

Week 5, Lesson 2

Hi, I'm Kathleen Schafer and welcome back to lecture 10. Today we are going to be talking about you as a leader and how you put your leadership skills to work in the world. For the past few weeks you have been working on understanding your own leadership styles, your talent, your skills, your passion, your temperament, your personality inclinations...all of the different factors that go into making you the person and leader that you are. And this past week, hopefully especially during the last few days, you've had the opportunity to take time to reflect on what these different talents and skills and qualities mean for the leadership that you want to bring to the world. What you're working on right now is beginning to think about, with that understanding of who you are and what you're about, how you will walk into the world. What is the change that you want to create?

So today what we're going to be focusing on is the idea of how leaders work with their followers. How they engage people to follow their dreams. So often when I work with people they come and they'll say, I want to do x or I want to do y. There's some change that I really want to create. I'd like to see us treat the environment differently. I'd like to see us improve social justice. I'd like to see our country improve education, but how in the world could someone like me possibly do anything about that? What is it that I have to offer? Well hopefully you've begun to answer the first part of that question because now you can answer with an understanding and a knowledge of the talents and skills that you have to bring to creating the change that you wish to see in the world. Now what's important is that you learn how to walk with that knowledge into the world: How to create those changes that you want to create, by working with people and with others in an effective way; because, indeed nothing ever happens without that dynamic and that relationship between leader and followers.

One of the first things I say on the first slide is that nothing happens without engaging a group of people to make a difference. And that's really the first act of leadership is a leader is someone who says something needs to be changed; something needs to be different and I'm willing to engage people in thinking about how we can create that difference.

I've said it before in this class but I'll go back to it again because it's one of my favorites; Margaret Mead's quote, "Never doubt that a small group of people can change the world, indeed it's the only thing that ever has".

That's leadership in its essence. It's that idea that one person can see a change that needs to be created, understand what they'd like to do or bring to creating that change and then engaging people and moving toward that. That's what leadership's about.

So today we're going to be focusing on that engagement piece. What is it that leaders do to engage people? How do you take that first step and begin to say to others, there's something that needs to be done and we need to do something about it.

One of the first things that leaders do is they engage people through a dream. Through their ideas about how to accomplish a dream. And that really comes from your passion. You've already talked about that in your personal leadership plan, is what is your passion. When you can communicate that clearly to people; when you can communicate the desire to see something better, to see it improve; to be very precise about it, that's when you can start engaging people.

You know it's very easy for all of us to look around and see any number of things that we would like to see different in the world. You know, it's not hard. All we have to do is step outside our doors, look at the newspaper, go on the internet...any number of things that face up, we all would like to see different.

One of the first things that a leader must do is they must understand what exactly they do want to change. What is that change? You know its one thing to say I'd like to see the environment be cleaner or I'd like to see us have better economic policies or I'd like more social justice in the world. Well those are nice ideas but they're very broad and very sweeping. One of the first things that an effective leader does is that they really understand they need to focus on the strategic piece, going back to our 4 intelligences, of what it is that they want to change.

Even if you're not the strategic thinker, even if you're not the rational, we all can have a sense of what it is that we do want to see different. Again, we've talked about this before. The idea of saying well we can't clean up the environment worldwide, but what can we do in our own community to see things be different. Can we institute recycling programs? Is there a way to get into the schools and get the kids thinking about it? That's how leadership begins because it needs to be something that is attainable and achievable and where people can engage in it. When the issue that you're dealing with is so big and so broad and goes beyond everyone's reach, then it becomes impossible and then it gets to be very difficult to engage people around that issue. The genius of leaders is that they're able to see that that's the big picture of where they're going, but they're able to break it down into small, attainable steps. What is the first things that we can do right here, right now that is going to create a difference, that's going to create a change? And once you can articulate that then it becomes much easier to begin to engage people in that process. Because people want to be involved with something that is going to be successful; something that's going to be fun; something that they do feel is going to have an impact. And when we don't give them the opportunity to be engaged in something that is doable, it's very hard to engage them and to get them into being excited and wanting to be a part of something.

So as a leader that first strategic step for you is decide what is the specific change that you want to see accomplished. Be able to communicate that and then to begin to engage other people into helping you with that change.

Again, going back to what we've been talking about, we all have our own natural inclinations and tendencies and intelligences that we bring to the table. A leader understands how to see those same things in other people and how to bring them along;

how to bring them on board. So depending on where you're at in any of these styles, as you start to engage people begin to look around and begin to think about the people who are going to complement the talents and skills that you bring. And as you bring them to the table, by acknowledging those talents and skills that they do bring, you're going to develop that sense of buy-in to an even greater degree.

