Research Essay

HUMAN DIMENSION

AT THE STRATEGIC LEVEL

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"It became clear to me that at the age of 58 I would have to learn new tricks that were not taught in the military manuals or on the battlefield. In this position I am a political soldier and will have to put my training in rapping-out orders and making snap decisions on the back burner, and have to learn the arts of persuasion and guile. I must become an expert in a whole new set of skills."

General George C. Marshal

INTRODUCTION

Today's senior leaders, also referred to as executive leaders, are confronted with a world in constant evolution. They must constantly be in touch with their environment and "roll with the punches". The end of the Cold War has removed the threat of a nuclear conflict but it has also contributed a blurring of the role and the mission of the Armed Forces. While the global threat of a world war has diminished, our soldiers have been deployed on numerous, more complex and often more dangerous missions than during the period of the Cold War. As the business world has changed, so too have the Canadian Forces (CF) and the Department of National Defence (DND) been faced with major budget reductions and with various restructuring and downsizing requirements. More than ever, today's senior leader must not only concentrate on the job to perform but understand correctly the environment he lives in and project his organisation in the future. More than ever, the senior leader must understand why and where to direct his energy and focus. More than ever, he must not 'charge' without ensuring that his subordinates (leaders and followers) are motivated and sold to the vision and mission of the organisation.

> " To be effective in the strategic arena our senior military leaders and their staffs must fully understand the strategic vision and strategy formulation process, as well as appreciate the environment and the culture in which they must operate, the competencies they must develop, and finally the tasks they must perform. " [1]

It is a 'fait acquis' that senior leaders will have to operate in an environment of constant change. The expectations placed on them are tremendous and what are often referred to as mere 'buzz words' must be integrated in our way of thinking:

- leaders who are effective in the change wave must be <u>visionary</u>;

- leaders must apply a <u>systems approach</u> to their <u>problem solving</u>;

- leaders must <u>encourage out-of-the-box thinking</u>;

- leaders must <u>appreciate the dynamics of teams</u>;

- leaders must know the <u>reality of change management</u>;

- leaders must <u>operate effectively in a chaotic world</u>;

- leaders must have the <u>skills to establish direction</u>;

- leaders must have the <u>skills to align people, systems, and resources</u>;

- leaders must <u>motivate</u> and <u>inspire</u> followers.[2]

Facing this impressive challenge, while being pressed by their respective authorities (shareholders or governments) to deliver, executive leaders of today are facing the risk of focusing on the tasks while forgetting their most vital element: the *human dimension*. This paper will demonstrate that, in order to be successful at the strategic

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[1] Department of Command, Leadership, and Management, U.S. Army War College (DCLM), <u>Strategic Leadership Primer</u>, (Carlisle Barracks PA, 1998) 1.

[2] Mary-jo Hall, "Changing the Way We Assess Leadership," <u>Acquisition Review Quarterly</u> Fall 1997: 393-394.

level, senior leaders must not only factor in the human dimension and develop the organisational culture but, most importantly, be aware and understand the dangerous consequences of not doing so. 'Making your numbers but not demonstrating our values,' says General Electric CEO Jack Welch, 'is grounds for dismissal'.[3]

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP - DEFINITION

First, it is important that we link the notions of strategic and executive leadership to the notion of strategic culture based on the following definitions:

> "***Strategic leadership*** is the process used by a leader to affect the achievement of a desirable and clearly understood vision by influencing the organisational culture, allocating resources, directing through policy and directive, and building consensus within a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous global environment which is marked by opportunities and threats." [4]
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> USAWC

> "***Executive Leadership***: The set of activities directed toward the development and management of the organisation as a whole, including all of its subcomponents, to reflect long-range policies and purposes that have emerged from the executive leader's interactions within and interpretations of the organisation's external environment." [5]
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> Zaccaro

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[3] Pamphlet in Fortune, "Special Edition No 20," <u>Fortune</u> Oct. 1997.

[4] DCLM 3.

[5] DCLM 3.

