

NEW COMPETENCIES FOR GLOBAL LEADERS

DR. JOHN STANKO

My goal is to read or listen to 6 books every month. Most of them can be found in the business/management section of a bookstore. I also read some biographies, history, world missions, science, and leadership. As we turn our attention in this session to the topic "New Competencies for Global Leaders," I want to draw from my readings over the last year and try to give you a summary of what I have found.

You may be surprised that I am not going to talk about technology, currency exchange, marketing plans, or other "hard" business issues. I am going to focus on what are called the "soft" issues. I do that not because I can't address the "hard" issues (although they are not my strength) but because everything I am seeing and reading that is directed to leaders is about the "soft" stuff like people skills, creativity, team building, and vision.

For the sake of time, I am going to touch on only five competencies, although there are certainly more than that. These five are in my opinion the major themes that are occupying and will continue to demand the attention of leaders all over the world.

And that is why I refer to those leaders who are developing these competencies as global leaders. These competencies are not contained in any one culture; they are universally applied. I have talked about these on six continents and have found them to be relevant no matter where I was or who I was talking to.

Let's look at the five competencies for global leaders.

I. Learning to manage yourself

Global leaders today must know who they are and what they do best. In the past, before the advent of the knowledge worker, people had limited opportunities. Their career path was set by tradition, family heritage, or what could provide a decent living. Not any more. And the increased opportunities require that leaders manage themselves and their decisions of what to do and what not to do.

If you know me at all or have heard me speak, you know it won't be long before I am quoting Peter Drucker, father of modern management studies. He wrote,

The answers to the three questions. "What are my strengths? How do I perform? What are my values?" should enable the individual, and especially the knowledge worker, to decide where he or she belongs. . . . But also knowing the answer to these three questions enables people to say to an opportunity, to an offer, to an assignment: "Yes, I'll do that. But this is the way *I* should be doing it. This is the way it should be structured. This is the way my relationships should be. These are the kind of results you should expect from me, and in this time frame, because *this is who I am*" - Peter F. Drucker, *Management Challenges for the 21st Century*.

Can you answer the three questions above? If you can, then you are well on your way to becoming a leader who is capable of taking on global responsibilities. Because you will know when to say "yes" and when to say "no." You will know what part of the world in which to invest yourself.

This issue is so critical because of what one writer calls "overchoice." Rather than trying to explain what he means by that, let me share with you what he wrote:

We are beat up, tired, and exhausted, but it's not the things we're doing that are wearing us out. It's the burden of all the things we're not doing. It's the knowledge of things undone that causes us to wish for more hours in a day. When watching television, it's all the shows we aren't watching that drive us crazy. We have too many possibilities, too little time. Overchoice strikes again.

Overchoice is not only keeping us average, it's making us tired. We delude ourselves with the hope we can "find time" or "make time" for all the things we'd like to do, yet time can be neither found nor made. Time will continue to sweep past us at its own pace, oblivious to our existence, just as it has since the days of Adam. We cannot manage time; we can only manage ourselves. We will quit feeling tired only when we've learned to say no to overchoice -- Roy H. Williams, *The Wizard of Ads*.

Effective leaders know they can't do it all, can't do most of it, or even some of it, whatever the "it" is for them. They realize, like Jim Collins said, that every leader not only needs a "to-do" list, but also a "stop to-do" list. Peter Drucker says if you have more than five goals, you have none. Overchoice will spread you so thin as to render you ineffective. Global leaders know that to be effective they must be focused.

But no matter what effective leaders focus on today, they realize that the expression of that focus must be servant leadership. Leaders today cannot sit in an ivory tower and demand the loyalty and obedience of their subjects. They must provide meaningful work for those with whom they are working. Leaders today must, in some sense, see that they are working for their teammates and employees and not the other way around. More on that later.

A discussion of servant leadership would not be complete without a quote from Robert Greenleaf, whose writings on servant leadership have profoundly impacted my life. Greenleaf wrote,

The servant-leader *is* servant first. It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve *first*. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. He is sharply different from the person who is *leader* first, perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions. For such it will be a later choice to serve - after leadership is established. The leader-first and the servant-first are two extreme types. Between them there are shadings and blends that are part of the infinite variety of human nature.

The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant-first to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served. The best test, and difficult to administer, is: do those served grow as persons; do they, *while being served*, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? *And*, what is the effect on the least privileged in society; will he benefit, or at least, will he not be further deprived? - *The Servant as Leader* by Robert Greenleaf,

One more quote from Max DePree adds a simple formula to our understanding of servant leadership.

