

# A Leadership Development Model That's Working

by Denise Cormier

In my work over these last few decades, I have come to know that leadership is not easy. Leadership requires energy and enthusiasm; it takes courage, the ability to dream and to engage others in working toward that dream. The best leaders walk their talk, with integrity. They know themselves and move through the world in a way that's inviting. They know themselves and their priorities and act on what's important.

A few years ago, I conducted a study with executives and leaders in the corporate and nonprofit sectors. My goal was to discover what you, as leaders, identified as your key personal challenges.

What I learned was that the issues of life balance, leaving a legacy, being true to yourself and making a difference were consistently paramount. What I also learned was that you felt at a loss as to how to get off the treadmill and rekindle your hope, joy and excitement.

Since my work is to help leaders become better at what they do, I concluded that I needed to design a process that would not only help you to eradicate the challenges that were draining your energy, but one that would also help you to reclaim your essential self. In doing so, I surmised, you would become a better leader. What I have discovered is that my hypothesis was true.

As we all know, strategic planning is a common practice in businesses and nonprofits alike. The concept of taking the time to reflect, strategize and create

a game plan for the future is an essential tool in all successful organizations. Identifying an organization's purpose, its vision and developing strategies and goals to achieve that vision is not new. Yet, doing the same for ourselves is not customary practice. Why should we not use the lessons learned from strategic planning to reinvent ourselves, to become more reflective and planful in thinking about what we are doing and why, what we want, and what our personal legacy is about?

The Personal Strategic Planning Process (PSP) is designed to do just that. In the

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PSP process, both your personal and professional life come under scrutiny. (Yes, I believe as a leader you bring both to the table.) The PSP process provides a successful, systematic method for leaders to re-discover themselves in the midst of their intense work-a-day worlds. PSP goes beyond creating a personal mission and vision into the practical details of making those intentions a reality.

Over the past five years, many leaders-through one on one coaching, group coaching and weekend retreats - have worked with me to create their personal strategic plans. As a result of the program, some have chosen to make radical changes, and others smaller significant

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changes. They report greater enjoyment and fulfillment in their work, clarity in knowing where they are going and why, and greater life balance. They report a high sense of self-knowledge and integrity, and consequently, an improved sense of well-being, courage, and the ability to get things done. They report that their definition of success has expanded to encompass both their personal and professional lives, and that they are reaping the rewards tenfold.

As one PSP participant recently said: *I wanted to give myself permission to dare to think and dream big, to set life goals and identify strategies and actions to achieve those goals. That's hard to do when you are on the treadmill, going at full speed every day. This program offered an opportunity to take time to focus on important things for me and a chance to think out of the box.*

When I began my research, I didn't know where it would lead, but I did know that I wanted to be able to help leaders take that next step in their development. I am happy to report that the PSP model is doing just that.

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