

INSIGHTS:

A COACHING NEWSLETTER BY BILL PULLEN, PCC, CPCC



Stepping Out of Leadership

Long-time subscribers to my mailing list may have noticed that I have been “missing”. Although I wanted to share thoughts and insights with you, I was not quite sure what I wanted to say.

Well, that has changed. I have it figured out! I encourage you to check out my website to discover what’s new. Although the look is the same, I have revised the content. You will notice a new and more powerful emphasis on the development of individual, team, organization and community leaders.

It has become clear to me that we all are leaders. I have said and thought it before, but after a rather introspective year, I am more convinced than ever that we all feel the pull to make change -- whether in our families, on our teams, in our organizations or in our communities.

If we are honest with ourselves, we admit the urge is there. We often deny it, however, and step out of leadership while rationalizing why we do so. Things I commonly hear from people include:

- “I don’t know what to do.”
- “I don’t have what it takes.”
- “It’s not my responsibility.”
- “I don’t have the time, the energy or the resources.”
- “I’m afraid.”
- “They won’t like me,” or “It won’t be popular.”

And my personal favorite:

- “It’s all their fault!”

Consider Allison, a 35-year-old accountant at a large firm. She enjoys a good career as a consultant and receives high praise for her work from supervisors, peers and clients. The firm recently promoted her to a leadership position with a larger team, a bigger budget and a higher level of responsibility. Allison went into the job excited by the opportunity to make more of an impact on the firm and for her clients.

Six months into the new job she is floundering. Allison feels as though her superiors, her team and her clients are pulling her in conflicting directions. She does not know which way to turn. It seems the harder she works, the less effective she is.

Allison called me feeling sad, angry, frustrated, overwhelmed. She was ready to quit. She had convinced herself that she was not up to the challenging of leading people. She was ready to step out of leadership. She told herself, “I can’t do it.”

It is not that Allison cannot be a good leader. Her problem is that she has reached her leadership edge; she has reached the line where the skills she always used and the way she always operated no longer work. Her new position requires a new way of operating and a different set of skills.

What Allison needs to do (and what we all need to do when we reach that leadership edge) is to recognize her situation as an opportunity to grow as a leader, to embrace the challenge and to create a plan for overcoming it. She needs to remain in her leadership role while creating the space for the leader in her to grow.

What about you?

- Where in your life are you stepping out of leadership?
- What are you doing about it?
- If you are doing nothing, what are you telling yourself?

The more aware we are of when and why we step out of leadership the better able we are decide whether or not stepping out is what we want to do.

In future articles I will discuss the costs to self, team, organization and community of stepping out of leadership. I will examine the benefits of not stepping out, and I will offer strategies for growth.

I am interested in your thoughts and comments about this article. Is it helpful? Why? Why not? Send your comments to me at Bill@PullenAssociates.com

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