



Christmas 2011

THE ENCOURAGING LEADER

The Leader of Christmas Yet to Come

You know it as one of the most beloved Christmas classics of all time. Charles Dickens', A Christmas Carol, first published in 1843, is the tale of Ebenezer Scrooge. As you know, the tale begins on Christmas Eve seven years after the death of Scrooge's business partner Jacob Marley.

Scrooge is visited by The Ghost of Christmas Past who implores Scrooge to change his stingy ways. Scrooge is reminded of his innocent youthful days in an attempt to appeal to a more tender time in his life. The second spirit, The Ghost of Christmas Present, takes Scrooge, among other places, to the home of his impoverished clerk Bob Cratchit. Scrooge is faced with the responsibility of caring for his fellow man.

Finally, Scrooge is visited by The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come. In this dream, Scrooge is faced with the dire consequences of his failure to act on what he has witnessed. He is shown his untended grave and in the end changes his ways. He spends Christmas day with his nephew's family and sends the prize winning turkey to the Cratchit home for dinner.

While the story concludes with Scrooge changing his ways it serves as a reminder that exceptional leadership is called upon in uncommon times. The fictional account of Scrooge serves to remind us of what is truly important during this season of the year.

The opening words of Dickens serve as an exemplary leadership model. This model will endear you to your team and will build the character of your organization from the inside out. Consider the qualities of The Leader of Christmas Yet to Come.

A leader with a heart never hardens. One of the greatest compliments for a leader today is that he or she has not grown calloused by the corporate grind. While leadership certainly has its benefits, it can be challenging. Keeping people at a distance might make a leader feel secure but it can create an unhealthy bubble that hardens the heart of leaders to those who otherwise desire to help.

Henry Ward Beecher said, "No man can tell whether he is rich or poor by turning his ledger. It is the heart that makes a man rich."

He is rich according to what he is, not according to what he has." When the Leader of Christmas Present has a heart that is not hardened he has the makings of a business with a future and a force for good.

A leader with a temper that never tires. The temperament of the leader in the organization determines the direction of the organization more than anything else. Lord Chesterfield said, "A man who cannot command his temper should not think of being a man of business." The responsibility of the leader is to set a tone that signals civility as well as success. All leaders are challenged and tried, and at times fall short. But in order to successfully move the organization forward, an even-tempered leader must be at the helm.

Wes Craven said, "A lot of life is dealing with your curse, dealing with the cards you were given that aren't so nice. Does that make you into a monster, or can you temper it in some way, or accept it and go in some other direction?" And this is the challenge of leadership – to endure some unpleasant realities, make difficult decisions, and put up with some cranky people along the way. The Leader of Christmas Present is the steady hand at the helm guiding the ship to success.

The leader with the touch that never hurts. This by far is the legacy of leadership. Your touch as a leader is far reaching beyond the decisions of today. Will yours be the touch that lifts up or tears down? Will it be with words that help or cause harm? It was Dickens who also said, "No one is useless in this world who lightens the burden of it to anyone else."

The touch that never hurts is the signature of your leadership. Your business environment benefits when your leadership is a source of healing and not one of destruction. The Leader of Christmas Present is a catalyst for creating an organization that is quick to care, patient in adversity, and leads with a touch that never hurts.

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Leadership Lessons from the Christmas Story	2
Leadership Lessons in Holiday Pop Culture	2

Inside this issue:

3	Maxwell Moment: Leadership in Dependence
4	Arthur Christmas: A Lesson in Leadership



Leadership Lessons from the Christmas Story

This article was written by Dan Foster on December 22, 2010 for his website (www.CoachDanFoster.com). With permission, it was edited for "The Encouraging Leader". The entire article is worth reading at: <http://www.coachdanfoster.com/2010/12/leadership-lessons-from-the-christmas-story/>

As a leader, I'm always looking for leadership lessons in the lives of other leaders, books, articles, and my own life experiences. With us approaching Christmas, I recently read the different biblical accounts of the arrival of Jesus' on earth. While reading these Christmas stories, a few leadership lessons jumped out at me that I thought were worth sharing.

Lesson #1: Connecting with your team in one-on-one and group settings is essential to building trust and developing relationships. As a leader this connection is very difficult to accomplish from behind a desk, on conference calls, or via webinar.

Lesson #2: Modeling the disciplines necessary for maximum impact and influence is essential to mentoring others and developing them into great leaders. There is an expectation that when you are hired or join an organization you should automatically know the culture of the company, how to do your job, and what it takes to be successful.

Lesson #3: Revealing your vision and retelling your vision consistently provides hope and a sense of belonging to your

team. We all want to be a part of something meaningful and purposeful. A leader's vision binds a team together and attracts the best talent to the organization.



