

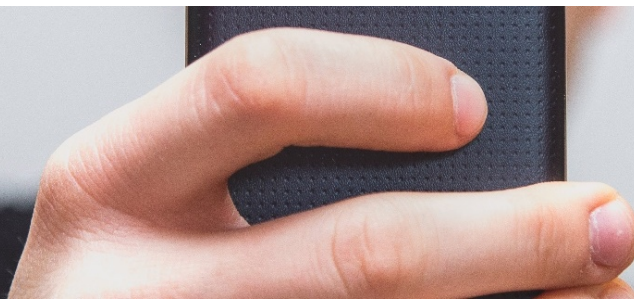


500 WORDS ON LEADERSHIP & DEVELOPMENT

narcissistic leaders

or, how humility and altruistic leadership is the key for inclusion and effectiveness

This 500 words on Leadership Development is for all leaders and managers who want to lead successfully and increase their effectiveness.



Roaming through the German start-up scene and meeting highly motivated young people who work collaboratively in co-working spaces, I am fascinated by their enthusiasm and humble spirit, sharing space and brain on a eye-to-eye level.

However, at some established hierarchical organisations, I observe something quite different. Here, leaders think that they have to work on their personal career first, paternalistic leadership prevails at the expense of their people and colleagues.

Humility is: “... not thinking less of yourself; it is thinking of yourself less.” (1)

A Catalyst (2) study shows that humility is a crucial factor for creating a business environment where employees from different demographic backgrounds feel included. Catalyst suggests that we most readily associate leadership competence with attributes like charisma, self-promotion, speaking up first, and speaking longest. Yet these characteristics may not actually be the ‘stuff’ that makes leaders effective in creating inclusive environments. Rather, qualities like ‘standing back’, humility, and self-sacrifice can go a lot further in making leaders more inclusive and effective.

The same study concluded that “employees who were treated altruistically by their managers were reported as being more innovative, suggesting new product ideas as well as better ways of working”.

Moreover, they were reported to be more likely to engage in team citizenship behaviours and go beyond the call of duty – for example by taking on extra work loads to cover for an absent colleague.

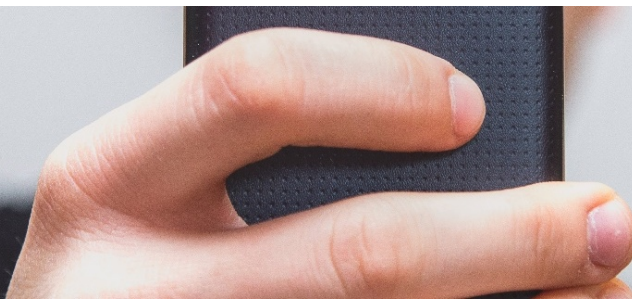
I am sure that all humble leaders have their own ways to be effective. There are many ‘tips’ how to become more altruistic. The ones CLP shares and develops in our programmes are (4, 5):

Share your mistakes as teachable moments

Humility is not only directed towards others but directed towards ourselves as well. L. Bock (6) calls this kind “intellectual humility” - without it, we are unable to learn and to grow.

Engage in dialogue, not debates

A crucial part of leadership development is the constant development of dialogue and communications skills: learn to be silent, to listen and to ask powerful questions that are non-closed and non-leading but stimulate new views and thoughts.



Embrace uncertainty

It is widely understood that we live and work in a world of fast change. Embracing uncertainty means to humbly admit that we do not have all answers and need to rely on each other to work through complex, ill-defined problems.

Be the change

We at CLP know that everyone perceives change very differently. To increase your 'change empathy', you have to detect and work with your strengths and preferences towards change. Change empathy (the ability to know yourself and others in the world of change) helps you to be the change and to guide others through it.

The truth is, however, that narcissists are more likely to step into positions of power than their altruistic colleagues. "They often exaggerate their skills and sound as though they can handle anything. Their arrogance tends to come across as confidence, which can lead to faster promotions.

They also tend to be charming and charismatic. So at first, they come across as likable and well-qualified, which explains why many of them got promoted." (3)

There is no research that start-up's digital natives are less narcissistic than their baby boomer predecessor. We can only hope that new organisational structures and changing attitudes towards hierarchies and money might break today's narcissist truth.

We at CLP endeavour to develop leaders to be truly altruistic role models in the way they lead and whom they promote, while at the same time being aware of the need for a healthy level of self-promotion to manage their career trajectory.

- (1) R. Warren: The Purpose Driven Life. What on Earth am I Here for? 2007
- (2) J. Prime, E. R. Salib: Inclusive Leadership. The View From Six Countries. 2014
- (3) A. Morin: Do Narcissist Make Better Leaders? Psychology Today. 2016
- (4) J. Prime, E. R. Salib: The Best Leaders Are Humble Leaders. Harvard Business Review. 2014
- (5) C. Williamson: The Importance of Humility In Leadership. Forbes. 2017
- (6) L. Bock, SVP of People Operations, Google. In J. Prime, E. R. Salib: The Best Leaders Are Humble Leaders. Harvard Business Review. 2014

Yours,
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CLP is constantly evolving Leadership Development and publishes 500 words periodically that reflect CLP's experiences, research and thought leadership. 500words@clp.world