> "***Organisational Culture*** (Strategic Culture) is a pattern of shared basic assumptions, values, beliefs, and norms that the organisation has learned over time and that unite the members of an organisation." [6]
>
> E. Schein

From these definitions, we conclude that executive leadership is significantly different in scope, effect and execution than leadership at the lower levels of the organisation. The environment, in which executive leadership is practised, is different; a fundamental undergoing which some executives have great difficulty to adjust. The Department of Command, Leadership, and Management of the U.S. Army War College places it in the proper perspective when stating that: "the environment at this level is characterised by the highest degrees of uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity, as well as tremendous volatility due to the compression of time in which the leader must act. Strategic leaders find themselves enmeshed in intricate networks of competing constituencies and co-operative endeavours that extend beyond their own organisation. The strategic leader must be an expert, not only in his/her own domain of war fighting and leading large military organisations, but also in the bureaucratic and political environment of the nation's decision-making process. This domain includes both a detailed knowledge of, as well as the interrelationship among, economics, geopolitics, military, and information. Moreover, the leader at this level must interact with a number of actors over which he has minimal influence.1498 Tw 12 0 0 555994 Tm(orks wn lss. (ThucprocfulT

communicate with the media is a harbinger of organisational success. Whereas leaders at lower levels of the organisation remain focused on the short term, strategic leaders must have a "future focus", spending much of their time looking toward the future and positioning the organisation for long-term success." [7]

In addition, the senior leader must among other things develop the organisational culture. The Canadian Forces have a well-established history and a mature, long-standing organisational culture. However, as external factors have changed and as subcultures have developed within the organisation, a major challenge of strategic leadership is to ensure that our culture is well synchronised with societal realities and that subcultures adhere fully to the desired core culture.[8]

> "… (C)ulture building is covert, infused in everything the conductor (read leader) does. (T)his reality makes the job of leading at the cultural level that much easier. Culture does not have to be created so much as enhanced. People come together knowing what to expect and how they have to work. The leader has to use this culture to define the uniqueness of the group and its spirit." [9]

To achieve this task, the CF senior leaders must clarify once again their mission, the roles of the CF, establish what core values and what competencies will better enable the CF to achieve the mission and create a detailed blueprint of the culture they want to develop. Once this is done, they must constantly refer to it. Such re-evaluation of the values and of the internal culture of an organisation constitutes the basis of new systems

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[7] DCLM iii.

[8] DCLM 25.

[9] Henry Mintzberg , "Covert Leadership: Notes on Managing Professionals," <u>Harvard Business Review</u> Nov./Dec. 1998: 145.

and new methods that will generate the desired behaviour which, in turn, will allow the organisation to improve.

Having confirmed the definitions and the environment in which the executive leaders must manoeuvre lets now look at the role a senior leader must perform.

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP – ROLE

> "Rethinking the future means challenging every assumption one has about tomorrow, in view of the non-linear, discontinuous nature of change. Instead of seeing the future as a linear continuation of the past, leaders have to learn to accept it as a series of discontinuities which can render useless the most sophisticated **strategic** plans and scenario forecasts." [10]

The challenge senior leadership faces at the beginning of the 21st Century is impressive. The global economy and the pressure on Government to manage national resources have created (more than ever) the need for top management to exercise strategic leadership effectively. And it is vitally important that we fully understand that the knowledge needed to understand and operate in this new environment is substantial, thereby requiring a team effort. [11]

Many specialists presented their analysis of what are the roles of executive leaders. Mintzberg, for one, identified 10 managerial roles subsumed under three headings. The first one, identified as the **interpersonal roles**, emerges from the formal

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[10] Rowan Gibson, " Rethink the future." <u>Executive Excellence</u> Dec. 1998: 13.

[11] R Duane Ireland and Michael A. Hitt, " Achieving and Maintaining Strategic Competitiveness in the 21st Century: the Role of Strategic Leadership," <u>The Academy of Management Executive</u> Feb. 1999: 43-57.

and positional authority of the executive. They are the *figurehead*, the *leader* and the *liaison* roles. The second category deals with **informational roles** and reflects activities centred around the acquisition and dissemination of information. They include the *monitor*, the *disseminator* and the *spokesman* roles. Finally, because each senior leader plays a central part in organisational decisionmaking, the third heading refers to the **decision roles** identified as the *entrepreneur*, the *disturbance handler*, the *resource allocator* and the *negotiator* roles. [12]

John Browne, CEO of British Petroleum Company, believes that the top manager must stimulate the organisation rather than control it. He states that the role of leaders at all levels is to demonstrate to people that they are capable of achieving more than they actually achieve and that they should never be satisfied with where they are now. [13] Charles M. Farkas and Suzy Wetlaufer add to the debate in their effort not to trivialise the issue. They argue that leadership must not be defined as an outgrowth of a strong and charismatic personality but by the development of a clear purpose and direction for an organisation. Leaders must also align all corporate systems with that direction for a sustained period and build organisational commitment to common goals. [14] To mobilise an organisation toward a new orientation often requires that leaders themselves change their behaviour. The basic fact is that the ultimate objective of the leader is to create the vision and to give it a concrete expression through their own words and deeds.

