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Leadership and appreciative inquiry in the spotlight

William P. Ferris

Editor-in-Chief's Introduction

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Our 2009 summer issue contains two main themes – leadership and appreciative inquiry (AI). Our first two articles are on leadership and appear in the Teaching & Learning section. Both describe pedagogical approaches in which students, either as individuals or in groups, present reports on great leaders. James Burton's students each pick their own great leaders from history and present them to the class. What makes these leaders so great? Students discuss their classmates' reports, debate the merits of all the presented leaders, and eventually vote on the best leader of all. Along the way, they learn what makes a leader great and reflect on how they might change their leadership behavior in a way that profits from what they have learned.

Joan Gallos, immediate past President of the international OBTS: Teaching Society for Management Educators, has her MS in Public Administration and MBA students carefully studying the creativity and artistry often present in leadership. She begins with everyone researching Mozart, Woolf, Freud, and Gandhi – four extremely different kinds of leaders – through work done by Howard Gardner (Gardner, 1997). They can go on to bring in other famous leaders as the course proceeds. Joan is interested in the "leadership pedagogy of imagination," and her article connects the humanities, business, and public administration to leadership study. Her students ultimately must reflect on how they can bring their own imagination and creativity to bear on their own personal leadership style.

The third and fourth articles in our issue focus on AI. First introduced in the late "1980s" and into the 1990s by professors and researchers from Case Western University (Cooperrider and Srivastva, 1987), AI posits that organizational change is more easily accomplished when organizational members concentrate on the themes of their past successes rather than when they try to analyze the deficits resulting from their past failures. Several of the authors of these next articles did their graduate study at Case Western and were involved with the development of AI. Both Thomas Conklin and Rama Hart are Case graduates, and they present an article on how to use AI techniques in the classroom, involving students in an extended AI exercise that can help them incorporate AI into their way of approaching leadership and life, itself. In the next article, which appears in our Linking Theory & Practice section, Sekerka, Zolin, and Smith show how different inquiry strategies influence readiness for change within an organization. Two of the three – Sekerka and Smith – are Case graduates and all have

published previously in AI. All three authors find that deficit-based approaches to organizational change (analyzing what is going wrong rather than what is going right in a given situation) create emotions that are counter-productive to accomplishing desired end states in organizational change projects. Applying AI to a business setting, they point us in the direction of positive emotional involvement *vs* critical identification of what is going wrong. In the end, their surveys from actual real change situations elicit answers that show clearly that the enquiry approach used to help diagnose and solve organizational problems has a direct impact on organizational member readiness to embrace change. Not surprisingly, using AI techniques is much more likely to produce desired results.

The last contribution to this summer's issue is a transcript of the speech of the Eastern Academy's 2007–2008 President, Ed Christensen's Presidential speech. *Organization Management Journal* normally publishes the EAM President's Presidential address at the annual conference, so we are pleased to publish Ed's speech here. In it, he explores the question of power and how the power of one can become the power of many. He asks us to consider the question of value when it comes to professional development and management education alike. Why is a journal article more important than a conference proceedings article, or even the simple experience of going to a conference? In the end, all of the conference members can help provide a more significant experience for a professional than getting an article published. However, articles have their place, too, and can help keep us employed in doing something that, itself, has much value – teaching management. At any rate, both the conferences and our journal, *OMJ*, can contribute to the power of one becoming the power of many. Without all of us, we would not have a professional community, and that professional community is what nurtures the individual professional within us.

I hope you enjoy the articles in our summer issue. They will add value to your ways of thinking about leadership, organizational change, and our own continued professional development.

References

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