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*We Help You Focus Clearly,
Organize Effectively,
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Whole Systems Change

- A case study in the use of organization development methods to effect change in a local school district.
- Originally published in *The OD Practitioner*, Vol.30, No.2, 1998

Building Organizational Courage

- Fostering organizational change is difficult – but the key lies in being true to vision and values while at the same time embracing current reality, despair, and fears.
- Originally published in *Minnesota Ventures Growth Guide*, 1993.

Beyond the Handshake

- Cathy shares her experience and practical strategies in creating consulting alliances and collaborations that work.
- Originally published in *A Career Resource Guide for Organization Development* in 1998.

Yikes! Valuable and Humbling Lessons about Future Search

- Cathy shares her experience and learning about facilitating Future Search conferences over a several year period.
- Originally published in *Search News*, Spring, 1998.

Front Line Leadership

By Cathy Perme

In the wake of September 11, 2001, we seem to be grappling with a world that is shifting so fast it is hard to figure out which way to go – terrorism, threats, and recession. Never before has the call for “leadership” seemed so urgent and welcomed so heartily when it appears.

However, leadership is not reserved for one or a few. That is a myth we have held for the *last* two centuries, when the word “leadership” was first used to describe a political appointment. The word “lead” is actually derived from an Old English word that means “a course, a way, or a journey” and is connected to another word we use today -- “load” --which is something we carry. ***So the real meaning of leadership is to bring something on a journey, with the implication that we deliver it intact.***

Unfortunately, in today’s world no business or nation can rely on a single set of individuals at the top to know about everything that is happening and to decide quickly, accurately, and fairly what to do about it. That might have worked in the slower pace days of the last two centuries, but not now and not into the future.

We all need to take the leadership journey, taking responsibility for bringing others and ourselves into the future intact. So what is our job, if we cannot delegate all of this upward to presidents, executives and CEO’s?

- First, it is our job to *accept and face today’s reality* head on – no wishing, no whining, no denying, and no panicking. Everyone needs to be part of constantly gathering and sharing information about customers, competitors, markets, products, and processes. Collaboration and teamwork are key to make sense of this data and to know where to focus attention.
- Second, it is our job to *engage in a vision for the future that goes beyond today’s fear*. Although it is cliché to say that people are our primary resource – in great companies and countries that is true. Every single person takes a leadership role within his or her own sphere of influence. They share the vision and goals, they understand their role, and they take action.
- Third, it is our job to *keep ourselves fresh, open-minded, creative, and learning*. Lifelong learning, new opportunities, personal feedback, and self-reflection are essential ingredients to personal development and long-term employability. Unless we do this we will stagnate and find change harder and harder.
- Fourth, it is our job to *live in concert with our values*. That means *knowing* what our personal values are, and ensuring that our values align with the company for whom we work. (There is absolutely no joy in working for a company whose values conflict with those we hold dear!) That also means having the courage to stand up for our personal and national values when they seem threatened or compromised. That is called integrity.
- Finally, it is our job to *respect the leadership of others and help them lead, too*. That means realizing that we may have differences of opinion or different ways of doing things, but that we must support each other, and challenge each other in *helpful* ways so that everyone reaches the future together, intact! ☐