



Know yourself

In the latest in a series looking at what it takes to be a good leader, David Parmenter talks about the importance of developing and nurturing self-awareness

From the time we enter this world, we acquire traits and habits that will be limiting factors in our management and leadership of people – it's our personal baggage. We will always be running with a few cylinders misfiring unless we fully understand our behaviour patterns and how they affect those people around us. It is important to remember that to be a leader today, you do not have to have handled all of your personal baggage; the key is to be aware of your weaknesses.

'Crippled' CFOs and financial controllers cause havoc in every organisation in which they work. Yet there are others who are a pleasure to work with and offer collegial support. You owe it to your colleagues, staff, suppliers, contractors, family, partner and offspring to do something about your own personal baggage. Here are some approaches that may help.

- * **The Enneagram** This is a way of looking at people and their relationships that distinguishes between nine personality types. The idea is that one of these will fit you, predicting your behaviour and likely pitfalls, which you can avoid with some minor modifications. It is best learnt by attending a course, with your partner or a friend. See enneagraminstitute.com.
- * **The Herrmann system** This identifies four different 'thinking preferences', with the aim of understanding the ways people think – you, your boss, your colleagues and the staff reporting to you – so you can communicate effectively with them. A great in-house team-building and awareness workshop can be found at hbdi.com.
- * **Neuro-linguistic programming (NLP)** NLP can be applied to your leadership skills, your hobbies and your relationships at home. By using your five senses, you create visions of achievement you have yet to attain. You smell, see, feel, hear and touch – all in your mind – what you want to achieve. Your subconscious will set about closing the gap between where you are now and this future reality. Search 'NLP courses' to find a course near you.
- * **Intensive life-skills course** Many different life-skills courses are available (eg, from the Landmark Forum). Ask around and find a course that has made a difference to others. To have the most chance of changing negative patterns of behaviour,

opt for a personal development course of relatively long duration. The experts in behavioural change say that it takes around 12 weeks of exercises to make a real difference.

- * **Anger management** Great leaders manage their emotions and avoid outbursts that could damage relationships with their staff. When you are able to choose not to get angry, you realise that anger does not help in the long term. The emotional damage caused by the outburst cannot be healed quickly and, in some cases, can never be repaired. I am sure most people can recall, as if it were yesterday, outbursts directed at them more than 10 years ago. The apology cannot wipe away the memory.

If you have anger-management issues, attending a course of at least 12 weeks can begin to resolve these. I know, as I went through a behaviour-change programme myself.

- * **Differing views** The US president Franklin D Roosevelt notably warned against taking major decisions where there was consensus until the homework had been done. The management guru Peter Drucker likewise saw conflicting views in positive terms, to be evaluated before a decision was made. Another business guru, Jack Welch, the former CEO of the conglomerate GE, would challenge any new idea, making sure it was well researched, before giving it the green light.

Gary Hamel, one of the world's most influential business thinkers, is adamant that organisations and leaders should embrace irregular people and their irregular ideas. ■

Next steps

1. Attend an Enneagram course
2. Book yourself on an intensive life-skills course
3. Email me at parmenter@waymark.co.nz for more information on the importance of visualisation.

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