

Paolo A. Ruggeri

THE NEW LEADERS



A LEADERSHIP MANUAL FOR
THE MANAGERS OF THE
THIRD MILLENNIUM



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CHAPTER 3



ENGAGE

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Dedicated to our clients whose demand for results encouraged us to grow, to take up the challenge, and then to research and develop a phenomenal know-how.

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CHAPTER 3

CAUSATIVITY!

“Man is not the creature of circumstances. Circumstances are the creatures of men.”

Benjamin Disraeli

Life could in itself be compared to a group effort. The lone individual, the “maverick”, is not very successful. This kind of individual survives and gets by. Sometimes on television we see some industrial tycoon who is presented to us as a veritable star, an individual with fantastic qualities. This might induce us to wrongly believe that success can be achieved by a single individual or is the result of individual effort. What we don’t see, however, is that behind every great entrepreneur, behind every leading personality, there are often other individuals who stand in the background but make a vital contribution to triggering the success of that person. Perhaps a valued business partner, an extremely motivated staff, a team of individuals.

Let’s take the example of Bill Gates, the founder of Microsoft. Looking at Microsoft superficially, we might think that Gates was the only architect of this

outstanding company. What we don't see, however, is that he has a staff of hundreds of valued and extremely motivated individuals. We might not consider his initial partners, like Paul Allen, for example.

Alternatively, let's take Steve Jobs, the founder of Apple. We often saw him on stage, but what we didn't see was that he had the support of several great personalities like Tim Cook, Jonathan Ive (his design wizard), John Lasseter (the creator of Toy Story), and so on, who worked with him, had the utmost confidence in him, and helped him enormously to achieve his success. Even the great financial speculator who seems to be able to determine the fortunes of the economy by buying or selling stocks or currencies has dozens if not hundreds of motivated and valued employees by his side.

All this is just to illustrate that success is not attainable single-handedly. To be successful, an individual has to be able to collaborate with other individuals, whether they are customers, work associates, relatives or suppliers.

In terms of how we operate, there is only one way forward: to achieve personal success we have to be able to collaborate with others, influence their ideas, mold them and be molded by them.

Obviously when we enter the field of professional and human relationships (whether between a boss and an employee, between peers, or between husband and wife), we find it is riddled with problems and difficulties. Let's analyze a few of them.

What are the problems we encounter when we try to influence individuals? What are the problems we

have when we want to teach them or get them to change their attitude? What are the problems we encounter in the management of our employees? Let's list them.

When I ask entrepreneurs and managers what problems they encounter in managing their staff, they usually suggest the following:

- Demotivated staff.
- Work associates who don't take responsibility for their own work.
- Employees who don't apply themselves.
- Individuals who highlight problems rather than suggest solutions.
- Individuals that you have to explain the same things to over and over.
- Company divisions made up of "sluggish departments" that don't cooperate with each other.
- Individuals who don't handle their jobs effectively.
- Individuals who constantly have to be given orders.

And so on...

I am sure that you too, as you read this, will have thought of some kind of problem you have when managing others or in your relationships with others.

These kinds of problems or difficulties often cause us to have emotional reactions. At times they lower our morale, other times they make us angry, and in

some cases they might make us feel disappointed or frustrated, particularly if they persist in spite of our attempts to resolve them.

Imagine you have a receptionist who is talking on the phone. You happen to walk past and as you overhear her, you realize she is being impolite with a customer. When she has finished her call you go up to her and, with a very positive approach, you explain to her the reason why what she did was not right and what a negative influence her manner may have on the company. She agrees and makes a commitment to change. You leave feeling satisfied that you have cleared up an important point.

The following week a customer calls you and complains that he has just called the company and the receptionist was ill-mannered. On hearing this, although you are a little annoyed about it, you keep your cool and your positive attitude and tell her that last week you probably didn't explain yourself well or she didn't understand what you meant. You explain to her again what manner she should have when answering the phone. She apologizes profusely and says she now understands very well what to do. You think you have resolved the problem.

