

## Chapter 1

# Why YOU Need to Innovate

*“Innovation distinguishes between a leader and a follower.”*

– Steve Jobs

Since you are reading this book I assume it is because you are a leader of some kind; religiously, socially, or professionally. If so, then you are well aware of the peaks and valleys that accompany leadership. On one hand, being a leader can be an incredibly high experience because of the opportunity to bring about positive transformation in individuals and organizations. On the other hand, leadership can also be extremely challenging as best-laid plans fall apart, goals aren't achieved, and failures become more common than successes.

The challenge to lead in today's environment is even greater due to an increasingly global economy accompanied with progressive change and complexity. Now, more than ever, leaders of every organization face tremendous uncertainty in responding to a volatile environment made up of innovative technologies, emerging markets, new competition, economic turmoil and changing demographics. As such changes accelerate, so does the uncertainty. Future threats and opportunities are harder to predict, making once proven and relied on leadership approaches and strategies undependable and potentially harmful to the survival of an organization and the future of its stakeholders. Because of such complexity the quest for effective leadership is at an all time high as the demand for it becomes more and more evident.

Ironically, the world doesn't have a shortage of leaders. In fact, the desire to lead exists now more than ever due to the perceived fame, wealth and influence associated with it. In our world, leaders are winners! They are the top of the food chain! They are the most successful, powerful and influential among us all! Consequently, politicians campaign for it, pastors preach for it,

businesspeople compete for it, and athletes contest for it. Hence, we have many leaders - socially, politically, and religiously, but unfortunately, little leadership. Simply put, today's leaders overall, just aren't getting the job done, making effective leadership as uncommon as it is essential.

## **Lack of Leadership Confidence**

The lack of effective leadership is not lost on the world, especially here in the United States. According to the most recent survey by the National Leadership Index (NLI), America's confidence in their leaders has steadily decreased to its lowest levels since launching their study seven years ago. On the whole, Americans have below average confidence in their current leaders, only citing an above average rating for leaders in military and medical sectors.<sup>1</sup> Such findings are not surprising considering the economic meltdown of 2008, international conflicts in Iran and Afghanistan, record-breaking unemployment, escalating foreclosure rate, and congressional gridlock in Washington; it is a wonder that any optimism exists at all. However, according to the report, 78% of Americans are still optimistic that today's problems can be solved through effective leadership!<sup>2</sup> Which brings up the question, "What can a leader do to improve their leadership and make it more effective?"

## **Leading Change**

*"Nothing happens without leadership.*

*Nothing changes without leadership.*

*Nothing develops without leadership.*

*Nothing improves without leadership.*

*Nothing is corrected without leadership.*

*Everyone, everywhere, every time is always being led."*

*- Myles Monroe<sup>3</sup>*

The role of the leader is to create followers. The task of the leader is to bring

about constructive and necessary change. The responsibility of the leader is to bring about such change in a way that is responsive to the true and long-term needs of those who follow them. The primary reason why leaders are deemed ineffective is because of their failure of not accomplishing the task and responsibility of leading change. Primary reasons why leaders are failing in this responsibility are rooted in emotions of fear of the unknown, losing control, and, security in the status quo.

An additional reason why change is so difficult is because of the phenomenon of senior leaders not having any history of dealing with the magnitude of change happening today. Change is quicker, faster, and deeper now than any other time in recent history. Leaders who are of the Baby Boomer and early Gen X generations are used to slower-moving business and social environments with less global competition, little to no social media with stability being the norm. The ruling motto for them is “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.”<sup>4</sup> Thus leading change for them becomes even a harder proposition than it normally is because they don’t lack the experience to draw from.

## **Agility Gap**

While the current environment calls for a more flexible approach to leadership, research indicates that most leaders never change. Data collected from over 600 leaders in a wide variety of industries revealed that 90 percent of managers operate at a lower level of leadership agility, which is best suited for relatively stable environments where complexity is low or nonexistent. As a result of their unyieldingness, a phenomenon identified as an “agility gap” is occurring between many organizations and their environments.<sup>5</sup>

The primary reason for the occurrence of this agility gap is the leader’s inability to modify their leadership style. Hence, they continue to do what they have always done, hoping to achieve different results. They don’t accept the fact that they are the cause for the inefficiencies occurring in their organization, department or group. Instead, they place the blame on the shoulders of their subordinates, accusing their lack of support, skill, or ability for the leader’s

ineffectiveness. Negative behaviors as these along with being autocratic, egocentric, and non-cooperative are identified as traits that contribute to ineffective leadership.<sup>6</sup>

While specific future developments are vague, strategic forecasters are certain of two deep trends: the pace of change will continue to increase, and the level of complexity will continue to grow.<sup>7</sup> Realizing this, today's leaders must shed the notion that what worked for them before will work now and instead, seek out new or modified leadership approaches and tailor them to fit the situations they face to remain effective.