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[12] U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences, Models and Theories of Executive Leadership: A Conceptual / Empirical Review and Integration (Carlisle Barracks, 1996) 177-178-179.

[13] Ireland 43-57.

[14] Charles M. Farkas and Suzy Wetlaufer, "The Ways Chief Executive Officers Lead," Harvard Business Review May-June 1996: 122.

While responsibilities at the top are numerous and complex, it remains that one of the most important duties of a senior leader is to provide a corporate vision and inspire the people they lead. In doing so, the executive leaders must never forget that one of their prime roles is to focus on managing the conceptual complexity of their task. The danger facing senior leaders is the overload phenomenon where because of the "business tempo" they will not have time or take the time to sit back and think about the organisation's future. Senior leaders must not fall into this trap, as this will cut them off from the realities of their corporate external environment. They must learn to balance competing requirements and focus on their role[15] by empowering and trusting their subordinates. They will also benefit from being constantly 'au fait' with what is happening in their global area of responsibility, internally and externally, by keeping themselves current with the evolution of its "business" environment. Continuous training and improvement should also be part of their personal vocabulary.

> "Top managers will no longer view their leadership position as one with rank and title, but rather as a position of significant responsibility to a range of stakeholders. Instead of seeking to provide all the right answers, they will survive to ask the right questions of community citizens they have empowered to work as partners with them." [16]

VALUES AND ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

Senior executives must therefore understand the environment they are working in and how the work force relates to it. They may have the best vision, mission and plans for their organisation, but if they concentrate only on the deliverables without a thorough

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[15] Capt(N) A. Okros, "Human Dimension at the Strategic Level," National Secutiy Studies Course 1, Toronto, 2 Mar. 1999.

[16] Ireland 43-57.

understanding of the dynamics that will get them there, their journey may become very "lonely".

One of the most important realities of our society today is the decline in trust toward our institutions. This was recognised in a study where John L. Manion asserted that, at the end of this century, the society in general distrusts governments, business, churches, medicine and even universities. [17] Although this research was done in the U.S.A., we are confident that its conclusions can easily relate to the Canadian society as a whole. In his study, Manion refers to the notion of *social capital* and argues that engagement, trust and reciprocity are crucial to the success of any organisation, public or private. Various factors tend to indicate that engagement, trust and reciprocity within the Canadian Forces may be at a level that is not conducive to optimal performance. As such, the senior leaders of the Canadian Forces may wish to seriously consider our reality. On the basis of their findings, the Human Resource Strategy of the Canadian Forces may very well require special attention. Trust in our institution, from within, must be strong. Otherwise, the Canadian Forces will never attain optimal efficiency.

One of the key elements in developing and executing a corporate strategy is the ability to influence and to mobilise managers and workers. In weak or sick organisations, employees complain against management. Thus, senior leaders must develop a strategy that will mobilise its human resources and bring individual talents to fruition. Every company claims that its people are its most important asset. The most admired

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[17] Robert D. Putnam, "The Decline of Civil Society: How Come? So What?," Optimum The Journal of Public Sector Management 27.1 (1996): 29.

companies in the world show they really mean it. Consequently, senior leaders must develop strong, empowering values and impregnate each of their activities with these values and with so much passion that it will generate the greatest possible advantages for every player. [18]

How can we translate such expressions of virtue into practice? Timothy C. Hoerr argues that organisations with superior long-term track records embrace key values that form the seven foundations of high performance. They are *principle-centeredness, purpose, people focus, customer focus, process excellence, learning* and *leadership*. [19] Hoerr mentions that while principle-centeredness is the most basic of the seven foundations, it is also the most important. Commitment to core principles such as integrity, fairness, honour and value is what provides strength in times of turmoil and massive organisational, as well as societal changes. And It could be argued that wherever external contingencies pose real and intense threats to the organisation and to its members, the organisation needs to be strongly anchored to timeless principles that do not shift or shake. [20] The situation of a military force in times of actual conflicts is the best example that comes to mind.

