

A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF SUCCESSES AND FAILURES @ WORK

(... and the relationship to quality of leadership and culture)

Leadership Myth 1:

“All good (or ideal) leaders are infallible”.

Leadership Myth 2:

“All good (or ideal) leaders have all the answers, all the time”

Myths are stories we tell ourselves and believe - consciously or unconsciously, or at any level of awareness between totally conscious, and totally unconscious.

“Ourselves” can be taken to mean – as individuals, i.e. psychologically: values and attitudes, expectations of oneself and others;

... and also refers to “us” collectively – as groups – social, and organizational, i.e. social and organizational **culture**: a group’s rules for behavior, overt or “unwritten” (“Unwritten Ground Rules” concept developed by Steve Simpson and Stef du Plessis).

The popular terms and bodies of work: “The Learning Organisation” (*The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization, Senge, Peter 1990*), and “Leader-as-Coach” (*about a thousand books and articles, and twice as many courses*) discuss the importance of recognizing and “dealing with” these 2 leadership ideals, or myths in organisations.

However, the reality is that doing so, (“dealing with” these leadership myths and ideals as leaders and “followers” (*especially* to the degree that is required both ethically and commercially) – at both the individual (psychological), and collective (culture – social / organizational / team) levels, is a major challenge.

And therefore, truly doing so - takes time, courage and perseverance. Further, truly doing so constitutes commodities, values and actual practices, that are becoming increasingly rare in the current business, societal and global contexts. At the same time these issues are now *urgent and important* for all leaders and organisations.

One key ingredient in the successful management of these deeply rooted leadership ideals is the attitude and practice in the **handling of error in the workplace**.

How errors are dealt with, and how “wins” are responded to - in organisations (both formally and informally) is a key determinant of healthy, effective, and ethical workplace cultures, and conversely: of unhealthy, ineffective, and unethical workplace cultures.

A Framework for thinking about, and responding to Error (and success!)

A	B	C
CONTEXT	DECISION or ACTION (or Inaction)	CONSEQUENCE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The situation (urgency, needs and expectations of others, etc..) • The “actor” (individual or group) wellness/stress • Information at the time 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive • Negative • The scale & significance • “Retrieve – ability”
& INTENTION		
<p>ALL CONSEQUENCES \neq ALL INTENTIONS (i.e. most people are treated as if their successes or errors correspond <i>precisely</i> to their intentions).</p>		

A quick word about “judgement”

This framework does not imply “no judgement / we shouldn’t judge!”

In fact - we must judge! In the sense of discern and evaluate, not in the sense of devalue or denigrate.