The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality. The last is to say thank you. In between the two, the leader must become a servant and a debtor - Max DePree, *Leadership is an Art*.

When I lead, I help set the ground rules up front, finish up by saying thank you in as many ways as possible, and try to serve others in every way imaginable in between. If you can do that, you are managing yourself in such a way as to gain one of the most important competencies for global leaders.

II. Leading and managing others

I want to say right away that effective leaders know they cannot manage people; they manage things and lead people. People are too complex and a leader's awareness of "what makes people tick" is always too limited to try to manage, manipulate or control people for very long. This is a critical awareness for global leaders. Why?

No matter what the nature of your business is, if you are a leader, ***you are in the people business***. You are not in the manufacturing business, the accounting business, or retail sales. More and more, your job is to find, nurture, serve and maintain a capable workforce to carry out your business, whatever that business may be.

Understanding that you can't manage people, the essence of your business as a leader, must force you to understand what motivates people and to develop leadership skills that will bring forth creativity, innovation, and teamwork. Any leader that can do that is truly a global leader, no matter what they do or where they live.

I would highly recommend the book by Marcus Buckingham & Curt Coffman, *First, Break All the Rules*. The authors work for the Gallup Organization and interviewed 80,000 effective leaders and managers the world over. They summarize in their book what they learned. Pay attention to this one quote:

They [great managers] recognize that each person is motivated differently, that each person has his own way of thinking and his own style of relating to others. They know that there is a limit to how much remolding they can do to someone. But they don't bemoan these differences and try to grind them down. Instead

they *capitalize* on them. They try to help each person become *more* and *more* of who he already is. Simply put, this is the one insight we heard echoed by tens of thousands of great managers:

People don't change that much.

Don't waste time trying to put in what was left out.

Try to draw out what was left in.

That is hard enough.

Effective leaders don't set people up for failure by putting them into a wrong position for them. Rather, leaders work with who people are and try to put them where they have a chance for success. To do this, a leader must take time and devote some resources to finding out - and helping the other person discover - who that person is and how they function best. Effective leaders help others manage themselves because effective leaders are learning to do the same as we discussed earlier.

Why is this so critical? Not only to insure that the business or organization is functioning, but because people have choices today, more than ever before. If they don't find what they want in your company, then they will pursue something else and probably find it. And if they are not intimidated, they can go anyplace in the world to work or sit at home and go to the world through the Internet.

That is why you are in the people business. You are competing for the same talent that everyone else is. If you don't develop the competency of leading people, people who have choices, then you will spend a lot of time and energy replacing those you lose and your place in the global economy will erode over time.

III. Developing partnerships

The third competency for global leaders is that they know how to develop partnerships, even with those whom they employ. Workers today want a say in what they are doing, even if they work for a church, hospital, or social sector organization. Even if they are volunteering, they want to be treated with respect, listened to, and have some options to choose from if at all possible.

If you haven't received the message, receive it now: Authoritarian leadership is dead or at least dying. It is in its death throes. Unless a crisis arises, people are not going to surrender their work "sovereignty" for long.

That is why it is important for an effective leader to always be on the lookout for partnerships, whether the opportunity presents itself inside or outside the company. But most leaders wonder how they can keep "control": of their company, vision or bottom line and build partnerships.

Read what Ken Blanchard of *One-Minute Manager* fame has to say about this:

Most organizations are typically pyramidal in nature. Who is at the top of the organization? The chief executive officer, the chairman, the board of directors. Who is at the bottom? All the employees—the people who do all the work. The people who make the products, sell the products, service the products, and the like. Now there is nothing wrong with having a traditional pyramid for certain tasks or roles. The paradox is that the pyramid needs to be right side up or upside down depending on the task or roles.

It's absolutely essential that the pyramid stay upright when it comes to vision, mission, values, and setting major goals. Moses did not go up on the mountain with a committee. People look to leaders for direction, so the traditional hierarchy isn't bad for this aspect of leadership. While the vision and direction might start with the leader, if you're dealing with experienced people, you want to get them involved in shaping and refining that direction. Some companies, such as W. L. Gore & Associates, do not even have appointed leaders. They think leadership is a follower-driven concept. Therefore, leadership should emerge rather than be appointed. But no matter how the leadership is determined, providing direction is an important aspect of servant-leadership.