25 Canadian Forces Supply Depot offers another interesting example. In their efforts to compete with the private sector, employees have fully accepted the challenge of

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[18] Thomas Teal, "The Human Side of Management," Harvard Business Review Nov.-Dec. 1996: 9.

[19] Timothy C. Hoerr, "Strategic Planning: The Seven Foundations of High Performing Organisations," Irvine

becoming a world class organisation. To achieve this, Depot employees have identified and incorporated four values, i.e. *team spirit, quality, integrity* and *respect.* These values have become the main guidelines used by both leaders and employees (military and civilian) to undergo major re-engineering initiatives while effecting a downsizing of more than 50% of the workforce. Not only did they meet their goals and objectives but also they did so with the full commitment of all unit members, reaching performance levels that compare favourably with world class competitors. It is our opinion that this success would have not been possible if both leaders and employees had not integrated these four collectively accepted values in all of their actions. This example also relates well to Hoerr's third foundation: people focus. Hoerr mentions that everything we do in business is through, with and for people. High-performing companies really value their people. He goes as far as saying that a true commitment to people means going beyond the popular cliché 'people are our most important asset'. It means respecting and honouring each employee, while ensuring that each personal mission is aligned with the organisation's mission. [21]

Michael F. Kipp expresses it differently. He argues that people have a hard time understanding, much less implementing, a strategy they were not involved in creating. [22] Although one must be careful in placing this statement in the right context, it has the merit of challenging senior leaders and of warning them of the risk inherent to sailing alone. Executives often ask how they can get "buy in" as if there were an after-the-fact

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[21] Hoerr 27.

[22] Michael F. Kipp, "The Challenges of Strategy: Seven Lessons," Strategy and Leadership Jan. 1999: 32-33.

communications program that might 'win the hearts and mind of men (and women)'. Kipp insists on the requirement for executive leaders to seek out opportunities to substantively involve people in the strategic dialogue-stretch assignments, fact-finding missions, supplier councils, customer visits and/or role swaps.[23]

'Downsizing' is a case in point. Corporate strategic analysis may force executive leaders to take important decisions that will have a direct impact on the members of the organisation. Study after study shows that following a downsizing, surviving employees become narrow-minded, self-absorbed and risk averse. Morale sinks, productivity drops and survivors distrust management. This constellation of symptoms is known as the *survivors' syndrome*.[24] This phenomenon is a very real and destabilising element within the Canadian Forces and, even more, within the civilian component of the Department of National Defence. Consequently, the senior leaders of the Department must manage it and must send a strong and convincing signal to all concerned, especially to the "survivors", to the effect that human resources are truly the Department's most important asset. A slogan such as 'we are all members of the Defence Team' means nothing if it is not backed up, or if it is not perceived to be backed up by a true, deeply integrated belief and commitment among the senior leaders of the Department. This example was clearly demonstrated in the Philips Employee Feedback Survey.[25]

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[23] Kipp 32-33.

[24] Wayne F. Cascio, "Downsizing: What Do We Know? What Have We Learned?," Academy of Management Executive 7.1 (1993): 100.

[25] Philips Employee Feedback Survey, (1901-2 (ADM Per) 28 Sept 1995) 1\10 –10\10.

Evidently, downsizing is not a characteristic of only DND. According to Statistics Canada, more than one million people are displaced in permanent layoffs each year in Canada, a figure that has not changed much since the late '70s.[26] Nevertheless, a poorly managed downsizing initiative may well be "le chant du cygne" for an organisation. Richard Doust, from the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants, states that at least 50% of downsizing initiatives failed to meet financial objectives, one of the real reasons for launching downsizing activities. Why so many failures? *Poor planning*, *poor leadership*, *poor communication* are usually cited. On the other hand, Doust reveals six practices common to successful organisations. They are: *articulate and commit to common values, provide direction and strategic context, develop a social contract, design the right performance environment, create a learning environment* and *build infrastructure.* [27] Once again, the human dimension can and must play a key role in the corporate strategy. As Asea Brown Boveri's CEO Percy Barnevick says: "Employees don't commit to companies. They commit to values." [28] Moreover, Jim McCaslin from Harley Davidson summarises it well in the following statement: "My way is not to reengineer every damn thing, but to focus on a key value, such as the well being of our employees." [29]

Can the Canadian Forces identify with these practices? Not only can it, but also as we have suggested earlier, it must. Considering that resources will never be sufficient,

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[26] Richard Doust, "Downsizing: Making it Work," Chartered Accountants Magazine Dec. 1998: 16-20.