Three days go by and as you are speaking with the Chief Operating Officer, you hear the receptionist arguing with a customer on the phone. What do you feel?

You might have various reactions, including getting angry, feeling resentful, or even disappointed or frustrated. What we are concerned about here is not so much our specific emotional state but the fact that AS WE HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO INFLUENCE A SITUATION OR AN INDIVIDUAL NOW WE ARE EXPERIENCING A DISAGREEABLE EMOTIONAL REACTION.

At this point I have some good news for you: in this book we will provide you with some techniques, procedures and knowledge to enable you to influence individuals in a positive way, to motivate demotivated staff and to make difficult customers more cooperative. I will describe the successful procedures and actions of managers who have successfully created highly motivated groups and of leaders who have successfully molded even their most difficult staff members and helped them develop.

Without wishing to be arrogant, I can assure you that these techniques work and when they are applied they bring results and progress.

We do have a problem, however.

In the absence of a prior ingredient, the knowledge given to an individual to help him succeed is not taken in or accepted.

This point may seem contrived, but it is not. It is a key fact in an individual's training. Let me give you some examples.

You meet an old friend of yours. He is very downbeat. He tells you about a major problem he has that is ruining his life. As he describes it to you, you realize that you, too, have had that very same problem, identical to his own. But not only that, you have also resolved it successfully. In other words, you have the knowledge to resolve it.

You then explain to him what you think he should do in that situation (you transfer knowledge to him). But how will he reply in 80% of cases if he is really dejected?

“No, look, you don’t understand”, “My problem isn’t quite what you think”, or “It’s easy for you to say that, you should be in this situation to know what it’s like”. Although you are giving him the knowledge to enable him to resolve the problem (and you know it works as you have tested it yourself), he doesn’t accept it. Why? Because he is missing another ingredient that comes before knowledge.

In other words, before individuals can absorb knowledge about something, there has to be another factor, in the absence of which you might give them the best possible knowledge in the world, but they will not be able to make it their own.

Motivation, you might say. No, it is not motivation. Some of you will say that he is not interested in resolving this problem. No, it is not even that. Your friend is interested. Indeed, look how emotionally involved he is in it.

At this stage you might suggest that the missing ingredient is experience. No, it is not experience.

In order to understand what this ingredient is, we have to consider a further example. Did you learn to drive a car when you went to driving school and they explained to you how to do it (i.e. you were exposed to knowledge)? Or did you actually learn when you were behind the wheel and, **NOTE CAREFULLY THE FOLLOWING WORDS, you felt you were the one in charge of the car, that is, you knew exactly that wherever the car went depended SOLELY AND EXCLUSIVELY ON YOU?**

Every one of us **TRULY** learned how to drive a car **THE MOMENT WE FELT IN CHARGE OF THE CAR, THE MOMENT WE HAD THE PERCEPTION FOR THE FIRST TIME THAT WHEREVER THE CAR WENT DEPENDED EXCLUSIVELY ON US.**

In fact, the missing ingredient is the FEELING THAT WE ARE SOLELY IN CHARGE OF SOMETHING: RESPONSIBILITY!

In order to learn something or absorb knowledge, I first have to feel that I am the sole person in charge of, or responsible for, that particular thing.

If I don't feel that I myself am in charge of something or feel that this thing doesn't depend entirely on me, but depends more on something or someone else, then I will not be able to absorb or accept knowledge about it.

RESPONSIBILITY

As responsibility seems to be so important for absorbing knowledge, let's try to understand a little more about it.

By RESPONSIBILITY we mean the ability to feel solely in charge of something. It is the ability to feel that that thing, person or situation depends entirely on us. It is a skill. Some individuals are unable or have a very limited ability to feel responsible. They feel that the majority of the things that happen to them or are not going the right way are determined by or are the fault of somebody else. In other individuals, on the other hand, this ability is more developed.

Your level of success is determined by how well developed your ability to feel responsible is.

Let's take a look at this in more detail.

