromising timeless principles.

THE GOLDBLOCKS PRINCIPLE.

The Goldilocks organization is based on the principle, “In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, and in all things charity, or “Unity in necessary things; liberty in doubtful things; charity in all things.”

In organizational parlance, this principle affirms that there are some things worth preserving at all costs—the organization’s identity, core values and mission—and other things that must change over time if the organization is to stay effective in a changing world—strategy, tactics, stylistic considerations, and perhaps some policies and procedures.

THE GOLDBLOCKS ORGANIZATIONAL CHALLENGE.

Over half a century ago, Peter Drucker noted that the only way for an organization to protect what is vitally important to its identity and integrity—its inner core—is by innovating, adjusting and adapting—its outer core. While he didn’t use Goldilocks, porcupine and chameleon terminology, his point is the same. If the organization wants to live true to its inner core and stay effective in a changing world, it must give itself permission to adjust, learn and adapt.

This places two challenges before leaders and organizations.

THE 1ST CHALLENGE

The first is to differentiate the timeless and essential from the temporal and expendable. The identity, purpose and core values of the organization must remain stable, unchanging and non-negotiable.

These essentials must be widely embraced, regularly emphasized, focused on, held dear and not deviated from if the organization is to operate with integrity.

On the other hand, some things must change in response to a dynamic operating environment full of emerging opportunities and threats if the organization is to stay effective over time.

THE 2ND CHALLENGE

The second challenge is to apply the essentials in effective ways to real-time, real world circumstances.

Toward this end, leaders must defend the essentials at all costs, while making sure everything else—strategies and tactics, structures and systems, methods and materials, is open to review and at times, revision.

This is easier said than done, as good-hearted, well-meaning and well-informed people may differ on what is essential. Additionally, leaders and organizations must deal effectively with a dynamic and changing world, but without losing touch with timeless principles and core commitments. Again, this is easier said than done, as reasonable people differ on what effectiveness looks like in light of the essentials—one person’s discerning insight into how to deal with a particular situation may be interpreted by another as outright compromise. As always, leaders will need to draw from deep reservoirs of integrity and wisdom to keep themselves and their organizations in the Goldilocks zone.

BENEFITS OF THE GOLDBLOCKS ZONE.

When an organization operates in the Goldilocks zone, it stays effective without sacrificing its integrity.

The “trick?” Goldilocks leaders employ the inner core as a sort of organizational bungee cord, the unbreakable but flexible ties that bind, which allows the organization to remain flexible while remaining true to itself, to adjust, change shape, even dramatically now and then, without compromising its identity, losing its way or undermining its real world performance.

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