

PAYING IT FORWARD

Leading With Purpose

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Who Do You Become...

After 40 years in the fire service, Chief Randy Bruegman founded The Leadership Crucible Foundation dedicated to helping shape future leaders by emphasizing integrity, paying it forward to others, and leaving things better than we found them. Together, we can inspire a new generation of leaders committed to these essential values.

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When The Bell Goes Off?

In the fire service, when a response for a call is received in the fire station, bells or tones go off to alert the firefighters to the emergency. They gear up, get on the equipment, and respond. In the past, when firefighters were using horses to pull their fire-fighting equipment, dalmatian dogs became the perfect companion in the firehouse due to their affinity for horses.

Their acute hearing and sharp instincts made them an integral part of the firefighting team. They could detect the sound of distant sirens before humans, often enabling firefighters to respond more swiftly to emergencies. The dalmatians were also trained to clear the path for fire equipment by running ahead and barking to alert pedestrians and clear the way through crowded streets. Their distinctive appearance drew attention, helping to create a safe passage for the fire equipment and the firefighters.

This early form of crowd control was particularly vital in bustling cities where congested streets posed a challenge for fire departments. Once on the scene, the dogs would stay with the horses to keep them calm while the firefighters extinguished the blaze. But one can imagine the scene in the firehouse when those bells went off, the dalmatians were running around just waiting for those doors to swing open so they could clear the way. They knew their mission, their purpose, and they had the heart to get the job done.

I thought of this in the context of leadership, when that bell goes off and it is time to get the job done, many of the people that I have worked with over the years, have lacked the

understanding of the mission, and their role and purpose to make sure it is achieved. They also did not have the heart to do what was right, especially when it was the hard thing to do. Inexperienced and ineffective leaders can be like a Dalmatian in the firehouse, running every time the bells goes off, but the difference is, when their door opens and it is time for them to act, they don't have the commitment or the heart to get the job done.

We witness this phenomenon in real-time every day in the political arena and with individuals elected or appointed to key leadership positions. When faced with a problem to solve, they often forget the mission of serving their constituency, lack the commitment to do what is right, and fail to lead on behalf of the people they were elected or appointed to serve.

A joint project between U.S. News and The Harris Poll published three reports in November and December of 2023 on the state of leadership in the U.S., the top traits that people would like to see in their leaders and how leaders can earn trust. The first study confirmed that the state of leadership in the country, from the government to the business world, has never been lower that it is today.



- 84% agree with the statement, "There is a leadership crisis in the U.S. government today."
- 86% of American respondents are "largely disappointed" by leaders in society.
- 78% say "there is a leadership crisis in corporate America."
- 70% say "current leaders are not prepared to handle the new crisis of today."

“Many feel that leaders are withholding society from advancing, while some believe our political leaders today are even worsening society,” The Harris Poll said in a statement analyzing the poll results. “Given the considerable concern around large-scale societal problems, the economy, climate change, AI and more, Americans are growing more and more weary.” (U.S. News 12/23)

In the current landscape of the public sector, it has become increasingly common to observe our elected leaders addressing audiences with statements that are not only factually inaccurate but also strategically crafted to distort the truth or manipulate the narrative to align with their desired beliefs. In the private sector, we often witness instances where leadership deviates from the organizational mission, lacks the integrity to make ethical decisions, and fails to lead with compassion.

Recent examples of this include Elizabeth Holmes of Theranos who envisioned groundbreaking innovations, but her leadership was tainted by deceit and a lack of transparency, ultimately resulting in a major scandal and the company’s downfall.

Similarly, Travis Kalanick’s aggressive leadership and relentless pursuit of rapid expansion at Uber led to numerous controversies, including accusations of fostering a toxic workplace and evading regulations, ultimately forcing him to step down. As CEO of Volkswagen during the emissions scandal, Martin Winterkorn failed to uphold the company’s commitment to sustainability and integrity, resulting in severe damage to Volkswagen’s reputation and substantial financial and legal repercussions. However, these are only three of many examples in the last decade that underscore the prevalence of leadership failures in today’s society.

While it is easy to dwell on the negative examples we witness every day, I believe it’s important to ask:

What leadership traits are the most important for people to see in their leaders to-



In the survey on what Americans want in their leaders, they indicated that the top ten traits to be a successful modern leader in America were the following:

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------|
| 1. Trustworthy | 6. Authentic |
| 2. Honest | 7. Strategic |
| 3. Hard-working | 8. Passionate |
| 4. Ethical | 9. Decisive |
| 5. Loyal | 10. Driven |

As you look at this list and then turn on the evening news or browse through our social media, it's disheartening to find so few examples of these traits in today's leaders. There's a noticeable disparity between what Americans desire from their leaders and what they believe they are presently receiving, particularly at the state and federal levels of government. However, at the local level, this gap is

less pronounced. In fact, the survey revealed that Republicans and Democrats, men and women, Gen Z and boomers, from north to south, and east to west, all concur: it's crucial for leaders to be trustworthy.

The survey also unveiled the eight essential ways leaders can earn trust from the American people, according to a U.S. News & World Report – Harris Poll survey:

1. Be Honest: Leaders must embody honesty and integrity, as these traits form the foundation of trust.

2. Put People First: Prioritizing the well-being and interests of the people they lead is not just admirable, but crucial in earning trust and respect.

3. Be Transparent and Communicate: Open and clear communication fosters trust and creates an environment of understanding and unity.

4. Be Reliable: Consistently delivering on promises and commitments is a key factor in building and maintaining trust.

5. Be a Team Player: Collaborating with others and valuing teamwork demonstrates strong leadership qualities that inspire trust and confidence.