For over two thousand years, Eastern philosophy, based on the famous laws of “Cause and Effect”² and of “Responsibility”³, has attributed to individuals responsibility for what happens in their lives.

Numerous Western philosophers too, including Aristotle (“It is ridiculous to ascribe responsibility to external causes for our wrong actions”), Shakespeare (“the fault lies not in the stars but with ourselves”), and Albert Schweitzer (“Man must cease attributing his problems to his environment and learn again to exercise his will, his personal responsibility”), over the centuries have made the connection between an individual’s effectiveness and his ability to consider himself the cause of what is happening around him.

More recently another scholar, Julian Rotter⁴, developed the concept of personal responsibility further. In 1966, Rotter established that some individuals are distinguished by what he calls “external control” (in other words, they perceive that their life and what happens to them is determined by chance or by events outside their control), and others by “internal control” (in other words, they perceive themselves as agents or causes of what happens). Quite a few studies have shown that, as a rule, “internal control” individuals are more successful in life and are better able to overcome stress and difficulties.

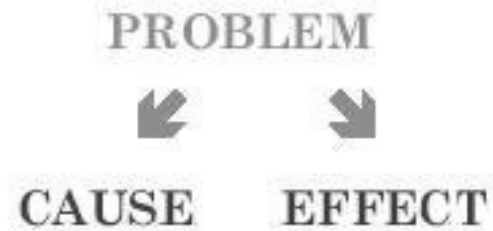
We could expand our definition of responsibility in this context and say that RESPONSIBILITY IS THE ABILITY TO CONSIDER ONESELF THE CAUSE OF SITUATIONS.

² *Law of Cause and Effect: you reap what you sow*

³ *Law of responsibility: our surrounding environment is a mirror of ourselves and of our actions.*

⁴ *ROTTER J.B. (1966) Generalized expectancies for internal versus external control of reinforcement. Psychological Monographs, 80.*

When faced with a problem, and by problem I mean whatever situation is not going as we would wish, we can consider ourselves the Cause (source) or the Effect (those suffering the effect):



Let's use an example. Suppose that you are now taking part in one of my training courses and you make an objection. There is something you disagree with. When faced with this problem, I can choose (and this is a real choice I make) whether to consider myself the Cause of the problem (i.e. "it is me who is not explaining something well") or the Effect (i.e. "it is you who are not understanding or are not willing to understand").

The choice I make will establish whether Responsibility is there or not. In the absence of Responsibility, I will not be able to develop or absorb knowledge. And even if someone else tried to suggest to me what to do, for as long as I don't consider myself a cause, I will not be able to absorb the advice given to me by this third party. In my mind, it is YOU who has to change, certainly not me.

As I am not developing this knowledge, will I be able to influence the situation? No, I will not. What will I feel instead? One of the unpleasant emotional

reactions we mentioned earlier on (i.e. getting angry, frustrated, upset, etc.).

In other words, if we CHOOSE not to consider ourselves the cause, our mechanism for seeking and absorbing knowledge is never activated and as a result we will never be able to influence situations.

Indeed, one of the most important points of this book is that when confronted with problems we must start training to see ourselves as the cause and not as the effect. This is such an important point that I would like to share a case history with you:

In an American school, some researchers told the teachers that they would give all the students of a particular class an IQ test. What they did, in actual fact, was to ask the students to complete some senseless questionnaires and then threw them away and pulled out the names of three students at random. They said nothing to the students but told the teachers that these three students were the most intelligent in the whole class and said they could not understand why they didn't perform according to their IQs. Two out of three kids were not interested in studying at all and, like some of us, used to take frogs to school... One of them had an average performance. At the end of the school year – and I must point out that the teachers had been checked, in the sense that they could not give them the grades they wanted but had to grade according to actual performance – those three students were among the top five in the class. DO YOU THINK IT WAS THE STUDENTS OR THE TEACHERS WHO CHANGED?

No doubt you will say it was the teachers who changed. But what did they change? They had changed their attitude towards the low performance of those three students.