### **Change As a Trend**

Leaders who do attempt to change often make the mistake of basing their transformation off the latest trend popularized by the latest bestselling guru, be it a CEO, sports coach, celebrity or political figure. The thought is if they model them, and follow their methods then they will achieve the same results. I can't tell you how many times I've been down this road. What I have learned is while one can learn from the experiences of others, the process of doing so can be very costly and frankly a waste of time and effort as you chase the rabbit down its hole. Prepare to be disappointed if you believe the idea that one-size fits all. Leadership is too complex. The reality is what works for one will likely not work out the same way for another. Effective leadership is not just based on certain traits or skills of an individual, but is also influenced by the setting of the environment, makeup of a task, and the needs of the followers.<sup>8</sup> In other words, leadership just cannot be copied off of the latest fad or trend, but must be tailored for both the leader and their environment.

### **Change and Credibility**

Change cannot happen if leadership is not deemed credible. A high level of behavioral integrity must exist in order for culture change and adaptation to effectively occur. Behavioral integrity is the perceived fit between espoused

and enacted values.<sup>9</sup> In other words, people doing what they say they will do. The development of trust and credibility among employees or members is necessary to the maintenance of behavioral integrity, which is vital for successful change efforts in organizations. In essence, there is no way for leadership to be effective if it is not credible. Credibility is the foundation of leadership.

## **Desired Leadership Qualities**

In the 2009 National Leadership Index (NLI) survey, six leadership qualities were identified as having the greatest impact on leadership credibility: trust, competence, working for the greater good, shared values, results, and being in touch with people's needs and concerns.<sup>10</sup> Leadership researchers, Kouzes and Posner also conducted a study on which qualities people looked for in leaders. After years of research, they found four top traits, which consistently scored high globally: *honesty, forward-looking, inspiring and competence.*

### ***Honesty***

Honest leaders not only tell the truth, they also live using a set of ethical principles and clear standards. Ethics refers to the code of moral principles and values that governs the behaviors of a person or group with respect to what is right or wrong. Ethical values set standards as to what is good or bad in conduct and decision-making.<sup>11</sup> Ethics are central to leaders because of the influence dimension. Leaders have a special responsibility because the nature of their leadership puts them in a special position in which they have a greater opportunity to influence others in significant ways.<sup>12</sup> Ethics is critical to effective leadership because it involves values, and one cannot be a leader without being aware of and concerned about one's own values. In other words, ethics are important to leadership because, in a way, they define how one leads.<sup>13</sup>

## ***Forward-Looking***

People expect leaders to have a sense of direction and a concern for the future of the organization. This expectation directly corresponds to the ability to envision a future, which connects to others' hopes and aspirations. When people share in a future vision, they are more likely to willingly follow a leader. Compared to all the other leadership qualities constituents expect, this is the one that most distinguishes leaders from other credible people.<sup>14</sup>

## ***Inspiring***

People expect their leaders to be enthusiastic, energetic, and positive about the future. It's not enough for a leader to have a dream. A leader must be able to communicate the vision in ways that encourage people to sign on for the duration and excite them about the cause. Leaders must uplift their constituent's spirits and give them hope if they're to voluntarily engage in challenging pursuits. Enthusiasm and excitement are essential, and they signal the leader's personal commitment to pursuing a dream. If a leader displays no passion for a cause, why should anyone else?<sup>15</sup>

## ***Competent***

Leadership competence refers to the leader's track record and ability to get things done. This kind of competence inspires confidence that the leaders will be able to guide the entire organization, large or small, in the direction in which it needs to go.<sup>16</sup>

Honesty, forward-looking, inspiring, and competence are leadership qualities that have remained constant over more than twenty-years of economic growth and recession, the surge in new technology enterprises, the birth of the World Wide Web, the further Globalization of business and industry, and the ever changing political environment.<sup>17</sup> In essence, these four qualities are timeless and are the foundation for credibility.

## **Change That Sustains**

For many, innovation is equated with change. But this understanding is incomplete. Change is happening all the time whether we're aware of it or not. A random event, insight or an accident may be novel, but can't always be considered an innovation unless it's permanent. Anybody who's ever tried dieting understands this principle. Losing weight is an accomplishment, but keeping the weight off is truly life changing. The point of the principle is change is not effective unless it is sustainable. This is the reason why today's leaders must not only view themselves as change agents, but as innovators. Innovation is the key to improving one's leadership because it causes change that sustains.

