



An opportunity for insight...

From Janet S. Steinwedel, PhD
President, Leader's Insight

Are you tired of hearing about the economic downturn and all of the unsettling ramifications? How are you responding to, or justifying the situation we're in? Do you feel *victimized* – or, *energized* to bring about a new reputation for leadership?

In the last few months I have been hearing of a fair amount of apprehension to take risks and be innovative due to the present economic climate. In my last memo I spoke about integrity and now am moved to discuss another aspect of integrity – “authenticity.” If we are overly anxious we only cut ourselves short and disable our effectiveness and the chance to bring our best selves to the work in front of us. A persona of caution and containment are both unfulfilling and lack integrity. So, what if you do manage to keep your job by staying under the radar? Is that the job you want? Is that the way you care to lead your life?

Now, don't think I am suggesting irresponsibility or reckless abandon on the job. That would be foolish. But, I do think there is a place in between fear and care-less-ness.

I often encourage my clients to evolve a personal philosophy on leadership. This is an opportunity to get clear about what leadership truly means for them. It is a chance to step aside from the lists of expected leadership competencies the organization may have outlined, for just enough time to come back to them realizing their true value. Once you've discerned your own belief in leadership, and determined the qualities that you bring, you can align more effectively...more passionately...more authentically with the organization's expectations. This in turn makes you much more valuable to the organization as you are not blindly following...but indeed, leading.

When we take risks and innovate from an authentic and aligned space we do so with much greater power because it is “connected up.” Being a lone warrior can get us in trouble, even if we think we do it with authenticity – à la, “this is who I am”...“this is what I want to do.” Connecting and collaborating can make our ideas better, bringing greater synergy and more confidence to the effort. Let's not shrink into the background at this difficult time – let's take leadership...whether that be as a peer, a manager, or a unit leader.

NPR has a series (podcasts available on line) called, “This I Believe.” You might take the time to listen to one or two of these essays and then create your own version of *this I believe* – bolster your confidence in what it is you do believe and share your thoughts with others in a collaborative effort for successful innovations for your organization.

One poet says, “We shape our self to fit this world, and by the world are shaped again.”¹ How are you shaping the world...your world and the world beyond your everyday living? What is shaping you? Is that in service to the *you* you really want to be?

How can you be your most authentic and creative self in the work place and not fear the consequences?

¹David Whyte, The House of Belonging