So that's that first step for you is to think about how is it that I'm going to bring these people to the table. And one of the things that I always like to say, its following here next on the slide, is that people like to be involved with agents of change. With people that they feel really can have an impact, who can make a difference. I said in here people who are leaders add value to peoples' lives. Think about that. Leaders add value to peoples' lives. The reason people are willing to engage with you is because they feel that they are not only able to give something but there's something of value that they're receiving in return. And for most people it's this idea that they would like to see the same type of change occur. They've had similar thoughts but they haven't had the knowledge, the talent, the skill and the desire to go out and actually create that change.

So what you're able to do as a leader is you're able to tap into that latent interest in people and add value to their lives because you're the one who's willing to begin to get things started. You're the one to get the roll ball rolling. You're the one to add the value by adding your energy; your talents, your passions, your skills, to issues that are already simmering for them. Now think about that. I mean think about the idea of the power behind that. You're not only adding value to their lives because you're allowing them the opportunity to go out and be engaged in something that they've been wanting to be engaged in, but you're unleashing a power to create the change that you want to create. I mean that's the beauty of leadership, that these relationships are reciprocal. They do go back and forth and everybody gains from them. That's where true leadership can occur.

So as you think about creating the change you wish to see in the world, and so often people feel like, you want me to go create this change and I've got to do it all by myself and how can I possibly do something like this; there's so much work, there's so much to be done. What can I do? And again, I'm not a physicist by any means, but you can begin to understand the power of unleashing those same interests and dreams and passions in other people and then using it and pointing it all in the same direction so you can all accomplish what you want to do.

You know leadership understands and recognizes that there's more commonality between us than what most people would tend to think. And so when you begin to identify in people, you know what; you've really had an interest in this and I've heard you talk about that. I know that you haven't really wanted to get involved with something right now, but would you be willing to spend a few hours of your time doing, you know, the web design our new recycling center. That's the kind of thing that leaders do because now what you've done is you've honored the person, you've allowed them to engage in something they've really been wanting to do and therefore you've added value to their lives. That's what a change agent was. That's what a leader does is understand how this relationship just isn't about themselves and the change that they want to see, but its about untapping,

unleashing that latent desire in so many people to be involved in creating that same change. It's fun, it's exciting and it really allows you to move forward with all of this.

One of the other pieces I guess of this agent of change idea is the sense that as you work with people, one of the other phenomenon that can happen is that your idea of change and what you want to see happen and how you are creating it can change, can improve, can grow, based upon those that you're bringing to the table to help you. That's one of the things that leaders do, as we've talked about this from the kind of old style of leadership that we've had in the past to, you know, much more of the kind of consensus and collaboration leadership that we see today, is that we have people who are willing...we have leaders who are able to be open to new ideas that come to the table all the time. We don't have to be stuck and saying, gosh this is the change that we were creating, this is the path that we were on and this is the only way that we're going to do. Indeed as you bring other resources to the table, as you bring other people in and their ideas and thoughts, you're able to improve what it is you're doing by virtue of the fact that you're not unleashing and untapping all of these talents and skills in other people as well.

So it really becomes a process where your growth is taking place alongside the growth of the group. And as a leader the joy of it is that you get to see your dream move forward, but it's improved upon; it's built on because you bring other people to it.

Too often leaders fail when they refuse to allow people to come in and join in and be collaborative partners in the change process. If there's only one way that you're interested or willing to do the change they you've really set up barriers and eliminated a lot of the different assets that can come to you. When you're open, when you're flexible, when you're willing to see areas where things could be improved or a different way that you might be able to approach things, then you're able to achieve that vision of change while making sure that those who are with you feel like they're really a part of it. Most times you'll be able to accomplish faster, more effectively and with greater success so that you can move on to your next goal. Again, this is that idea of the pebble in the pond. You know that that first thing that you do may be a small thing but with that achievement and with people really being able to recognize your ability to create change, to draw people in to accomplish things, then the next task, the next goal that you have, you know, is a little bit bigger reach and a little bit bigger. This is how leaders grow. This is how leaders develop. It's like any other skill that you work on. Yes, we all have talents, yes we all have natural inclinations, yes we can all be leaders, but there is the skill of leadership that as it is practiced, as it is put into use every day, really does develop.