Most organizations and managers get in trouble in the implementation phase of the leadership process. The traditional pyramid is kept alive and well. When that happens, who do people think they work for? The person above them. The minute you think you work for the person above you for implementation, you are assuming that person—your boss—is *responsible* and your job is

being *responsive* to that boss and to his or her whims or wishes. As a result, all the energy in the organization is moving up the hierarchy, away from customers and the frontline folks who are closest to the action - *Insights on Leadership*.

This gets back to the issue of servant leadership and to the second competency of leading and not managing people. Leaders instill vision and then insure that the activities of the organization serve the vision, not the leader. When that is happening, then the leader must partner with others to help them carry out the mission that will accomplish the vision.

You can build internal partnerships, and even partnerships with other companies, when you determine to always devise what Stephen Covey calls win-win situations. Let's look at what Covey has to say:

Creating Win/Win performance agreements requires vital paradigm shifts. The focus is on results; not methods. Most of us tend to supervise methods. . . . With Win/Win accountability, people evaluate themselves. The traditional evaluation games people play are awkward and emotionally exhausting. In Win/Win, people evaluate themselves, using the criteria that they helped to create up front - *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*.

Global leaders know how to develop win/win agreements. They know that win/lose, lose/win, or lose/lose situations cannot last for long. Effective leaders see others as partners and look for opportunities where everyone can benefit from the work agreements being devised.

I have a friend who says, "Part of something is better than a whole lot of nothing." Effective global leaders today don't try to wring every last penny out of deal, or to negotiate the life out of the person with whom they are dealing. If you are going to succeed in the business world of today, you must learn how to be a partner and not always the one in control. You will have the part of a person that they want to give, while they withhold another part for something or someone else.

IV. Flowing with spirituality in the workplace.

The fourth competency for global leaders is spirituality in the workplace. I know what you may be thinking: What in the world has

spirituality got to do with me as a leader or my organization? Let me answer by saying that I am reading some amazing things in business literature. For instance, Danah Zohar, a writer and quantum physicist, is in great demand as a speaker at business conferences. Her writings are quite "hot" right now.

In her book *Connecting with our Spiritual Intelligence*, she writes about the "God spot or module" in the brain. The "God spot" is an area of the brain where brain-wave activity increases when spiritual things are discussed. She goes on to tie that area to human ability for creativity, adaptation to surroundings, and understanding of the "unknowable." Amazing stuff for business people to read, don't you think?

I saw another author, with presumably no religious affiliation, refer to business leaders as the "pastors" or "spiritual leaders" of the company. I hear the Bible discussed regularly in the secular business or leadership conferences I attend. Leaders are encouraged to meditate and get in touch with their inner resources. Why the sudden awareness of spiritual things in the corporate?

This generation is preoccupied with a search for significance and meaning. No longer are lives and careers scripted by where you live, what your parents did, or what the "experts" said you had to study to get a job. With choices has come a search for the "right" choices, even if those choices are only a subjective "what's right for me?" search.

Since church attendance has continued to decline, people are exerting the "God spot" in their brains where they spend most of their time: on the job. They are looking to use their "gifts," create a legacy, and find purpose in what they do. Leaders who ignore this do so at their own peril. They will lose good people if they make them check their brain (as companies often did in the past) *and* their souls at the door when they arrive at work.

I would like to quote Robert Greenleaf again as he predicted this spiritual awakening in the 1960's. He wrote:

The great religious prophets of the future will not necessarily be theologians, philosophers, or people of literature. They are as likely to be lawyers, doctors, businesspeople, scientists, or politicians. And they will carry out their prophetic roles while functioning at a high level of excellence in their professional field. In fact, unless significant prophecy emerges in all of these places, the vision, without which the people perish, will not be sufficiently evident.

The world society in which we are all inextricably involved is far too complex, it is in too revolutionary a mood, and it is fast becoming too literate and aware of its sources of expertise for very much of the prophetic wisdom it needs to be uttered by ministers, scholars, or writers. These will, of course, continue to serve, but more on a par with those who are more immersed in the ongoing work of the world.

Businesses, governments bureaus, law firms, clinics, and scientific laboratories have not only become large, sophisticated institutions and important sources of new knowledge, but they are just as likely to harbor a philosopher, a prophet, or a saint as is the monastery or the university - *Seeker and Servant: Reflections on Religious Leadership*.