[27] Doust 16-20.

[28] Doust 16-20.

[29] Doust 16-20.

it is definitely through the quality of their soldiers that the Canadian Forces will truly enhance its operational capabilities. Unfortunately, it is my opinion that, during the last decade, the Canadian Forces has been overly focussed on missions, tasks and budgets. As a result, its human resources, as enablers, have been neglected. Notwithstanding the fact that salaries have recently been adjusted, it remains that core values have not been adequately projected and lived. Some core values have been developed and they are clearly stated in the Statement of Defence Ethics: **loyalty, honesty, courage, diligence, fairness** and **responsibility**. [30] Although all of them are indeed basic values that each leader must integrate in his everyday action, they have still not been communicated forcefully as recommended by the Philips Employee Feedback Survey. A general feeling existed in 1995, as reported in the Survey, that most civilian employees and CF members (did) not have confidence in the Department's management and leadership on departmental restructuring, budget implications and departmental change.[31] The Survey went further and recommended that to regain the trust of military and civilian employees, the organisation should make clear efforts to improve leadership skills and to communicate and practise Defence 2000 principles. These included: *promoting employee participation, communication and innovation*; *delegating more authority*; and *encouraging innovative decision-making*.[32] Although one must recognise the will by senior leadership to move toward that direction since 1995, we have still not reached our destination. Moreover, I believe that military values should explicitly relate to physical

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[30] <u>The Many Faces of Ethics in Defence</u>, (Ottawa: Minister of Public Work and Government Services Canada, 1997) 5.

[31] Philips Survey 3\10.

[32] Philips Survey 3\10, 4\10.

toughness, individual discipline, strong and enlightened leadership and professional knowledge/expertise. These notions should be communicated up-front and constitute the heart of our professional focus. I believe these are the values that most soldiers are longing for. Yet, for some reason, they are not being brought to the fore as strongly as they should be by senior leadership.

> **"Strategic leaders must be sensitive to the fact that statements of values alone have little impact on organisational culture unless the members internalise them through a process that includes experience-based validation. Only then will stated values result in the desired effect on members' attitude and behaviour." [33]**

THE WAY AHEAD

> **"Not too long ago, human resources was merely 'the personnel department'. Today, human resources is one of the most important talent pools within a company. Confronted by rapidly evolving workforces and workplaces, HR has found itself in a position to guide companies safely through the turbulent waters of change". [34]**

There are no two ways about it: "it starts from the top". Executive leaders will have to brace themselves for continuous change. And this reality will often require of them to question long-standing paradigms, long-standing behaviour patterns, as they must demonstrate leadership with actualised and credible solutions. [35] As Ronald A. Heifetz and Donald L. Laurie suggest, they must *get on the balcony* and develop their view

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[33] DCLM 26.

[34] Jack V. Wirts, "Rewriting the Rules of Human Resources - Executive Summary," 1994 Human Resources Conference, New-York City, 18-19 Oct. 1994.

[35] Ronald A. Heifetz and Donald L. Laurie, "Adaptive Strategy," Executive Excellence Dec. 1998:14 -15.

patterns as if they were on a balcony, [36] always looking forward and challenging regularly their own ways of doing things.

This represents a formidable challenge indeed and today's senior leader needs to structure his environment differently. Not only is the human factor an essential element of his strategy, but he should make better use of his HR staff. HR practitioners within the Department (and for the purpose of this essay, I refer to ADM HR-Mil staff) must quickly change their focus from the traditional administrative approach to become strategic partners and change agents. They must become the driving force that will create the conditions for the development of truly relevant and significant values and for the professional development of the soldiers (strategic leadership focus). [37] This approach would obviously be done in support of the supervisors \ leaders of the organisation. For example, HR practitioners should take the lead in proposing, creating and debating best practices in culture change programs. They should provide strong leadership in reviewing/improving performance measurement approaches and the related reward system. And their focus must be energetically aligned with the future, and not the past needs of the Canadian Forces. A clear balance between core values, knowledge management and performance measurement must be established and the responsibility to define such balance must belong to well trained HR practitioners. Evidently these HR practitioners must also possess a thorough knowledge and understanding of the military profession, they must be professional officers and they must develop a capability for

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[36] Heifetz 14-15.

