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THE LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE: BALANCING COMPLIANCE WITH FREEDOM FOR COMMITMENT
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Excellence is mostly a matter of balance. As Aristotle said wisely, the challenge is not only to do the right thing, but to do the *right thing at the right time for the right reason*. This is the hallmark of a good leader. A good leader inherently knows what the 'right thing' is and how it is to be done, at any point in time, when the situation presents itself. It often requires a balancing act. Today with the speed of change as rapid as it is, it requires leaders to possess high levels of discernment and adaptability. The leader's ability to balance compliance (for good order) with the freedom that precedes commitment is one of the most critical reasons behind his success or failure. As parents we experience how difficult it is to guide our children with the right mix of do's and don'ts on the one hand, against the freedom of allowing our children to make their own decisions and mistakes on the other.

Prescriptive action stifles responsibility and productivity

From an employee's perspective, it is de-motivating to have a manager who constantly points to the rules and regulations book, or 'tick-boxing' an individual's performance against requirements and score sheets. Most often, it is very difficult to commit to a cause and find inner alignment or a good fit with one's work if an employee feels they are constantly under threat.

From a manager's perspective, understandably it may be important to have order with minimum disruptions, and as much control as possible. In more authoritarian cultures -- or earlier times when employees as a rule still had high respect for those in positions of power -- they were generally willing to follow all instructions provided by their managers, believing that their authorities knew better. Their commitment relied upon the values of respect and loyalty. However, in contrast today the trend is that employees have decreasing belief in authority and are becoming increasingly independent in their thoughts and beliefs. Many leaders, be they directors in a boardroom or managers in the operations, find it extremely difficult to adjust to the new world of decentralised power, with more employees who express their individual freedom and self-actualisation. These leaders need to discover that the energy which comes from their employees' personal commitment to work and their organisations, is still largely untapped.

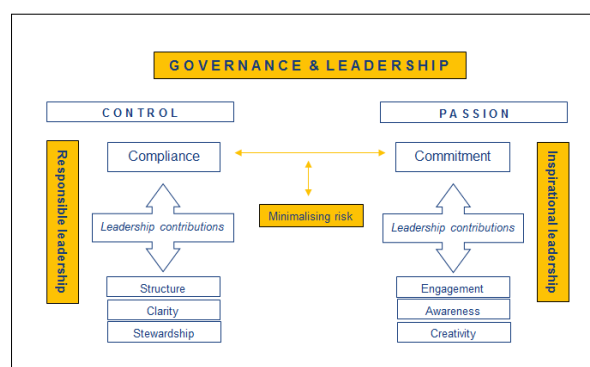
Considering the manner in which our modern day work and social dynamics have changed, leaders are challenged to get the balance right between necessary order and structure, and the freedom and flexibility needed for employees to passionately commit themselves to their work. Clearly getting this balance correct requires careful thought, exemplary planning and much needed insight in human behaviour and motivation. In this vein, we learn how *discipline* and *freedom* should not -- and need not -- be enemies, but offers the most when these concepts are 'in balance' with the other.

Earning respect

A leader who is consciously aware of balancing the demands placed upon the organisation, and who is able to deal with the many complexities found within the organisation, inherently contributes toward the 'health' of the organisation, both in ensuring responsible practices and inspirational environments. Such a leader will acknowledge and emphasize the necessity for compliance to satisfy the key requirements from all the organisation's stakeholders. In order to achieve goals of this nature, the leader will have established robust organisational structures, ensured clarity of employee roles and duties, and encouraged personal stewardship. It is for these important principles that the leader earns respect from everyone. Good *structure* will always be important in the pursuit of a big vision. *Clarity* is needed to focus our energies where it will take us forward. As we become a more disciplined organisation we grow the principle of *stewardship*. As an organisation and as individuals; we are entrusted with intellect, resources, opportunities and service to others. There were others before us and there will be others after us. What is good for one is good for the other and by embracing the principle of stewardship we denounce entitlement. In this respect the leader practices *responsible leadership*.

When the leader contributes to the vitality of the organisation, they emphasize commitment, mutual collaboration, engagement, as well as emotional, social and spiritual awareness and *workplace creativity*.

Employees are generally more likely to commit to -- and support -- what they create based on what they value. Employees want to know and then see how their leader *engages* them on the organisation's journey. They want to experience an adventure as they make progress towards a meaningful and desired destination. Employees want a leader who takes them in his confidence by articulating their story, the highs and the lows, the usual and the unusual. In doing so, everyone becomes *aware* of something bigger and more meaningful than their own position in the organisation.



Illustrating the way governance and leadership, compliance and commitment, discipline and freedom complement each other to minimize risk

Employees start to discover they share similar values, and their individual and collective journey begins to take on a greater meaning, with more purpose that satisfies their reason for belonging within the organisation. Each day, employees have an inner desire to return to their workplace in order to continue co-creating 'their story' within the development of the organisation, and indeed themselves. Unsurprisingly, employees who are guided through their leader's *inspirational leadership* are not in the slightest deterred from their mission, even if their day at the office has been an uphill slog.

Appealing to the hearts of people

In these times of 'flatter societies' where hierarchical structures are less prevalent with greater individual freedom and empowerment, and the need for more meaningful engagement is sought after by the organisation's stakeholders; achieving a state of compliance can only really be effective when it is not forced in a draconian manner. That being said, in South Africa there are a number of examples where enforced

compliance to legislation such as the Broad-based Black Economic Empowerment and Employment Equity Acts have indeed caused a number of counter-measure actions, and these often lead to unintended consequences.

Perhaps it would be more useful for leaders to understand -- be they in business, government and indeed civil society -- that a sledgehammer approach is not necessarily the only solution to a problem. In many instances, achieving the stated objective with good governance can also be attained when leaders decide not to force matters, but instead appeal to the hearts of people in the interest of a meaningful organisational story with both responsible and inspirational leaders as the main characters. As one can be proud of a neat room, a neat desk and healthy body, members of an organisation can be proud of doing things in the right and agreed way. It is such a sense of pride that leaders should instill in the people through their own example and inspirational communication.

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The CGF leadership development process is built on the above-stated views. It includes the following: The heartstyles assessment (www.heartstyles.com), the 32 leadership principles online programme (www.newlead.co.za/corporate-offering), individual coaching and group learning facilitation.

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