



WENTWORTH 1

Leadership, Teamwork and Self-awareness

VIEWPOINT

A Minor Miracle

I've always been interested in miracles, but there's quite a common one in the world of organisation behaviour which really fascinates me. Countless times I have witnessed managers promoted to Director or Management Team level, who suddenly and miraculously have no further need for any leadership, management or personal development training!

Obviously, the promotion has automatically changed their skill levels. It's a phenomenon which would save organisations massive amounts of time and money if it were replicated at all levels, but it isn't - it only seems to happen near the top!

The funniest example I've seen of this centres on a senior manager who booked to attend a week-long in-company leadership programme who was promoted to the Management Board two weeks before the event, whereupon his MD said "Now you're a director, you don't need to go on that." To his credit, the manager disagreed and went anyway.

Am I exaggerating this phenomenon? Well I don't think so. I can think of very obvious exceptions, particularly some CEOs I know trying to create culture change who have accepted that it gives a much better message if they start their training programmes with the top team, including themselves. At the same time, one very well planned organisation-wide change programme I was involved with had an interesting hiccup when the MD told his team that their week-long Top Team Event would go ahead without him - so that he didn't "inhibit" the others (neither they nor I believed that reason!).

So what could be going on here? Once I've taken the tongue out of my cheek regarding "miracles", I believe that *fear* is the main cause of this phenomenon, with the occasional bit of complacency or arrogance. For a lot of people, becoming a Director puts them in quite a vulnerable place - they are more visible and more is expected of them, so they are more wary of being found wanting. Going on training events, especially experiential ones, could show up their weaknesses, and it's safer to shy away.

Most senior managers are nothing like as confident as they may appear (they're human like anyone else!), and occasionally they may need a serious nudge to get them to see that their learning and development is an ongoing process like everyone else's.

On our public Wentworth 1 courses, we have a rule of anonymity for the first three days, where participants are not allowed to disclose their job role or organisation. This allows people to be free of the pressure to live up to other people's expectations and just be themselves, which is when the best learning takes place.

- AS/Sept 08

UPCOMING WENTWORTH 1 COURSE DATES

30 Nov - 5 Dec 2008 (2 places left)

8 - 13 March 2009

7 - 12 June 2009