A powerful way to think of innovation is *intentionally 'bringing into existence' something new that can be sustained and repeated and which has some value or utility*. That is, innovation is always related to some practical 'in-the-world' value. It is about making new tools, products or processes, bringing forth something 'new' which allows human beings to accomplish something they were not able to accomplish previously. Innovation and leadership are closely related because they both focus on bringing about a better future.<sup>18</sup>

## **Increasing Your Innovation Capacities**

Being innovative is not just reserved for the Steve Jobs, Bill Gates, or Barack Obamas of the world! We all have the capacity to innovate! We all have the capability to think of new ideas, create new methods and apply new processes. Increasing this capacity is essential for leaders as you face challenges never seen before in this volatile environment. The lessons within this book will teach you how to increase your innovative leadership capacity and even more importantly, create a culture of innovation in the organizations where you serve. However, the very first step you must commit to is to commit to increasing your innovation leadership capacity. Change cannot happen in others until it happens in you! You must first make the commitment to make

sustainable change as a leader. This means you must make the following commitments:

### **Become A Learner**

The best way to stay stagnant and stuck in freefall is to stay complacent in the status quo. I know I've said it before, but I must repeat myself again. Things are not what they use to be. What worked before will not work now. Thus only leaders who commit to learning and promoting a learning culture will be effective in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond. Learning and innovation ensure the renewal and survival of leaders and organizations by helping them transform themselves from within and respond responsibly to external challenges as they exploit what they have learned in the past while exploring or innovating to deal with the present and future.<sup>19</sup>

### **Embrace A Global Mindset**

Globalization and its many forces are not only here, but are here to stay. Successful leaders are those who possess the ability to influence individuals, groups, organizations, and systems that have different intellectual, social, and psychological knowledge or intelligence from their own. A global mindset is the new competitive advantage in the marketplace and the difference between failing, surviving and winning!<sup>20</sup>

### **Lead From The Future**

Many leaders are fatalistic when it comes to the future because they believe it is what happens to them, instead of what they create. This perspective limits the ability to be proactive and seek out ways to create a chosen future.<sup>21</sup> To counter this, leaders must commit to developing their foresight - the ability to make decisions that are judged to be good not just in the present moment, but also in the long run. Leaders with good foresight will lead from the future by



identifying and assessing a wide variety of possibilities and making astute judgments about what will work out best over time.<sup>22</sup>

## **Lead With Love**

Leadership is not about perks, position or prestige, but about people. Unfortunately, too many of our leaders have forgotten about this. Consequently, more and more people are questioning the credibility of leadership because their concern for their position outweighs their concerns for those they lead. In other words, leaders do not care about the people they are leading. Successful leaders are those whose foundations are rooted in love, service and integrity. Bruce Winston calls it *Agapao* leadership – doing the right things at the right time for the right reasons.<sup>23</sup> Calvin Miller refers to it as servant leadership - not seeking to possess leadership, but being possessed by leadership; a calling to serve our fellow man under the direction of the spirit of Christ.<sup>24</sup> No matter what you decide to name it, love, service and integrity should be the primary attributes that drive your leadership!

## **You Can Do This!**

*Take the first step in faith.  
You don't have to see the whole staircase.  
Just take the first step.*

*- Martin Luther King Jr.*

The first step to becoming an innovative leader involves making a commitment to do so. To have a genuine commitment requires two things. The first is desire. The second is faith. The very fact that you have read this far is proof that you already have the desire. I know that this book has the tools and strategies to transform your leadership and I believe you already possess the skills, abilities, and passion needed to make this happen. Now it's up to you to believe and apply your faith to use all of these resources to become the leader you are destined to be! To help cement your commitment to becoming an

innovative leader I have provided a Faith To Innovate Commitment agreement for you on the next page. Sign it! Once you do, you will be on your way to becoming an Innovative Leader of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century!

Faith is the key to innovation! Believing in what you are hoping for. The evidence of what is not yet seen. When you feel like giving up, use your faith to get you through! Transformational times calls for transformational leaders. I believe this is your time. Embrace it! You can do this!

# Faith To Innovate Commitment

I, \_\_\_\_\_, hereby decide to become an Innovative Leader so I can bring about constructive and necessary change in a way that is responsive to the true and long-term needs of those who follow me.

I commit to the development of my innovative capacity by being a learner, embracing a global mindset, leading from the future, and leading with love! I dedicate all of my skills, abilities, passion and FAITH to transform my leadership to become an Innovative Leader of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century!

Signed this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ 20\_\_\_\_.

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Your Signature

*Please go to [www.FaithToInnovate.com](http://www.FaithToInnovate.com) to let me know of your commitment!*

## **Think About it...**

1. Increasing your innovation capacity requires bringing new thinking and different actions to how you lead. How can you think differently about your role and the challenges you and your organization face?
2. What can you do to break open entrenched, intractable problems?
3. How can you be agile and quick in the absence of information or predictability?
4. Determine at least 3 behaviors you can change or add immediately to take the first step to building up your innovative capacity. How can you measure your progress?