Before the IQ test, when one of the three students would come into the class and on being asked whether or not he had done his homework, he would answer, “No, I didn’t. I left my workbook at school...”, the teachers would have thought to themselves, “Look how negative this child is, he really doesn’t want to make an effort” (= the teachers considered themselves the effect). Now, on the other hand, the teachers were thinking, “If he’s intelligent and isn’t performing well, then it’s probably me who isn’t able to explain and who has to change something.” In other words, they had changed their attitude towards these students’ problems and had started to consider themselves as causative. In this way their teaching skills had also improved.

In his book *Pygmalion in the Classroom* (Pygmalion was the King of Cyprus and a sculptor. In today’s common parlance “Pygmalion” is someone who teaches a rough and uncultured individual to refine his or her skills), Dr. Robert Rosenthal from Harvard University reported numerous cases in which the teachers were told that a student (or sometimes a whole class) was extremely bright and was therefore expected to make great strides in his or her academic performance during the year. Even if random students were chosen from the class, if the teachers were led to believe that those students were extremely bright, then their performance turned out to be immeasurably better than that of the other students in the same class or similar classes, or than the performance that could have been expected of them based on their previous school performance.

What had changed? The attitude of the teachers. Faced with those students’ underachievement, instead of considering themselves the effect, the

teachers now considered themselves the cause. As such they achieved much more positive results.

EMPHASIS ON CAUSATIVITY

Imagine you have lost your car keys and are looking for them everywhere in the house. You search in every drawer, every pocket, every bedside table, you look high and low for them. You do all you can to find them. You ask your wife, you think about and go through everything you did since you came into the house. In short, you turn into an expert key hunter. Now imagine you had not brought your keys into the house but had left them in the car. It makes no difference how thoroughly you look for them in the house or how painstakingly you apply yourself to your search: you will never find them in the house because they are not there. Likewise, when you try to find the causes of your problems inside other people, you will never find them, because **THAT IS NOT WHERE THEY ARE**. They are inside you.

It is a fact that, as we shall see more clearly in due course, somewhere between 3 and 8% of the population (and therefore also among our staff) are individuals who sometimes act extremely negatively or are highly resistant to correction. I am not saying you are to blame for the fact that these individuals are like that. In their case you probably found yourself with tougher-than-average people to manage. All of us encounter some individuals in our lives who are difficult to deal with. But let's take a look at the proportions: out of 100 people who might be working in your company, 92-97 are potentially good employees. If they don't perform as you would like them to, the problem doesn't lie in them but in you.

Perhaps it lies in the idea you have of them and therefore in your expectations. I am not the first to maintain that your expectations influence the individuals you have around you. The reason is easy to understand. What you expect from people determines more than anything else the attitude you will have towards them, and people, acting as mirrors, will reflect back to you the same attitude you have towards them, positive or negative as it may be.

Perhaps the problem depends on the way you interact with them, or on your style of motivation. Who knows? We will only find out when we begin to consider ourselves the cause of their performance. And it is only at that point, in fact, that will we begin to analyze ourselves, challenge ourselves and find some real answers.

If, conversely, we continue to consider ourselves the effect, and believe that the problem depends on them, then the most we can achieve is the same result as the frantic key seeker from our earlier example achieved by looking all over the house for the keys that were actually in his car, namely stress, anxiety and frustration.

All too often when faced with unsatisfactory situations, we consider ourselves the effect and forget what it is about US that cause that situation. I go home to my wife, for example, and realize that lately she has been slightly aloof. This bothers me. I complain about it and try to change her character. To my eyes only her defects stand out. But it doesn't occur to me that I haven't brought her flowers in ages. I fail to remember that before marrying her I used to be a really good lover, I was romantic, and always made sure she was having fun and made light of things, whereas now, in the little time I

spend with her, my attitude and manner have completely changed.

