



What does Donald Trump's election mean for leadership development and leadership coaching in particular?

Shock! Horror! So what now?

Ryk Bliszczuk - 14 November 2016

A reputed bully and narcissist has been elected to the most powerful position in the world! What do I now tell my clients about how to become a successful leader when the globe's most coveted (and supposedly most difficult to achieve) leadership role has been awarded to a person who represents all the qualities of leadership that I try to teach my clients to avoid. That companies regularly approach me to assist in ridding from their organisations or changing the behaviours of leaders identified with such qualities? That employees the world over, complain about and refuse to follow?

There are several possible solutions to this conundrum. One is to capitulate and, against my

better instincts, admit that might is right and bullies always win in the end. So I should establish a school of coaching to teach aspiring leaders how to be bullies and therefore how to succeed. And then establish a therapy program to treat all those employees and other followers who will suffer, as a result, any number of psychological problems and emotional pain.

A second option might be to give up coaching altogether in recognition that no amount of teaching what I believe to be good and effective leadership habits and styles, is ever going to overcome brute force and ruthless application of power when available.

Third is to try to understand the phenomenon that is Trump and use that insight to create even better means to develop positive leadership and to empower leaders, to meet and oppose the challenges of the bullies and the naked self-promoters.

Given that the first two are admissions of defeat and I am anything but a quitter, I shall try to open the debate on the third.

My initial thoughts are firstly that Trump's victory proves that Politics is a special case of leadership with only minor relevance to corporate or organisational leadership. Secondly that Trump's elevation arises from a unique confluence of events that many others (more qualified than I) have already written about but

that include the weakness of the Clinton leadership persona by comparison to Trump's and the anger of an electorate willing to take a huge, uncalibrated risk. My third thought is that winning an election is the easy part; the true measure of Trump's leadership qualities and the measure of his success will come with how he wields his enormous power over the next four years.

Politics is different to corporate leadership which is why few corporate leaders ever try for a career in politics and fewer succeed. Politics is the art of compromise and minimising risks to key stakeholders; corporate leadership is about bold visions and taking calculated risks to create returns to shareholders. But the two are legitimate and attractive leadership pursuits for many, so as a leadership psychologist it is not legitimate to completely separate them into mutually exclusive categories.

Simply ignoring the relevant leadership lessons and benefits from one to the other is to limit leadership development too narrowly. I refer to what to look for

below. Trump's rise has surely been made possible by the unique events of our time to which so many refer. However, he made the most of this situation and successfully exploited it in a manner few could have matched.

Importantly, he made seasoned and experienced politicians on both sides look naive and unskilled. His ability to gain advantage over opponents was masterful and should have lessons for all leaders, not to emulate his tactics necessarily, but to be better prepared to counter them.

Finally it is important to remember that getting elected is not in itself a measure of successful leadership. It is a measure of being able to run a good race against known and easily defined opponents. It is the corporate equivalent of applying for and gaining the top job. But convincing a small representative constituency - disaffected voters in politics or the Board of a corporation in business - that you have the potential to lead well, is not the same as leadership of the entire enterprise and achieving promised outcomes. Trump, the President, still has a lot to do to prove that he can lead.

He will need to cope with many unpredictable events and unknowable opponents. These are situations in which Trump has rarely if ever found himself. Declaring bankruptcy as a tactic to escape the consequences of a difficult situation, is not available to the President of the United States.

My advice to my clients is, and will be, not to judge Trump as a leader until we see him lead and witness the consequences of his actions. To use him as role model for good leadership or to emulate his tactics to achieve specific outcomes will not be legitimate (if ever) until the results of his tenure as President are known.

Until then there are numerous examples of a very different leadership style that is both successful in achieving good things for many people, but also without the tactics of bullying, without engendering fear and hatred of others and without playing a win-lose game. Jack Welch and Bob Hawke are renowned for having been able to create grand visions of a better place and including all stakeholders in both the sacrifice and the rewards. The benefits of their efforts continue to reward

many years after their tenures.

Trump has not rewritten the rules of good leadership. If anything, I expect him to prove (by demonstrating what NOT to do) that good, great and effective leadership are still

only achievable through inclusion, consultation and empowerment around a positive vision of a better future. Many books and treatises will be written about his journey to the Presidency,

but it will be the assessment of his achievements during his presidential tenure that will provide the real lessons to learn on leadership.



CONTACT: Ryk Bliszczyk

Email: ryk@ryk.bz

Mobile: +61 (0)417 711 711

Website: www.ryk.bz