And that's one of the beautiful things of where you're at right now that working on these plans you have an idea of a change that you want to create. And what I'm asking you to think about in this course is what it is that you want to do even during the next 6 months. What is a change that you could implement? How could you begin to build those leadership muscles in your skill set? So think about that as you are moving through this process...that the more that you exercise this ability to lead in groups to accomplish the change, that vision that you put out, the more that you have that experience of working with groups to do that effectively, the better able you're going to be to make the big

changes that you do wish to see. Because there are issues that need to be dealt with on a very big scale and again that change takes place one step at a time with leaders that are constantly open to critiquing and improving their leadership skills.

One of the other things that I like to talk about in leadership is that leaders are bold and, you know, it's a little bit different way of describing leaders because so often we like to think about them as being strong, as being tough, as being in control. And a lot of those words tend to be, you know, the more masculine way of looking at leadership. We again talked about, in previous lectures, this idea of kind of 'might' makes 'right'. When I talk about leaders being bold I like to think about this word as one that includes the sense of strength, but it also includes that sense of inner knowing, of wisdom, of being able to be strong in who you are and what you're about. So, bold leadership is balanced leadership. It's that leadership that says, "Yes, I'm willing to go out and to be daring, to push the limits". At the same time, I'm doing it from a place of that wisdom of knowing who I am and doing it in a very conscious way.

So when I think about the different qualities of being bold I think about the idea of being willing to redefine expectations, of really being willing to challenge the system. Again, when we think about people who have made huge leadership impacts in our lifetimes, these are people who were willing to take a look at what is and say, how can we do this better? How can we get beyond the mindset of this is what is here and this is what we're going to have to deal with? Leaders do have that ability to balance ...here's the system, going back to our guardian and our artisans, and yet how can we do this a different way? So that's that idea of what are we going to boldly move forward with ideas. Making incremental improvements is always good. Leaders are those people who are really willing to step out and say maybe we ought to think about doing things differently.

The next idea is one that I think is very good for us as political leaders in particular. To create a cause and not a campaign. I think that one of the best ways that this has been demonstrated, and I'm sure we'll have many ways of Monday morning quarterbacking as we go through the democratic presidential process, but when you look at the success of Barak Obama in this primary campaign. This is a perfect example of what I'm talking about right here. I mean, what he has done is he has created a cause. He's created a movement that really goes beyond who he is as an individual. That the change that he is seeking to create really isn't about whether or not he is president, of course he does want to be, but he has been talking about and articulating ideas that talk about the change in Washington. About what needs to be done, about the fact that, again, he's willing to change the system as it is. He's willing to be bold and say how are we going to do things differently. And that vision, that ability to talk about and to create an idea of change that isn't about a campaign, it's not about one end goal...simply in November of winning or losing. But it's about a whole different way of looking at how we do business in Washington in general. This has just created a ground swell of support politically that has been unparalleled in decades. Young people coming out; internet contribution. I mean people are excited about somebody who's willing to stand up and say I think we can all do better. That's a bold statement. That's an idea of saying this is a cause. This is something for all of us. And indeed I think a lot of his words have been a call to action

for all of us as leaders to do exactly what we've been talking about in this course. That each of us in our own ways can create our own causes: that we can create our vision and draw people to it, but it's not because it's over a win or lose, it's not over a ballot proposal or a change in an ordinate. It's really about calling people to something higher, something that's really going to change and uplift all of us. And that's what leaders can do, is they can articulate the ability to achieve that kind of change that raises what it is that you're involved with, from a simple straightforward yes/no, win/lose to a cause. To something that makes everyone better off. Again, going back to the idea we just talked about, adding value to their lives. So again, think about that as an important component. We want to create a cause as leaders, not only a campaign.

We need to always be open to new ideas and I think one of the interesting things, especially so much in the internet era is, "What are the revolutionary ideas that are out there?" And when I talk about revolutionary ideas I'm not talking about, you know, overthrowing governments or anything like that, but what are the ideas that can really shift and change how we think about what it is that we're doing? I mean when any kind of major change that's taken place in history ...again, someone had to be bold enough...a leader had to be bold enough to envision a new way of doing things. You think about the founders of this country and the settlers of this country. They had a bold idea; they had a revolutionary idea that said we want to live in a country that's ruled by its people and not by monarchs. You know that is the foundation for having made all of the leaps that they took to get us where we are today. You know, what are those ideas that are out there that may seem a little far fetched, that may seem a little bit on the edge. Think about a Bill Gates who sat down and said gosh, someday I think it would be a great idea if everyone owned a computer. Or Henry Ford who thought that everyone owning a car. I mean these are revolutionary ideas when people first heard them. But again it took leadership to turn those revolutionary ideas into, you know, concepts and products, and tools that we use every day and take for granted. No one can hardly think about operating in this society today without a computer and yet it took somebody like Bill Gates who put forward revolutionary ideas, and was able to lead that change to get us to where we are.