Or I look at my staff and feel irritated at how inefficient they are. I fail to realize that my management style with them is extremely demotivating or that when anyone wants to talk to me I never have any time for them. Or I don't see that, differently from how I used to be when I started up my company, in the little time I spend with them now I am so tense and nervous, or absorbed by problems, that I talk about all the things that aren't going right and never devote any time to boosting their motivation.

THE ONLY WAY TO RESOLVE A PROBLEM IS TO CONSIDER YOURSELF THE CAUSE WHEN YOU TACKLE IT

We found that in 100% of cases all employee motivation and improvement programs tend to fail unless the person at the top of the company hierarchy espouses causativity. If managers don't learn to consider themselves the cause of their staff's performance and productivity, then any human resource improvement program will yield meager results at best.

I am not saying that you are always to blame if your staff's productivity is not as you would wish it to be. In some cases it might actually be your fault. In other cases it might be due to the staff themselves.

Yet even when it is clear that responsibility for something not done properly is to be ascribed to the employee who did it, you should not forget that you are the leader of the company and the attitude you adopt may lead to either the resolution or the exacerbation of the problem.

If you consider yourself the effect when you interact with your staff and believe that *they* are to blame for the fact that they are not delivering, not learning, are making mistakes and are demotivated, then YOU ARE SIMPLY MAGNIFYING THE PROBLEM, because, while they may be to blame for some things, your very attitude will make them become withdrawn and get worse.

In the case study on IQs illustrated earlier in this chapter, the low aptitude for studying of the children who would take frogs to school was probably not the teachers' fault. It may have been due to the environment they grew up in, to their parents not devoting enough attention to their progress or who knows to what other factors. But the case history demonstrated most glaringly that if the teachers considered themselves the effect in their approach to the students, the students didn't improve, whereas if they considered themselves the cause the students' performance improved.

By the same token, it is impossible to improve individuals if we don't consider ourselves the cause of their productivity and performance.

IF IN MY APPROACH TO ANOTHER PERSON I CONSIDER MYSELF THE EFFECT, THAT PERSON TOO WILL BEHAVE AS THE EFFECT

Causativity, just like being the effect, is infectious.

If I am dealing with a person and, as I argue with him, I consider myself the effect, he will in turn consider himself the effect (of me) and think that it is me who is not understanding or not explaining myself properly. How many times have we witnessed two individuals blaming each other and,

as we watched them, we knew that the more they blamed each other the more likely they were to go on fighting?

Causativity is infectious too, but unlike being the effect, this infection doesn't occur immediately. It happens with a short delay. In the case of a controversy with a person, I have to consider myself the cause once, twice or even three times before I can see that this person is reflecting my attitude and is in turn beginning to think that he, too, bears some responsibility for what happened.

We could go as far as to say that THE CAUSATIVE MANAGER CREATES CAUSATIVE STAFF and THE "EFFECT MANAGER" CREATES "EFFECT STAFF".

In other words, when you are dealing with an employee who made a mistake and, considering yourself the effect (thinking they are to blame for the mistake), you go up to them and say, "You don't understand any of this, look at the mess you're making!", they are very likely to think (though they would certainly not tell you) that it is actually you who are not explaining things properly.

If, conversely, we adopt a causative attitude when we deal with an employee who has made a mistake, saying for instance, "Look, it's not you that hasn't understood this but it's me who hasn't explained properly", it may be that nothing will happen the first time, but after two or three times of your speaking to them in this way, they will say to us, "No, listen, IT'S ME WHO HAS TO PAY MORE ATTENTION". In other words, they too are becoming more causative.

A kind of “mirror effect” begins to set in between the manager and his staff. The staff begin to have the same attitude that their manager has towards them.

This is so true that if I don’t consider myself the cause of my staff’s performance, I am actually creating a team of “effect individuals”. Suppose I go up to my Sales Manager and get angry at the low sales volume. As I do that, I consider myself the effect and think that HIS work is inadequate, that he is not managing his salespeople properly. Following my “motivational” action, what do you think he will do with his salespeople? He will go to them considering himself the effect, offloading responsibility onto them and demotivating them enormously.