[37] John Hodge, "HR as a Strategic Player," HR Magazine - Alexandria, Mar. 1999: 136-138.

innovation. The HR team may need more training and professional development but such acquired knowledge would quickly prove to be a tremendous investment. [38]

Change has a way of scaring people – scaring them into inaction. It would therefore be the HR practitioner's (new) role, as a change agent, to transform resistance into resolve, fear of change into excitement.[39] In other words, bring the *human dimension* into the solution. However, let it be crystal clear that the HR staff cannot substitute themselves to their line colleagues. They are in support of them. The argument made above calls for a new strategic focus and partnership for HR in the organisation, not an invasion into supervisors \ leaders authority.

Christopher A. Bartlett and Sumantra Ghoshal propose a 'shift' in senior leaders' standard approach to their role, a 'shift' that results from the need to replace the obsolete strategy-structure-systems doctrine with a leadership philosophy built on purpose, process, and people. As they point out, creating a corporation based on the individual does not mean stripping the organisation of all its formal systems, policies, and procedures. It does require redefining them so that they support rather than subvert top management's ability to focus on the organisation's people. The authors further suggest that top management can:

- reduce its reliance on strategic-planning systems by influencing the organisation's direction through the development and deployment of key people;

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[38] Dave Ulrich, "A New Mandate for Human Resources," <u>Havard Business Review</u> Jan.-Feb. 1998: 129.

[39] Ulrich 130.

- lighten the burden of control systems by developing personal values and interpersonal relationships that encourage self-monitoring; and

- replace much of its dependence on information systems by developing personal communications with those who have access to vital intelligence and expertise. [40]

> **"Goran Lindahl, ABB's executive vice president responsible for power transmission and distribution, sees his most important role as coach and developer of his management team. He estimates that he spends 50% to 60% of his time communicating directly with his people in a process he calls 'human engineering'". [41]**

Jacques Nasser, the newly appointed CEO of Ford Motor Company, has a very simple approach on how to shift strategy into overdrive at a company with 340,000 employees in more than 200 countries: teaching, "teaching as you have never seen it before". For two or three years, all that the company did was to teach where it was going, why it was going there and how it was going to get there. Nasser's main message was that passion and success come when employees think and act as if they own the company. [42]

Harvard Business Review has recently published an article on "What effective General Managers (read Senior General Managers) Really Do". It suggests a 12 point pattern which not surprisingly has a strong human dimension 'flavour':

- They spend most of their time with others;

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[40] Christopher A. Bartlett and Sumantra Ghoshal, "Changing the Role of Top Management: Beyond Systems to People," Harvard Business Review May – Jun 1995: 135.

[41] Bartlett 136.

[42] Suzy Wetlaufer, "Driving Change an Interview with Ford Motor Company's Jacques Nasser," Harvard Business Review Mar.-Apr. 1999: 77-78.

- They spend time with many people in addition to their direct subordinates and their bosses;

- The breadth of topics in their discussions is extremely wide;

- They ask a lot of questions;

- During conversations, they rarely seem to make "big" decisions;

- Their discussions usually contain a fair amount of joking and often concern topics that are not related to work;

- In more than a few of these encounters, the issue discussed is relatively unimportant to the business or organisation;

- In these encounters, the executives rarely give orders in a traditional sense;

- Nevertheless, they often attempt to influence others;

- They often react to others' initiatives; much of their typical day is unplanned;

- they spend most of their time with others in short, disjointed conversations; and

- They work long hours. [43]

This is another reminder of the paramount importance for senior executives to be visible and in contact with those who execute the plan. They can develop a strong, more realistic feel for what goes on at the front end and allow themselves an opportunity to influence the outcome of events directly.

Finally, one of the most important challenges for senior leaders is to promote teamwork. As newly commissioned officers and platoon commanders, we were taught

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[43] John P. Kotter, "What Effective General Managers Really Do", <u>Harvard Business Review</u> Mar.-Apr. 1999: 148.

that teamwork was an essential, vital value of any military organisation. Strangely, however, as we progress in ranks, it seems that everyone becomes more competitive and more individualistic. Teamwork is often encouraged as the way to go but is rarely practised. In terms of image, we quickly learn that we derive benefits by clearly showing off the fact that we are 'in command' and that we have full 'control' of situations. We are trained to lead and to command, to exert our authority. For example, top executives:

- are individually accountable for whatever happens on their watch;

- are primarily responsible for broad corporate strategy, policy and objectives;

- must create and maintain a sense of urgency about resolving those issues that are critical to overall company (department) performance;