Lesson #4: Extending grace while holding people accountable allows you to focus on improving the person and not just the work they accomplish. A leader's positive response to a negative situation is when development and growth have the best chance for occurring.

Lesson #5: Communicating both the reality and hope of your organization's current state and future develops trust between you and your team. Your team knows when things are

tough and they can identify "corporate spin" better than you think.

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Leadership Lessons in Holiday Pop Culture

Written by Mike Hoban for the DDI Talent Management Intelligence blog. Mike Hoban is a senior consultant with DDI. You can follow the blog at <http://blogs.ddiworld.com/tmi/>

Christmas season film favorites are not just entertaining, some of them contain valuable leadership lessons. So in the holiday spirit, here are some examples of well-known and mostly well beloved seasonal celluloid and their lessons.

A Christmas Story

Leadership Lesson: Sometimes you have to take some intelligent risks in order to reap big rewards, even if the skeptics and naysayers tell you that you might shoot your eye out. Act upon your inner Ralphie.

It's a Wonderful Life

Leadership Lesson #1: You as a leader often have no idea of the unintended positive impact you have on others and unfortunately, there is usually no Clarence angel to show you. **Lesson #2:** Every time you hear a bell ring it means someone has earned his/her leadership "wings."

National Lampoon Christmas Vacation

Leadership Lesson: As a leader, setting accurate expectations about the organization's reward system can help you avoid disengaged and disgruntled employees. An added bonus for viewing this movie is enjoying one of the very classic movie lines, as uttered by Chevy Chase's character. "Am I surprised? Why Eddie, I wouldn't be more surprised if I woke with my head sewn to the carpet."

Miracle on 34th Street

Leadership Lesson: Being seriously - I mean seriously - customer focused might mean sending your customer to someone else if they have a better solution, as Kris Kringle in the movie suggested that shoppers go to his sponsoring store's arch-competitor Gimbels. Sometimes enhancing the long-term relationship and trust is more important than making an immediate sale.

Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer

Leadership Lesson: The power of diversity gets a lot of lip service but in this low-tech classic production it's the odd, eccentric Rudolph who brings his unique and heretofore unappreciated quality (his glowing nose) to the table and enables Santa, the leader, to accomplish his task. Despite

that valuable lesson, it is a truly awful and annoying production and leaders are urged to acquire that lesson through other means.

How the Grinch Stole Christmas

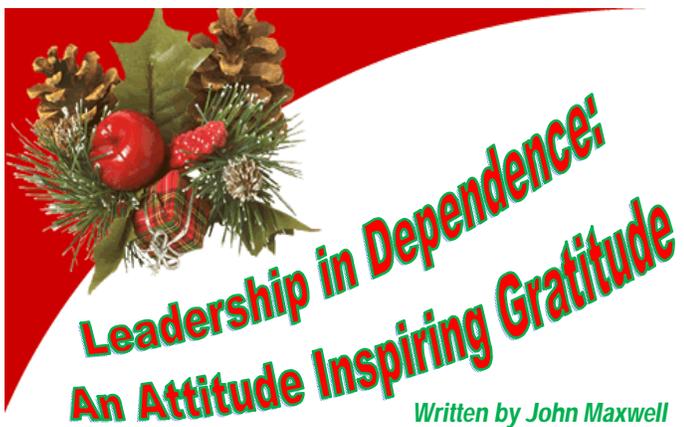
Leadership Lesson: You as a leader can overcome significant character flaws or executive derailers through self-awareness and intentional action. Even a negative, narcissistic reputation like the Grinch's can be repaired through authentic and consistent positive behavior.

Elf

Leadership Lesson: Embracing, advocating and acting upon your beliefs and vision can enable others to believe in and achieve a desirable outcome, even if it seems preposterous to others initially. Plus, every leader can increase his/her credibility with younger employees by knowing there are four main food groups: candy; candy canes; candy corns and syrup.

A Charlie Brown Christmas (Animated)

Leadership Lesson: Good grief, leading by example can be a powerful way of capturing the hearts and minds of others in times when a paradigm shift is needed. Come to think of it, this is something of a theme for all of these seasonal productions.



When I began my journey as a leader, I honed in on my goals and pushed hard to achieve them. Before long, I reached a painfully obvious conclusion. When I tried to make things happen on my own, my accomplishments ended up being incredibly insignificant. As it turns out, self-made people don't make much of an impact.

You won't be successful as a leader unless a lot of people want you to be. No matter what level of talent you possess, you're dependent on others for success. As a leader, your influence derives from an awareness of your dependence and a willingness to express thanks to those whom you rely upon for help. In their book, *Laws of Lifetime Growth* Dan Sullivan and Catherine Nomura, write about the connection between gratitude and influence:

"Only a small percentage of people are continually successful over the long run. These outstanding few recognize that every success comes through the assistance of many other people—and they are continually grateful for this support. Conversely, many people whose success stops at some point are in that position because they have cut themselves off from everyone who has helped them. They view themselves as the sole source of their achievements. As they become more self-centered and isolated, they lose their creativity and ability to succeed."

