

Leadership

Secrets to Leadership: Motivating People to Lead Themselves

**Jim Janz, in conversation
with Val Wilson**

The Scrivener: *You are a leader of many people. What do you consider the most important aspect of leadership?*

Jim: Leadership is very much relational. So often in the past, the leader was distanced from his followers by position or rank. In a positional world, the leader is usually appointed, hired, or elected.

In the companies described in the book *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap . . . and Others Don't* by Jim Collins, most leaders were somewhat incognito as far as the general public was concerned, yet their companies ranked anywhere from 15 to 20 percent above other companies. The biggest reason was those leaders spent a lot of time inspiring their people to do the job. To me, that is what leadership is all about. It's about inspiring your people to become the best they can be.

The Scrivener: *Where should a leader begin the process of developing leadership?*

Jim: It all begins by finding out what your people want. So often, we decide what others should have or what they should become. Many people just won't fit the jobs they are assigned. Collins says



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that when you're running a company, the first thing you want to do is "get the right people on the bus, the wrong people off the bus, and the right people in the right seats in the bus." Then you pull out to get the job done. That's a powerful statement.

In the process of developing leadership, first find out what a person wants; attempt to find the best spot that exists in the organization for that person.

There is the nurturing process—the honeymoon period for new people in an organization. From a leadership perspective, you must spend a lot of time with them if you really want the individual to develop, fully trust you, and reach potential. A new staff member will be afraid to say she doesn't understand the tasks, fearing the boss will feel she is inadequate for the job. In leadership, you encourage people to be vulnerable; it's the only way you can help.

The more intense the effort you expend in the early stages, the sooner you get to the point several leadership authors talk about: where the new person says: *Aha! I've got it!*

The Scrivener: *Can a bad attitude be turned around? Can people be retrained?*

Jim: Provided they're teachable. I sit down with people who are showing they are not teachable and share with them that their future with the company depends on their ability to become teachable. Of course, they will want to

know what that means because people who are not teachable don't know they aren't teachable.

The Scrivener: *Is that an attitude or an intelligence thing?*

Jim: It can be both. The Peter Principle does enter in. There are ways that people with high IQs get things done, and that sometimes differs from those who don't have as high an IQ or as great a natural ability. There is more than one way to arrive at achievement and success in a venture than by having it fit snugly into a specific model. This is where we as leaders need to be flexible and creative.

The Scrivener: *How does the leadership approach vary in a small business compared to medium and large businesses?*

Jim: They are vastly different arenas. Let's start with the large business. The flexibility I've just discussed is often a little more difficult to come by in large organizations; many major corporations, however, are really catching on to the idea of nurturing their people. Those companies are the great companies.

A medium-sized business that is still on the grow and still wanting to go somewhere, is probably more flexible and open to looking at new ideas in leadership development.

Leadership development is relatively new. We used to talk about leadership and we really meant management. Leadership and management are vastly different, even though they do cross boundaries from time to time. Leadership is about inspiring people; management is putting the numbers on the right spot on the balance sheet and getting people to be at the right place at the right time, more than really inspiring people to achieve their best.

A small company has the limitations of staffing; everybody has to do everything and more. Sometimes the stresses can limit some of the leadership potential we've talked about. If the company survives, other great leadership lessons are learned.

The Scrivener: *What do you think of the concept that all employees are supposed to be leaders?*

Jim: I think people need to learn how to follow as well as lead. In my experience, the best leaders are the best followers. I'm involved in a lot of organizations; in some, I'm Chairman of the Board and very much in a leadership role. In others I'm totally in a follower role; I'm following the obvious leader yet at the same time, I have responsibilities that also make me a leader.

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There are three levels of maturity.

1. The first level is: *please help me.* I've hired a lot of people who didn't want to start at the beginning. They wanted to jump right to the top.
2. The second level of maturity is: *I can handle it.*
3. The third level is: *please let me help you.*

That last process, of course, is the leadership role. People need to be humble.

Sometimes those who would be leaders have not mastered the first two qualifying steps.

The Scrivener: *How should people develop their leadership skills? Should they read?*

Jim: I would always recommend that people read. There is a proliferation of books in the marketplace, by some pretty well-respected people. There are also people writing books today who probably shouldn't be. You can find yourself reading a lot of nonsense somebody has put together if you're not careful; a book often sells just because the word "leadership" is on the cover.

Peter Urs Bender writes great leadership material, as does Steven Covey. John Maxwell talks about developing the leader within you and developing leaders

around you. They are not management books. These are leadership books with leadership principles.

In *Leadership from Within*, Urs Bender says: know yourself; have vision and passion. Take risks. Communicate. Check your progress and results. That advice is good for absolutely everybody. Another book here on my desk is *LeaderShock [LeaderShock . . . and How to Triumph Over It: Eight Revolutionary Rules for Becoming a Powerful and Exhilarated Leader]* by Greg Hicks; it's a great book. It's basically about somebody already in leadership who needs to jolt the organization a bit.

There's a tremendous amount of leadership material out there. I'm a firm believer in tapes, books, and functions. I recommend reading, reading, reading, and attending leadership seminars. You need input from the outside. I find the people who have an egotistical attitude with regard to their abilities have a tendency not to listen to other people. They think they know it all. I don't follow people like that. The best leaders I know are constantly reading, constantly learning, constantly going to seminars, and learning things from other people. ▲

During his 38 years in business, **Jim Janz's** business successes have been centred around Distribution Technology.

Over the last 24 months, helping kids stay safe on the Internet has been a major thrust of his activities. He currently serves as chairman of the Board of World Serve, Board member of Internet Associates, and Chairman of Strategic Productions.

He and his wife Sharon are on the President's Counsel of Trinity Western University. An accomplished public speaker for business organizations, Jim guest-lectures in schools, colleges, and universities.

jejanz@shaw.ca