6. Take Action (and Get Results): Leaders should take decisive action and deliver tangible results to earn trust and confidence from those they lead.

7. Demonstrate Ethics: Upholding high ethical standards and demonstrating moral values are essential for earning trust and respect.

8. Be Respectful: Treating others with respect and dignity is fundamental for building trust and fostering strong, positive relationships.

As Linda Klein, former ABA President, and a guest on the Leadership Crucible Podcast stated, “Leadership is about trust and trust is about keeping your word, and people are disillusioned when they follow someone who hasn’t kept her word, because that leads to problems in a company if the leader doesn’t keep their word, and of course in our political world. So leaders have to have integrity, they have to be trustworthy, so when you’re a leader and leadership is about yourself, you fail yourself and you fail those who you lead”.

The current landscape of leadership in society has led to many people not having trust in our institutions, or in the people that are leading them. Trust is the currency required for effective leadership and is the bank account that funds individual, team and organizational effectiveness.

Throughout history, the gradual decline of countries, civilizations, organizations, and corporations has often been attributed to ineffective or unethical leadership. Leadership significantly influences the outcomes and sustainability of various endeavors, underscoring its paramount importance. In the

current era, a noticeable disparity exists between the leadership expected by those being led and the actual leadership provided by individuals in positions of power. We have a phrase in the fire and emergency services that states, no one else is coming. It is up to us,-- a mentality that dictates when the bells or tones go off in the firehouse and we are responding to an emergency, it is up to us to fix the problem.

So the question for each of us in the context of leadership in our society today: who are you going to become and what are you going to do when the bells go off, because they are ringing loudly today?

From my vantage point, the only way to respond and fix the issue that we are collectively faced with, is to get involved and demand leadership that is honest, trustworthy, ethical, and puts people first. Like the Dalmatian that fearlessly led the fire apparatus through the streets in the past, we must show the same unwavering resolve, know our mission and purpose, and have the heart to get the job done.

“Trust is the currency required for effective leadership...”



Leaders Are Readers

I believe that to be a good leader, one must be on a continuous quest to gain more knowledge. The leadership benefits of reading are wide-ranging. Evidence suggests that reading can improve intelligence and lead to innovation and insight. To that end, we provide a few suggested titles below for you to consider:

The Speed of Trust

Stephen M.R. Covey

The Trust Edge

David Horsager

When Pride Still Mattered: A Life of Vince Lombardi

David Maraniss

Good Business: An Ethics Workshop for Business Leaders

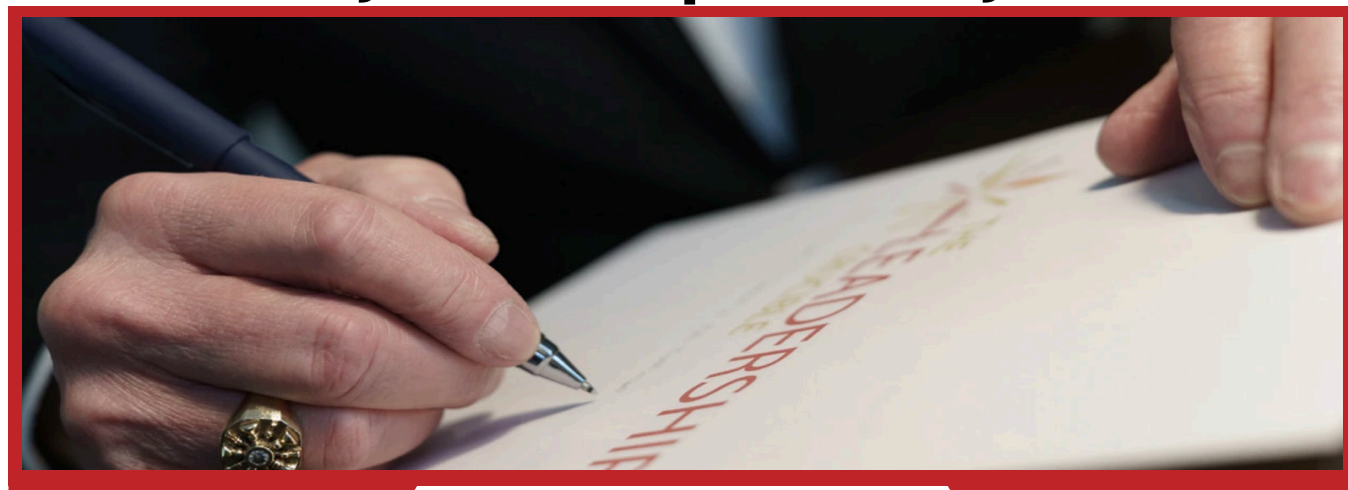
John Endris

Honest to Greatness

Peter Kozodoy



Chief B's Key Leadership Takeaways



Having the honor of speaking to great leaders in their profession in **The Leadership Crucible Podcast**, we take notes on the key leadership takeaways we discussed.

We share these personal and leadership takeaways - these insights - with you in hopes they will help you reflect on them personally or from a professional perspective. Points you can discuss with your team or colleagues, often creating great dialogue insights:

- The lack of understanding of mission, purpose, and commitment to putting others first has created a leadership vacuum in our country.
- When leadership is about yourself, you fail yourself and you fail those who you lead.
- Poor Leadership is stifling society from advancing, and is not prepared to meet the demands that will be placed upon it in the future.
- Honesty, ethics, hard work, and being trustworthy are the foundation to being a trusted and effective leader.
- Trust is the currency required for effective leadership and is the bank account that funds individual, team and organizational effectiveness.
- No one else is coming to fix the leadership problem, it is up to us!

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