

## Leadership is Jack Layton's legacy

There was something about Jack Layton's leadership that crossed boundaries and is something that leaders within corporations would do well to pay heed to.

All too often we judge a leader's success on his or her decisions, strategies and goals. But while this is important, what Layton showed us is that in many cases it is the manner in which you choose to lead that is far more significant than the decisions you make as a leader. "Soft" is more important than "hard."

Layton said it best himself. His leadership was defined by love, hope and optimism. He was real and human. While he was clearly the leader of the party, arrogance and ego played no role. He was personable, energetic and, yes, the guy we'd like to sit down and have a beer with. His positive energy translated into a positive vision. Whether or not we agreed with it, he was still able to articulate a constructive option as distinct from simply defining what was wrong with others' positions.

But we see little of this leadership style in today's organizations. Those at the top concern themselves with the hard part of leadership such as decision-making and strategy formulation. While this is important, leaders need to consider how they show up and articulate these policies. Somewhere along the way many appear to have forgotten that the best way to lead others is to connect with them on a real and human level. Policies are worthless if others will not buy in and follow. If this emotional connection is there, then, as we saw with Layton, the relationship between leader and follower is defined by a deep respect. And it is through this respect that others will follow leaders – regardless of whether they agree with their policies. His leadership became more important than the policies he was articulating.

Had Layton been the CEO of a corporation, there's good reason to believe that organization would have been successful. His energy and commitment would have inspired others, and his hope and optimism would have likely meant that many were willing to put in the discretionary effort to help the enterprise succeed.

Let me be honest here: if I were to tell a CEO that his or her leadership needs to be better defined by love, hope and optimism, I would probably get a bunch of strange looks or rolled eyes. Either such words would be viewed as having no place in today's organizations or the out-of-touch and arrogant CEO might genuinely believe he or she appears as loving, hopeful and optimistic.

But I beg to differ.

Most of those at the top of organizations are so caught up in the demands of shareholders, regulatory bodies, boards and others who are interested in the hard side of the business that they have forgotten that the most important job is to inspire others. And the only way they can do this is to be real, human and personable.

Layton's legacy will be with us for many years, but my hope is that his passion and courage will cause us to take stock of how we lead organizations. What if we were to promote into leadership positions those

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who best portrayed a sense of love, hope and optimism? What if we demanded that today's organizations be led by real people with a passion and a humanness so desperately lacking? What if those at the top recognized that what employees really want is not invulnerability but to be able to sit down with them, have a beer and talk with mutual interest, respect and caring.

This, I hope, will be Layton's lasting legacy – a legacy of loving leadership. .

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