So what are those ideas out there? You don't necessarily need to be the one to come up with that revolutionary idea, but as a leader who wants to create change you need to be open to hearing them. And the more open that you are to all different points of view, to all different ideas that come your way, to looking at them, thinking about them; what can you use, what can't you use. You and your change that you are creating will be far more effective because it really will be at the cutting edge of where we are as a society and as a people. And ultimately, you know, that's a place where leaders need to understand very well. We need to understand where the people are, but just as importantly we need to understand where it is that we need to go.

Look to all kinds of talent that you can bring in. And I think this is part of that whole idea of the revolutionary thinking is that, you know, so often we, again, have very strict ideas about who can and can't be involved in change. But oftentimes when you engage people who maybe aren't a part of your normal group or aren't normally an advocate for the thing you're advocating, or perhaps maybe even an opponent of the change that you want

to create. But by engaging people from all different sectors you're opening yourself up to those ideas. And again, over and over I have found both personally and professionally, working with hundreds of clients, is that the best, most effective way of creating change is engaging people. Change is arrested when we start fighting and when we start pushing against things. And that the only way you ultimately can create the change that you wish to create is by engaging as many people as you possibly can. There will always be those contrarians, there will always be those obstructionists, you know, and you just have to accept them and learn the lessons from what it is they have to say. And sometimes you just have to move right around them. But by engaging people from all different walks of life what you do is you strengthen your ability to create that change. Because, again, the more people that are involved the more that it works. And as leaders of change that's what you need to do. You need to put all the tools and resources that you possibly can into creating the change that you want.

I guess the other one that I really wanted to mention is this idea of growing organically. And I think that as a leader there's a couple of different ways to interpret this as we talk about bold leadership.

One of them is personally, and that is that for you as a leader it's very important to continually look for new ideas. That you're reaching out to people, that you're reaching out to organizations, to books, to whatever it is that you can do to continue to grow. Because again, these ideas, these thoughts, these concepts, the thing that's really going to, you know, be that spark that ignites the group that you've been talking about, may come from a very, you know, isolated place. It may come from something that you've never thought of before. But by keeping yourself in that mode of growing and improving, it allows you to really continue to strengthen yourself as an individual. As a leader continued growth is imperative. You must do it. Leaders who shut themselves off from any kind of growth are those that ultimately find failure because we're all growing, we're all changing all of the time. So by you being open to growing, by you being open to looking at all different ways that you can continue to take in information and strengthen your talents and skills, you can do that.

The same thing is true with the groups that you're working with because you want to provide them the same opportunities. Remember we talked about this idea of adding value to people. Well this is one of the things that you can do when you're working toward change is to think about how you can provide the people that you're working with the opportunity to grow and learn themselves. So as you're exposed to new ideas and concepts, this is a wonderful way to pass that information along and to get others' responses and reactions to it.

So again, this is another way that leaders can engage the groups that they're working with is by you constantly being in tune to learning, by bringing in new ideas, and then passing those ideas along, that's how you're able to strengthen the people that you work with and to strengthen the groups and organizations that you're working with as well.

So the last quote that I wanted to talk about with you today is one of my favorites and Anita Roddick said it, who was the founder of The Body Garden, or excuse me The Body Shop. She said people become motivated when you guide them to the source of their own power. So that ultimately the challenge that I want to put forward to each of you is that now that you have had the opportunity to learn some of these tools, you have been able to develop a different way of understanding and way of looking at your own talents and skills...one of the challenges to you is to think about how you can turn around and do the same things for others. Because, again, how you're going to be able to create the change you wish to create in the world is to empower others to do it. And now that you've been shown a way, you have been going through this process yourself, and the more that you can turn and do the same with the people that you're working with, helping them to see the source of their own power, the easier and easier it will become for you to engage in working with you to create the change that you want to see.

So again, the beauty of leadership is this idea that both sides are served. It is not a one-way, one-directional relationship. It is a very dynamic relationship and the more open you are to serving those who are 'following' you, the more effective you will be as a leader.

So I hope that you will take time to think about ways that you can be effective in drawing and bringing up your groups that you're working with as you complete your plans for creating the change that you wish to see in the world.