If those salespeople have no staff of their own, who will they offload responsibility onto? On the manufacturing department for being late in producing the goods. Or they will ascribe their underperformance to the economic crisis. Or, even worse, they will act as the effect with the customers (“No, look, I’m sorry, it is YOU, Mister the customer, who sent in the order late. I can’t do anything about it...”).

If I often consider myself the effect, I will gradually lead all my company’s staff and associates to consider themselves the effect. The manager who doesn’t see himself as the cause of his staff creates a team of “effect people” who offload responsibility for what happens onto each other.

The manager who acts in a causative manner begets staff who, in turn, act in a causative manner and are therefore more responsible and more effective.

THE MOST IMPORTANT FACT ABOUT LEADERSHIP

LEADERS ARE INDIVIDUALS WHO GIVE ORDERS OR MAKE REQUESTS THAT THEIR STAFF CARRY OUT WITH PRIDE. In other words, if we had Jesus Christ, one of the greatest leaders in history, with us today and he asked us to do something, WE WOULD DO IT WITH PRIDE. The same would happen with Gandhi, or with other leaders in history or still living. We would certainly not say, “Oh yes Jesus, I understand. Unfortunately my favorite baseball team is playing tonight. I’m sorry but I really have to go home”, or “Ah, does it really have to be tomorrow Mister Gandhi? No, look, tomorrow is Saturday. I’ve been working for two consecutive Saturdays and I really need to rest this weekend.”.

On the contrary, we would be electrified by their requests. We would be honored to be party to their plans. This, however, happens not only with the great leaders in history. All individuals with good leadership skills will have their requests carried out by their staff with pride.

There is something else we should know, however: it is not possible to develop leadership over a person if we consider ourselves the effect of that person.

Unless you feel that you are the cause of how a person is, unless you feel that the behavior of that person depends solely on you, you will never be able to develop your leadership over them.

YOU CAN ONLY DEVELOP LEADERSHIP OVER THOSE WHOSE BEHAVIOR YOU FEEL YOURSELF TO BE THE CAUSE OF.

Let's take a practical example. I have two new staff members, Mr. A and Mr. B. I feel that whatever Mr. A does depends on me and that the responsibility for any mistakes he may make or low performance of his lies primarily with me. With Mr. B, by contrast, I sometimes consider myself the cause and sometimes the effect of his actions. When he makes mistakes I often feel it is his fault.

Well, after I have been acting in that way for two months, a surprising phenomenon will occur:

°When I ask Mr. A to do something, he will carry it out with pride. He will be happy to do it.

°When I ask Mr. B to do something, he will do it because he really has no other option (because he needs his salary at the end of the month, or because I am his boss), and in any case will do it unwillingly.

Considering ourselves the cause of our staff's performance and state of mind is truly the key that can open our doors to leadership.

THE MANAGER'S CAUSATIVITY

"If you want to know why your people are not performing well, step up to the mirror and take a peek. In most cases, the biggest cause of the problem is looking you in the eyes."

Ken Blanchard, author of The One Minute Manager.

Effective leaders know that their job is to make those they lead become winners. Effective managers often spend between 40 and 50% of their time motivating and training their staff. According to the

management guru Peter Drucker, “Above all, Thomas Watson (founder of IBM) trained all the time.”

When one of their staff members fails, these leaders accept responsibility for their poor performance and, in order to identify the cause of that failure, they look at themselves and their own actions and omissions rather than at that staff member’s.

Such managers not only achieve a more motivated and effective workforce but, by considering themselves the cause, they acquire the prime characteristic required for the purpose of absorbing and developing new skills: responsibility.

The next time you get into a rage about a mistake or lack of performance by an individual under your management, don’t continue to behave like the man who kept looking for his car keys in the house but had actually left them in the car. Insofar as you continue to do that, you will only feel more anxious, stressed, and bad-tempered.

If we wish to improve our results in the management of our staff, the first idea we have to change is that it is possible to develop and even hold on to leadership while we consider ourselves the effect.