- make decisions on their own as they exercise personal judgement about risks, resources, and strategic options;

- assign people to tasks based largely on their position in the organisation; and

- leverage their time and experience by means of efficient organisational and managerial processes. [44]

The traits required to perform as "commanders" are rarely conducive to efficient team performance. Clearly, we must admit, the weight of responsibilities they carry is significant. It is often referred to as "loneliness at the top" or "loneliness of command". Leaders, realising their own human dimension or limitation, can easily become "rugged individualists". [45]

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[44] Jon R. Katzenbach, "The Myth of the Top Management Team," Harvard Business Review Nov.-Dec. 1997: 87.

[45] Prem Benimadhu, "Managing Teaming at the Top," The Insidedge The Conference Board of Canada: 6.

Yet true teamwork possesses extraordinary advantages and organisations with a strong top team culture enhance organisational effectiveness. For this reason, teamwork should occur at all levels of the organisation. After all as concludes Prem Benimadhu, Vice-President Centre for Management Effectiveness of the Conference Board of Canada, how can top executives expect others in the organisation to sustain a team approach if they do not demonstrate, day in and day out, that they are a team. [46]

> **"Senior management's primary role is to create an internal environment in which people understand and value our way of operating... Our job is one of creation and destruction – supporting individual initiative while breaking down bureaucracy and cynicism. It all depends on developing a personal trust relationship between those at the top and those at lower levels." [47]**

Finally, Benimadhu continues in offering a number of critical factors for team effectiveness:

- the level of comfort among the executives must allow for the generation of a healthy tension or a constructive ferment;

- trust and the presence of a shared organisational purpose are essential;

- team members must work together on specific projects or assignments directly related to overall organisational performance; and

- although top executives have little discretionary time, regular meetings focusing on strategy and operating decisions are indispensable. [48]

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[46] Benimadhu 6.

[47] Bartlett 133.

[48] Benimadhu 6.

CONCLUSION

"The new senior leader will be a "facilitator" who will remove obstacles for his subordinates in order to help them do a better job. He will then have understood that the sure way to get power is to give it." [49]

We firmly believe that the top executives of world class organisations are leading the way. Almost unanimously, they reinforce the absolute necessity for business organisations to focus on the capabilities of their employees. And they stress, with much energy and conviction, the fact that this focus on employees must be based on knowledge management, empowerment, team building and two-way communications.

It would be a real shame if the Canadian Forces, an organisation so manpower intensive, which is striving for optimal operational effectiveness (and, let us recognise it, for international and national recognition), were to ignore this necessity.

We have witnessed erosion of the soldiers' trust toward their leaders. Although actions to correct this situation have been undergoing, we have not reached our destination. We must continue to work improving this situation before it is too late, as the vitality and the operational efficiency of the Canadian Forces depend on our ability to mobilise and energise our soldiers.

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[49] Jean-Claude Dauphin, "Demain des Organisations Moins Encadrées: Entrevue avec M. Claude Daigneault Vice-Président – Ressources Humaines et Administration – Technologies SNC," <u>Info Club</u> Juin-Juillet 1995: 9.

The senior leaders of the CF must be pro-active in stating the mission and determine what core values soldiers and officers alike must share if the CF are to successfully accomplish its mission. Once these values are recognised, as the necessary enablers they must be, specific means must be taken to integrate them in the way of life, the way of thinking of every soldier and every officer. Also, these means must be well documented with specific objectives and specific projects.

This is no easy challenge. And this is why senior leaders of the CF must develop the tools that will make it possible. Hence the need for our traditional HR staff (ADM HR – Mil) to be transformed into strategic partners and change agents, in support of their line colleagues. Evidently, to be effective these 'transformed practitioners' will have to be able to relate to combat environment, share the set core values (very deeply) and acquire an in-depth professional expertise in the HR field. Only then will they obtain credibility with the senior leaders and within the hierarchical structure of the Canadian Forces.

> **"For leaders to expect the organisation to change, they must understand the change process and how people react to change. For leaders to expect the organisation to improve, they must improve themselves using a disciplined approach. For leaders to expect everyone to contribute to the vision and mission, they must personally contribute to the vision and mission. For an organisation to move toward its vision all systems must be aligned and individuals must be intrinsically motivated and inspired. The greatest loss in any organisation is the inability to tap the full measure of human potential."** [50]

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[50] Hall 402.

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