What Greenleaf predicted is happening, and global leaders recognize this and are tapping into the tremendous creativity and power that this new spirituality is releasing. Who can explain where a good idea comes from? How teams build synergy to be more effective than the sum of the parts? Why some people emerge as leaders in their field of endeavor? If the truth be known, there are no hard and fast answers. The answers lie in the unknowns of the human heart. The answers are spiritual answers and today global leaders had better understand and learn to work with it, or see their competitive edge slip away faster than an email being sent around the world.

V. Identifying Coaches and Mentors

Jesus said, "You will know the truth and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32). If you *know* that you need to grow and improve, then you are free—free to draw from others who can do what you can't in order to hone your skills. If you are a writer, who is helping you be a better writer? If you are a parent, who are you drawing from that can make you the best parent possible? If you are a pastor, who are your models and how can they help you be more like them? Let me make some suggestions of how to employ this principle in your life.

First of all, don't get locked into bad thinking. You don't need a mentor or coach; you need mentors and coaches. I heard one man say that we need to hear from many preachers and speakers because "Man's soul is too big to be fed by one person." The same is true for mentors. You need more than one. What's more, mentoring isn't a lifelong appointment. You'll change mentors

regularly as the needs of your purpose and creative expression change. But now you're probably asking, "Where can I find these mentors?" I'm glad you asked. The second thing to remember is that a person doesn't have to be alive and you don't even have to know them in order for them to serve as a mentor or coach. Here are some places you can seek people who will help you in your pursuit of purpose and excellence.

1. **Bible characters.** **Who is your favorite Bible character? Why are they your favorite?** They're your favorite because they have something that you need. Go back and study that person's life. Don't just read about that person, but take them apart, so to speak. For example, the apostle Paul is one of my favorites, so I've chosen him to be a mentor. I read books about him, meditate on what he did, and pray to the same God who helped Paul be a man of purpose who changed the world. I ask God to give me the Spirit of Paul. Now you see how the apostle Paul can be on my board of mentors.
2. **Historical figures.** **Who do you admire from the past?** In my case, I admire John and Charles Wesley. I've studied their lives and how they founded Methodism. I've visited their home and cathedral in London. I've also worked with Methodists to see how the Wesley's work continues today, 200 years after they have died. The Wesleys are on my board of mentors.
3. **Current leaders.** **Who speaks to you today?** Please don't limit yourself to the church world as you consider this question. There are two men who speak to me. One is Peter Drucker, the 96-year-old father of modern management studies. I read and re-read all his books and attend his annual leadership conference. I subscribe to his magazine. The other is Robert Greenleaf, the originator of the servant-leadership message. Greenleaf died in 1991, but I financially support his foundation and read everything that his foundation produces on servant-leadership. Drucker and Greenleaf are on my board of mentors.
4. **Associates.** **Whose input do you value among your associates and relationships?** I have several people who I meet with regularly who help me with my business and ministry. When I say we meet regularly, it may be once a year. We may email from time to time. But I draw on their expertise in the area of editing, finance, writing, marketing and business development. And I have two pastors, one in the United

States and one in Zimbabwe, who speak to my spiritual needs. These people are on my board of mentors.

5. **Family. Who in your family speaks wisdom and has your best interests at heart?** I'm learning to draw more and more on my wife's wisdom and counsel. It's a funny thing that I'm doing this more even though I'm home less. But there's no one who has been more faithful or committed to the Lord and me for the last 30 years. I'm proud and honored that my wife serves as my adviser and mentor. How about you? Are you drawing on your spouse's, parents', or even your children's wisdom where your purpose is concerned?

There you have my board of mentors and coaches. And I mentioned above that "things" can mentor you. Let me give you some examples. I try to go to Disney World regularly. The environment there challenges me as I study what they do and how they do it. I have two conferences I go to annually, and those conferences inspire and equip me. I also attend live sporting events and theater to see how they move and manage crowds, how they advertise and how the players and actors perform at optimal levels under tremendous pressure. The important thing is that you are committed to grow and improve in your purpose and determined to produce quality work.

So there you have them: Five competencies for the global leader to succeed in today's world. They are:

1. Learning to manage yourself.
2. Leading and managing people.
3. Developing partnerships.
4. Flowing with spirituality in the workplace.
5. Identifying coaches and mentors

I hope that you are ready to take your place on the world's stage and make a contribution to its betterment. If you are, I encourage you to develop these competencies. If you are not, then I hope you will better understand what happened when you were relegated to insignificance or failure. The choice is yours. I urge you to choose the path of relevance and growth.