

**Successful Leadership Skills**  
*A Newsletter for Real Leaders*  
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**Mindset vs. Toolkit**

**The Devil and  
Leadership Development**

**An excerpt from our  
upcoming  
book on  
healthcare  
leadership -**

**Steve Moreau, CEO  
San Antonio Community  
Hospital  
Upland, CA**

**Mindset vs. Toolkit**

We have witnessed many debates between executives on the relative merits of LEAN, Six Sigma, PDCA and scores of other codified problem solving processes. The people are always arguing about which set of problem solving tools is the best. We think they are all missing the point.

What is the point you ask? There is a great story about a Toyota executive attending a LEAN conference as a keynote speaker. After his speech he was asked why no one inside Toyota had ever written a book about LEAN considering that Toyota had pioneered the concept.

He looked a little bemused and said, "Because there is nothing to write about." His audience asked what he meant by that. "Well, all the book would say is ask the people doing the work if they know what they are supposed to do, do they know how to do it and what stops them from doing it right every time...then ask them the same questions again and again and so forth."

His point was that the value of any process, whether LEAN, Six Sigma, PDCA, etc. is not the tools advocated by that process. The value is in the mindset that develops in the people over time. A mindset, a culture that is always focused on how to do a better job.

If you go to Amazon.com you will find over 270,000 books on LEAN process. Yet the founders of the concept have not written a single one of them. These experts know that the tools are easy to learn how to use. The important work is establishing the right mindset in an organization.

Many of our clients think we have a codified process with a set of tools that we always use. We really don't. We make up new tools all of the time. Sometimes in the middle of a problem solving session! What we have is a mindset that calls us to drive teams to see their circumstances as clearly as possible from as many different angles as possible. We will use any means we can dream up, borrow or steal to make that happen!

That is our recommendation to you. Hold everyone on your management team accountable for continually improving the processes and results in their areas. Do not get hung up on what specific process they use to accomplish this. Let them create the way that will work best with their people. Establish the mindset for continual improvement by relentlessly following up with them to track their progress.

This three-pronged approach of requiring managers to continually work to improve, allowing them the flexibility to do it their own way, and regularly following up to make sure what they are doing is working will establish a mindset for improvement that will be far more valuable than any tool kit you can buy.

### **The Devil and Leadership Development**

What do the Devil and leadership development have to do with each other? Well, if you think about the leadership qualities of some of the leaders you know who have been through typically ineffective leadership development programs you don't need us to answer that question for you.

But, that's not our story. We actually got to engage the Devil on his leadership development...and live to tell the tale!

Now, this is actually a story within a story that addresses some of the most fundamental questions in leadership development:

- Can you change leaders' behavior?
- Can really bad leaders change?

- Can you change a leader's heart and really make the change stick?
- How long should leadership development last?

Our story begins. We are sitting in the boardroom of a large healthcare company. The senior leadership team surrounds us. They are looking more than a little skeptical. The CEO, whom we had done some other work for, had asked us to talk to his team about how we could help them create a leadership development program that would teach the right leadership skills to all managers.

We were being hit with comments and questions like; "leadership development is a waste of time" "I've never seen management development work" "Who cares what leadership style you have, just get the work done"

Then this gruff senior Vice President challenged us with "Do you really think you can change the heart of a leader? I mean you might get them to nod their head "yes" that certain leadership styles are more appropriate than others, but at the end of the day they are going to keep doing the same things they have always done. So, answer my question, do you really think you can change a leader's heart?"

We looked at each other and then one of us said; "I don't know and I don't care and neither should you. But, let me tell you what I do know. The right kind of management training can change behavior and make it last...well, sort of. Let us tell you a story."

Now, this is where the Devil comes into our story. Turn the calendar back 10 years from the boardroom we were all just in. We are with a brand new client. We are at the beginning of a leadership development program for more than 250 leaders. We have started with the top dozen or so leaders.

We had just received the results of a leadership skills survey and were meeting with each executive to give them the feedback and discuss their management development plan.

One of the senior executives had been there for years. His secret nickname across the organization was "The Devil." He loved to put people on the spot in public and make them twist while he blasted them. He had orchestrated the firing of scores of leaders just because he was in a battle with their bosses. He was a tyrant, plain and simple. His survey results included this comment from one of the staff; "He can suck the soul out of a person and enjoys doing it."

Against all expectations his behavior began to change for the positive. He began to call himself "Good Robert" (name changed to protect the guilty!) and so did other people. In fact, at a social event his wife took us aside and said; "I don't know what you're doing with him at work, but keep it up!" And here is the amazing thing, his behavior stayed positive for 6 years!

So there are the answers to the first two questions we posed at the beginning of this article. Can you change leaders' behavior? Absolutely! Can really bad leaders change? Yes, again!

But what about that next question; Can you change a leader's heart and really make the change stick? The change stuck for 6 years. But, then the hero of our story left to become a CEO at another company. He called us to say; "I just wanted to tell you that I always hated that management training program and I'm not going to hire you guys to help me here. I'm going back to being "Bad Robert." I always like being "Bad Robert" and that's who I'm going to be!"

Did leadership development ever change Robert's heart? No, it did not. But it did change his behavior for 6 years. Which leads us to the answer to our last question, how long should leadership development last?

Forever. It is something that every leader needs to do for them and every organization needs to do for all of its leaders. Why? Because, while Robert's behavior was extreme his tendency to fall back into bad habits is neither extreme nor unusual. We all have that tendency.

But we can avoid that trap by continually focusing on the specific leadership qualities we want to exhibit. Excellent leadership development applied consistently over time will allow you and every leader in your organization to keep that focus.

## **An Excerpt From Our Upcoming Book On Healthcare Leadership**

**The healthcare industry is one of the most complex in the world. We can all benefit from the insights from successful leaders in this business. We are working on a book to do just this. Each month we will share a pearl of wisdom.**

Steve Moreau, CEO of San Antonio Community Hospital in Upland, CA spoke on the balancing act between community health and hospital health.

*"I think it is an important challenge to negotiate the balance between community health and hospital health. The way that my experience has been the most successful is when you bring in a broad enough group of constituents that includes your board leadership, your medical staff leadership, your hospital leadership, so you have all the dimensions, as many dimensions of your constituents as possible and together you prioritize what is most important for your organization to do.*

*From that, you literally create a balance. It isn't something where you say, "Success is defined by margin," even though the more business-focused folks, particularly the Board or finance executives, that is often how they are going to determine success.*

*Yet, when you get the broader constituents, I think you have a better chance of valuing the impact on your community, whether it's clinical outcomes or services that you can provide, where that gets as much weight, maybe even more weight at times, than how big your margin is. Not to underestimate the fact that you have to have a margin to survive. Of course that is a given. But the degree of margin, how you use your resources, your reserves, says a lot about you as an organization.*

*You can be an organization that prides itself about having hundreds of millions of dollars in the bank, but if you're not using them to improve care, is that the best use of those resources? I have seen organizations that have totally conflicting priorities. One will say, "The bigger the reserves, the better off we are." Another one will say, "That's wasting*

*valuable resources, and if we're not using them to improve health and to improve our organization, we're wasting them." So it's an interesting balance. I think a successful executive has got to balance those things with their constituents and help evolve them to an optimum situation. Strike a balance of long-term success with ongoing results."*

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