Broadly speaking, three categories of people have lifted me to success.

1) Some people helped me that never knew me. Some people have deposited their thoughts into my mind through the books they have written. Others have influenced me on account of the lives they have authored. These leaders, like Mother Teresa and Martin Luther King, Jr., have inscribed leadership lessons on the pages of history for all to read.

(2) Some people knew me but never knew they helped me. These individuals modeled success principles for me that I could apply to my life. I watched them and caught from them things that add value to my life today. I am filled with joy whenever I am able to express my gratitude to these unintentional mentors.

3) Some people know me and know they help me.

These friends have been intentional in their assistance. Most of the good things that have happened to me are a direct result of their commitment to add value to my life.

The people who have helped me the most include:

Gift Complementors: These people do things I am not gifted to do.

Creative Thinkers: These people solve problems and give me options.

Door Closers: These people complete assignments with excellence.

People Developers: These people multiply my influence by training other leaders.

Mind Stretchers: These people expand my thinking and my spirit.

Networkers: These people connect me to relationships that enhance my life.

As a leader, my visions have always been bigger than my ability, leaving me with two options: give up or get help. I've leaned heavily on others in making my dreams a reality. As a Chinese proverb says: "Behind an able person are always other able people." That adage certainly has been true in my life.

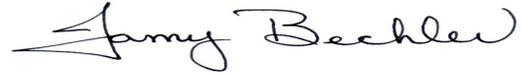
Success is compounded when others join our cause. Followers make leaders possible. In turn, great followers make great leaders. Understanding this lesson inspires a leader to be grateful. I'd like to give a big "Thank you" to the people whom I've depended upon for success as a leader.

Application:

The English word "thanks" actually comes from the same root word as "think." Yet oftentimes we are not mindful of the many mentors and supporters who have assisted our leadership journey. Maybe if we were more "Thinkful" we would be more "Thankful." Carve out 20 minutes to think about three people responsible for your success. Jot each of them a note expressing your gratitude for the ways in which they have benefited your life.



With Christmas just days away, we wanted to put together a special issue of THE ENCOURAGING LEADER, which attempts to capture the essence of this holiday season. Whether you are somebody that celebrates Christ during this holiday season or sees it as a great opportunity to spend time with friends and family or as a good time of the year to be generous and give to those less fortunate or just as a nice break from your normal routine—there are many positive leadership principles associated with Christmastime that we'll try to highlight in this issue.



"Arthur Christmas" A lesson in leadership

This weekend, some PLA gammas and I decided to go see "Arthur Christmas," a recently-released Christmas movie playing at a local State College theater. As someone who is usually skeptical of (a) animation, (b) movies released around holidays, I was admittedly a bit hesitant to see the movie. As it turned out, though, "Arthur Christmas" was fantastic -- mostly because it combined all the "feel good" elements you'd want in an animated Christmas movie with the subtle (and sometimes, not so subtle) humor you'd want in a movie that focuses on current social commentary. I may just be a huge nerd, but I also saw some valuable lessons about leadership embedded in the plot of "Arthur Christmas."

As a warning, I wouldn't suggest reading any further if you'd like to see the movie and not have the element of surprise ruined for you. But basically the story follows Santa's family -- including his wife, two sons, and father -- and their respective roles in the Christmas Eve toy delivery process. As depicted in "Arthur Christmas," the evening of deliveries has now gone completely technological, with thousands of elves manning computers at the North Pole control station, using what are suggested to be the equivalent of smart phones, etc. Santa is somewhat of a figurehead in the whole process, leaving the logistical duties to his more tech-savvy older son. While the older son seems to have virtually no emotional investment in the beneficiaries of the Christmas deliveries, Santa's younger son Arthur is filled with the Christmas spirit and becomes very adamant that the one girl in the whole world who is somehow missed in the "present drop" receives her bicycle on Christmas day.

Long story short, Arthur saves the day -- without technology or efficiency but with a ton of passion. When those in positions of power -- i.e. Santa and his older son -- seemed indifferent about their actual intended mission, bumbling Arthur was filled with determination and passion for the holiday and what it means. (And ultimately, in a very peachy-keen kind of outcome, this passion enabled him to become elected as the new Santa.)

I think this lesson is a great one. People who have established titles and power are not always going to exhibit top-notch leadership qualities, including passion for the organization or cause that they are in charge of. Leaders, then, can be anyone -- including those who are written off as lacking social status or wealth or eloquence. And while exhibiting that passion for the cause may not always elevate you to a position of power, the optimistic part of me would like to think that at least in some cases, it does.

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