

Leadership is an integral aspect of managing innovation for value creation. However, with this notion comes varying definitions of what makes a good leader. Leadership is a dynamic concept, constantly changing as the world around it changes. This statement held true for me personally as I began to further explore and study leadership in today's business world. First, the work of several renowned business writers will be outlined to illustrate the concepts that have created my new lens on leadership. I will then discuss my goals in applying this new found knowledge to my future professional and personal life.

Davila, Epstein and Shelton (2005) organize innovation management principles into what they entitle the *Seven Principles of Innovation Management*. Surely it is no coincidence that strong leadership is principle number one. Davila, Epstein and Shelton characterize strong leadership as day to day commitment and theory in action. They contest that following commitment with action will encourage others to follow suit. In essence Davila, Epstein and Shelton argue that strong commitment through action will generate similar commitment from the rest of the organization, thus allowing the group as a whole to reach their maximum potential in any activity they undertake.

This theory of group potential is affirmed by Blake and Mouton (1985; as cited in Isaksen and Tidd, 2006) who further define leadership by creating a grid, and placing concern for results and concern for people on the x and y axis respectively. At the high end of both scales is the category of *Team Management*, which Blake and Mouton describe as, "...interdependence through a "common stake" in organization purpose [that] leads to relationships of trust and respect." (p. 123). The common idea of interdependence and group potential is clear in both concepts put forth by these business writers. These ideas allude to a change in the overall

concept of leadership centering on the group rather than the individual. Today's leaders are characterized by goals achieved by the group rather than qualities and successes of the individual.

Quality leadership can also be a contagious effect. Good leaders will create additional leaders within a group or organization. This leads to Carlson and William's (2006) concept of *Innovation Champions*. Innovation Champions are those who are committed to the cause and take responsibility in value creation. These champions can be a key factor in the success of organization innovation. However, Innovation Champions require organizational support and alignment, which brings us back to earlier discussions on leadership and group potential. In order for Innovation Champions to flourish they must first receive the support of quality leadership in order to realize their maximum potential. It is easy to see the connection between strong leadership and the formation of Innovation Champions. Strong leadership must first be in place in order to create an Innovation Champion, which validates Davila, Epstein and Shelton's (2005) reasoning for placing strong leadership first on their list.

While all these concepts slowly began to come together for me, it was Ben Zander (2000) who so elegantly placed the cherry on top. In his documentary *Leadership, an Art of Possibility*, Zander speaks of his days conducting the Boston Philharmonic Orchestra. I was awe inspired as Zander shared his revelation that the conductor is the only person in the entire orchestra that does not make a sound. It is the conductor's job to awaken possibility, power and sound from each individual, allowing the orchestra to project at its greatest capacity. This is the perfect analogy of what defines leadership. Good leaders will speak possibility in order to realize maximum potential of the individuals they lead.

Each of the previously outlined concepts tie together to create the definition of superior leadership. Davila, Epstein and Shelton (2005) rightly place strong leadership first in their list of the principles of innovation management. They contend that it is strong commitment that transcends to the rest of the organization, encouraging others to follow suit. This concept is further explored by Blake and Mouton (1985; as cited in Isaksen and Tidd, 2006) whose model of *Team Management* emphasizes interdependence between the group and its leader. The trusting relationships generated by this interdependence will allow for the emergence of Carlson and William's (2006) *Innovation Champions*, adding to success in organizational innovation. Finally, these concepts are brilliantly summarized by Ben Zander (2000) who talks of the leader's role to speak possibility and never doubt the capacity of the people they are leading.

It is said that true learning and understanding results in a change in behavior, and I intend to hold true to these words. Through my new lens on leadership I will strive to empower both myself and others around me thus increasing the potential for success. In addition, I will always exhibit a concern not only for results, but for the individuals around me as Blake and Mouton's (1985; as cited in Isaksen and Tidd, 2006) *Team Management* theory suggests. Finally, I will aim to speak possibility in order to realize the maximum potential within myself and my colleagues. I strongly believe that one can exhibit true leadership regardless of their position or title. Thus, I intend on taking these concepts and applying them to all aspects of my life, both personally and professionally. While the future still holds many uncertainties, there is no doubt in my mind that these tools will be the key to overcoming any obstacle that may block the path to success.

References

- Carlson, C., & William, W. (2006). *Innovation the five disciplines for creating what customers want*. NY, NY: Random House.
- Davila, T., Epstein, M., & Shelton, R. (2005). *Making innovation work*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Isaksen, S., & Tidd, J. (2006). *Meeting the innovation challenge: leadership for transformation and growth*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Zander, B. (Performer). (2000). *Leadership, an art of possibility*. [Video]. Chicago, IL: Groh Productions.